

INSPECTION REPORT

REDHILL SCHOOL

Stourbridge

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103865

Headteacher: Mr. Brian Heavisides

Reporting inspector: Dr. Faysal Mikdadi
2447

Dates of inspection: 19 – 22 May 2003

Inspection number: 249106

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Junction Road
Stourbridge

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Simon Beddow

Date of previous inspection: 3 February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2447	Faysal Mikdadi	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
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15924	Ann Barrett	Team inspector	Religious Education	
19069	Brian Bartlett	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs	
19135	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology	
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17732	David Martin	Team inspector	History	
1964	Patrick Playfair	Team inspector	Physical Education	
1027	David Potter	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Year 11 pupils were on study leave during the inspection week. Several Year 11 pupils from the current academic year and from the previous one were interviewed by inspectors. Year 11 pupils' work and records were closely scrutinised.

Redhill School is an 11 to 16 comprehensive school in Stourbridge. It is situated on two sites separated by a main road. It has 1138 pupils on roll. Of these, 90 pupils are eligible for free school meals which is half the national average. Eighty seven pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds which is higher than the national average with 53 pupils who have English as an additional language and 45 who receive specialist English language support. Languages spoken at the school are English, Cantonese, French, German, Panjabi, Urdu and sign language. The school has a small unit for deaf pupils. Pupils' attainment on entry is above the national average for the majority. There are 133 pupils with special educational needs (SEN). As a proportion of the school this is broadly in line with the national average. Twenty pupils have statements of SEN which is below the national average for a school of this size. As well as an individual needs department the school has a Resource Base for Deaf Pupils (RBD), staffed by specialist teachers provided by the Local Education Authority (LEA) and speech and language therapists, and a behaviour support unit. The school caters for a very wide range of special needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Redhill is a very good school which is truly inclusive and within which every person is valued equally. Everyone is encouraged to reach his or her potential and to fulfil their aspirations and, as a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make significant progress. Pupils aged 14 gain well above national average results in the National Curriculum tests with a high proportion gaining the higher levels. Those aged 16 achieve GCSE results that are also above the national average for those attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C and well above the national average for those attaining five or more grades A*-G. Teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. The success of the school is largely due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the very good leadership of key staff. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. The leadership of key staff is very good.
- Attainment is well above the national average in the National Curriculum test results and above the national average in the GCSE results.
- The school achieves significant value added education for its pupils.
- Teaching is very good and teachers are much appreciated by their pupils. The result is that pupils make very good progress and achieve well.
- Behaviour and pupils' attitudes to the school are very good and relationships are excellent.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school and the monitoring of individual pupils is outstanding. The school makes very good use of excellent data collected on every pupil.
- Opportunities for enhancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- There are insufficient information and communication technology resources and insufficient staff training to enable pupils to fully access the curriculum in some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in 1997 has been very good. All five key issues have been successfully addressed. In the last report modern foreign language provision was a key issue. Currently the modern foreign language provision is such that the school has recently applied to be granted Language Specialist Status and is awaiting the result of an assessment visit by the Department for Education and Skills. Library use is now

providing effective support for learning. Support for all pupils including those with special educational needs is now a strong feature of the school which is fully inclusive. The monitoring of teaching is also a strength which has caused significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Homework meets the needs of pupils of all abilities.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	C	

Since the last inspection the GCSE results have improved by ten percentage points. Current Year 11 work seen indicates that the rising trend has continued. Standards at GCSE were at least above and often well above average in all subjects except for information and communication technology and religious education. In 2002 there was a dip in the information and communication technology results which is not reflected in the quality of the work seen during the inspection. In religious education the number of pupils attaining higher grades has increased although the overall figure is below the national average. Results in the National Curriculum Tests at age 14 were well above the national average in 2002. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was also well above the national average. The trend over time is rising. The school's targets for both GCSE and tests results are challenging but realistic with outstanding use being made of available data to set the targets. The standard of work seen was at least satisfactory and often good and very good. Pupils achieve at least well and often very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils' attitudes to the school are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is consistently very good with pupils treating each other with courtesy and consideration.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships around the school are outstanding. Opportunities for enhancing personal development are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

This area is a strength of the school which is fully inclusive and which values every individual and helps him or her to attain his or her potential. The ethos around the school is warm, friendly and business like. Teachers are excellent role models and help pupils become responsible, considerate and pleasant young people.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Year 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 pupils spoke very highly of their teachers whose quality of teaching is very good overall. No lesson seen was less than satisfactory and the overwhelming majority was good or better and almost half was very good or better. There were no variations between subjects or years. In English, mathematics and science teaching was

very good overall. Teaching is characterised by excellent relationships, excellent teacher knowledge, very high expectations, excellent management of pupils and successful individual support to every pupil. Pupils respond well and display very good attitudes and show considerable interest and enthusiasm. The relationships in classrooms are such that pupils become keen to please their teachers and fulfil their expectations. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are very good. Pupils are offered a well balanced curriculum that matches their needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and it enables pupils to make very good progress. It has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was a key issue.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision allows pupils with English as an additional language to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is excellent overall with improvements made since the last inspection especially in the opportunities for enhancing pupils' spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school employs excellent procedures for ensuring very good behaviour and for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Pupils feel valued and very well supported.

The school's strategies for caring for its pupils are strong features of its work. Individual pupils are valued and very well supported. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and all pupils are offered equal access to all that the school offers. Information and communication technology provision is sometimes limited. The school is aware of this relative shortcoming and, as part of its improvement plan, it is aiming at widening resources and staff training in order to ensure fuller access. The school has very effective links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. Other key staff in the school offer very good leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory duties except that the school does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of corporate worship. They know their school very well and understand its strengths and weaknesses. They offer appropriate support and challenge to the headteacher and his senior leadership group.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has very effective strategies for monitoring and evaluating its performance. All staff know their school well and consistently seek to improve their performance.
The strategic use of resources	Resources, including accommodation, are well used and provide very good value for money. There are shortcomings in the quality of accommodation and some health and safety issues.

The school enjoys outstanding leadership from the headteacher. This leadership is replicated across the school where key persons provide overall very good leadership. Learning resources and accommodation are satisfactory and very well used. Teachers' qualifications and expertise match the needs of the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The standards achieved by their children.• The progress made by their children.• The values and attitudes that the school teaches their children.• The behaviour around the school and the relationships between the teachers and pupils and between the pupils.• The information that the school provides to parents.• The headteacher's leadership of the school.• Extra-curricular activities especially music and drama.• The teachers' hard work and commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concern about the amount of homework set.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views of the school. They do not agree with their concerns about the amount of homework set which is sufficient to extend pupils' learning effectively.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils first arrive at Redhill School, their attainment is above the national average. The extensive data available from the school indicates that pupils' prior attainment has been improving since the last inspection. A significant minority of pupils joining the school have special educational needs and their attainment on entry is below the national expectations. The value that the school adds to pupils' achievement between their first arriving in the school and the age of 14 years is significantly high. Overall, the school adds considerable value to pupils' achievement over their five years in the school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and those with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress.

2. In the 2002 national tests which are taken at the age of 14, pupils' results in all three core subjects were well above the national averages for all schools nationally as well as for all schools in similar circumstances. This trend has been consistently the same over the last five years and shows a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils also do particularly well in attaining the higher levels of 6 or above in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The improvement trend over the past five years was similar to the national trend of improvement.

3. Teacher assessments in core subjects in 2002 for Year 9 were well above the national average both for those attaining the expected level as well as for those attaining the higher levels. Attainment is well above the national averages in geography and information and communication technology; above the national averages in art and design, design and technology, history and music; in line with the national averages in modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. Based on their attainment on entry, pupils achieve well with many achieving better than would be predicted on entry. The school adds considerable value to pupils' achievement in the first three years of their life in the school. In years 10-11 pupils continue to make progress and achieve as would be expected given their National Curriculum test results at 14 years.

4. Sixteen year old pupils achieve results that are above the national average in almost all subjects and often well above the national averages. Compared to all schools in the country Redhill's pupils attain above average results in the number of those attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C. They obtain well above average results for those attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-G. Compared to similar schools, pupils' attainment is average for those attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C. It is above average for those attaining five or more grades A*-G. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve results that are significantly lower than the rest of the school. Only a third of those entered for the GCSE examination attain the higher grades as opposed to nearly two thirds of the whole school doing so. Nonetheless, the attainment of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds shows considerable value added since their attainment on entry to the school is significantly lower than the rest of the school's population. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C has increased significantly from being in line with the national average to becoming above and, in most years since then, well above the national

average. The gap in attainment between boys and girls has declined and is now more in line with the national trends in performance. The school has successfully applied strategies specifically aimed at improving boys' performance.

5. GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average in English literature, science, design and technology (food), history and music. They were above the national averages in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, geography and physical education and in line with the national average in modern foreign languages; a department which has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was heavily criticised. Its improvement has led it to its current position of being considered for Language Specialist Status which is awaiting a decision from the Department for Education and Skills after a submission made in March 2003. GCSE results were below the national average in information and communication technology for the first time; a result which is not reflected in the standard of the work seen during the inspection. The school has already taken necessary action to improve results by introducing the GNVQ course. The religious education GCSE results in 2002 were also below the national trend although there has been a constant rising trend in the number of pupils attaining the higher grades of A*-C over the years. The standard of work seen during the inspection was very good in English, Years 7-9 mathematics, science, design and technology, Years 7-9 geography, Years 10-11 history, information and communication technology and Years 10-11 music; good in Years 10-11 mathematics, art and design, Years 10-11 geography, Years 7-9 history, modern foreign languages and Years 7-9 music; satisfactory in Years 10-11 art and design, physical education and religious education. The school has set challenging but realistic targets for each individual pupil. It anticipates increasing test and examination results at a good and steady rate over the next three years.

6. The standards of literacy across subjects are good. Pupils speak and write confidently and for a variety of purposes and audiences. They listen well and respond appropriately. They can use words that relate to different subjects competently and accurately. On arriving at the school, pupils quickly learn and use basic language skills accurately across all subjects. Numeracy skills are also good. Pupils are able to effectively handle spatial relations, measuring, data analysis, graphs, statistical tables, spreadsheets and calculations across all subjects. In both areas, all pupils, including those with English as an additional language, make consistently very good progress.

7. The achievements of and progress made by pupils with SEN are very good. Most pupils aged 11 to 14 make significant improvements in their ability to read and spell. On entry to the school the attainment of the majority of pupils with SEN is at least one level below national expectations. By the time they are 14 most have improved by one level in English; by at least one level in mathematics; and by one or two levels in science. At the age of 16 most achieve six to eight GCSE passes. The majority achieve at least grades D or E in English language and mathematics; in science, many achieve at least grades C or D. The results in technology are impressive. In 2002, ten pupils with SEN were entered for at least one of the five GCSEs offered. Of those, eight achieved at least a grade D with six being awarded a grade C. The deaf pupils make similar progress. Most enter the school with very low levels of attainment in English, particularly in respect of vocabulary and comprehension. By the age of 16 they, typically, record at least eight GCSE passes, mostly in the grades D to F range, although many achieve the top three grades of A-C.

8. In lessons and across all subjects pupils with SEN make at least good, and usually very good, progress. In religious education, it is excellent. In music, pupils are proud of their developing interest in the subject; they participate fully in the difficult task of improvisation and give up their break times to practise their skills. In mathematics, pupils aged 14-16 make very good gains in their learning about equations; pupils aged 11-14 show a very good understanding of the use of 'certain to impossible' vocabulary in relation to probability. In English, pupils aged 11-14 use their knowledge of the text to determine how different characters react to the same situation. In volleyball, pupils with special educational needs develop their ability to serve, set up and smash. Very good support in technology ensures that pupils gain an understanding of the different foods that are eaten in different countries which also enables them to celebrate British cultural diversity.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development, relationships and attendance make a major contribution to their progress and achievements. These outcomes, resulting from the school's work, represent very good improvements since the last inspection.

10. Attitudes to the school are very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic in their work. They show very high levels of interest and involvement in lessons and school activities. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson looking at styles and techniques in poetry, pupils were fully absorbed in their work as they contrasted two poems. Pupils also show much interest in year group assemblies. For example, Year 9 were keen to learn about special words in holy and other books. They were thoughtful as they listened to the senior teacher, firstly recite a favorite poem and then discuss a religious story about the seriousness of using hurtful words. Pupils are keen to take part in activities outside of lessons including sports, music, art and homework clubs and school trips. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Unauthorised absence is extremely rare. These factors further show the overall excellent levels of enthusiasm for school.

11. The school is a very orderly community. Pupils are especially well mannered, respectful and polite towards others. Behaviour is very good. There is a remarkable absence of oppressive behaviour including bullying, sexism and racism. The vast majority behaves very well in lessons, assemblies, at break-times, as they move around the school and between the two main sites. Personal, social and health education lessons and work in citizenship have resulted in pupils developing a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. For example, in an assembly, youth workers linked to a church in the area gave an excellent presentation to Year 8 about the duties and responsibilities of young citizens in the community. Although there were a considerable number of fixed period exclusions in the last academic year for unacceptable behaviour, there were no permanent exclusions.

12. Relationships between adults and pupils, and also between pupils, are outstanding. The harmony between different groups of pupils, especially ethnic minorities, those with special educational needs and the deaf, is a major strength of the school. Pupils work particularly well together, for example, in physical education lessons they easily organize themselves to work in groups for competitions. The success of the peer support scheme shows pupils' outstanding social development. The pupils at this school show exceptionally high levels of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. This is especially evident in religious education as they learn about other faiths. They say that people with different

beliefs, cultures or opinions should all be treated equally and fairly. Such views show their outstanding moral development. The diversity of cultural backgrounds at the school is supporting personal development very well as pupils mix and learn together. This makes a significant contribution to their very good cultural development.

13. Personal development is excellent overall. Pupils hold very positive views and have very strong feelings about issues such as honesty, justice, caring for others and doing your best. They show awe in their learning. For example, a group of Year 7 pupils described how remarkable it was to learn about human reproduction from the fusion and growth of cells. They were fascinated about the occurrence of twins, including 'Siamese' twins. This shows their excellent spiritual development. Pupils respond exceptionally well to responsibilities, both for themselves and others. Library monitors provide an excellent example of the mature response of pupils. Members of the school council meet frequently and liaise well with their peers in channeling suggestions to the school, many of which are adopted. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their initiative. For example, pupils of all ages were heavily involved in putting forward ideas and designing the new statue outside the science building.

14. Pupils with SEN have very good attitudes towards school, the teachers and other pupils. They are very supportive of one another and appreciate one another's difficulties. Some of the younger pupils are learning British Sign Language; they make good use of this to work with, and to involve, deaf pupils in lessons including algebra and basketball.

15. The behaviour of pupils with SEN is usually at least good although some pupils do require high quality teacher management to help them in this respect. The school is also being very successful in improving the behaviour and attitudes of the most challenging pupils aged 14 to 16. Due to the high quality intervention work and support provided by the Behaviour and Education Support Team (BEST) Centre most of these pupils show a reduction in the number of sanctions they receive for inappropriate behaviour, including detentions and fixed term exclusions. In one session observed a group of 11-14 year olds gained an appreciation of the feelings they experienced when they became angry.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is a strength of the school. Teaching in all years is very good. All the lessons seen were at least satisfactory and the overwhelming majority were good and nearly half were very good or better. There was no variation in the very good quality of teaching between subjects or between years. Teaching is very good overall in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

17. There is a strong 'Redhill factor' that makes teaching of such high quality. Pupils spoken to consistently listed teaching as the main strength of the their school. They invariably spoke highly of their teachers as being committed, hard working, helpful and encouraging. They felt that their teachers had consistent high expectations and gave a great deal of time and energy to ensure that each pupil reached his or her potential. Parents also spoke of teaching as a strength of the school. Governors and senior managers spoke specifically of the focus that the school has put on teaching and learning. Inspectors support these positive views.

18. Teachers have established excellent relationships with their pupils. The pupils themselves appear to pick up this positive role model and in turn they have excellent

relationships with each other. Teachers are invariably pleasant, polite and courteous to their pupils and the pupils, again, respond in kind. The result is an environment within which everyone behaves in a mature and responsible way. This in itself creates a wonderfully warm and business like ethos around the school. Both teachers and pupils behave as if it were a real pleasure coming to school. Teachers have made a major effort to brighten up the learning environment with displays of pupils' work, stimulating prompts with attractive and colourful stimuli. Pupils show considerable appreciation for their learning environment.

19. Almost all lessons were characterised by excellent relationships, very good planning of lessons, good individual support for pupils and the pupils' invariably very good response to their teachers. Teachers themselves discuss their teaching with a conscious agenda of improving it. Teaching is monitored effectively and regularly across the school. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are always excellent. Their expectations are very high and their management of their pupils is invariably excellent. The result is that pupils are always attentive, willing to learn and interested. They understand what it is that their teachers require of them and they respond with all their intellectual and physical capabilities. Teachers take risks with new approaches and consistently evaluate their own work. This attitude is reflected in the pupils themselves being willing to have a go and cheerfully learn from getting things wrong. There were many lessons seen where the teaching was outstanding. Perhaps an exemplification of the 'Redhill factor' can be given in the following outstanding religious education Year 7 lesson: The teacher was introducing Islam to the pupils. The lesson was well planned with clear objectives. The teacher used a range of teaching strategies which helped maintain pupils' attention. The variety also ensured that each pupil's preferred learning style was made available. Relationships were excellent, firm but friendly, which brought out the best in pupils. The excellent relationships were used to encourage two Muslim pupils to talk about their religion and prayers in a way that was unobtrusive and which allowed the pupils to demonstrate considerable pride in their religious background. Other pupils were interested and asked a lot of questions. They enjoyed the work and showed considerable enthusiasm. They were eventually able to explain the manner and purpose of Muslim prayers. Outstanding lessons were also seen in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, information and communication technology, music and physical education. A large representation of very good lessons was seen in every subject with teachers focusing on individual needs and on basic skills, literacy and numeracy. Literacy and numeracy prompts are displayed in most subject areas. The result is that all pupils, including those with English as an additional language, learn very well and consequently make very good progress.

20. Across the school, in the individual needs department, the Resource Base for the Deaf (RBD) and the BEST Centre the teaching of pupils with SEN is almost always at least good and frequently very good. This high quality teaching is hallmarked by several significant strengths. Teachers are very aware of the needs and learning difficulties of their pupils. This means that they are able to plan and deliver lessons that are expertly tailored to match the pupils' level of attainment. As such, the pupils are able to access the work but, at the same time, are appropriately challenged and thus improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. In the RBD these features are excellent. In a design and technology lesson pupils were given individual support by the teacher that encouraged them to think for themselves and make good progress. The teachers are skilful in managing the behaviour of pupils quietly but firmly. This ensures that the pupils concentrate on the tasks they are given and strive to produce work of high quality. For example, in music, pupils with challenging behaviours

achieved very well in instrumental lessons because of the way in which the teacher encouraged them and used their mistakes sensitively to improve practice.

21. The learning support assistants (LSAs) provide very skilled assistance to pupils with a wide range of needs that enables them to participate in the learning process and develop independence. The signing provision for a deaf pupil aged 14-16 ensured that the understanding of Pythagoras' Theorem was equally as good as that of the rest of the class. Similarly the support for and involvement of an 11 year old deaf pupil that was provided by the teacher ensured excellent learning occurred in geography.

22. The school encourages teachers to use the 'visual-aural-kinaesthetic-tactile' strategy to engage pupils with different learning styles. Whilst this is proving to be successful in the kinaesthetic aspects of some lessons there is a need to be more focused on reinforcing learning rather than merely on practical activities. The individual needs department is not making sufficient use of information technology and available computer programs to enhance learning.

23. In the main school, whilst the quality of support provided for deaf pupils by the LSAs is extremely good, not all teachers are making full use of the most appropriate strategies for teaching pupils with such an impairment. As has been stated, virtually all the deaf pupils have low levels of understanding in language, literacy and vocabulary. This is not always reflected in the teaching.

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

24. The school is very successful in giving pupils a rounded education, including excellent attention overall to personal development, through both the formal curriculum as well as through the extensive extra-curricular activities programme. This represents excellent improvement since the last inspection. For example, spiritual development has improved from 'only just satisfactory' to becoming outstanding provision. Pupils have many opportunities to develop a sense of awe and wonder in their learning through the curriculum. For instance, they often consider the natural world, disasters, tragedies, human emotions and the inspirational nature of human achievement. They consider their own feelings and responses to events. For example, pupils have discussed the war in Iraq and their first thoughts were for the waste of life. They responded by fundraising. In assemblies, pupils are given a 'word of the week' such as 'reflection' and this is then a feature in lessons where teachers try to focus on the idea or word in their lessons.

25. Provision for moral development is excellent. This results in pupils having a great sense of right and wrong. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons contribute very well. For example, topics include bullying, sex and race discrimination, stereotyping, environmental issues and animal rights all in a moral context. Religious education enables pupils to learn about the major world faiths in detail and teachers promote the need for mutual respect. There are also many opportunities to explore moral issues in other subjects. For example, in science pupils considered how Einstein felt as he realized how his work could be abused by future generations.

26. Provision for social development is excellent. Consequently, pupils form exceptionally good relationships with others. Staff are very good role models for pupils to base their own behaviour and relationships. Many contacts with a diverse community allow pupils to inter-act with a wide cross section of society. The school offers many opportunities for pupils to experience responsibility for others including a school council. Pupils' caring nature is evident as they frequently raise money for charities and good causes. Extra-curricular activities offer many chances to develop team-working and leadership skills. For example, many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme and there are many opportunities through residential trips.

27. Provision for cultural development is very good. Consequently, pupils value their own culture whilst appreciating and respecting others. Pupils learn about their own heritage through the curriculum, many trips and visitors. A wide range of texts is included in English. For example, pupils often read poetry. Gifted and talented Year 9 pupils recently went to Oxford University and took part in a performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as part of their experience. Many girls recently took part in a project ('Ek Kerna') to produce a wall textile portraying the lives of women in Islam. There is good range in the music introduced to pupils including English classical and from other cultures and this is often used as a backdrop for assembly.

28. The provision for PSHE is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when this aspect was judged to be good. A detailed programme of work has been devised for pupils aged 11-16 that involves a very wide range of topics including study skills, health and hygiene, politics, drug education and relationships including sex education. A significant amount of the citizenship scheme of work is currently delivered during the PSHE programme. The PSHE programme is delivered by form tutors. Because tutors work in lower (11-14) and upper (14-16) age group teams they are able to become skilled in the aspects that they are required to deliver. The quality of teaching observed confirmed that the delivery of PSHE is, most often, good or very good. In addition, the school organises a very well planned two weeks of work experience for all pupils aged 14-15.

29. The provision for careers education is very good. The school is one of only three pilot schools for a Connexions Guidance Community. Provision for vocational educational is currently good but the plans that will take effect from September 2003 will improve this aspect yet further. Careers education is delivered during the PSHE programme by form tutors. The local careers (Connexions) service supports the delivery of this aspect and offers all pupils a personal interview. Careers education begins, formally, for all pupils aged 13-14 although elements are introduced for younger pupils. The preparation for and advice given to pupils regarding post 16 options are extremely detailed. The school is increasing the opportunities for pupils aged 14-16 to follow vocational courses by making excellent links with the local colleges of further education. This provision has been extremely well received by this year's 14 year old pupils and over 90 of that year group have opted for such courses commencing in September.

30. The school makes very good provision for pupils with SEN. Assessment information is used extremely well to target pupils requiring additional support. This is then provided in a variety of ways including: the Apex group for 11 year olds; enrichment studies for 12-14 year olds; in-class support by SEN teachers or LSAs; reading and homework clubs; sessions with the teachers of the deaf, the speech and language therapists and the Ethnic Minority

Achievement Service (EMAS); the BEST Centre and anger management programmes. In the main school the provision made by subjects is always at least good and usually very good. However, the school needs to reconsider the Apex group provision. Whilst it is being successful in improving the pupils' attainments the demands being placed on a single teacher to deliver a very wide range of subjects should be reviewed. Parental concerns over the amount of homework set are not justified since the homework set is invariably appropriate and extends the pupils' learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. This is a very caring school. The educational and personal support and advice given to pupils are very strong. This represents very good improvement overall since the last inspection. Staff ensure that all pupils, including boys, girls, ethnic minorities, those with special educational needs, the deaf and gifted and talented, are given equal attention in learning. For instance, the school works closely with external agencies such as the EMAS, one example of the school's excellent, inclusive approach to education.

32. Arrangements for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good overall. The designated officer for child protection is fully trained and deals with any issues effectively. In addition, there is also another member of staff fully trained. All staff are issued with very good quality written guidance about the school's policy and procedures and they are very vigilant. Accident and emergency procedures, including arrangements for first aid, are very well developed. The school works very closely with several agencies in raising awareness regarding health and safety matters. For example, a drugs education agency gives talks to pupils regularly and health visitors are involved in sex education. Regarding the use of computers, the school has implemented an appropriate policy, including safeguards for using the internet.

33. However, general risk assessment procedures are under-developed in the science department. Although the school has plans to address the electrical issues in the music department it would be prudent to do so more urgently. It was also noted that the pug mill in the pottery room does not have a padlock and guard and the disused swimming pool on the school grounds may ultimately pose a threat to pupils' health and safety.

34. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal development are excellent. Staff know pupils very well and provide much informal advice and guidance. Various records are kept on pupils' attendance, behaviour and personal development and information is very well used to help pupils where there are issues. The school has very good procedures to establish what pupils know, understand and can do academically. Similarly, procedures to monitor and support academic progress, are very good. This includes very effective use of computer-based information ('Integris'). Performance data is very well used and updated frequently in every subject of learning as pupils move up through the school. All pupils are assessed as performing below, at or above the expectation for their age. Teachers use assessment information very well to guide curriculum planning and set targets for pupils. Target setting is a very strong feature of the school's work, contributing to pupils' awareness of their own learning. For example, even the youngest pupils show a very good awareness of their future learning targets. The school produces very helpful 'monitoring sheets' for parents, in addition to full annual reports and consultation evening on their children's progress.

35. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are very good. Appropriate records are kept for all pupils regarding their attendance, punctuality and any related issues. There are very strict procedures for parents to report absence and the school strongly discourages holidays in term times. The school works very closely with the educational welfare service and also the home and hospital tuition service. Newsletters to parents successfully stress the importance of good attendance and punctuality in pupils' learning. These provisions, along with the system of reward that values full attendance each year have resulted in very high attendance.

36. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, are outstanding. Very detailed records are kept of incidents. Where necessary, pupils are very closely monitored to make sure that improvements take place and parents are involved appropriately. The school offers outstanding support for pupils where there are slight concerns about attitude, behaviour or personal development through the BEST initiative. The whole school rewards system is very effective and popular with pupils who work hard to earn certificates and special treats.

37. The quality of care, welfare and support for pupils with SEN is excellent. Redhill School does not merely recognise pupils with learning difficulties - it welcomes and celebrates their presence in its community and strives to ensure that they are able to maximise their involvement in the full range of opportunities that are on offer. There is a detailed, comprehensive policy that not only meets the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice but also is implemented to the full. The school does not simply expect pupils to conform to its systems and expectations. It is flexible in both its attitude and approach to make specific, additional provision for individual pupils. Transport is provided to enable pupils with physical difficulties to commute between the two sites. Pupils who, because of their learning difficulties, have problems getting to and from lessons safely are escorted. Those who have problems managing their own behaviour are provided with advice and strategies by and, when necessary, the safe haven of the BEST Centre. Pupils aged 14-16 who are becoming disaffected are enabled to negotiate a curriculum that they feel is relevant to their needs and interests. The school makes the fullest possible use of special arrangements to enable pupils to take part and achieve well in the national tests at 14 and external examinations at 16.

38. The individual needs department makes very good use of initial assessment data to organise provision according to the needs of individual pupils. The co-ordinator for special educational needs (SENCO) produces individual education plans (IEPs) that are extremely detailed. These do not merely identify targets but provide practical strategies for the pupils, their teachers and LSAs to enable those targets to be achieved. The reviews of these IEPs and the annual reviews of pupils with statements of SEN are very comprehensive. The pupils are fully involved in this process and are able to describe their targets and explain what they are doing to achieve their targets. Pupils are encouraged to carry their IEPs with them to lessons in order to ensure that these are readily available to all those who teach them. However, not every teacher makes the maximum use of these IEPs in the classroom.

39. An appropriately wide range of external specialists is involved in supporting pupils with SEN. The Connexions Service attend annual reviews for pupils aged 14-16 although the Local Education Authority does not yet have specific documentation relating to the statutory Transition Planning aspect of those reviews.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Links are very effective and parental involvement has a very good impact on the work of the school. The contribution of parents to children's learning, at school and at home, is also very good. These features represent good improvements since the last inspection.

41. Parents have very good views about the school. Replies to the inspection questionnaire, and responses given at the parents' meeting show that parents have much confidence in the school and the quality of education provided. Parents are especially pleased about the school's high expectations of their children to work hard and achieve their best, how the school helps their children become mature and responsible, how approachable the school is and how much their children enjoy school. They are very pleased with leadership and management of the school, teaching, pupils' behaviour and information they receive from the school. They value how closely the school works with them and provision for activities outside of lessons. Inspection findings support parents' positive views. Although a significant number of parents have concerns about homework, the inspection team judges that provision is very good and supports learning very well.

42. The quality of information to parents, especially about pupils' progress, is very good. Parents have timely opportunities to find out about their children's progress. Monitoring sheets provide much information about pupils' effort in learning, achievements and future learning targets. The school also provides excellent 'citizenship reports'. Pupils' annual reports provide very good information about what they can do, know and understand. However, future learning targets are not always clearly expressed. The school prospectus is very well presented and gives full details about the school's policies and provisions. Very good information is given about options for study beyond Year 9, including a separate booklet about GCSE coursework. Much written advice is given to parents about helping to support learning at home. Newsletters are bright and attractive providing helpful information about issues and dates to remember.

43. Virtually all parents have signed up to the home and school agreement and their commitment is evident in supporting the school's work. For example, there is very good attendance at consultation evenings and pupils' planners are well used. Many parents attended the recent Year 10 'target setting day'. The school also regularly organizes workshops such as Year 10 and 11 'family support' where the headteacher and senior staff work through aspects of parental involvement, including homework. Parents are strongly involved in working parties to progress whole school matters such as homework and educational inclusion. The parents and teachers association (the Home and School Association) works very hard in organizing social and fundraising events. Considerable sums of money are raised each year and are used to purchase additional learning resources. Many parent helpers give their time generously to support activities such as listening to readers, helping in the library and organizing after school sports.

44. The individual needs department involves parents in the target setting and review process very well. This is well appreciated by parents and is reflected in their extremely high level of attendance at reviews of statements and IEPs for pupils at School Action Plus. The SENCO has also trained some parent volunteers to act as reading assistants in the school. However, not all parents receive copies of their child's IEP, review outcomes and suggestions as to how they can help their child achieve the targets set.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED

45. The Redhill School is a truly inclusive school within which every person is valued equally. Everyone, whether pupil or staff, is encouraged to reach his or her potential and fulfil their aspirations. Pupils, as a result, make significant progress. The undoubted success of this school is due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. Since his arrival after the last inspection he has successfully created a clear vision to which everyone is fully committed. He has made some significant and bold changes which in turn have empowered staff to work creatively and confidently. The result has been significant improvements since the previous inspection. He has also ensured a firm commitment to equality of opportunities for all within a culture that constantly monitors and evaluates its work. All staff share the headteacher's very strong and high profile commitment to continued success. This was partly reflected by the school recently achieving the Investor in People (IiP) Award. The school is set to improve further and to continue the rising trend of National Curriculum test and GCSE examination results seen over the last five years.

46. The management of the school by the headteacher and key staff is very good. The leadership team is fully committed to enabling each pupil to achieve his or her best within a stimulating learning environment. Key managers work well together and ensure very good day to day management of all aspects of the school's life. The very good services of the business manager allows senior managers to produce effective financial planning that supports the school's stated aims and priorities. Key staff, including middle managers, monitor teaching and learning closely and constantly seek to improve practice. This monitoring is replicated by teachers who know their pupils well and who have a wealth of data on each pupil which they use intelligently to enhance both teaching and learning. The focus of much of the school's leadership and management is on the pupils' progress and attainment.

47. The school's governing body plays a key role in shaping its work. Governors know the school well and have a remarkably accurate and clear idea of its strengths and areas for development. They work effectively with the senior leadership group and maintain very good relationships with staff. Many governors are well known by staff. The headteacher provides accurate and timely information to the governing body to enable it to function effectively. Governors offer helpful and appropriate challenges. The results of the school's outstanding monitoring and evaluation of its work are regularly communicated to the governing body. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties very well with the one omission of not ensuring a daily act of collective worship. Governors' very good knowledge of the school means that their support of the headteacher and his leadership team is productive within an effective overall collegiate system.

48. Department leadership largely replicates that of the senior leadership of the school. It is never less than good. Leadership is outstanding in music and physical education. It is very good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, history, modern foreign languages and religious education and good in design and technology, geography and information and communication technology. Department heads are invited to sit on the senior management team for a term on a rota basis which, apart from enhancing their professional development, also allows them to gain an understanding of senior leaders' perspective of the big picture encompassing all aspects of the school's work. They are also effective in

monitoring teaching and learning within their departments. This, coupled with the school's effective Performance Management process, has enhanced each teacher's practice at an individual as well as a departmental level.

49. The current SENCO has been in the school for almost two years. Following the last inspection there was a decline in the quality of provision for pupils with SEN due to staffing issues. Since the appointment of the present SENCO the improvement has been outstanding. The leadership and management of SEN are now very good with many excellent features. The particular strengths are the clarity of the aims and values of the SEN provision in the school that are shared by all staff, including the headteacher and other senior managers. The SENCO is committed to continue to improve further what is now a very good provision and to enable this to occur very precise and appropriate priorities and targets have been established. Assessment data are being increasingly well used to evaluate the effectiveness of the SEN policy. However, a system of regular monitoring of the quality of teaching of pupils with SEN is not yet fully developed. There is a governor for SEN and the governing body is both knowledgeable and supportive. In its annual report the governing body does not make reference to the effectiveness of the SEN provision in terms of the achievements of the pupils. Whilst the qualifications, expertise and deployment of staff in the SEN department are very good the number of LSAs is only adequate. This restricts the amount of support that can be provided and means that when a SEN teacher or LSA is absent through illness or attendance at a training course it is difficult for the school to maintain its usual level of provision. The accommodation in the individual needs department is excellent but that of the RBD is cramped. The latter causes difficulties when two adults are working with two pupils in the same small room.

50. The school has very good strategies for monitoring and evaluating its work. Every teacher is observed by his or her line manager as well as by a senior member of staff. Monitoring outcomes are used to set targets for further improvements and to determine staff development needs. The school has extensive data on each pupil which include attainment levels, rewards and sanctions, targets, predicted levels and grades and much other information which is accessible to every teacher in the school. The information is very effectively used to enhance both teaching and learning. Monitoring both teaching and learning is a strength of the school. New staff are given very good induction and support. Their professional development helps them to improve their practice consistently.

51. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The new building is attractive and provides a good learning environment. The older building has been refurbished and great efforts have been made to make the learning environment attractive and warm. Displays of pupils' work around the school enhance this learning quality. There are some shortcomings in the accommodation. The Deaf Unit is too small and therefore constantly cramped. The physical education outdoor facilities are limited. The girls' changing rooms are unsatisfactory. Two information and communication technology suites are poorly designed in that they are too small and badly ventilated. There is insufficient space for small group music making. The quality of decoration in some mathematics rooms is unsatisfactory. The outdoor unused swimming pool constitutes a health hazard. The science department needs to develop better general risk assessment procedures. In the music area there are trailing keyboard wires which present another health hazard. In the art department the pug mill in the pottery room does not have a padlock and guard.

52. Staffing resources are good. Teachers' qualifications and expertise match the needs of the curriculum offered to pupils. New staff are very well supported and all staff are offered very good opportunities for development as a result of good monitoring and evaluation of their work. Some staff need further support in the use of information and communication technology.

53. Financial management is very good and the principles of best value are very well applied. Resources are deployed effectively and well in accordance with the principles of best value. There are shortcomings in the information and communication technology resources which are underdeveloped in science, modern foreign languages and music. The school's finances are in a healthy state and they are very well managed by the business manager who has made dramatic improvements in the way that finances are managed, for example catering has become a strength of the school after having been successfully put out to tender. The school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school should:

- (1) Ensure that wider information and communication technology resources and training are provided to enable pupils to fully access the curriculum in some subjects. The school recognises this need and has already begun to address through its current planning.

(Paragraphs 22, 51, 52, 53, 70, 77, 82, 86, 88, 100, 112, 113, 123, 139, 136, 137, 140, 145, 146, 154)

The school also needs to consider further action on the following areas:

- (1) Address the health and safety issues raised in the report.

(Paragraphs 33, 81, 88, 145)

- (2) Address the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

(Paragraph 48)

- (3) Address the accommodation issues raised in the report.

(Paragraphs 49, 51, 70, 126, 127, 146, 154)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 10	162
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	70	

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	17	54	61	30	0	0	0
Percentage	10	33	38	19	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1138
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	90

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	133

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	53

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.2

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	2002	117	108	225

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	89	94
	Girls	95	82	88
	Total	180	171	182
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (65)	76 (77)	81 (79)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (40)	55 (53)	56 (47)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	92	90
	Girls	99	84	86
	Total	185	176	176
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (74)	78 (80)	78 (65)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (43)	54 (50)	50 (28)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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
	2002	111	133	244

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	58	105	111
	Girls	90	129	129
	Total	148	234	240
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (60)	96 (95)	98 (100)
	National	50 (48)	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	44.1
	National	39.8

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	105	100
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1040	30	
1		
12		
8		
3		
3		
2		
47	5	
1		
2		
3		
1		
2		
2		
11		

The 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)	66
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	381

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	21.9

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2,812,125
Total expenditure	2,811,808
Expenditure per pupil	2,471
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,218
Balance carried forward to next year	45,535

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1140
Number of questionnaires returned	182

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	55	4	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	53	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	67	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	62	14	3	0
The teaching is good.	27	67	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	60	7	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	45	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	39	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	24	64	8	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	37	54	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	57	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	48	3	2	10

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Results in the national tests at age 14 and in GCSE English literature are well above the national averages. GCSE English language results were above the national average.
- Standards of written and oral work are very good for pupils of all abilities.
- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and the capacity for pupils to achieve their best.
- The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and often excellent.
- The leadership is very good with clear plans for the future development of the department.
- The learning environment is attractive and supports learning for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Further opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their learning.

54. In 2002 the standards attained in the national tests at age 14 were well above the national average for all schools as well as similar schools. Apart from a dip in 2001, results have been consistently above the national average for some years.

55. GCSE English language results were above the national average for 2002 and those for English Literature were well above the national average with over half the pupils gaining an A*-B grade. Although the performance of boys in literature was below that of girls, against the national average boys are performing at a very high standard. Whilst attainment in English language is above average, there is scope for increasing the numbers of the highest grades and improving the performance of the lower attaining boys.

56. Standards are high throughout and this was evident in work seen across all years during the inspection. The department has done a good deal to help pupils attain these results and is constantly looking for ways of improving its already very good provision. Pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language display confidence and skill in articulating their ideas and opinions. They are willing to take risks in both written and oral work because of the high levels of support and challenge and this raises the level of their work. At all ages, but particularly in the lower years, pupils can use information and communication technology as a tool to demonstrate their learning, for example in deconstructing a 'home page' as a media exercise. Lower attaining pupils in Year 7, including many with special educational needs, demonstrated fluency in reading and an understanding of the conventions of advertising. Pupils routinely used appropriate and sophisticated specialist vocabulary when exploring film or poetry. Pupils' writing skills are targeted for improvement through challenging tasks in persuasive and comparative written work. Higher achieving pupils in Year 11 wrote in a penetrating and accomplished way on German Expressionism and with imagination and empathy in response to art. Media work and personal writing for lower achieving pupils at GCSE showed creativity and a good awareness of conventions and audience. On occasions, pupils were so

involved in a task that they seemed surprised at their level of understanding, for example in a 'hot seating' activity in Year 10. Progress made by pupils with SEN and those with English as an additional language is very good.

57. Overall teaching in the department is very good and never less than sound. There were some outstanding lessons seen and all lessons demonstrated a consistent commitment to high quality teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are excellent and raise achievement through the breadth and depth that can be given to the programmes of study. At its best, the marking of pupils' work was outstanding with precise formative comments to promote further improvement rather than encouraging but less focused comments. Teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve and challenge them through judicious questioning and opportunities for discussion and reflection. Pupils expect and are encouraged to use sophisticated and appropriate terminology and are motivated by varied and well planned lessons. This was particularly evident in lessons studying the ending of the film *Dracula* looking at how tension is built up and in imaginative approaches to active learning on *The Hitcher*. At its best, teaching encourages pupils to feel secure enough to take risks when exploring ideas either orally, through written work or information and communication technology. This was evident for example in a Year 10 lesson on the theme of love in *Twelfth Night*. However, there are occasional underdeveloped opportunities for younger pupils to take more responsibility in becoming independent learners. The department is also committed to raising the achievement of boys and has focused on strategies which will raise the achievement of all pupils including boys. The use of film, short structured tasks, an emphasis on information and communication technology and careful choice of texts were all examples which were seen to promote quality learning and engage pupils.

58. Pupils respond very well to their teachers and to each other. They are confident and competent learners in class, group or individual situations across all abilities and ages. The pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject and the excellent relationships between pupils and with their teachers foster a productive learning environment where pupils feel that their views are given validity and their progress appreciated. In many lessons, and particularly in Year 10, the pace, challenge and enthusiasm were such that the pupils were completely absorbed in the learning process. Pupils were encouraged to be rigorous in their thinking and writing because the teachers constantly asked them to develop and refine their original ideas. A strong feature of all lessons seen was the encouragement for pupils to speculate, whether about the meaning of a phrase, the ending of a film or a character's thoughts. Not only did this strategy benefit the learning of boys, but it also extended the learning of all pupils considerably. Pupils felt able to challenge each other when working in groups or pairs and enjoyed and benefited from opportunities to teach others. The learning environment encouraged pupils to want to make progress and pupils of all abilities were aware of the level they were working at and what they had to do to improve. This was helped by quality marking and feedback on both oral and written work.

59. The department is very well led and managed and benefits from a collaborative and cohesive approach to the teaching of English. Both the head of department and deputy are relatively new in post but clear direction and intelligent strategies for development are ensuring that rapid progress is being made. The introduction of well-resourced, structured schemes of work which motivate and engage the pupils is an important recent development. Pupils are closely monitored and clear targets for improvement are set. Indeed formative assessment procedures are a strength of the department, ensuring pupils realise that their work

is valued and that teachers are committed to their continued progress. The self-evaluative culture of the department ensures that examination performance is closely monitored and strategies adopted to enhance skills in areas of difficulty such as writing about poetry. There is an opportunity to extend this to members of the department to ensure that a culture of observation and mentoring is fostered. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils in Year 9, were considering local, national and international culture as a stimulus to understanding the Poetry from Other Cultures section of the GCSE examination and many lessons used literature as a stimulus for a consideration of moral issues.

60. Improvement since the last inspection report has been good: the departmental setting policy and schemes of work have addressed differentiation issues whilst independent research skills are now taught in a discrete library lesson in Year 7 and through particular tasks in other years. The department has used the literacy strategy wisely to promote a more systematic approach to the acquisition of language skills and monitoring and evaluative practices are now integral to the department's development plans. The issue of boys' achievement remains a high priority for the department

61. Drama is an area where the department has considerable plans for improvement. Standards at GCSE in 2002 were well below the national average for the highest grades, largely as a consequence of the intake to the subject. However, those pupils who do take drama do consistently better at it than in their other subjects. Provision for drama in the lower school is within English and this is reflected in the subject schemes of work. However, there are plans to develop the subject for its own intrinsic value and the opportunities for evaluative, reflective work it fosters and this would also be of benefit to the GCSE schemes of work. In the next academic year, increased curriculum time for younger pupils will be used to teach generic drama skills to develop interest and aptitude for GCSE. Teaching of drama is always at least sound or better and teachers are enthusiastic and committed. The initiative for pupils who are gifted and talented will further help to improve the profile of the subject beyond the department.

62. The provision of opportunities to develop information and communication skills to enhance learning in English is good and has been an important development area over the last year. The schemes of work for pupils aged 11-14 have information and communication technology opportunities as part of their provision and information and communication technology is also used as a learning aid for pupils studying for GCSE. Year 7 pupils were able to demonstrate a facility to use software packages to demonstrate their understanding of media conventions. The department is located in a suite of rooms which are resourced with televisions and overhead projectors which are well used to engage pupils and enhance learning.

Literacy

63. Teachers of English have made very good progress in implementing the literacy strategy. All the schemes of work have been re-written to incorporate strategies to support the acquisition of basic skills and there are imaginative and useful aids and activities for pupils. The department has played a key role in training and supporting staff in other curriculum areas. Across the school, standards of literacy are good. Pupils of all abilities are confident and articulate communicators and throughout the subjects there is a range of writing for a

variety of audiences and purposes. In a number of the subject areas, for example art and religious education, literacy is embedded in the routine learning opportunities within the departments. In other subjects there is a shared commitment to the use of specialist terminology, displays of key words and techniques for supporting the written work of pupils. There is further scope for ensuring that the quality of written work across these subjects is appropriately monitored. There is a whole school working party providing strategic direction and support for literacy across the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- GCSE results at A*-C and A*-G are above national averages for 2002, and standards are improving.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is very good.
- Management of pupils by teachers is very good and often excellent.
- Pupils' interest in mathematics and concentration in lessons are excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, with very high levels of collaborative working by pupils.
- The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is very good, with very highly qualified staff.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- There is a very positive, collaborative spirit within the department.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology to develop mathematical skills is limited.
- There is insufficient provision of learning support assistants.
- Some lack of resources limit pupils' progress. The quality of decoration in some mathematics rooms is unsatisfactory.

64. Standards in mathematics, as shown by the average points' score in tests taken at the end of Year 9, were well above the national average. In 2002, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above and the percentage reaching Level 6 or above were both above the national averages. A third of the pupils attained the higher Level 7 and above. When judged on average points' scores, the results over the last four years are increasing at a slightly faster rate than nationally. Girls and boys performed at about the same levels over the last four years. When the results are compared with schools which have a similar percentage of free school meals, the results are above the national figures. Pupils entered the school with attainment levels slightly above the national averages and they achieved well in mathematics.

65. Results at GCSE were above the national averages. In 2002, the percentage of pupils who gained grades A*-C was above national averages, and the percentage who gained grades A*-G was very high compared to the national figures. The average point per pupil was higher than nationally. Girls' results in 2002 were slightly better than boys' compared to national statistics. Pupils achieved satisfactorily compared to their previous performance.

66. In lessons, attainment is above average and pupils make good and very good progress. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 prepare very well for their coursework exercises because of the teacher's very enthusiastic approach, which starts with a very useful revision of building sequences using individual white boards and moves at a quick pace to understanding a framework for an investigation. Middle attaining pupils handle data well, and specify the advantages and disadvantages of the use of different types of statistical diagrams. Pupils use the three averages confidently. Pupils with SEN struggle with basic arithmetic, but practise

very conscientiously. These pupils responded very well in a lesson about an investigation into areas; they worked independently and showed very mature attitudes to study.

67. Higher attaining pupils' work in Year 11 shows examples of the highest levels in trigonometrical functions, the solution of inequalities using graphical methods, function graphs and calculations involving surds. In Year 10, pupils learn quickly about the theorems connected with circles, and apply their knowledge well to solve complicated examples. Pupils who are studying at the intermediate tier complete a high quantity of work; their arithmetic and algebraic work shows good improvement over time. Pupils' work shows that diagrams are completed clearly and are used frequently to aid understanding. Pupils working at lower levels recognise number patterns, and concentrate more on basic arithmetic.

68. Pupils learn very well and make very good progress in lessons. Pupils listen intently to their teachers and respond very well in question and answer sessions. Pupils show extremely high respect for their teachers, follow tasks specified by them and value their dedication. When written work is set, pupils generally start immediately, and are very committed workers. They are extremely keen to develop their mathematical ideas and are very successful in their learning during lessons. For example, pupils enjoyed participating in a card game which helped them learn about probabilities; they used counters and dice very sensibly, and then made a link between experimental and theoretical probabilities. Throughout the lesson, there was a strong desire to cooperate at a very high level with the teacher and with other pupils, and a keenness to grasp knowledge. Pupils with SEN make good progress, because teachers are aware of their individual needs and set work which is appropriate to their abilities. There are a few learning support assistants, but continuity of help is lacking; more support is required and the assistants need to take a more active part in some lessons.

69. The overall quality of teaching is very good in all years, which is an improvement on the last report. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better; half of the lessons were very good or excellent, which was a very high proportion. The mathematics teachers are very hard working, highly committed, caring of pupils' welfare and delicate in their dealings with pupils. They maintain very good and excellent levels of discipline in their classrooms, and organise lessons in which all pupils really improve their mathematics. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the mathematical needs of pupils is excellent. Lesson plans show that teachers appreciate that lessons should be broken into small parts; these changes of tasks help pupils' learning. For example, in an excellent lesson, pupils examined statistical information for bias, then prioritised statements on cards about planning for coursework, which included very good collaborative work and high level discussion, shared conclusions with the rest of the class and proposed individual hypotheses for future work. Teachers challenge pupils regularly in very good question and answer sessions, and pupils' concentration is often excellent. Time is very well used, with lessons starting promptly. The three-part lesson is used across most of the department; 'starters' are very well considered and their contribution to the development of numeracy skills is striking. There is a strong expectation that homework will be completed on time, and this brings a very positive response from pupils.

70. The use of new technologies in teaching is under-developed, but all year groups have some experience of working with computers. The quality of decoration in some mathematics rooms is unsatisfactory. Many textbooks used by pupils are in a state of disrepair and more finance would enable the department to provide better learning resources. Teachers make very good use of teaching aids, many of which are painstakingly prepared within the

department. Pupils' books show above average presentation, and good stress is placed on showing all the working out of answers and solutions. Marking varies from very good to satisfactory, with many useful comments. Long-term assessment is clearly planned.

71. The head of department gives very strong leadership, and her management style shows she has an excellent grasp of priorities for development. She continually seeks personal improvement in her role and has created a very strong team ethos, which means that teachers are highly motivated to work together for the benefit of pupils. Monitoring of teaching takes place, and, given a slightly sharper focus, will improve the overall quality of teaching even further. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is very good, with all teachers having qualifications in mathematics. Many recommendations of the last report have already been actioned and the department is moving forward very well.

Numeracy

72. A numeracy policy is contained in the mathematics handbook; this is in draft, and works well within the mathematics department. A member of the mathematics team is allocated responsibility for the introduction of numeracy within the mathematics area, and the curriculum in Years 7-9 is significantly adjusted in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Some of the ideas from the National Numeracy Strategy are also applied to teaching in Years 10-11. The three-part lesson is used extensively; some 'starters' make very good use of individual pupils' white boards, and a few creative and stimulating ideas are seen. Training for numeracy work has been made available to the department, and parts of department meetings deal with the introduction of the new methods suggested by the strategy.

73. Cross-curricular discussions have taken place, and there have been discussions with other departments. The mathematics team gave in-service training to all staff over a year ago. The senior management team holds a draft policy, but this has not yet been promulgated to all staff and transferred into practice.

74. In science, pupils apply their numeracy skills very well. Year 9 pupils handle calculations involving speed, distance and time with confidence; they have no problems in interpreting work normally covered in Year 10. Their good levels of numeracy allow them to access the higher levels in GCSE science coursework; their data handling skills are very good. The art and design department handbook contains a section on numeracy; spatial relations, proportion, measuring, enlargement and tessellations are all part of the curriculum. In design and technology, pupils measure accurately, and move well from drawing to actual design skills. Pupils use numerical skills at a very high level in geography. The use of numeracy is co-ordinated well, giving good progression through the school. Graphs of several varieties are well used. Statistics, including averages, scatter graphs and correlation are built into the schemes of work. In history, time lines and statistical tables connected with election results are used. Pupils use formulae well in information and communications technology work on spreadsheets; they highlight differences between adding cells and using the sum function. In modern foreign languages, there is a good emphasis on numbers in calculations and the use of telephone directories and timetables. The usual opportunities for scoring, timing and measuring are used in physical education, and pupils use graphs confidently. The numeracy support provided for pupils with statements of SEN in the learning support department is very good, with the result that pupils apply mathematics well and use the correct terminology.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in all years.
- Leadership and management are very good and the head of department is very well supported by an exceptionally strong team of teachers.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- There is well above average achievement in Years 7-9 and above average achievement in Years 10-11.
- Very good accommodation allows pupils to study science under near perfect conditions.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology, particularly data logging.
- The department has not taken action to replace and improve some expensive resources.
- Insufficient use is made of the Module Test results to give pupils more specific targets.

75. Standards for pupils' aged 14 for the last two years were well above average when compared with both all schools and with similar schools. Over the three years up to 2002, average point scores have increased at faster rates than those nationally. There is a difference in the performance of boys and girls over the last three years. Girls have performed better than boys but this can be explained by the unevenness of the school population. There are fewer girls in the school and a significantly higher proportion of boys come into the school from a lower starting base. In 2002, pupils achieved results well above what might be expected based on their performance in the National Curriculum Tests at age 11.

76. Standards at GCSE show small fluctuations but have been well above the national averages for the last three years both for all and similar schools. In 2002, pupils achieved GCSE results above what might be expected based on their attainment at the end of Year 9. Based on results obtained from Module Tests already taken it is expected that this year's GCSE results will again be well above the national average for all schools. Results in science are nearly always better than those in English and mathematics for pupils of all ages.

77. Most pupils have above average literacy and numeracy skills, which enable them to obtain the highest levels and grades. Their explanations of scientific principles are often sophisticated. Importantly they can apply their knowledge well. The majority of pupils have no difficulty with calculations, which are required for both their terminal examination and their coursework. Generally pupils have above average levels of recall and understanding of work carried out the previous year. Teachers make some provision for gifted and talented pupils by providing extended work. However, mostly the provision amounts to no more than putting these pupils into the highest sets. Some Year 10 pupils who underachieved last year now follow an applied science course, which is more suited to their needs and provides them with sufficient challenge. Pupils with SEN make very good progress. Teachers use the technical language of the subject well and improve the pupils' literacy skills by the use of key words. Pupils' standards in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory

because they do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers and data logging equipment. The department has only a limited range of sensors. There have been problems with the laptop computers, which have been returned to the manufacturer. Until more sensors and computers are purchased it is not possible for the department to meet the data logging requirements of the National Curriculum. Before sensors can be used properly it will be necessary for some staff to have more training. The department, however, does attempt to make as much use of information and communication technology as possible by frequently booking the information and communication technology room and borrowing one of the Power Point projectors.

78. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching for pupils of different ages. The excellent scientific knowledge and understanding of the teachers are the foundation for their very good practice. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. Consequently, in the classroom pupils quickly get down to their work as should be expected. Pupils learn very well because teachers are confident to use a wide range of resources and methods to make their lessons interesting. Teachers organize the pupils well in the classroom so that all have every opportunity to learn. For every lesson teachers set clear objectives. Teachers do provide some work to meet the needs of pupils of different ability in the same group but there is too much reliance on the setting arrangements. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly giving sufficient scientifically supportive comments for pupils to improve their work. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. The reports to parents are good because they identify what pupils can and cannot do in science. Teachers give high priority to the level or grade that pupils are working at when they share test data with them. However, pupils in years 10-11 could be given more precise targets by making better use of the Module Test data.

79. Overall, pupils learn very well. Highest attaining Year 7 pupils made very good progress when using chromatography to separate mixtures. In this lesson the teacher set clear time targets for the completion of each experiment so that all the work was finished. Her high expectations for this able group of pupils were fully justified. Consequently, by the end of the lesson pupils had a very good understanding of what chromatography is and how it works. When measuring water loss from leaves Year 8 pupils also made very good progress. The teacher had planned the lesson carefully and by her skilful questioning technique was able to fully challenge all pupils. A wide range of methods and resources were used including Power Point so that pupils showed high levels of interest throughout the lesson. In a lesson with Year 9 pupils learning was also very good. Pupils timed a car rolling down an inclined ramp so as to calculate its speed. A key feature of this lesson was that the teacher had broken the lesson down into small parts so that pupils were always doing something different. Lowest attaining Year 10 pupils learnt very well about the difference between animal and plant cells. In this excellent lesson the teacher made very good use of models to help these pupils to understand better. Her excellent relationship with the pupils enabled her to get very positive responses from some potentially disruptive individuals. These are only a few examples of lessons seen but they illustrate the very good practice, which takes place throughout the department. This is an exceptionally strong team of teachers working very well together to help their pupils achieve their full potential.

80. The quality of pupils' written work indicates that their attitudes to academic achievement are very good. In half the lessons the attitudes and behaviour of pupils was

excellent and in the rest they were never less than good. Pupils work very well together carrying out experiments. They move responsibly around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment. The services in these new laboratories are around the outside of the room. Consequently, there is the potential for pupils to knock into each other because they have to work very closely. It is credit to both the pupils and their teachers that pupils behave very responsibly and the problem is minimised. It is important that teachers minimise risks further by making better use of the laboratory space when the services are not required for the practical work. Pupils have respect for others, which they demonstrate by putting up their hands to answer questions. They have very good relationships with their teachers and each other. When talking to each other and their teacher they are courteous and polite.

81. The head of department provides very good leadership and has made some significant improvements in the relatively short time he has been in post. The adoption of an applied science course for some underachieving Year 10 pupils is going well. The department would like to offer the separate science course to the highest attaining pupils. This is a correct strategy but may be difficult to fit into the curriculum. The majority of pupils follow a modular course. GCSE performance is outstanding. However, it could be even better if the teachers made more use of the results of module tests in order to provide pupils with specific targets for improvement. Resources are just satisfactory except in the very important respect of sensors and computers. It is not possible for the department to address this problem with the money made available to it annually. The money will have to come from the bidding process. An excellent team of technicians supports the work of the department very well. However, the team requires one more full time technician to bring it up to the required strength. The department gives due attention to health and safety. However, electrical testing of equipment needs to be carried out more often. Safety points are flagged up in the schemes of work but fall short of being detailed written risk assessments. The risk assessments should vary with the particular group of pupils carrying out the work.

82. Overall the department has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Still outstanding are problems associated with resources and information and communication technology.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- There is very good achievement, and progress in all years; attainment shows an improving trend and is above the national average by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is largely good, and there is some very good teaching.
- Displays, and the wide range of media and resources provide an inspirational learning environment, and promote high standards.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and behaviour is good.
- Very good leadership and management give the subject clear educational direction.

Areas for improvement

- National Curriculum levels could be used more in assessment, and shared more with pupils.

- Examination analysis, and tracking of attainment through the years could help to improve learning.
- Information and communication technology and the use of computer aided design need further development.

83. Achievement in art is very good throughout the school. The 2002 Year 9 teachers' assessments showed slightly above average attainment, with the vast majority of Year 9 pupils working to at least national expectation and many above. Inspection evidence would suggest that overall pupils make good to very good progress and standards are in line with national expectation by the end of Year 9, with a large number of pupils working at the highest levels. Standards by the end of Year 11 have shown an improving trend in recent years and are now above the national average, with good quality pass grades and an increasing number of pupils taking the subject. The number of A* to C grades gained in 2002 was slightly above the national average in the art and design examinations and showed an improvement on the previous year's results. The school's predictions for 2003 show a significant increase to above average standards overall. Work seen during the inspection confirms these above average standards of attainment. Girls' work is of a better quality than boys' work, but the difference is not as great as it is nationally.

84. In Years 7 to 9, pupils learn about the basic art elements, and study the art of other times and cultures. From these studies they develop practical work in a wide variety of media, both two and three dimensional. For example, Year 7 pupils learn about illuminated lettering, when working on a project on St George and the Dragon. Their work shows a good understanding of the shape and proportion of letters, and they use decoration imaginatively. Pupils' literacy skills are developed during the project through Internet research, and evaluative writing. Year 9 pupils working to average standards, use line and tone effectively to show form when drawing still-life objects. They are able to judge the relative proportions of jugs and bottles, and develop ideas using the Cubist technique of drawing the same object from different viewpoints. However, only the more able show full understanding for the Cubist style in their work. Good standards are evident in the *Gargoyles* project work of Year 9. Pupils research the topic well using the Internet. They print collections of gargoyles from various sources, and develop a pencil drawing for a gargoyle of their own. Their drawings are highly imaginative and express emotional meaning through exaggerated facial features. Their designs show understanding of how the gargoyles will be made and knowledge of the properties of stone and clay. Overall, pupils' attainment is as expected, with a good number of pupils attaining the higher levels.

85. Pupils build successfully on the skills they have learnt in the first three years, and make very good progress through the GCSE courses. They continue to explore materials and processes, and document their ideas and thoughts. They make good use of the Internet for

research and visual reference material, showing good development of ideas, and analysis of images. Some Year 10 pupils have produced very well presented art appreciation sheets, evaluating the work of fantasy artists such as John Howe and Tim Hildebrandt, and developed Fantasy creatures of their own in two and three dimensions. Year 11 work, for the theme Illusion, shows clear understanding of the use of perspective to show depth. Pupils use digital photography and electronically manipulated portraits as a basis for strikingly original oil paintings. Final pieces for the project show strong links to the styles and techniques of Vasarely and Escher yet are highly original and imaginative. Pupils take great pride in their work, and achieve high standards of presentation. They have very good understanding of curriculum specifications and assessment criteria. Most pupils show strong commitment, and standards overall in Years 10 and 11 are above average.

86. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory, it is largely good, and there is some very good teaching. In the best lessons, aims, and objectives are clearly explained, and good planning and structure make the best use of time and resources. Teachers' command of their subject is very good, schemes of work are well thought out and pupils' knowledge and skills are built up sequentially through challenges that spark curiosity. As, for example, in a lesson where the making of a clay gargoyle held the attention of pupils of all attainment levels, and very good learning resulted. In most lessons questions are directed at specific pupils, making learning fully inclusive, but in some lessons the use of question and answer sessions are underdeveloped and more pupil participation is needed to retain concentration and to reinforce learning. A strength of all teaching is the good classroom management, and the very good working relationships that have been established between pupils and teachers and pupils. Some introductions, although often containing lively demonstrations, become too long and take up pupils' time for practical work. However, plenary sessions, where work is evaluated and pupils say what they have learnt are a valuable part of nearly all lessons. Although assessment of work in progress is satisfactory, pupils in the lower school could be made more aware of national standards and National Curriculum level descriptors, and there are too few opportunities for information communication technology and computer aided design work.

87. Attitudes to the subject are very good and behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy the subject especially the gifted and talented and those with SEN, such as the deaf. They like the tasks set, and are eager to be creative and work with the wide range of resources provided. Informative displays, in the art rooms and around the school, provide an inspirational learning environment, and promote high standards. Extra-curricular provision and visits, for example to the Pitt Rivers museum, are a strength of the department's work, and contribute to the overall personal development of pupils.

88. There is very good leadership and management of the department, with clear educational direction for its development. Management of resources, team work, and day to day running are all very good. Development plans have identified what is needed to improve standards, these include; the further development of teaching and learning styles; improved homework provision; improved facilities for information and communication technology; and to extend the high quality displays across the school. There is scope for the further use of statistics and examination analysis to aid the tracking of pupils' progress through the school. The pug mill in the pottery room does not have a padlock and guard which constitutes a health and safety hazard. Developments since the last report are good. There is a strong

upward trend in GCSE standards, and the quality of teaching and learning overall has improved.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Pupils' development as individuals and as citizens of the future is excellent.
- Citizenship has a high profile across subjects and around the school building.
- Provision is very well planned.
- The subject is very well taught.
- The range of opportunities offered to pupils to develop their citizenship skills and knowledge is extensive.
- The personal, social and health education programme is well organised and effectively led.

Areas for improvement

- Provision would be improved by the designation of a timetabled citizenship lesson taught by a trained team.

89. Pupils' participation in events such as debates, charity events, clubs, school council and extra-curricular activities shows them to have a strong commitment to their school, their community and the wider world. Their involvement in the running of events - school council, newspapers, charity events and others - is very good. Pupils' behaviour is excellent, as are their personal development and relationships and their participation in events: the outcomes of the citizenship programme are very good. Parents believe that their sons and daughters are becoming mature young adults. They show excellent understanding of differences between people - at the individual level and at the international level, in their understanding of differences in development and the impact of people on their environment.

90. Provision is unusually good: those matters which are hidden and uncoordinated in many schools are clearly planned here. The subject has a high profile around the school: pupils are made aware that they are studying a subject called citizenship. The personal, social and health education programme is the centre-piece of delivery. This is very well organised and resourced, and teachers are well trained. Methods as well as content are carefully thought through, so that learning is promoted by exploration, discussion and decision-making methods.

91. Many subjects make a major contribution: geography for example has expanded parts of its schemes of work to promote the citizenship agenda. In Year 8, the work on Italy which forms part of National Curriculum geography has been prefaced by a section on the European Union - origins, aims, methods and current debates (e.g. enlargement, joining the Euro), to help pupils become better global citizens. History, music, physical education and religious education also make considerable contributions to the teaching of citizenship. The school has recognised that, in order to progress citizenship still further, it needs the addition of a nominated lesson and a trained team of teachers - this will happen from next September onwards.

92. The subject is unusually well managed and co-ordinated: the audit of subjects' contribution to both citizenship and personal, social and health education was a very good piece of work, and led to the fine-tuning such as that described in geography above. The personal, social and health education programme is very well led and managed, and this acts as a driver for the citizenship agenda.

93. Because of their ability, most pupils are achieving at least appropriately for their age but the school does not yet have a mechanism for accurately assessing, and therefore reporting upon, their attainment. Through their work in personal, social and health education and other subjects, and through their general reading, pupils are well informed about the world they live in; they take their full part in society, encouraged by the debate, initiative and leadership opportunities. Added to all of this is the stress on both independence and collaboration, both of which pervade school life.

94. Although the school has a good personal, social and health education programme, the inclusion of citizenship in a scheme of work that already includes careers as well as personal, social health, sex and drugs education is expecting rather too much of a subject that is allocated one period per week. Despite the audit of individual subjects' contribution to citizenship, most departments are hazy about which aspects they should be, or indeed are, delivering.

95. In the subjects that are contributing to citizenship, the areas of strength are related to religious and cultural diversity and the need for mutual respect and understanding, human rights and conflict resolution. Geography, history and other subjects strongly promote the theme of the world as a global community through their schemes of work. More overt attention should be given to the work of parliament, government and the electoral process and the significance of media in society.

96. The quality of teaching is very good. Pupils are able to explore the nature of God in Hinduism and the codes for living and traditions of Judaism and Buddhism. There are challenging lessons about evil and suffering, the issues involved in abortion and adoption, reforming the House of Lords, the Cold War and the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good standards are achieved by pupils in all material areas and very good standards are achieved in food.
- There are good teaching with well-planned and effective lessons that develop skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Support for individual pupils is very good, particularly those with SEN.
- Mutually respectful relationships and very good attitudes of pupils create a positive learning atmosphere where pupils are confident to participate in lessons.
- The hardworking and committed teachers work very well as a team to deliver design and technology effectively.

Areas for improvement

- Formalise the monitoring of the work of the department to ensure consistency and the sharing of good practice.
- Further develop use of information and communication technology across the material areas.
- Develop the use of a range of activities to support further higher attaining pupils to fulfil their potential in Years 7, 8 and 9.

97. The GCSE results of pupils by the age of 16 in 2002 are above the national average in all materials and well above in food. Standards of work seen during the inspection are good with examples of very good standards with pupils achieving above the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in all material areas and well above in food technology. Pupils' standards of work and their design and technology experiences when they first come to the school are variable, so pupils' achievement and progress in this subject as they move through the school are good or very good, particularly lower attaining pupils and those with SEN. This is due to the good quality of teaching, the very good relationships and the very positive attitudes of pupils towards their learning in this subject. The teacher assessments of standards achieved by pupils aged 14 in 2002 were above the national averages. The work seen during the inspection reflects these standards.

98. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils experience and develop a good range of practical skills and are able to use small and large equipment appropriate to the material they are working with. They practice a variety of cutting, shaping, joining and combining skills in order to produce high quality products. Pupils move from year to year developing good knowledge and understanding about materials in relation to functions and properties and are able to identify the correct material or groups of materials for developing, modifying and making a given product. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils were able to identify and discuss the process involved in the production of cotton and its usage in commercial products. By the end of Year 9 they can work well from a design brief, develop a specification and plan and make quality products.

99. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection was of a high standard. The application of skills, knowledge and understanding pupils have gained in Years 7, 8, and 9 are further developed enabling them to develop ideas, research their projects thoroughly and analyse their findings effectively. This was seen in a Year 10 electronics lesson where pupils demonstrated good knowledge of components and circuit boards. Pupils have a good understanding of how to develop their designs using a range of graphics techniques. In a Year 10 food lesson pupils develop good observation and investigative skills by looking at existing products and suggesting ways to modify work in the developmental stages and enhance final products. Overall, pupils consolidate, develop and apply their learning well whilst using technical language effectively to record and analyse findings in their coursework.

100. Overall the use of information and communication technology is satisfactory with pupils using it in a number of ways to support their work. Computer-aided design work is developing but the use of computer-aided manufacture is weak. Literacy and numeracy skills are good.

101. Learning is good and in some cases very good. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils and pupils themselves build confidence and mutual respect creating a positive learning environment within which pupils respond confidently to teachers' questions and to opportunities for extended discussion. Teachers plan their lessons well and share their very good subject knowledge effectively with pupils. They give very good support to individual pupils, particularly those with SEN. However, the range of activities used to ensure that higher attaining pupils make full use of the potential are more limited. When given the opportunities pupils work well in groups delegating responsibilities in order to complete tasks given. In the best lessons, teachers give clear instructions and share the objectives for learning with the pupils. This is coupled with probing questioning to check previous knowledge and deepen understanding. However, this does not happen consistently across the department. Overall, the assessment of pupils' work is good. Pupils are aware of their target for improvement and the level they are working at. However, the targets set are not always sufficiently clear to help pupils to improve.

102. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear view of the direction for the department that is documented and shared effectively with teachers. Good understanding of the strengths and areas for development have resulted in appropriate strategies being in place to raise attainment and for the department to make good progress since the previous inspection. The monitoring of the work of the department by the head of department is insufficiently formal to ensure consistent implementation of good and very good practice.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils make rapid progress in the lower school and achieve well above average standards at the end of Year 9.
- GCSE results have been consistently above average for many years.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well and make good progress.

- Improvement since the last inspection has been good: strengths have been maintained and most areas identified for development have improved.
- Teaching is consistently good, with a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching; as a result, pupils learn well.
- Pupils enjoy geography: they behave and concentrate very well in lessons.
- Geography makes a distinguished contribution to pupils' personal development to their skills and knowledge in citizenship, and to their literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers set challenging targets for pupils and monitor their progress towards these targets very well.
- The head of department leads the department well: he manages and organises the subject and its very experienced team of teachers very well.
- Resources are very good and accommodation is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Marking of pupils' work does not always show them how to improve.
- Although it has improved since the last inspection, the department's use of information and communication technology does not raise standards nor improve learning as effectively as it should.

103. When they arrive at the school, pupils' attainment in geography is average for their age, and their standards of literacy and numeracy are above average. They are enthusiastic learners with sound skills of observation, measurement and mapwork. Their knowledge of places is, however, weak. By the end of Year 9, they have made rapid progress and reach well above average standards; with around a third of pupils achieving the highest levels, and only around one in ten pupils not reaching the expected standard, standards in geography are high in the lower school. Pupils aged 14 have a good knowledge of the differences between more- and less-economically-developed countries (MEDCs and LEDCs). Their knowledge of settlements - where they are located, how they are structured and the services they contain - is also good. Less-able pupils can use information in graphs and diagrams to describe the characteristics of L/MEDCs, while the most able understand sophisticated concepts linking birth and death rates to the rate of natural increase and to the shape of population pyramids in these different countries. In a very good lesson in Year 8, very able pupils rapidly explained the impact of different types of migration on population pyramids. In a lesson in Year 9, more able pupils showed that they understood the aims and origins of the European Union, and participated in the "Euro debate" vigorously, with some interesting ideas. Pupils' knowledge of places has therefore improved, and for many it is good. Their mapwork skills have not moved on as rapidly as they should, because less attention is given to this aspect of geography, especially Ordnance Survey work, than to other aspects of the subject.

104. Pupils with SEN make very good progress and achieve good standards by the end of Year 9, with several achieving the nationally expected standard. In an excellent Year 7 lesson with a group most of whom had significant learning difficulties, the pupils showed real enthusiasm and produced a series of accurate, neat graphs based on their own shopping surveys, and drew sensible conclusions from what they had done. They were rightly proud of their work.

105. GCSE results have remained above average for many years: almost all pupils pass the examination (A*-G), and the proportion achieving the higher grades (A*-C) is always above

the national average. Girls out-score boys, as they do nationally. Pupils on average achieve slightly less good results in geography than they do in their other subjects, and progress is not quite as rapid as it is for younger pupils. This is in part the result of aspects of the curriculum (see paragraph 108 below). The most-able pupils in Year 10 can write clearly and at length and illustrate their work with well-chosen maps and diagrams. Their knowledge of tourism and the environmental tensions to which it gives rise is good. They can make use of knowledge from earlier work, such as footloose industries, bringing it to bear on a new topic; likewise, they can combine information in different forms - graphs, maps, photos, diagrams, text - and use it to answer questions. This promises well for their GCSE skills paper. GCSE coursework - the only Year 11 work available for scrutiny - is very well presented and carefully researched. The most-able pupils analyse data extremely well and draw interesting and valid conclusions; the standard of the best coursework is very high. Pupils of average ability do not score as heavily as they might in their coursework because they give insufficient attention to the analysis of their findings and to the conclusions they draw. Coursework shows that their mapwork skills have developed rapidly during Year 11. Pupils with English as an additional language make at least good progress.

106. Pupils make real efforts to achieve these good results: their concentration and persistence, combined with the stimulating teaching they receive, lead to good rates of progress and to pride in achievement. Pupils of all ages and abilities clearly enjoy their geography; they concentrate well, participate willingly, stay on task throughout lessons and generally behave impeccably. Their written work is well presented and complete, and they are proud of what they have done.

107. Pupils' progress, confidence and behaviour are the result of consistently good teaching. Teaching is always at least good and frequently very good or excellent. Consistently good teaching and learning in geography come about because: the teachers are extremely experienced and highly skilled; their relationships with pupils are excellent; their passion for their subject communicates itself to pupils; they have very good resources, many of them "home-made"; their planning and preparation are rigorous. When teachers add in high levels of challenge and expect pupils to do a lot for themselves, the teaching becomes very good or excellent. Pupils of all abilities enjoy such opportunities and learn very well when they occur. On occasions, teacher talk does not allow pupils to do enough for themselves.

108. As a result of the consistently good teaching, pupils learn well: they have good work habits, concentrate hard, participate well and stay on task. They are therefore productive. The statement of objectives at the beginning of lessons, and the check that they have been achieved at the end, help pupils understand what they have learned and put it into context within the topic. Because personal development and relationships are excellent, pupils listen to and support each other very well.

109. The geography curriculum is good: it is broad and very well organised and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, although there is less evidence of the development of map skills in pupils' work than the scheme of work would suggest. The programme of fieldwork is sound, the recent attempt to generate more exciting fieldwork collapsed because not enough pupils wanted to take part. The department has worked hard to ensure that its schemes of work play their full part in helping develop pupils' literacy and numeracy; the latter is especially good - the department's stress on data analysis and the graphing and mapping of data is very good and pays dividends in the quality of pupils' work.

Pupils use information and communication technology to research information and to present their work, often beautifully; their work in geography does not develop those skills because the work does not include enough information and communication technology. When geography occurs in single groups within option blocks, as in the current Year 10, the range of ability in each group is very large and slows progress. The scheme of work for GCSE repeats a good deal of work from earlier years without deepening significantly the level at which it is studied; this again slows progress for older pupils.

110. The subject makes a distinguished contribution to promoting pupils' development as good citizens: the teaching of geography consistently emphasises values such as tolerance, responsibility and empathy, through: the content of the work, with its emphasis on differences in development and the way people treat the environment; the way the subject is taught, encouraging pupils to work together, listen to each other, make decisions and solve problems; the friendly and courteous way that adults and pupils treat each other in the department.

111. Long-term assessment of pupils' progress is very good. Challenging targets are set, and teachers monitor pupils' progress towards these targets carefully, intervening to support those who are falling behind. Day-to-day marking of pupils' work is not always as formative as it should be - it does not point out areas for improvement.

112. This is a well-led and very well-managed department. The good leadership reflects the school's agreed values in the subject. Teamwork and the sharing of responsibilities and good practice are excellent: for a team to have worked together for so long and retain their passion for teaching and improvement in the subject is remarkable. Staff share the leadership and commitment to improvement. The careful monitoring of teaching, pupils' progress and the curriculum has led to steady improvement over many years, and to good improvement since the last inspection. The strengths described in 1997 have been maintained, and most areas pointed out for improvement have been addressed successfully. The exception is information and communication technology; work in the department has improved, but still does not realise the potential for energising teaching offered by information and communication technology.

113. Accommodation, and the quality of display of pupils' work, are excellent. With the exception of information and communication technology, the department is very well resourced: books are up-to-date and well matched to the needs of the courses and the pupils, and there is a sound range of maps and equipment. The range of home-produced resources is outstanding, and all resources are excellently organised and readily accessible. Both accommodation and resources have a positive impact on pupils' learning and standards in geography.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are well above the national average.
- There is a shared commitment of teachers in the history department.
- There is high quality display work in the history area.

- The department takes advantage of the many opportunities to make history relevant to pupils' daily lives.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' attainment at GCSE is further behind that of the girls than is the case nationally.

114. The pupils' performance at GCSE over the past three years has been consistently well above the national average and it has been improving each year. In 2002 the pupils' history results were well above the national average and also above their results in other subjects in school. Of the 58 pupils studying history 72 per cent gained A*-C grades whilst 31 per cent gained the highest, A* or A grades. These high standards are the result of very good teaching by an experienced team of history teachers together with the commitment of the pupils. Two very positive aspects of history at GCSE are the numbers of pupils achieving the very highest grades and the high quality of pupils' coursework. Whilst boys' performance is above the national average it is much further behind that of girls than is the case nationally. During the inspection week Year 11 pupils were on study leave but scrutiny of their coursework confirmed that they were reaching standards in line with national standards. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed that the standards of work achieved by pupils in the current Year 10 are well above national expectations. This represents good achievement over the two years of the course for all pupils in years 10 and 11, including those with SEN and with English as an additional language. What all pupils can do well is to describe historical events such as the battle of the Little Big Horn. Middle and higher attaining pupils are able to analyse and then explain complex historical trends such as the reasons why the United States government was able to win the struggle for the Great Plains against the Plains Indian Nations. All pupils are compiling very good note sets. The relative weakness in the work of lower attaining pupils is their failure to answer the question asked. History is an increasingly popular option choice.

115. The standards of work achieved by the pupils in the current Year 9 are above national expectations. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including those pupils with SEN and with English as an additional language. Pupils of all abilities show increasing skills in their use of historical sources and demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding, such as the Year 9 pupils who were able to clearly define such concepts as propaganda. Pupils have a clear chronological understanding and are beginning to make connections between historical periods by Year 9.

116. The quality of teaching and learning in history is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good at GCSE. Strong features of the most effective teaching are the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. Teacher planning is very strong, both of individual lessons and of a series of lessons. Year 7 pupils were able to analyse perceptively the difference in contemporary accounts of the murder of Thomas Becket because of excellent planning. In their previous lesson they had developed an understanding of the historical context and then through a stepped set of tasks, together with skilful teacher intervention and questioning, they reached a point where they were arguing with each other and their teacher and quoting from the sources to support their conclusions about what happened. Teachers are willing to experiment with new approaches and in a Year 8 lesson pupils responded well to the stimulus of a computer based presentation on the Plague of 1665 to devise a report for King Charles II. At GCSE the teachers' excellent knowledge of the syllabus enables them to prepare pupils

extremely well for their examinations. In every lesson teachers ensure, in a variety of ways, that pupils know what they are trying to achieve by the lesson end. The relative weakness within teaching is where teachers do not give pupils sufficient time to reflect on and discuss in small groups the historical materials and questions that they are considering.

117. The leadership and management of history are very good. There have been a number of good improvements since the last inspection. Results have improved at GCSE and the numbers opting for the subject increased. The new history area, together with very good displays, creates a very good atmosphere. The experienced team of specialist historians are very committed both to helping pupils to do well and to developing new ideas and methods. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 give effective guidance to all those teaching history and now need to be updated in the light of new resources and developments. The head of history effectively monitors teaching and learning through some lesson observation and scrutiny of pupil work to ensure a consistency of experience for all pupils. Resources for history are good with a suitably wide selection of textbooks available in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE. This is having a very positive impact on standards. There have also been promising developments in the use of information and communication technology, with at least one opportunity for pupils to use information and communication technology in each year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- 2002 teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 are very high.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- There is very good provision of well-equipped computers in six suites.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for development

- Room design is poor in two information and communication technology classrooms.
- GCSE results in 2002 are well below the national average.
- The school has no permanent on-site technician.
- Resources in science, modern languages and music are underdeveloped.

118. Teacher assessment grades of information and communication technology skills in Year 9 were well above the national average but GCSE full and short course results were well below national expectations. The poor GCSE results in 2002 were against the trend of the previous two years and uncharacteristic of the standards observed in the classroom or in pupils' work. The school has already planned to reverse the fall by changing the curriculum for the full course to GNVQ and altering the short course timetable.

119. All pupils can log-on and load appropriate software and documents and use the Internet facilities confidently. Many of the older pupils acquire advanced skills in information and communication technology with software packages such as Publisher, DataPower, Word, Excel, FrontPage and Access and all pupils undertake to study for the short course GCSE examination if they are not studying a full information and communication technology course.

120. The standards in the lessons observed were very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and some excellent examples were observed where pupils worked in co-operation and harmony with each other. In the best lessons, pupils are focused on their tasks, working enthusiastically and keen to improve. They are highly motivated and work with initiative. As a result, they make good progress within lessons.

121. Teaching quality is very good overall. In all lessons observed, teachers show excellent knowledge of the subject and confidence when teaching. Consequently, pupils have opportunities for achieving higher levels through extension work and a high standard of behaviour is expected. In the best lessons, pupils work with purpose and enthusiasm and at a good pace. Teachers are aware immediately if pupils need support. Homework is used very effectively to reinforce and extend what is learned in school. Pupils' work is assessed through discrete information and communication technology lessons as well as many cross-curricular subjects. This enables information and communication technology to be delivered within meaningful contexts. The head of department collates the grades and monitors cross-curricular delivery.

122. The school meets statutory curricular requirements for information and communication technology through discrete information and communication technology lessons and a cross-curricular programme in Year 7. Opportunities for learning within the discrete lessons are enhanced by the good range of software and hardware available.

123. Good use of information and communication technology is seen in English, history, physical education and religious education. This is in marked contrast to science, music and modern languages, however, where they have an underdeveloped information and communication technology provision.

124. Learning resources in most areas are good - especially software, CD-ROM titles and on-line resources. The Intranet and Internet facilities (supplied by Dudley Grid for Learning) are well designed and used throughout the school and provide a useful resource. Pupils are often seen using the Internet, extracting valuable information for their schoolwork. The school provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities, which meet the interests and aptitudes of all pupils. For example, the computer clubs are well organised and available to pupils before school, at morning break at lunchtime and after school. There are also information and communication technology support classes.

125. Pupils are given targets based on assessment information and are well informed of their progress through the report system. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and this creates a very good working environment.

126. Two information and communication technology classrooms are poorly designed, too small and poorly ventilated.

127. Leadership is very good. The head of department works hard to improve standards in his department and has improved the provision of information and communication technology in the school. He also recognises that there is a long way to go to improve such things as Year 11 information and communication technology examination results and the layout of information and communication technology classrooms, but he has the ability to manage this strategy. He meets with the information and communication technology steering group once a term to develop policies throughout the school. He also has a good working relationship with the Learning Resource Centre manager who is keen to promote information and communication technology resources in his area.

128. The school provides good value for money with the provision of discrete information and communication technology resources. Software licences are carefully monitored and hardware is maintained to provide good reliability.

129. However, the school has no on-site information and communication technology technician. If there is a problem with the network it is usually the head of department who has to resolve it, either by contacting the contractors who will attempt to fix the problem within 48 hours or he will attempt to fix the problem himself. This is poor use of his time and an area for concern.

130. Since the last inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 have been maintained with attainment above expected levels. Teachers' knowledge of information and communication technology has improved and the ratio of computers in the school is now above the national

average with one computer for every 5.5 pupils on average, sufficient for individual use by pupils. GCSE examination results have fallen since the last inspection, but the school is already addressing this problem.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- There is a stable and committed team of specialist language teachers with very good leadership of the department.
- There is a wide range of languages offered within a framework of inclusion.
- All pupils get a choice of two languages.
- Senior managers are committed to promote the subject further.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' achievement needs to be improved.
- The target language is not consistently used.
- Information and communication technology is insufficiently integrated into teaching and learning strategies.
- Pupils do not consistently get opportunities to enhance their independent language learning skills.

131. The school offers four modern languages: French, German, Spanish and Urdu. Year 11 provision in languages was not inspected. Currently, there is no Year 10 class in Urdu. All pupils study French. In Years 8 and 9, they can choose to study an additional language from the other three languages on offer. The school enters candidates for GCSE in all the four languages. While there are variations in the GCSE data for the four languages, overall, school's GCSE results are in line with the corresponding national averages. There has been an improvement in the GCSE results in modern languages since the last inspection.

132. As at the time of the last inspection, overall, standards in modern languages in Years 7, 8 and 9 are in keeping with the national expectations. Standards attained by higher level Year 10 pupils are in line with national expectation. Low attaining pupils reach the standards required for their Certificate of Achievement. There are no significant variations in the standards reached by pupils with SEN and with English as an additional language. Girls outperform boys.

133. Year 7 pupils, who all study French, have made an enthusiastic start. They can understand classroom instructions and respond to them. Their grasp of the basic vocabulary of the topics studied is sound and many can recall relevant words when prompted visually or otherwise. Their feel for the sounds of French is developing through listening to their teachers, and taped materials, as well as through practice in choral drills, pair work and other learning activities. Pupils' writing in French meets national expectations and has benefited from regular homework and written work in lessons.

134. Higher ability pupils in Years 8 and 9, reach above average standards in all the four languages. Most understand short instructions, messages, and dialogues, while a number can extract meanings from longer passages and can take part in short dialogues, using familiar sentences and vocabulary. Most pupils can copy words, phrases and sentences largely accurately. A number can produce short paragraphs of independent writing constructed with

familiar grammatical structures and vocabulary. Although pupils' reading and listening skills are more advanced than their speaking and writing skills, their writing is developing well. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 are also developing independent language learning skills, though variations were noted across lessons observed and in pupils' work seen. Higher ability Year 10 pupils in French, German and Spanish build on their knowledge of the languages studied in Years 7-9. Some pupils in Year 10, on the other hand, are working to a Certificate of Achievement in French. Accordingly, their knowledge of French is at a relatively basic level in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with SEN attain standards in keeping with their abilities. Girls are more focused on their study of languages and attain higher standards than boys.

135. Modern languages provision benefits from the current stability in staffing. Teachers are good and through their use of the relevant target languages act as good role models. They deliver lessons with enthusiasm and commitment, harnessing a variety of strategies. Their purposeful class management, combined with very good relationships with their pupils, creates an ethos for learning. Their high expectations and the system of rewards for good work also contribute positively to lessons. The pace of lessons is appropriate for most pupils and the language materials are suitably controlled, in terms of both grammar and vocabulary, to ensure practice and consolidation by pupils. Teachers' individual support and supervision during lessons as well as their planned introduction of an element of enjoyment in language teaching keep most pupils involved in learning activities. Their marking, feedback and homework all play a significant part in pupils' learning and progress. Data from formal assessment are used in the planning of lessons and in placing pupils in suitable classes.

136. More consistent use of the target language would give pupils a valuable exposure to the language they are studying. Teaching strategies do not always encourage greater learner independence – through group work, research and collaborative learning, for instance. Schemes of work and lesson plans need to introduce a greater focus on independence and ownership of learning. Further integration of information and communication technology in both teaching and learning of languages is likely to raise pupils' motivation, besides providing them with further opportunities for independent practice, extension and enrichment activities. In a minority of cases, especially in Years 10-11, where the less able pupils make inadequate progress or the more able pupils are not stretched to their full potential, the known challenge of a greater variety of tasks and materials needs to be addressed at the planning stage.

137. Pupils' attitude to learning is good in all years. Most are on task most of the time. They enjoy very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Most pupils undertake homework willingly, they take care of their exercise books, handouts and worksheets. The progress of Year 7 pupils since the beginning of the school year has been good. Most pupils maintain their momentum also in later years in Years 8-9. However, in Years 10-11, particularly in lower ability or mixed ability groups, some pupils voice negative sentiments regarding the subject they study. Some lack the necessary skills to pursue their studies over and beyond what their teachers offer them. Such activities as reading for pleasure and the use of ICT-linked language learning materials, for example, remain to be fully exploited. Pupils with English as an additional language and SEN progress well and their learning is good.

138. There are no significant differences in the teaching practice of French, German and Spanish, especially as there is a conscious collaborative approach pursued by all teachers. The

part time Urdu teacher works largely in isolation. As noted in the previous report, further integration of Urdu teaching, therefore, in the school's modern foreign languages programme will enhance the quality provision for those studying Urdu.

139. Modern languages provision is a strength of the school. Since the last inspection, very good leadership of the department has contributed to the steady improvement in the provision of modern languages in the school - through monitoring of pupils' standards, sharing of good practice, internal moderation. The department is developing skills for self-analysis and implementation of actions resulting from it. The senior management's commitment to modern languages has proved distinctly beneficial and further developments are actively being pursued. The department has also established successful links with a number of external agencies, including primary schools, further and higher education and Blackcountry LSE Pathfinder. Extra-curricular activities, such as German Exchange, trips to France and Spain, Language Club, conducted by the department have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are good overall in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The numbers of pupils achieving A* and A grades is outstanding.
- Teaching is very good overall. Pupils of all levels of ability achieve equally well.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and their enthusiastic, positive attitudes contribute to the success of the lessons. Numbers in the option groups and those having instrumental lessons are well above the national average.
- Provision in the extra-curriculum is outstanding and standards and participation rates are very impressive.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- More resources are needed to develop skills in music technology.
- More spaces are needed for small ensemble music-making in this very active department.

140. At the end of Year 9 standards overall are good. They have steadily improved in the last three years and most pupils now achieve levels above the nationally expected level in performing, composing and listening. A significant minority achieve very good standards. Limited resources restrict the development of pupils' skills in music technology which affect standards and achievement overall by Year 9. In performing, pupils can play melodies and form chords on keyboards. Most of them use appropriate fingering techniques and playing is rhythmical. They maintain their parts accurately in paired work, but, in larger ensembles, some have difficulty in maintaining co-ordination as they cannot always hear their own work clearly during practice sessions. Those performing well above the expected level play more difficult parts accurately and with good musical understanding. Pupils show imagination in the choice of melodic and rhythmic ideas for their compositions. They can compose variations for melodies and they can also respond to a pictorial stimulus. Most use the musical elements with understanding and, in the best work, use of harmony and structural

development are good. Structure is less clear in the work of a few lower attainers. Knowledge and understanding of a variety of musical styles are good and pupils use musical terminology accurately in their descriptions.

141. Standards on entry to the school are broadly in line with national levels but prior musical experience varies widely and is limited for some. Progress and achievement are good for pupils of all levels of attainment when judged across all strands of the National Curriculum. At the end of Year 11 standards are very good and well above national levels in most years. Numbers achieving A* and A grades are outstandingly good. Numbers opting for music have increased in the last three years and group sizes are now twice the national average group size with numbers predicted to rise even further. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Performing is a particular strength and many pupils play beyond the level of difficulty required for the examination. Pupils play a variety of instruments in various musical styles. Most play accurately with very good technical control and attention to musical detail. In composing, pupils maintain their chosen styles very well and some very convincing waltzes were heard for the dance area of study. Most make very good use of melody, harmony and rhythmic patterns and structures are developed and clear. In a few compositions the chord progressions are less convincing. Listening skills were only observed in Year 10 during the inspection. They were good with pupils demonstrating a good understanding of a variety of musical styles and an ability to use musical terminology accurately in their detailed descriptions. Achievement across Years 10-11 is very good for most pupils and outstanding for those who are gifted and talented. Standards in the instrumental lessons are very good overall and twice the usual percentage number of pupils have lessons in school.

142. Teaching is very good throughout and some outstandingly good lessons were observed. Lessons are very well planned with a variety of tasks that sustain pupils' interest in the topic and widen their understanding. Tasks are timed which helps to maintain a very good pace to the lessons and they are structured to suit pupils of all levels of ability. Explanations are very clear and supported by well-chosen musical examples and very good work sheets. These sheets help pupils to develop independent working skills. Questions are well-directed to check and extend pupils' knowledge and teachers are careful to involve all their pupils. Most respond enthusiastically and pupils' positive attitudes contribute a great deal to the success of the lessons. Classroom management is good and pupils appreciate the lively, good-humoured and encouraging teaching styles. Teachers have very good subject skills and use them well to support pupils in their work. Expectations are high and pupils respond very well. A very good learning environment is established in music lessons. Pupils enjoy their lessons and strive hard to succeed, knowing that their efforts will be recognised and celebrated. Sixteen peripatetic teachers support the work of the department for 46 hours per week. Teaching in the instrumental lessons is very good and these lessons make a very good contribution to the success of the department.

143. Leadership and management are outstanding. The curriculum leader has a very clear sense of direction for the subject and in the last two years the school has been awarded Artsmark Gold and the department has won The Times Award for extra-curricular music. The curriculum is very well planned and schemes of work are reviewed and modified annually. The department makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils and contributes appropriately to the teaching of key skills. Assessment, including base-line assessment is thorough and the pupils are clearly aware of their standards and how to improve them.

144. Extra-curricular work is outstanding both in provision and participation rates. There are many ensembles covering a wide range of musical styles. These include orchestra, senior and junior wind bands, jazz groups, choir, chamber choir, clarinet and saxophone ensembles and a variety of rock and pop groups. Over 300 pupils regularly rehearse in these groups and the school production of *Grease* ran two casts to give more opportunities to the large number of pupils who auditioned. Standards achieved are very impressive and teachers give freely of their time and expertise to help the pupils to succeed. Pupils have many opportunities to perform in school, in the local community and on international tours and they also take part in workshops at local primary schools.

145. The curriculum leader has already identified the necessary areas for development. The last report identified an urgent need for more computers. The school has partially addressed this need. However, there are still insufficient resources to allow pupils in Years 7-9 regular opportunities to develop skills in music technology. Limited opportunities to create and realise their compositions affects standards and achievement - particularly for those who do not have instrumental lessons. More computers would also support the composition work for the large option groups in Years 10 and 11. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but there are some limitations. This very active department needs more space particularly when Years 7-9 are working on small group performances and compositions. Pupils cannot always hear their own work clearly which affects their progress in developing good ensemble skills. The school should also address some health and safety issues resulting from trailing keyboard leads.

146. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. Standards have risen throughout and numbers involved have risen rapidly. Curriculum time has been improved and national awards have been won. Improvements have been made in technology resources but more are needed. Some issues in accommodation need to be addressed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils of all ages achieve well.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave very well.
- An excellent contribution is made to the pupils' personal development.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- The assessment of individual achievement and the monitoring of progress are very good.
- Outstanding leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the performance of pupils in the GCSE examination.
- Information and communication technology is insufficiently used to support learning.
- The all weather surface and the girls' changing rooms are in need of refurbishment.

147. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum has better balance. The frequency, with which activities are scheduled, together with the updated

schemes of work, has greatly improved the opportunities for the pupils to make progress and to achieve well. A closer link has been established between assessment and the planning of work. This has helped to raise the challenge of lessons and the expectation that the teachers have of their pupils. It is now easier to identify the specific knowledge, skills and understanding to be assessed and to track the progress and attainment of individual pupils. Teachers are now better equipped to monitor and evaluate the impact of the revised programmes of study and to demonstrate this in their approaches to teaching and learning. Pupils are now able to take the GCSE examination and the department has carefully analysed the performance of pupils and recognised the need to consider alternative approaches to the teaching of the theory component of the course. Teachers plan for and actively encourage pupils to undertake responsibility for coaching and officiating during lessons. This ensures the involvement of those pupils unable to participate in lessons.

148. In 2002, the teacher assessment of the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 showed attainment to be broadly in line with that expected nationally for pupils aged 14. The proportion of the pupils achieving the expected level of performance improved by 7 percentage points in 2002. This improvement was due in large measure to the significant rise in the proportion of the girls achieving both the expected and higher levels of performance.

149. In the lessons seen during this inspection the standards of attainment for pupils aged 11 to 14 are generally in line with those expected for their age. When they start at the school the pupils have a very wide range of ability. For example, in a girls' basketball lesson in Year 7 the standards seen augur well for the future. The girls show an emerging confidence to apply and consolidate basic skills and techniques in attacking play so that in small team games good passages of play emerge with good use of space, controlled dribbling and passing. However, in a Year 7 boys' cricket lesson, with over 30 pupils in the group, the standards seen were well below those expected. Poor bowling technique, a lack of simple precision when batting, and haphazard fielding and catching skills reflect the lack of specific knowledge, skills and understanding that the pupils bring with them from their previous schools. Through the very effective links with primary schools being fostered through the school's close involvement with the School Sport Co-ordinators Programme the school is seeking to raise the standards of attainment that the pupils bring with them into Year 7. In Year 8, the pupils benefit from precise teaching and very effective assessment to develop a very secure technique in the shot put. Less good are the skills seen in badminton where most pupils can perform the low serve with some degree of accuracy but lack the consistency and tactical awareness to use the serve effectively and to play a sequence of shots. Evidence of how well the pupils achieve over time and the progress they make from Year 7 is seen in the performance of Year 9 pupils in athletics and volleyball. Mastery of the three phases in the triple jump is the result of the pupils maintaining balance and control whilst striving to improve the distance covered. Their success is also the result of the detailed planning of a progressive sequence of learning activities by the teacher, complemented by accurate assessment and well-timed intervention to improve performance. Similar qualities contribute to the standards being attained by the majority of pupils in volleyball where a very competent grasp of basic skills and shot technique and selection enables most pupils to complete a three touch rally and apply a basic form of defence. Despite the very wide range of ability and prior experience that the pupils bring with them, because of the very good teaching they receive they achieve well between the ages of 11 and 14.

150. Pupils have been able to take the GCSE examination since 2001. The proportion of the pupils obtaining an A* to C grade was above the national average in both 2001 and 2002. In 2002 only one student failed to obtain a pass grade. However, the performance of the subject in comparison with others in the school is not as good as these figures would suggest. In 2002, a quarter of the entry achieved a grade D and two thirds of the entry achieved either a grade C or D. Just under a fifth of the entry achieved either a grade A or B. Just over seven out of ten pupils achieved their predicted grade but too few pupils exceeded their expected grade. The school has recognised what it needs to do to improve the overall performance of the subject, and in particular that of boys. The decision to cover the theory components of the GCSE course through planned practical tasks is sensible. It also reflects the capacity of the department to analyse outcomes and to adapt their teaching and learning activities to improve the pupils' attainment and to raise their achievement. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson where this approach catered for the pupils' preferred learning styles, made them think and demonstrated through their involvement in practical examples the theory behind fitness and skills' circuits.

151. Pupils of all abilities aged 14 to 16 achieve well as a result of the very good teaching they receive and because the well-planned activities promote an enthusiastic and positive response. In the lessons seen during this inspection it is clear that a firm foundation of skills is being laid down in basketball, rugby and trampolining.

152. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is better for pupils aged 11 to 14. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection. Lesson planning of the highest quality ensures that learning is placed at the forefront of the teacher's work with the group. Clear and precise explanations of what is to be learnt is backed up by the teachers' outstanding knowledge and understanding of their subject. The excellent management of the pupils keeps them focused on the task and continually reinforces the high expectations the department sets for its pupils. This is also seen in the way the pupils organise themselves, support each other, work effectively in teams and show high levels of personal responsibility and co-operation. In those lessons that were otherwise satisfactory the teachers lacked fluency in their teaching and lacked the overt enthusiasm that features so strongly in the work of the department. Greater attention needed to be given to the pace, challenge and expectation of the lesson and to the clarity of instructions given to the pupils.

153. All teachers practise very good inclusion strategies for SEN pupils. There is very sensitive handling of pupils with a range of learning and behavioural needs. The particular needs of both hearing and visually impaired pupils are met through a combination of clearly communicated instructions and specific resources. As a result these pupils, and those with English as an additional language, make good progress.

154. Outstanding leadership and management have brought about the wide-ranging improvements required to raise the quality of provision in the department. The department shows an impressive capacity to evaluate its performance and to take effective action through very well structured development plans. The department has a shared commitment to improvement and because of excellent teamwork has the capacity to achieve further success. The department is extremely successful in meeting its stated aims of ensuring that its pupils feel involved in the process of learning and that pupils have respect for each others' abilities. The department has begun to use information and communication technology to support teaching and learning and to assemble assessment data. More needs to be done to use

contemporary development in information and communication technology to support learning and to assist in the assessment of the pupils' performance and in the evaluation of their work during lessons. Although the adequacy of the accommodation is satisfactory, the condition of the all weather surface and the girls' changing rooms are unsatisfactory. During wet weather its usable area is significantly reduced and restricts the range of activities that can be planned.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is excellent. Teachers are committed, share a real enthusiasm for their subject and are constantly looking at ways in which to improve further.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The department makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Excellent relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
- The use of information and communication technology is effective.

Areas for improvement

- To increase the amount of time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 in order to: ensure that the statutory requirements for the provision of religious education are met; raise the standards at GCSE (Short Course) by providing sufficient time to teach the subject effectively.
- Provide opportunities to visit local places of worship.

155. Overall the standards in Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the Dudley Agreed Syllabus, with attainment for girls slightly higher than that of boys. With the exception of those who follow a full GCSE Course, all pupils follow a compulsory Short Course. In Years 10-11 standards are below the national expectation for the subject but there has, with the exception of this year's Short Course, been a steady rise in the number of pupils achieving A*-C. Also, the numbers achieving A*-G in both courses have been consistently high. Analysis indicates that results for the Short Course are below national expectation because pupils choose to prioritise the core subjects for revision, in preference to religious education. In addition, the low amount of teaching time puts considerable pressure on teachers to 'water' down content and thereby limit discussion. The importance of discussion in order to explore and clarify religious and moral issues is not sufficiently appreciated. Those teachers who spend the appropriate amount of time on discussion experience great difficulties in covering the syllabus adequately. The reason for the significant dip in 2002 results for the Short Course may be due, in addition to the above, to the following factors: half the pupils having their one religious education lesson being taught on the last period on a Friday afternoon (this has since been rectified); change in teaching personnel, affecting three teaching groups; the adverse effect of some de-motivated boys

156. The results for the Full Course were also below the national average. It should be noted, however, that only a small number of pupils (12) followed the Full Course and they, on the whole, performed well in relation to their ability. In order to improve standards in Years

10 and 11, particular attention should therefore be paid to increasing the amount of curriculum time to ensure that basic requirements can be met. Although the time allocation to meet with the basic statutory requirements has improved since the last inspection it is still insufficient and needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. Additional time does not always result in higher standards but there is no doubt that in this department, which already has excellent teaching and learning, it would make a significant impact. The additional time would also further strengthen the rich contribution which religious education already makes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as the new orders for citizenship.

157. Overall, the progress made by pupils in Years 7–11 is very good in relation to their ability. Lower attaining pupils, in particular, make excellent progress. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, which commented that it was less than satisfactory, in part because of the limited in-class support. The progress made by pupils with SEN and by those who are gifted and talented is excellent.

158. By Year 9 the majority of pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs relating to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism. They have a clear understanding of the links between belief and practice and are able both orally and in writing to identify similarities and differences between religions. They show an awareness and respect for other points of view and are confident in using specialist vocabulary, when it is appropriate. In particular they have acquired a good understanding of the different forms of worship observed within the different Christian denominations, Islam and Judaism. Their knowledge and understanding of the importance of Ramadan is good, showing an empathetic understanding of why Muslims fast as well as links with other faith traditions. By Year 11, pupils have developed an empathetic understanding of religious issues relating to the existence and nature of God. They have acquired and developed further their knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and traditions of Christianity and Islam. They are successful in considering religious and other responses to moral issues and are able to identify, investigate and respond to fundamental questions of life raised by religion and human experience. In a Year 10 lesson on Ramadan, pupils responded well to teacher questioning and showed real empathy for the viewpoints of others. For example, they listened with interest and respect as the four Muslim girls in the class explained what Ramadan and the challenge of fasting means to them. In another Year 10 lesson pupils acquired a good understanding of the difference between absolute and relative morality and were able to apply these, using appropriate examples, to issues such as euthanasia and abortion.

159. Overall, teaching is excellent throughout. All pupils are appropriately challenged. This is undoubtedly linked to effective teacher planning, which in turn recognises that individuals have preferred learning styles and ensures that these are catered for within the lesson. Consequently, a wide range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies are used throughout, which enables pupils to make good progress. Explanations are always clear and focused questioning ensures that pupils understand and are able to extend their knowledge. Pace is good and high standards of discipline are maintained throughout. Relationships between teachers and pupils are commendable. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are very effective in recognising and supporting pupils in their work. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, using criteria, which is understood by pupils and helps them to progress further.

160. The curriculum leader has been effective in identifying the necessary areas for development since the last inspection. Consequently standards have been maintained in Years 7-9 and are in line with the expectations of the Dudley Agreed Syllabus. There has, however, been no significant change relating to standards in Years 10-11 and the reasons for this are highlighted above.

161. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils is now excellent, due to the high standard of teaching. Opportunities for more sustained debate to heighten pupils' understanding of religious concepts are now clearly evident but still restricted by the paucity of time for the Short Course in Years 10-11.

162. In the last inspection the time allocation for the GCSE Course was described as being below the minimum recommendation and not meeting fully with the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education in Years 10-11. This still holds. The use of information and communication technology is now however a strength of the department. Religious education continues to make a significant contribution to pupils' education, particularly in the areas of moral, social and cultural development. This is still extremely strong and is now extended to include the spiritual dimension. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. This is a first class department which has a capacity for further improvement.