

INSPECTION REPORT

THE SWINTON HIGH SCHOOL

Swinton

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 105983

Headteacher: John Biddlestone

Reporting inspector: Ted Wheatley
10013

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th January 2003

Inspection number: 249118

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:	Sefton Road Pendlebury Manchester
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Davies
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9895	Roger Williams	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2919	Phillip Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3758	Tony Barringer	Team inspector	English Drama	
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
31772	Alan Kelly	Team inspector	History	
23246	John Mitchell	Team inspector	Science	
12118	Allan Paver	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
30901	Sue Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design	
1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Swinton High School has 941 pupils and is average compared to other 11 – 16 comprehensive schools. With the exception of Year 9 there are more boys than girls in all years. The majority of pupils are of white United Kingdom background and there are small numbers of Bangladeshi, black African, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian pupils and Polish. There are also seven pupils from refugee families. The main language spoken is English and small numbers of pupils speak Urdu, Czech, Albanian and Sri Lankan. Twenty pupils have English as an additional language, but only three are in the early stages of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is below average though the percentage with statements of special educational needs is broadly average. Statements are mainly for moderate, specific or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Special educational needs provision is supported through a special unit designated for literacy, numeracy, motor skills, behaviour difficulties and for refugee children. The school is in an area of some social deprivation and employment is difficult to find. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average overall.

The school has experienced a large turnover in staff recently, though at the time of the inspection this had become more stable, though there were still some difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education and standards, though below average, are rising. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is very good. Leadership and management are good and the direction for improvement from the new headteacher is very good. The school is improving and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are starting to rise under the new leadership of the school.
- The direction for improvement provided by the headteacher is very good.
- Teaching in one in six lessons is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship are very good.
- The school's links with primary schools, colleges and community organisations are very good and make a significant contribution to pupils' education.
- Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The school's care and support for pupils are good.

What could be improved

- Standards achieved by some pupils are not high enough.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are below average.
- There is too little support for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is too little support for pupils with English as an additional language.
- The condition of the school's accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since it was last inspected in March 1997. Teachers' expectations have improved, work is challenging for the great majority of pupils, pupils' progress is monitored more closely and the quality of homework has improved. However, strategies to improve pupils' reading and writing skills are still unsatisfactory. The school continues to work hard to improve pupils' attendance and to raise levels of interest and motivation. Statutory requirements for design and technology are met though they are not for religious education in Year 11 and there is not enough time for physical education in Years 10 and 11. There are increased opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to show initiative and the school's procedures to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society are satisfactory. The accommodation is still

unsatisfactory although internally it is well maintained. Statutory requirements for collective worship are still not met and the governors' report to parents does not provide information on disabled access to the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils' attainment was below average in the national tests taken by 14 year olds in 2002. In English, the percentage of pupils obtaining the average Level 5 or higher was well below average and in mathematics and science it was below average. The results in 2002 were better than those in 2001. This is an improvement because the attainment on entry to the school of both year groups was similar. Compared with similar schools, attainment was below average. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are still below average but are rising and overall pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In English, mathematics and science standards are below average. They are above average in drama and citizenship and average in design and technology, history, ICT, music and physical education. Standards are below average in art, geography and modern foreign languages.

In the GCSE examinations in 2002, attainment overall was well below average and similar to recent years. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades was also well below average, but a small increase on the results of 2001. Pupils' progress was broadly satisfactory. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-G grades and one or more A*-G grades was close to the national average and they achieved well taking into account their prior attainment. Compared with similar schools, results were well below average overall, though for those pupils obtaining one or more A*-G grades and five or more A*-G grades, they did better than similar schools. The school exceeded its point score target and its target for pupils obtaining one or more A*-G grades but was slightly below its target for five or more A*-C grades. Inspection evidence shows that standards are below average overall – an improvement on the GCSE results of 2002. Standards are below average in English, mathematics, science and above average in modern languages, drama and citizenship. They are average in design and technology, ICT, music, physical education, business studies and child development and below average in art and design, history, geography and religious education. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily and they achieve well in geography, ICT, modern foreign languages, drama and citizenship and very well in music.

Staffing difficulties have been partially to blame for low standards, but improved stability and a new focus on raising standards are starting to show some improvements.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. Many make good progress when they are withdrawn from lessons for support. However, there are too few support staff so the progress of some is unsatisfactory. The progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is unsatisfactory. Some pupils receive support from learning mentors to help them improve their standards of work and this is successful; these pupils make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Pupils are interested and keen to learn. They take part enthusiastically in the wide range of activities provided for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Most pupils behave well in lessons. They show good self-control when moving around the building and during break and lunch times.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Relationships are good between pupils and between pupils and adults. Personal development is good with many opportunities for pupils to take

	responsibility and show initiative.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory overall and below the national average, though the great majority of pupils attend regularly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is very good in about one in six lessons, it is good in a little under half of lessons and satisfactory in about one third of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in about one in 20 lessons. There is less unsatisfactory teaching than at the last inspection, though the proportion of very good teaching remains unchanged. Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. There is some very good teaching in all three subjects and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in science. Teaching is good in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, ICT, modern languages, music and drama. It is satisfactory elsewhere.

The best teaching and there is some in most subjects, is challenging and motivates pupils to learn well. Teachers plan lessons well and have sound expectations of what pupils should learn. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good and this leads to good behaviour and a positive attitude to work on the part of the great majority of pupils.

Overall, the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school has policies and opportunities are planned into schemes of work, but practice is inconsistent and not sufficiently challenging for pupils.

There is some unsatisfactory teaching in science, geography and religious education leading to unsatisfactory learning. The weaknesses arise from teachers not demanding enough of pupils and not planning interesting activities to engage pupils in their own learning. On rare occasions, teachers do not have the necessary skills to deal with disruptive pupils.

The school does not meet the needs of all of its pupils, but does so for the great majority. There are too few support assistants to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs receive the help they need, though many teachers work hard to reduce this problem. There is too little support for pupils with English as an additional language, though individual teachers do their best to provide support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory overall. All subjects are taught in Years 7 to 9 but there is not enough time for some of them. The requirements of the National Curriculum for physical education in Years 10 and 11 and the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education in Year 11 are not met. The school has plans to remedy these deficiencies in September 2003. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory overall. There are too few learning assistants so the progress made by some pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Where there is support, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and sometimes good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory overall. Where there is support from specialist staff, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. However, there is too little, although teachers work hard to remedy this.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual,	Good overall provision. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good though provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory

moral, social and cultural, development	because there are no planned opportunities for spiritual development and requirements for collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils' welfare is a priority and the procedures to promote personal development are good. Assessment procedures are good and the school provides good academic support.

The school has satisfactory links with parents and works closely with the majority of them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher and staff in management posts carry out their responsibilities effectively. The headteacher is giving very good direction for further improvement and is well supported by the great majority of staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil most of their responsibilities well and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, they have failed to ensure that the statutory curriculum is fully taught and that their annual report to parents reports on disabled access to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and what it needs to do to improve. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are satisfactory and the school is taking sound steps to ensure its improvement is maintained.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory use of the funds available to it and applies principles of best value where it is possible.

There are sufficient resources and suitably qualified and experienced teachers to support the curriculum. However, there are too few support assistants for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • They make good progress. • Children's behaviour is mostly good. • Teaching is good. • School deals with parents' questions and problems well. • The school has high expectations. • The school is well managed and led. • It helps children become mature and responsible. • There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have some concern that there is too little homework. • Parents feel that they are not well enough informed about children's progress.

Inspectors agree with some of the strengths parents identified. Children generally like school, they behave well and they become mature and responsible as they get older. The school is well led and managed, it deals with parents' concerns well and provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Teaching is satisfactory, the school has sound expectations and pupils make satisfactory progress. In terms of what parents would like to see improved, generally, the amount and frequency of homework is satisfactory and the school provides detailed reports on pupils' progress and consultation evenings for parents to meet teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment is below average on entry to the school and this has been the case for several years, with fluctuations between well below average and below average. Standards of literacy are below average overall on entry and, for some pupils, well below average.
2. There have been significant changes and disruption to staffing in recent years in English, mathematics and science. Staffing in English, mathematics and science had stabilised at the time of the inspection. Staffing disruption has had a noticeable depressing effect on attainment, the back-log of which is still to be seen in some lessons, in spite of teachers' efforts to help pupils catch up.
3. In the end Year 9 National Curriculum tests taken in 2002, pupils' attainment was below average overall. The percentage of pupils obtaining the average Level 5 or better was well below average in English and below average in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils obtaining Level 6 or higher was below average in English, mathematics and science. Results in 2002 were better than in 2001 which is an improvement because the pupils from 2001 had similar levels of attainment on entry to the school. Nevertheless, the improvement was not enough and pupils made unsatisfactory progress overall. Compared with similar schools, results were below average. In the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments in other subjects attainment was below average overall. Attainment was above average in information and communication technology (ICT) and average in music and physical education. It was below average in design and technology, history, geography and modern foreign languages and well below average in art. Staffing difficulties and shortage of time for geography and history have contributed to below average levels of attainment. However, in spite of difficulties, attainment has been maintained overall in the last two years; attainment has remained the same in geography, history and ICT and has risen in design and technology, music and physical education; it has dropped in art and modern foreign languages.
4. Inspection evidence shows that standards are still below average overall, but the signs of improvement are there. In English, mathematics and science, standards are below average, but stability of staffing and efforts to support pupils' learning are starting to have a positive effect on achievement – which is now satisfactory. In other subjects, standards are above average in drama, average in design and technology, history, ICT, music and physical education and below average in art, geography and modern foreign languages. Standards are below the expectations of the local agreed syllabus in religious education. Standards are above average in citizenship, mainly because the school had established the course one year ahead of the statutory requirement to do so. Achievement overall is generally satisfactory; it is very good in citizenship, good in geography, ICT, music and drama and satisfactory in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. Achievement is satisfactory in art – some of the staffing problems have been resolved, though there is still some temporary staffing.
5. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002, the average point score of pupils was well below average and similar to recent years. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades was also well below average, as it has been in recent years. Nevertheless, there was a small percentage increase and the achievement of pupils was broadly satisfactory when their results in the end of Year 9 national tests taken in 2000 were taken into account. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-G grades and one or more A*-G grades was broadly average and well above average taking into account these pupils' prior attainment. Compared with similar schools, those with a similar percentage of free school meals, results were well below average overall, though the percentage obtaining one or more A*-G grades was above average and the percentage obtaining five or more A*-G grades was average. The school exceeded its point score target and its target for pupils obtaining one or more A*-G grades; it missed its target for five or more A*-C grades by one per cent. Results were best in drama, Spanish, French, ICT and music; they were worst in art and design, history and geography. Comparisons are difficult because there were significant differences in the prior attainment of pupils in each subject. Nevertheless, staffing difficulties have been partially to blame for low standards, but improved stability and a new focus on raising standards are starting to show some improvements.

6. Standards seen in the inspection indicate that the performance of pupils in Year 11 is below average. In English, mathematics and science standards are below average but pupils are achieving satisfactorily taking into account their prior attainment. Standards are above average in modern languages, drama and citizenship and in these subjects pupils achieve well. They are average in design and technology, ICT, music, physical education, business studies and child development and below average in art and design, history, geography and religious education. Standards vary between subjects mainly because the range of prior attainment, in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, varies also. Overall, boys' and girls' achievement is satisfactory; it is never less than satisfactory and is good in geography, ICT, modern foreign languages, drama and citizenship and is very good in music. Higher attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and many achieve well.
7. The major factor that is leading to rising standards has been the arrival of the new headteacher which has resulted in a reorganisation and expansion of senior management and an increased use of assessment information to monitor pupils' performance and to set targets for improvement. The latter has been taken on readily by the great majority of staff and they show a commitment to working with pupils to help them raise their levels of attainment. There are also study support groups that help pupils improve their standards of work and these are increasingly effective. However, standards have not risen far enough yet and the staff and many pupils are aware of that.
8. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Most pupils are working to a standard commensurate with their level of ability. Progress is good or very good when pupils are withdrawn from lessons to work in the learning support unit where the work is closely matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Shortage of sufficient numbers of support assistants to help pupils, restricts the progress of some pupils.
9. Pupils with English as an additional language do not make satisfactory progress. A few do make sound progress, where there is specialist language support and where teachers use personal knowledge and contacts to help. However, most do not; there is too little specialist help available, particularly for European languages. Pupils of different ethnic backgrounds generally achieve satisfactorily.
10. Some pupils who underachieve and in some cases are disaffected with school, receive support from learning mentors. This is effective use of Excellence in Cities (EiC) funding and these pupils generally achieve well and gain a sense of achievement in their successes. A significant small number of pupils follow work related courses based in local colleges. Their progress is satisfactory overall, though there is some disruption to their learning in English, mathematics and science because they are withdrawn from some lessons to visit the colleges.
11. Standards of literacy are below average overall, but there are variations between subjects. Standards of literacy are good in art and modern foreign languages. They are satisfactory in English, design and technology, geography, history (in Years 10 and 11) and music. Standards are weak in mathematics, science and religious education. Speaking and listening are, in the main, of a higher standard than writing and in subjects such as English, drama, geography and history, group talk and discussion form an important part of pupils' learning. Standards of reading are satisfactory but too little use is made of the library to support pupils' independent learning. Writing is the weakest element of literacy across the curriculum. In mathematics, science (especially in Years 7 to 9) and religious education, written work is weak and holds down standards. Nevertheless, the structure of written work is improving and is particularly noticeable in English, art, geography and history.
12. Standards of numeracy are below average despite past attempts to develop a whole school approach. The lack of competency in dealing with number does slow learning in other subjects, particularly science and geography. In science, for example, pupils' use of units is poor and there is little evidence of understanding of number except amongst the highest attainers. In the case of both ICT and design and technology, standards of numeracy are satisfactory, with pupils using graphs and charts well in DT, and using both calculations and spreadsheets appropriately in ICT. Pupils' basic mathematical skills are below average and they are not confident in using number.
13. Pupils' ICT skills as used in other subjects are below average because there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and knowledge. At present, a significant number of

departments are not contributing to the teaching of ICT skills. However, pupils can access the Internet to carry out research for projects and they use their own time to do this.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes are good overall. Pupils show a good interest in lessons. Most pupils thoroughly enjoy school and participate fully in all the activities provided for them by the committed teaching staff. Teachers work very hard to provide a good range of extra activities and give unselfishly of their time. These additional experiences make a valuable contribution to pupils' general education and are greatly appreciated by pupils. This provision and the good attitudes to learning, which are a direct result, have improved considerably since the last inspection.
15. Behaviour is usually good and this has improved since the last inspection. The school has high expectations for good behaviour from its pupils. It has consulted staff, parents and pupils to ensure a fair system of rewards and sanctions is in place and that it is applied consistently. Pupils almost always behave well in lessons and whilst moving around the school; but there are occasions in a few lessons when a small number of boys are disobedient and fractious. Behaviour is also good in the playground and while queuing for food during breaks and at lunchtime. During the week of the inspection, there were only two pupils excluded. Exclusion is used effectively and as a very last resort after all other sanctions and strategies have been tried. The percentage of exclusions is appropriate for the school.
16. Bullying is positively discouraged and dealt with firmly when it occurs. Neither sexism nor racism is condoned and such instances are rare. Pupils are all aware of how they are expected to deal with sexism and racism and there are up to date policies for all these areas. Morning form tutorials and personal social and health education lessons are also used by staff and pupils to discuss these issues.
17. Most pupils have a good understanding of how their actions affect others. For example, they co-operate sensitively in drama lessons and respect each other's space. In these lessons, pupils show good awareness of the needs of others, whilst still expressing themselves well dramatically. However, in some lessons in other subjects lower attaining pupils do not possess this awareness. Generally pupils show good respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. They usually co-operate and support each other in lessons and in other activities. This is encouraged by the school's expectation that they help others through charitable work and by older pupils acting as mentors and reading 'buddies' for Year 7 pupils.
18. Pupils are keen to accept responsibility and the school fosters this spirit of initiative and responsibility well. The school has worked hard to achieve this and it has improved considerably since the last inspection. The key concept is the word 'respect' and this forms the basis of what the school offers its pupils and expects from them. Pupils are expected to contribute to the benefit of the whole school on joining in Year 7 and are encouraged to display initiative and take on extra responsibilities, both in the classrooms and at assemblies. They accept responsibility and show initiative well. There is a school forum composed of representatives from each year group, elected from the year group forums. It makes recommendations and takes decisions on issues affecting pupils, such as the purchase of an ice cream dispenser and they also suggest suitable charities and organise their sponsorship. The forum also represents their peers' views on various issues. Pupils in Year 11 apply to become school prefects and there is a head boy and a head girl and deputies for these posts.
19. The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs is good in lessons and very good when pupils are withdrawn to work in the learning support unit. Here they are confident they will succeed because they have appropriate support and because learning support staff are very aware of pupils' specific needs. Pupils' attitudes to work here is enthusiastic and they have good relationships with other pupils and with members of staff. In lessons, where appropriate support was not provided by learning support assistants, there were incidents of unacceptable and disruptive behaviour.
20. Relationships at the school are very good and are a strength of the school. Such very good relationships, particularly between pupils and staff, play an important part in building self-esteem and confidence in pupils and improve their learning.
21. The attendance level is unsatisfactory and is below the national average. However, it has improved since the time of the last inspection and is better than most other schools in the local authority. Some pupils

arrive at school late and this affects their attendance at assemblies and form tutorials. The school is working hard to combat absence and lateness and is committing time and resources to improve attendance and punctuality.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, mainly in the much smaller amount of unsatisfactory teaching currently seen, though the percentage of very good teaching has not changed. In one in six lessons teaching is very good and it is good in just under half of lessons. It is satisfactory in one in three lessons. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced to fewer than one in 20 lessons.
23. Teaching is good in English, art and design, citizenship, design and technology, geography, ICT, modern languages, music and drama. It is satisfactory in mathematics, science, history, physical education and religious education.
24. There is some good and very good teaching in all subjects. At their best, teachers have very good relationships with pupils, resulting in good classroom discipline and behaviour and a good atmosphere for learning to take place. The best teaching is challenging and is matched to meet the needs of all pupils – both boys and girls. Good questioning is a significant part of some science and English lessons. Teachers ask searching questions and encourage pupils to answer fully and to take part in wider discussions that lead to good learning and understanding. In some art lessons, pupils are expected to analyse the work of artists and to discuss their ideas. This is good and results in pupils having a good understanding of the work of different artists and being able to express their ideas fully. In history, teachers use strategies to develop pupils' thinking skills so that they have a better understanding of historical events and can interpret evidence in source materials. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and this leads to well planned, challenging lessons with useful, interesting resources and activities that involve and motivate pupils. The structure of lessons is improving with teachers beginning to recognise the strengths of the Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) Strategy of having clearly defined introductory, development and finishing activities in lesson to improve learning. Nevertheless, there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
25. Teachers make good use of the resources and support available. Resources are used well and several teachers make extremely good use of computer-aided presentation to bring aspects of their subjects to life in the classroom. This was evident in some geography lessons, for example and this means that pupils are interested, become involved in the activities and learn well. There are not enough classroom assistants, but where they are available they are mostly used effectively to support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties.
26. Generally, teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, particularly so in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are preparing for GCSE examinations. In modern foreign languages and history, for example, marking is informative and gives guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and what to do to gain a higher grade. Oral feedback to pupils in lessons is generally good. Overall, the use of homework is satisfactory though there are some inconsistencies. For example, in science, homework is not regularly followed up to ensure pupils have completed it or understood what they were supposed to do.
27. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons seen, in science, geography and religious education, there is unsatisfactory learning arising from teachers having low expectations of pupils and not planning suitable activities to engage pupils in their own learning. Occasionally, teachers do not deal with disruptive pupils effectively.
28. Teaching of literacy skills is unsatisfactory at present, but is improving. There are different levels of awareness of the significance of literacy across subjects. The importance of structured talk as an important way of learning is being developed in English, drama, design and technology, geography and history but in other areas discussion, group talk and feedbacks are not regularly used. In only a few subjects is adequate use made of the library to develop specialist knowledge. The marking of written work is inconsistent across and sometimes within, departments. Writing is the weakest element in literacy, especially in mathematics, science and religious education, with shortcomings in certain aspects in other departments.

29. Teaching of numerical skills is unsatisfactory in all years with few subjects making use of their departmental numeracy plans. For example in science, numerical or algebraic systems are introduced as and when required rather than being part of a whole school numeracy scheme. However, some attempts are being made, where, in physical education, interpretation of graphs and basic statistical work is used in GCSE classes and in English, rhyme and rhythm are usefully considered. Teachers of both music and citizenship make a conscious effort to involve elements of numeracy in their work, as do those of design and technology and ICT.
30. The use of computers to support teaching across the curriculum is generally unsatisfactory. Although there is some good practice in science, design and technology, music lessons and personal, health and social education (PSHE) there are too few instances of computers being used in other subjects. Computers are used effectively to help pupils with their revision.
31. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory across all subjects and is good or very good where pupils are withdrawn from lessons to the learning support unit. In lessons, inconsistent use is made of individual education plans. Where they are used appropriately pupils needs are well known by teaching staff and subject specific targets are set, often resulting in good progress of these pupils. In a minority of subjects targets for these pupils are very general and rarely related to learning or to guiding teaching. In most subjects the level of support from learning support assistants in lessons is not providing pupils with special educational needs with appropriate guidance. Where they have been deployed they work effectively with pupils who then make good progress. Good classroom teaching involving an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources is compensating to some extent but in many cases the progress of those pupils with special educational needs is restricted because of this lack of support.
32. The support for pupils with English as an additional language is unsatisfactory – there is some, but not enough support for pupils from refugee families who have very little English. These pupils are often incorporated into mainstream lessons and there are instances of teachers using imaginative strategies to help them learn, but without the assistance of specialist staff, these pupils often make slow progress.

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

33. The quality and range of learning opportunities are unsatisfactory and the statutory curriculum is not in place. The curriculum covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education in Years 7 to 9, although there is insufficient time for some of them. The requirements of the National Curriculum for physical education and the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11 are not met. However, the school is well aware of these deficiencies, has made some interim adjustments under the guidance of the recently appointed headteacher and is in the middle of a major review with the intention of making significant changes in September 2003. The governors have recently reorganised their committee to strengthen the management of the curriculum and they are, rightly, involved in the review.
34. The programmes of study of the National Curriculum are not fully taught in geography or history in Years 7 to 9 and in physical education in Years 10 and 11 because there is insufficient time. Whilst all pupils are taught ICT as a separate subject, they do not receive enough experience in ICT in other subjects of the curriculum. The school is aware of this and has already conducted a curriculum audit as a preliminary step to correcting the matter. The time for English, mathematics, science, ICT and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9 is appropriate. The time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient. Time allocated to some subjects at GCSE is generous; the school's plan is to reduce this, thus improving the balance of time between subjects and increasing subject choices, including vocational work, available to pupils.
35. Currently some pupils follow more GCSE courses than they can realistically cope with, although, in the curriculum review the school proposes to reduce this number so that these pupils can spend more time on a smaller number of subjects. Some improvements have already been made and there are distinct differences between Years 10 and 11. Double science is replacing single science and all pupils follow

GCSE, national vocational qualification (NVQ) or general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses. Up until summer 2001, a significant number of pupils starting GCSE courses did not finish them; departments are now expected to ensure pupils finish courses or justify why not. Reorganisation of the curriculum is being done in such a way that expectations of pupils are raised.

36. Timetabling arrangements are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and lead to unsatisfactory equal opportunities for pupils. Very few pupils follow modern languages courses to GCSE; some are withdrawn from languages to follow another subject; others are withdrawn from physical education and religious education for yet further courses. The school is planning that these arrangements will cease. Similarly, pupils are increasingly withdrawn from subjects to follow vocational courses. While following vocational courses is desirable, catching-up arrangements are not rigorous and detract from one of the main purposes of vocational courses, which is to provide increased motivation for pupils to stay in education. Currently, arrangements for vocational experience are seen by some staff as a means of controlling rather than educating disaffected pupils.
37. The personal, social, and health education (PSHE) course for pupils is very good. The course is comprehensive, very well planned and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The course includes a wide range of subject issues, citizenship, racism and diversity, the environment and health education. The sex education programme puts an emphasis on the importance of personal relationships with strong guidance on assertiveness, decision making and problem solving. It is well supported by outside agencies such as the Brook Advisory Service and the school nurse who also is available for counselling. The Healthy School Initiative has awarded certificates to the school and a significant part was played by pupils who worked with them to set up a web-site on aids. Pupils are given very good guidance on drugs, which enables them to make informed choices. Teachers and the police have worked with a theatre group to build on the knowledge and understanding of drugs and their effects. Clear procedures are in place for any incidents involving the misuse of drugs with clear communication to parents. The police community liaison officer also strongly supports other areas of the curriculum such as working on a unit on car crime. Pupils achieve well and make good gains and skills across an appropriate range of areas because teaching in specialist lessons is well planned and predominantly good. The co-ordinator trains staff very well but there is no permanent team teaching the programme and staff change every year which makes long-term planning for training very difficult to organise. It is a credit to the co-ordinator that this has not affected standards but it does mean that valuable expertise gained one year is not necessarily used the next and it is an inefficient use of time and resources.
38. The programme for careers education is well structured and progressive and well supported by the careers service. Up-to-date information relating to the full range of opportunities, both locally and nationally is built into planning and pupils are well aware of vocational as well as other training routes. Work experience is an effective use of time and pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their experience in preparation for future career choices.
39. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good overall and is improving. The performing arts (drama, music and physical education) represent a great strength of the school and the opportunities to perform for fun and in public involve pupils in a wide range of activities in which they take great pride in their whole efforts. Circus skills, breakfast club, steel pans, dance, netball and rugby are some of the activities on offer. Currently the range of boys' sports available out of school is below that normally seen, but it is improving. The pupil support unit provides a wide range of activities at lunchtimes and after school and the library and computer rooms are open whenever needed to support learning. Individual subject study support groups are also available and these are well supported by pupils.
40. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good and is a significant and improving strength of the school. There is much goodwill towards the school in the local business and professional community of Salford, which is being used productively by the new headteacher and put into effective action in support of pupils. Business and industry personnel visit the school to talk to pupils, conduct mock interviews and advise pupils on career options. There is a strong sense of urgency in the requirement to reinforce the notion of extended education at both academic and vocational levels and a refreshing willingness to co-operate. Colleges of extended education note a sharp improvement in the attitudes of pupils coming to them. The numbers entering extended education have risen from below 50 per cent to 64 per cent over four years but this remains well below the national average. This is expected to increase further.

41. Links with partner institutions are particularly effective. The pastoral link with primary schools and the smooth transition of pupils within the partnership have been very good for some time. The crucial curriculum links with partner primary schools are strengthening rapidly, as the school implements the best suggested by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and outlined in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Teachers give lessons in art, French, music, mathematics and science to pupils in the year before they come to the school. There is also improving liaison and exchange of skills in other subject areas. The school works very hard, particularly so since the arrival of the new headteacher to improve existing curricular links to ensure continuity of learning and to prevent duplication. However, not all subjects are involved in this initiative, but there are plans to develop curricular links further.
42. The school is developing a vocational strand to its 14 to 16 curriculum to maintain pupils' interest in education and to fill the need for practical, vocational education that leads pupils into work, further training and/or extended education. Pupils follow a variety of foundation and NVQ part 1 courses leading to certification and gateways into further courses. These include catering, building trades, motor vehicle engineering, hairdressing, administration and ICT.
43. The pupils following these vocational curricula are typically disaffected with school. The vocational experience is helping them to mature and to become self-reliant in the atmosphere of simulated work experience provided in Year 10, followed by actual work experience for some in Year 11. They appreciate the opportunities in education and work that are opening to them. They renew their understanding of the importance of school and many pupils work better in school as a result of seeing its relevance. For example, a girl enthused about her hopes to work as a chef; a boy expressed his hopes to use learned building skills to work with his brothers; another frequently troublesome pupil showed appreciation for the trust given him at college to work as an adult and his hopes for an apprenticeship in the motor trade. The school's intention to establish the permanent position of these courses and to widen access to all pupils has the potential to raise expectations and aspirations of pupils.
44. The school's literacy policy is not fully implemented and is not being used effectively to improve pupils' literacy skills. A member of staff has recently been appointed to co-ordinate literacy across the curriculum. There is an existing school policy and much valuable training has taken place over recent years. The policy is now under review in light of developments in the Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) Strategy. Most departments have policy statements in their handbooks but there are wide variations in the degree to which aspects of policy have been incorporated in teaching methods. Writing is the weakest activity and in several curriculum areas is adversely affecting achievement.
45. The school has been involved with the National Numeracy Strategy for 18 months. A school policy for the teaching of numeracy is in place as are those for many departments. In the main, these are ineffective because they are not specific enough, or are not adhered to. The policy of the music department details how numeracy can be incorporated in its work and both ICT and D&T have well planned opportunities identified in their documentation; these all support the pupils' application of numeracy well. Art makes a contribution through consideration of Islamic patterns and through the use of proportional and perspective drawings.
46. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive appropriate support although many others on the school register of pupils with special educational needs do not. Teachers compensate for lack of support by providing extra work and support themselves and the quality of this is often good. However, all pupils receive their basic curriculum entitlement. Pupils aged 14 to 16 have some opportunities to participate in vocational or work related courses but there is no coherent arrangement that ensures continuity and progression and other examination courses are often disrupted to accommodate these courses.
47. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is unsatisfactory, predominantly because there are too few specialist support assistants to help pupils with English language difficulties.
48. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Within that context, however, its provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. This is because the school has not effectively addressed a key issue of the previous inspection concerning its statutory

responsibility to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Nor does it plan effectively for pupils' spiritual development in the classroom.

49. Pupils attend one year group assembly a week and occasional whole school assemblies to celebrate special occasions in the calendar. On other mornings, pupils meet in their tutor groups for reflection on a "Thought for the Day". The school takes the conduct of assemblies seriously and they play an important role in reinforcing its moral and social values. Only about half, however, have any explicitly Christian, religious or spiritual content.
50. In most instances, form tutors do not address the planned "Thought for the Day". Tutor time is used primarily for pastoral and organisational purposes and lacks any spiritual dimension. There is no whole school approach to pupils' spiritual development in lessons. Where there is good practice, such as in art, music and religious education, it is as the result of individual departmental initiative. Elsewhere, opportunities are largely missed to raise pupils' spiritual awareness in the classroom.
51. The school makes good provision for the moral development of pupils. It has clear values, based on respect for the individual, that inform its daily life and work. Teachers provide very good role models for pupils. Most pupils know right from wrong and behave well. Pupils give practical expression to the values of caring in good support for a wide range of charities. A very well planned programme of personal, social and health education challenges pupils with a range of contemporary moral issues, including those relating to substance abuse and human sexuality. Other subjects also confront pupils with ethical issues. For example, geography explores those relating to globalism and sustainable development and religious education those surrounding the concept of the sanctity of life.
52. The school makes good provision for the social development of pupils. It publicly recognises their achievements and raises their self-esteem through a well-planned rewards system. It provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their social skills through visits and field trips and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, societies and teams. Pupils can learn to exercise responsibility and develop leadership skills through the effective student forum, the prefect system and routine duties around the school. Most subjects provide pupils with good opportunities to develop skills of collaborative working. The citizenship programme engages pupils with contemporary social issues. Not all pupils, however, have the opportunity to undergo a residential experience during their time in the school.
53. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. It provides them with good opportunities to experience the creative and expressive arts, with music and drama being particular strengths. Pupils are helped to develop an appreciation of their cultural heritage through visits to galleries, museums and theatres. Their appreciation of other European cultures is raised through visits abroad, for example, of the Steel Pan group to Holland and the biannual language visit to Spain. However, there is no foreign language exchange programme.
54. The school does much more than at the previous inspection to raise pupils' awareness of cultures other than the Western European, both through whole school activities and in the classroom. For example, a visit of the Zulu Dance Group brought alive African culture. Subjects such as the creative arts, food technology, textiles, music and religious education draw on inspiration from other cultures and beliefs. Pupils now have a more secure understanding of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European to the development of 21st century civilisation and appreciation of the multicultural richness and diversity of contemporary British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

55. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. This has improved since the last inspection and pupils' pastoral care is viewed as a priority. The school day starts early and the provision of a breakfast club facility is greatly appreciated by pupils and their parents. Such consideration is typical of the school's respect for pupils' needs. Risk assessment procedures are satisfactory and the school has appropriate first aid arrangements.
56. A senior member of the teaching staff is the designated teacher for child protection and she is fully trained. All members of staff received child protection training from the local education authority at the beginning of this academic year. There is a child protection policy specific to the school, which is currently being reviewed.

57. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection, leading to an overall improvement in the annual attendance rate since then. The recently recruited pastoral manager is building up a good relationship with parents of absent and late pupils through the first day of absence enquiry system. Pupils are encouraged and rewarded for good attendance and parents' assistance is regularly sought and advice is given to them on signs of truancy, through newsletters and meetings. The school is working hard on other strategies, including working closely with the educational welfare service, to improve attendance; although further improvement in attendance levels is awaited. Analysis has highlighted a major cause of absence as holidays taken in term time and the school is attempting to discourage the practice.
58. Systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour at the school, are good. Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and is managed very effectively by the strong and well-staffed pastoral teams, composed of heads and assistant heads of year and form tutors. The latter stay with pupils throughout their time at school, provide continuity for them and a good knowledge of their pupils, for the staff. The school's positive behaviour policy is very much rewards based and this is emphasised well. There is a clear cut range of sanctions, well known to pupils, ranging from a rebuke from teachers, to the 'Retreat' facility, to remove pupils who are troublesome to a closely supervised environment where they cannot affect others.
59. The school has developed many strategies for keeping its pupils in mainstream schooling; these include the use of the learning support unit, the Janus Centre and learning mentors. Only the most serious breaches of discipline lead to consideration of exclusion from school. On those occasions when that is the only appropriate sanction, all the statutory requirements for the process of exclusion are undertaken.
60. Any instances of bullying are dealt with sensitively and firmly. Parents are involved immediately and a careful watch is kept to ensure there is no repetition. Interviews with pupils during the inspection indicated that bullying was infrequent and is not a problem at the school. Records are kept as required and are analysed by pastoral staff.
61. One particularly effective initiative taken by the school is in the area of primary school liaison. The special educational needs co-ordinator attends each review meeting for pupils in Year 6 at the feeder primary schools and details of these, together with other pastoral and curricular information, such as reading age, is given to Year 7 staff, in advance of the pupils' actual transfer. This timely information helps pupils' transfer more easily. The school supplies Year 6 pupils with a planner, similar to the one they will use on transfer, to develop good habits in organising work, personal targets, homework etc. GCSE drama students produce a "Hopes and Fears" presentation to the Year 6 pupils to reduce their apprehensions. Pupils in Year 11 also act as mentors to new pupils and have had training to increase their skills for this role. They also participate in a shared reading programme with the new pupils. This very good practice by the school contributes considerably to a smooth transition for these pupils.
62. The school has good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. This has improved since the previous inspection and is structured to encourage them to show initiative and take responsibility, as soon as they enter the school in Year 7. Pupils are expected to fulfil duties such as that of office assistant in Year 8, year forum and school forum representatives and school prefects in Year 11. The school also has a head boy and girl. Prefects fulfil a variety of functions, including helping to supervise stairways, corridors and exits at lunchtime. These expectations of pupils help to develop their self-esteem and they clearly enjoy taking on responsibilities of this kind. The school's very good provision for personal, social and health education and its very good citizenship is preparing pupils well for adulthood.
63. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying pupils are thorough. Although there are links between departments and the learning support department, these are still developing and are not yet fully effective in ensuring that all staff have an appropriate understanding of the particular learning needs of those pupils with special educational needs. Liaison with primary schools is good and forms the foundation for initial assessment, which is then developed through extensive testing of pupils on entry and in subsequent years. This provides relevant information which should assist the school in making decisions about the level of support necessary for all pupils. However, while this

necessary support for pupils in lessons is provided for those pupils with statements of special educational need, it is rarely provided for other pupils with special educational needs. On the occasions when support is provided, by learning support assistants and when pupils are withdrawn, progress is good or very good.

64. The learning support unit provides very good support for pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, who are experiencing significant problems in developing literacy and numeracy skills or who are experiencing severe behavioural problems. Highly structured lessons using a wide range of resources and teaching strategies are provided for small groups of pupils by teaching staff and learning support assistants, leading to good or very good progress. Funding for this has been provided by the Excellence In Cities initiative and is making a significant and very positive impact on the progress of these pupils. The unit is very well managed and pupils are re-integrated into main school lessons and continue to make good progress. Learning mentors, also funded by Excellence In Cities are providing valuable support for a range of pupils who for a variety of reasons are underachieving.
65. The school has good assessment procedures, which have improved markedly in the last four terms following a strategic decision to strengthen them as an important means of raising standards. The appointments of an assistant headteacher in overall charge and of staff to assist with the task of entering assessment information into a computerised database, have been essential first steps in this reform.
66. The use of prior attainment information to track pupils' progress and to set targets for the future is in its first year and this is a positive development in helping to raise standards. At this stage, training of staff is still incomplete, as is the purchase of additional software, but a pilot project in Year 10 has been successful. Form tutors have an important role in putting this into effect. This was observed in operation during an early morning registration period, when pupils spoken to confirmed that they found their targets helpful. Long-term planning is to extend this across the school. In most subjects, assessment use is satisfactory at this stage rather than good, because time is needed to implement the new procedures. Existing procedures are at least satisfactory in all subjects, sometimes involving pupils in self-assessment. Good procedures are in operation in English, mathematics, science, geography, design and technology and ICT and very good procedures in drama. Where this is the case pupils benefit from having a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. Most parents have a positive view of the school and believe it provides a satisfactory education for their children. There was a good response from parents through the pre-inspection questionnaire and very few concerns were raised.
68. The most significant area, concerning a minority of parents, was a desire to be better informed about their children's progress. The inspection found that, generally, both the amount and the quality of information the school provides for parents and carers are good. The school has improved since the last inspection in this area and two monitoring report summaries are furnished each year to inform parents of their children's progress in achieving targets. This is in addition to year group curriculum information in the newsletters, open evenings and the written annual report. However, the latter report tends towards blandness in its wording and seldom refers to specific targets in subjects. Heads of year groups and form tutors, as well as faculty heads, also communicate with parents, both formally and informally, when necessary, about pupils' progress.
69. Pupils' planners contain targets and areas for improvement and parents are expected to note them each week, which many do; thereby making a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning. The school prospectus is very good and it makes clear to parents that the school has high expectations for its pupils in attendance, behaviour and academic effort and that parents and carers are expected to play their part fully.
70. Whilst the governors' annual report to parents gives much interesting information, it fails to include a description of the arrangements made for the admission of pupils with disabilities; details of steps to prevent disabled pupils being treated less favourably than other pupils; and details of facilities to assist access to the school by pupils with disabilities.

71. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association has restarted recently and is already organising social and fund raising events for the school. There are five governors who are parents, who make a significant contribution to the school community through this commitment to the school. Parents are having a satisfactory impact through their involvement with the school. Parents' views have been sought recently on whether or not to have a school uniform blazer and they decided against blazers on the grounds of cost for families with several children at school. These, growing links with and involvement of parents are satisfactory and are proving to be effective and beneficial to the school community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

72. Leadership and management are good and under the very good leadership of the new headteacher, the pace of improvement has increased. The recently expanded senior team have a suitable range of responsibilities and they are carrying them out effectively. For example, the quality of assessment is improving rapidly and there are considerable efforts being put into helping teachers analyse assessment information so that they can set targets, improve teaching and raise standards. There is a sense of purpose within the school for the need for improvement. The commitment of staff is good and the potential for improvement is good. Management of subject areas is generally sound and is good in English, art and design, geography, ICT and drama and is very good in music and citizenship. However, management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because there is inadequate co-ordination and monitoring to ensure that ICT is properly integrated into teaching in all subjects. There is an increased awareness of the need to focus on standards and most staff have come to grips with this. The school has had a long tradition of commitment to the performing arts and is planning to bid for specialist arts school status.
73. The leadership and management of special educational needs is satisfactory. There is a clear policy and a good range of information for staff. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities although their deployment and the balance of their time spent supporting pupils in the learning support unit and in the main school is not well planned. Learning support is provided through a variety of different sources and the co-ordination of these is still developing. There are regular meetings between the learning support staff and with representatives of departments in the school, but they are not focused enough on improving provision. The governing body provides appropriate support and the link governor is very well informed.
74. The school's monitoring of its own performance is satisfactory. There is increased observation and evaluation of teaching, examination of samples of pupils' work and teachers' planning and marking. At senior level this is good and is leading to targets for subjects and teachers. At departmental level it is satisfactory. There is some inconsistency – staffing difficulties have deflected attention into day-to-day organisation issues, though this is reducing and this approach is new for some teachers. Nevertheless, procedures are improving.
75. The school's priorities are clearly stated in the school improvement plan and have a focus on raising standards through improved teaching and on improving the school's accommodation. Governors and staff are involved in the development planning process and their involvement is improving. Overall the actions taken to meet the school's targets are good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have an increasing awareness of what the school needs to do, as a result of the information they are given by the headteacher and other staff. They do not meet all of their statutory obligations. The National Curriculum is not fully in place – ICT across the curriculum is not fully in place and the time allocations for subjects prevent full coverage of the National Curriculum in geography and history and physical education and religious education in Years 10 and 11. They are currently involved in ensuring that this is resolved by September 2003. Daily collective worship does not meet statutory requirements and information on disabled access to the school is not included in the governors' annual report to parents.
76. Financial management is satisfactory overall. The school makes sound use of grants for special educational needs and supplements these to provide further support. Nevertheless, there are insufficient support staff for special educational needs and the school is reviewing its provision in this area. In the current year the school plans to spend heavily to support resources for learning in computers and the library and to facilitate the development of teaching and learning. The funds it receives from the Excellence in Cities initiative to support gifted and talented pupils and to provide mentors for

underachieving and disaffected pupils are used effectively. The day-to-day financial procedures are well managed; there is good financial planning and procedures are carefully implemented by experienced and effective staff. The recommendations of the last auditors' report of two years previously have been implemented. The school is, correctly, beginning to reconsider means of achieving the best available value for money through a number of fixed contracts, to which it is tied until 2004.

77. The school receives and spends more per pupil than most schools nationally, but it has just emerged from a period of restricted development whilst repaying in full an agreed budget deficit. Premises costs are high and the cost of repair and maintenance of a complex site has been kept down whilst the overdraft has been cleared. The unusually high incidence of burglary causes very high losses and disruption to learning and brings in its wake much higher than usual security and insurance costs.
78. Overall, the provision for staffing is satisfactory and the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory, but there are too few support staff for pupils with special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language. There is a nucleus of staff who have been with the school for some years. This has provided a basis upon which improvements in standards can be anchored; staff development only pays off when teachers stay long enough to put training into practice in the classroom. Past staff turbulence has had a minimal impact on pastoral support systems because of good planning by management. General administrative matters are now dealt with by support staff and this allows teachers to focus more effectively on issues which affect standards. Some subjects are taught by teachers who are non-specialists, but the school manages this well. The school provides very good induction and support to new teachers.
79. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory although it has improved since the last inspection, through the refurbishment of several science laboratories. The external condition of the buildings is poor and depressing. Although much has been done to maintain the internal decorations, there are areas which are in a poor state of repair. This detracts cosmetically from the positive learning environment the school seeks for its pupils, as does the amount of litter on the site.
80. The school has tried to improve its environment by prioritising a series of internal improvements and redecoration and work has been done to improve outside safety and security with a variety of external funding. However, much of the outside areas and the exterior of buildings appear neglected and dilapidated, through lack of investment over past years.
81. Four out of the seven science laboratories have now been refurbished and provide a good working environment for staff and pupils. The mathematics, information and communication technology and technical faculty accommodation are good. Art faculty accommodation generally is good; but there is a need for better soundproofing between the art and music departments.
82. The provision for outdoor physical education is unsatisfactory. There are cracked steps and pavements and dogs foul the sports field, which is open to the public. One of the playground areas is on two levels, with only one set of small steps in between and another playground has an uneven surface, which is potholed in places.
83. Overall, the provision of resources to support learning is satisfactory. Most subject departments are adequately supplied and they are well supplied in music, mathematics, ICT and geography. Where less adequate resources exist, they are well husbanded. The library is a rapidly improving resource that seeks to support pupil learning across the curriculum. The appointment of a full-time librarian and allocation of additional funding have led to improvements in stock, better relations with subject departments and increased use of the library by various groups of pupils. However, stock levels are still insufficient to support the needs of 941 pupils and study space available in the library is insufficient for current levels of use. The numbers of computers available are broadly average.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. The headteacher, staff and governors must now:
 - i. Raise standards by:
 - fully implementing literacy and numeracy policies with a particular emphasis on writing;

- providing opportunities for pupils to experience ICT in all subjects;
- ensuring the programmes of study for history and geography in Years 7 to 9 and physical education Years 10 and 11 are fully taught;
- ensuring the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are fully met;
- continuing with existing strategies, and exploring further methods to improve attendance;
- sharing good practice, particularly, in raising standards achieved by boys;
- improving provision for vocational education;
- organising the curriculum to ensure that pupils have equal access to all subjects offered;
- continuing to work on strategies to deal with the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils; and
- providing opportunities for independent learning.

(Paragraphs: 8, 11, 12, 13, 21, 24, 27 - 32, 33 - 36, 43 - 46)

- ii. Improve the support for pupils with special educational needs by increasing the numbers of learning support assistants.

(Paragraphs: 8, 46, 78)

- iii. Improve the support for pupils with English as an additional language by providing specialist language support.

(Paragraphs: 9, 47, 78)

- iv. Work with the local authority to improve the quality of the school's accommodation.

(Paragraph: 79)

- v. Improve the quality of spiritual development by:

- providing planned opportunities for spiritual development in schemes of work; and
- ensuring the statutory requirements for collective worship are fully met.

(Paragraphs: 48, 50, 75)

Minor issues the school should also consider are:

- Ensure the information on disabled access to the school is in the governors' annual report to parents.
- Increase the numbers of books in the library to support pupils' independent learning.

(Paragraphs: 11, 70, 75, 83)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

163

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	27	74	55	7	0	0
Percentage	0	17	45	34	4	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	941
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	216

Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	115

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	20
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
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 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	105	82	187

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	63	56
	Girls	50	48	49
	Total	95	111	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (39)	59 (53)	56 (46)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (9)	32 (28)	19 (20)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	56	50
	Girls	62	46	43
	Total	121	102	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (53)	55 (51)	50 (30)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (17)	20 (22)	14 (8)
	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	68	87	155

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A* - G	1 or more grades A* - G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	10	60	68
	Girls	30	77	83
	Total	40	137	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	26 (22)	88 (89)	97 (94)
	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	26.6 (24.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	868	33	7
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	26	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	504.35

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.9
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Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,753,909
Total expenditure	2,713,555
Expenditure per pupil	3,022
Balance brought forward from previous year	11,661
Balance carried forward to next year	52,015

Key Stage 4	20.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	941
Number of questionnaires returned	303

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	52	8	6	2
My child is making good progress in school.	39	49	7	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	47	5	5	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	59	10	3	2
The teaching is good.	32	55	4	3	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	45	16	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	41	5	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	50	14	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	53	3	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	49	5	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	8	4	11

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting held for parents before the inspection, some concern was expressed about standards and the effects of poor behaviour on the achievement of some pupils. Some parents also were concerned that there was too little homework and that it was not regularly given. Inspection evidence shows that while standards are below average, pupils mostly achieve satisfactorily. In a small proportion of lessons, pupils' poor behaviour does spoil learning, but generally this is not the case. There are some inconsistencies in homework provision, but overall it is satisfactory. Parents expressed the view that the arrival of the new headteacher was having a significant impact on the quality of education – inspectors endorse that view.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, with very thorough planning of lessons.
- Pupils have a positive attitude towards the subject.
- The department is efficiently managed.

Areas for improvement

- Performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE, especially that of boys, is too low.
- Pupils of average and lower levels of attainment do not plan their written work carefully enough.

84. Serious recent staffing difficulties have had an adverse effect upon pupils' attainment and motivation in some classes, especially those preparing for national tests at the age of 14 and the GCSE examination.
85. In the national tests taken by Year 9 pupils in 2002 attainment was below the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above was below average, and the percentage of pupils obtaining Level 6 or higher was also below the national average. Compared with similar schools, results were below average overall, although the percentage of pupils obtaining Level 6 or better was broadly average. Girls performed better than boys. These results at the age of 14 in 2002 showed an improvement on those of 2001 and are part of an improving trend over the last three years. Considering the low levels of literacy of a significant number of pupils on joining the school, satisfactory progress is made by pupils up to the age of 14. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, results for A*-C grades were well below the national average with boys performing poorly. Results were below average compared with similar schools. Results in English literature were also below average but performance in both subjects showed clear improvement on that in 2001. Although some pupils have not caught up as much as they need to because of previous staffing difficulties, achievement is now broadly satisfactory. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and the highest attainers is good overall. The small numbers of pupils from ethnic minorities make satisfactory progress.
86. Standards in English seen during the inspection are below average overall by the time pupils are in Years 9 and 11. The general standard of speaking and listening is in line with expectations and by the end of Year 9 the great majority of pupils use standard English. Pupils listen attentively and work together well in pairs and small groups. They give way to others sensibly, arrive at agreed conclusions and feedback confidently to the class. The great majority answer questions willingly, audibly and fluently. Most higher and average attaining pupils read aloud confidently, with effective variation in pitch, pace and intonation. Some lower attaining pupils, however, although keen, find difficulty in reading fluently. Much imaginative and articulate discussion arises from pupils' study of literature. Standards in speaking and listening in Year 11 are broadly average. In one class, for example, pupils showed sensitivity and thorough knowledge of the text in their detailed consideration of the role of Shylock in the *Merchant of Venice*. They had a firm grasp of key themes in the play and developed their opinions coherently. Pupils' willingness to respond and evident confidence in discussion are a direct result of trusting relationships and clear ground rules established by the teachers.
87. The majority of pupils have levels of reading comprehension in line with those found nationally which equip them to read with understanding and enjoyment a wide range of literature and other material. By the end of Year 9, pupils have studied a wide range of literature and the majority identify accurately details of plot, characters and their motivation and the main themes. In their work on the early scenes of *Macbeth*, for example, pupils in Year 9 made imaginative suggestions for staging and lighting of the witches' scenes. A significant minority, however, have a reading age on entry well below their actual age. Such pupils receive intensive, specialist support and make good progress. Senior pupils offer additional and highly valued assistance through paired reading sessions with pupils from Year 7. Lower attaining pupils in Year 7 show good understanding of the family feud underlying the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, when acting out an adapted version of the opening scenes. By the age of 16, pupils study texts in

increasing detail and the standards they reach are broadly average. They respond with growing maturity and sensitivity. In the early stage of their introduction to Miller's *The Crucible*, a high attaining group in Year 11 asked perceptive questions about the text which showed real interest about the historical background to the play. Good use is made of the library to encourage reading, especially in Years 7, 8, and 9.

88. The overall standard of pupils' writing by Years 9 and 11 is below that found nationally. Pupils take care with handwriting and work is, in the main, presented neatly. Average attaining pupils at the age of 14 make errors with sentence structure, choice of vocabulary and the expression of ideas. Lower attaining pupils make frequent mistakes with paragraphing, punctuation and spelling. One main weakness, which contributes to the below average standard of writing, is the tendency for pupils to begin writing without thinking clearly what they wish to communicate before putting pen to paper. In Years 7, 8 and 9 there is a very wide range of levels of attainment that is reflected in the quality of written work. All pupils write for different purposes and audiences. They draft their work but too many pupils fail to read the first version carefully enough and, consequently, do not redraft thoroughly and accurately. High attaining pupils in Year 7, however, write imaginative, lively and largely accurate assignments that reach National Curriculum Level 5. Much attention is now being focussed in Years 7 to 9 on strategies to assist pupils in their writing and standards are improving. By the age of 16, high attaining pupils produce written assignments of high quality which are carefully planned, skilfully crafted and, on the whole, accurately expressed. Higher standards of writing amongst average attaining pupils will assist significantly in improving results in tests and examinations.
89. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good in almost all lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good and sometimes very good in two-thirds of lessons. This shows a marked improvement in teaching since the last inspection. Planning and preparation of lessons are very thorough. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject. Objectives for lessons are clearly explained and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. A stimulating range of teaching methods is used, with varied language activities. This results in pupils maintaining motivation, concentration and interest. Teachers question classes rigorously, encouraging pupils to elaborate upon answers and justify opinions. Such questioning engages pupils' attention and enables them to sharpen their own thinking. All these positive features result in mutual respect and confidence, leading to positive working relationships. Lessons are pitched at an appropriate level of challenge and pupils with special educational needs are taught with great sensitivity. Support staff and class teachers collaborate skilfully. Behaviour is good or better in almost all lessons. Occasionally, a few boys in Years 10 and 11, are not challenged firmly enough about attitudes and seem disaffected. Whilst not affecting the concentration of others in the class their own work is clearly suffering. In the great majority of lessons, however, the pace is brisk and pupils maintain concentration and motivation throughout.
90. The department has survived a period of serious staffing difficulties and has now a well-qualified and settled team. Much attention has been given to improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, with effective monitoring and evaluation of lessons and support for teachers. Good assessment procedures and detailed analysis of data are in place. Staff share the same aims for raising standards and the improvement in test and examination results in 2002 gave them encouragement. The department is efficiently managed and has been very skilfully led through a difficult period. However, the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Taking into account the staffing difficulties the subject has experienced and recent work done to improve teaching and raise standards, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
91. The effectiveness of the school's literacy strategy is unsatisfactory overall, though there are strong signs of improvement. Across the curriculum there are wide variations in the emphasis given to literacy. The majority of pupils listen attentively in most subjects but there are inconsistencies. Group talk is planned into lessons in art, design and technology, drama, history, geography and modern foreign languages but is little used in mathematics and science. Drama makes an outstanding contribution to the development of oral skills. Pupils' overall standards in speaking and listening are in line with those found nationally and not all subjects are exploiting this comparative strength.
92. The majority of pupils in all curriculum areas read well enough to understand textbooks and other materials. Key words are displayed effectively in science, art, geography and history. A range of texts suitable to pupils with different reading ages is available in geography. Subject departments make too

little use of the library but pupils in design and technology and music read for research and to extend their knowledge. In geography pupils are regularly encouraged to read aloud in class. There is little evidence that pupils are being helped with a range of appropriate reading strategies across the curriculum.

93. It is the overall poor standard of pupils' writing which causes concern in several departments. In mathematics, science and religious education examination results and general levels of attainment are adversely affected by inaccurate written work. Several departments are working hard to improve pupils' writing skills. In modern foreign languages accuracy in grammar is a high priority. Writing frames and other techniques are well used in geography and history to assist pupils to structure their written work. In these two subjects work is marked analytically and constructively, especially for GCSE courses.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with much that is good.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of behaviour and effort.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good overall.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- The attendance of some pupils restricts their progress.
- The use of numeracy is underdeveloped.
- The co-ordination and application of numeracy across the school is unsatisfactory.

94. The mathematics department has recently passed through an extended period of staffing turbulence, which has significantly depressed the attainment of many, particularly the older pupils. Dealing with the staffing issues has significantly deflected the efforts of the subject management from other considerations. The situation has now stabilised.

95. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests taken by Year 9 pupils, attainment in mathematics, in terms of the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or higher, was below average when compared with schools nationally and above average when compared with similar schools. There was no significant variation between boys and girls. In terms of the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 or better, results were below the national average but the same as the average for like schools. Again, there was no significant difference between boys and girls. Overall the results represent a gradual improvement over the past three years, with the rate of improvement greater than that nationally. In broad terms, the results were marginally better than those for both English and science. In the 2002 GCSE examination, results were well below the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C and below average when compared with like schools. In this examination girls performed far better than boys. The results in mathematics were poorer than those for English, but better than those for science. The overall trend in GCSE results has been upwards with occasional dips, for example in 2001. Much of this can be directly attributed to the staffing problems only recently resolved. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and higher attaining pupils generally make sound progress. The small numbers of pupils from ethnic minorities achieve satisfactorily.

96. Overall standards of work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of past work are below average at all ages. Until very recently the work of all years has been adversely affected by staffing problems and, additionally, that of some older pupils by their continuing poor attendance. In lessons seen pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils had, in past lessons, begun work on indices. Despite this work, some pupils still show confusion when adding $2x$ and x effectively multiplying them. Pupils of average attainment cope well with the first lesson on two-dimensional representations of common three-dimensional shapes. However, many had forgotten the rule for determining the areas of triangles. Lower attaining pupils speak fluently about perimeters and areas of given shapes. Although they know how to calculate them, pupils often fail to include reference to the unit of measurement used. Pupils with special educational needs, although concentrated in lower attaining sets, are present in most groups. They play a full part in lessons and generally work at the same rate and with the same degree of interest as the rest of the class. In most cases they make good progress.

The majority of lessons employ the three-part lesson structure, a feature of the National Numeracy Strategy and this is helping many pupils. Overall, the important warm up session does not always have the focus it deserves. Girls tend to be more reactive in class than boys but both have generally the same work rate so that gender differences are slight.

97. In Year 11 classes, pupils' achievement is again at least satisfactory and sometimes good. During the inspection week, all teaching groups were preparing their coursework submission for next summer's GCSE examination. In past work higher attaining pupils had worked competently with the sine rule and with Hero's formula for the area of triangles. Pupils of average attainment had used basic algebra well to rearrange a series of equations. Lower attaining pupils had mastered the use of tree diagrams to determine event probabilities. As with younger classes, pupils with special educational needs are present in most groups although most numerous in lower attaining sets. Again, they play a full part in lessons, work at the same rate and with the same degree of success as their classmates. They therefore make good progress, as do the few pupils of minority ethnic origin. In none of the lessons seen was there a significant difference in attitude or work rate between boys and girls. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a weakness with basic rules of computation.
98. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Within this, examples of good lessons and one lesson of very good teaching were seen with standards of teaching better overall for older than younger pupils. The best teaching is characterised by good teacher-pupil relationships, high expectations of both behaviour and effort, good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher and their good knowledge of the pupils as individuals. Teaching that is satisfactory often lacks an appropriate level of demand so that pupils' learning is not as well paced as it should be. In most lessons pupils' concentration and effort is maintained well and they display an interest in the subject matter. Homework is set regularly and, like classwork, is marked effectively, usually suggesting ways in which it could be improved. Reports to parents appear to be formulaic and do not indicate what needs to be done to improve standards. They are unhelpful.
99. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of department has had to support colleagues during an extended period of staffing disruption and this he has done well. This extended disruption not only depressed the learning of many pupils but also deflected management from some of its other tasks. For example, full analysis of test results has only recently restarted so that the use of pupil- and group-specific assessment data to guide planning is in its infancy. The faculty has used these data to identify under-performance of boys and has already taken steps to ameliorate this. A good whole-school training day on numeracy was not followed through effectively so that other subjects have yet to assimilate this material. Monitoring of classroom teaching is not a regular feature of mathematics so that opportunities to share the good practice that exists are lost. Little has been done to highlight the contribution the subject has to make to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship. The head of faculty is aware that these and other activities have lapsed and has begun work on them. The National Literacy Strategy is having a positive impact on the work of the faculty but needs extension. The National Numeracy Strategy is evident in lessons with younger pupils but staff need to refine the warm-up session so that it strengthens basic numeracy skills which currently are unsatisfactory. ICT is playing an increasingly important role in the work of the faculty and staff training to extend its use in teaching is ongoing.
100. Since the last inspection there has been some improvements. Significantly, the quality of teaching has improved so that this inspection witnessed no unsatisfactory teaching. The effect of the improvements in teaching have led to some improvement in achievement over time, but have been partially masked by the staffing problems.
101. The effectiveness of the school's methods to teach numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. This is despite a successful whole-school INSET day covering numeracy and the development of a whole school policy document. Documentation is primarily a statement of intent with only geography detailing how numeracy will be assimilated into its work. Despite this, standards of numeracy in most subjects are unsatisfactory. Most subjects have a policy statement but have yet to embed the ideas into their work. In science, for example, the policy does not focus on learning need in sufficient detail to be useful. Music, design and technology, ICT, art and science use numeracy in some lessons.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- High attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well.
- Teachers' planning is good.
- Relations between teachers and pupils are good.
- Assessment is thorough and is used well to guide learning.
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning is developing well.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils have poor standards of scientific literacy and experimental skills.
- Some pupils, notably boys, underachieve in Years 10 and 11.
- There is insufficient focus on learning in some lessons and the use of homework.

102. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002, the proportions reaching at least Level 5 and Level 6 were both below the national average but were in line with those in schools with pupils from similar social backgrounds. The performance of boys and girls was similar. For the last three years, results have improved steadily at a rate slightly greater than the national trend. Results in science were better than those achieved in English, but below those achieved in mathematics. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the results were well below average as measured by the proportion reaching at least grade C and those reaching at least grade G. Results were average compared to the results of pupils in similar schools. The smaller than usual group of pupils which followed a double science course reached standards significantly above the national average. Standards overall have improved steadily over the last three years with girls improving faster than boys and, overtaking them in 2002 for the first time in recent years. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily and higher attaining pupils generally achieve well.
103. By the age of 14, standards reached by pupils are below average, though they reflect the rising trend shown by national tests results and, although below average overall, shows wide range of attainment. By the end of Year 9, pupils with high prior attainment show an above average grasp of scientific vocabulary and can use it well. They are beginning to show sound understanding of some of the important scientific concepts such as chemical reactions. For example, Year 9 pupils show a good grasp of the principles underlying the reactivity series of metals. A greater number of pupils acquire a good deal of factual knowledge about biology, chemistry and physics but without showing significant understanding of the underlying concepts. Pupils with very low prior attainment acquire some knowledge when given appropriate support, particularly when they can represent their knowledge in diagrammatic form.
104. Many pupils are hampered by a very weak grasp of general and scientific literacy, particularly in relation to their written work. Some of the very low attaining pupils find it very difficult to acquire useful notes in their exercise books when left to their own devices without support. The development of all pupils in experimental and, particularly, investigative science is weaker than in the other areas of the subject. Low attaining pupils need very considerable support when carrying out and recording results of experiments. Their tables of results pay little attention to use of correct units and are often incomplete.
105. Achievement between the ages of 11 and 14 is satisfactory. The major contributory factors are teaching, most of which is satisfactory or better, the willingness of pupils to learn and the positive attitudes they bring to their lessons. Poor writing skills make it difficult for some to make progress, although the department has made a good start in developing scientific vocabulary. A lack of focus on the

development of the skills of scientific investigation from Year 7 onwards leads to slower progress in this area.

106. By the age of 16, standards reached by pupils are below average. The standard of work seen in school shows a wide range of attainment. Most of those who have chosen to study science as a double subject, show knowledge and understanding above national expectations across a wide range of topics as well as in experimental and investigative science. Pupils studying double science in Year 10 showed a good understanding of food chains and the flow of energy through them. Some pupils with lower attainment have difficulty in developing secure understanding but can, for example, draw conclusions relating to data they have gathered in their experiments and make links between variables when given support. In a lesson on fractional distillation, some pupils were able, with help from the teacher and a table of data, to link the boiling point of fractions to hydrocarbon structure. Poor retention of scientific knowledge and problems with writing characterises the work of many of the lowest attaining pupils. In practical course work, few can make predictions for the possible outcomes of experiment based on understanding.
107. Achievement is satisfactory between the ages of 14 and 16. Pupils with high prior attainment achieve well as a result of some well-directed teaching, their own positive attitude and the additional time allocated to double science. Some boys, particularly those with low prior attainment, do not achieve as much as they might on account of low levels of literacy, a poor attitude to work and some aspects of teaching which do not adequately address their needs.
108. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Of the lessons seen almost all were at least satisfactory and about half were good or very good; there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of science and mostly plan their lessons well. Pupils are well managed and a good learning environment is quickly established in almost all lessons.
109. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall and often good or better. There are many features of teaching which lead to good and very good learning. For example, most lessons begin with teachers taking the register and include a short activity in which each pupil is asked a question about some aspect of work related to the lesson. This quickly establishes a positive learning atmosphere. Lessons in which teachers consistently use carefully structured and persistent questioning are very effective in consolidating new knowledge and developing understanding.
110. The pace of learning is brisk when pupils undertake a series of well-planned, short but varied activities involving a range of learning styles. In a very good lesson on atomic structure and radioactivity the use of questioning, pupil contributions at the whiteboard, teacher demonstration aided by the technician and the use of ICT all contributed to rapid gains in new knowledge. Teachers' expectations are matched to pupils' prior attainment, providing challenge for higher attainers and promoting confidence in lower attainers. A low attaining class in Year 11 received well structured support using ICT in developing their understanding of the difference between mitosis and meiosis. Many pupils contribute effectively to their own learning by their positive attitudes to work and good relationships with their teachers. The careful attention paid by teachers to health and safety issues pays off in the care with which pupils handle apparatus and move safely around the laboratory.
111. Learning is slower where the activities are not planned well enough to help pupils move forward. In a Year 11 unsatisfactory lesson, some high attaining pupils made little progress because there was insufficient connection between the theoretical and practical aspects of the lesson so that pupils were uncertain of what they were aiming to learn.
112. Inconsistent use of homework and a lack of follow-up to work not completed leaves some pupils with little written work in their books. In some lessons, insufficiently structured writing activities pose problems for lower attaining pupils, who do not have the literacy skills to cope with free writing, leading to little real learning or development of good presentation skills. Some boys, particularly between the ages of 14 and 16, learn more slowly due to an immature attitude to learning both in lessons and in the work they are asked to do at home. An accumulation of poor learning habits leads to underachievement by the age of 16.
113. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of science provides good leadership of the team in which there is a mix of both experienced and younger teachers as well as a very hard-

working technician who provides very good support. Assessment procedures are good and the head of science carries out effective data analysis from which secure judgments are made about, for example, the grouping of pupils and changes to teaching programmes.

114. The recent change to double science for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 brings the department more into line with the national pattern. The guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority provides a sound basis for planning of schemes of work for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 and was seen in inspection week to be used to form good plans for most, although not all, of the lessons seen. Liaison with primary schools is good and a project for gifted and talented pupils is well under way. The use of ICT in teaching and learning continues to develop well and all staff are quickly becoming conversant with the good quality modelling software recently acquired. There is, however, insufficient focus on the development of the basic experimental and investigative skills from Year 7 onwards.
115. There are good procedures for monitoring the work of the department but some shortcomings in teaching seen during the inspection show that there is still some way to go to improve teaching to that of the best seen in order to accelerate the improvement in standards. All teachers are beginning to use keywords effectively but the good practice started has not yet had much impact on developing pupils' writing skills. Development planning overall is coherent and effectively linked to the school development plan and budgeting. The adequate resources of the departmental are well deployed and very carefully maintained by all staff. Accommodation is satisfactory and will be shortly further improved by the refurbishment of three more laboratories and the main preparation and storage area.
116. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Attainment by the age of 14 has improved as has the attainment of girls of all ages. Standards in GCSE, although now rising, are similar to those achieved at the time of the last report. Accommodation, which was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, has been significantly improved with the refurbishment of four of the seven laboratories. Developments in the use of ICT have continued to improve and teachers have made significant strides in developing expertise in its use.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, which means that pupils learn well in lessons.
- The management of the department is good.
- Staff demonstrate a good shared commitment to improve standards.
- Pupils behave well and show good personal development.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Areas for improvement.

- The percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades at GCSE is too low.
- Some boys continue to underachieve in spite of efforts made by the department.
- Pupils' technical skills are not good enough.
- Too few girls choose to follow the GCSE course.

117. Disruption of staffing has impacted on standards, particularly of examination classes over the last two years. The staffing is presently stable and standards are now beginning to rise but there are still staffing factors in place, which will impact on the continuity of the situation.
118. Results of the 2002 statutory teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average and were worse than in 2001. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002 the percentage of pupils obtaining A*-C grades was very low and similar to results in 2001. Attainment has fallen since the last inspection. The performance of girls was of a higher level than boys. Boys did less well in art and design than in their other subjects but girls did slightly better but less well than is the national trend. In 2001 and 2002 all pupils entered gained a GCSE grade and this was slightly above the national average.
119. By Year 9 standards are higher than those indicated in the 2002 teacher assessments, with girls performing better than boys. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards vary greatly but overall,

are below the national standards. This represents a good level of achievement, given the well below average level of attainment on entry to the school. Technical skills are weak, but sketchbooks exhibit an increasing ability to handle line and tone and in a project on the human figure pupils produced very lively drawings which demonstrated a growing confidence to express themselves. Pupils working on a project designing a piece of public art to celebrate the multicultural society show a growing understanding of art from a variety of cultures such as the Egyptian and Islamic, but only higher attaining pupils apply the styles to work of their own. Gifted and talented pupils produce work of a higher standard than the rest of the pupils but overall it is only in line with the national average. Good literacy strategies are in place, key words are displayed in rooms and teachers positively encourage the use of appropriate vocabulary, but poor written skills limit pupils' analysis and annotation of their own work. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because teachers give a high level of support and channel their strengths into successful outcomes.

120. By Year II, standards overall are lower than the national average, although they vary a great deal between classes due to the wide range of capability. A high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils follow art to examination level and they achieve well. However, this does impact on attainment comparisons with national results. At this level pupils interpret whole class themes and are encouraged to develop their own style. Pupils' work shows a growing understanding of research and investigation. For example, in a self-portrait project, pupils had soundly explored the work of artists such as Andy Warhol and Paulo Rego and produced good sketchbooks to support this, but the final outcomes did not always sufficiently reflect application or use of these artists' styles. Far more boys than girls choose to study art and their work frequently shows less attention to detail and an over-reliance on imagination. In coursework, higher attainers demonstrate the ability to extend work into different media such as large papier-mâché structures, but lower attaining pupils demonstrate a lack of understanding of how to develop work and fail to consider different styles and techniques. The poor level of analytical and observational skills combined with a lack of technical skill in the use of different media limits the achievement of many pupils. However, pupils are provided with a sound range of creative opportunities and as a result of the good teaching, pupils competence, knowledge and understanding is improving and achievement is overall satisfactory.
121. Teaching and learning are good overall and are never less than satisfactory. Over half the lessons seen were good and one lesson was very good. In the best lessons teachers plan well to motivate and engage pupils. In a project on 'self-image' pupils were encouraged to analyse characteristics of the human face and to look carefully at the different ways they have been portrayed by artists at different times and in different cultures. Pupils learnt to respect the diversity of people and gained the confidence to express how feelings and emotions influenced their response. Where lessons have weakness, it is generally because the aims are too broad and insufficiently focused on specific skills. Teachers manage pupils well and their high expectations of behaviour create a positive attitude in pupils. Most pupils are lively, enthusiastic and, at times, demanding but they interact well with teachers and want to do their best. Once they have settled down they listen well to instructions and are keen to participate in discussion which is frequently used. Higher attaining pupils respond well to challenging questions whilst lower attaining are given the support to respond confidently. ICT is built into planning but its use is still in the early stages. Projects are well planned to build on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and citizenship and the pupils' personal development is good.
122. Over the past two and half years there have been significant changes to the department. The head of the creative arts faculty has addressed the main areas of weakness within the department and clear plans and strategies are in place to address these. However, her task has been exacerbated by the instability of staffing within the department which has limited how fast standards could rise. The current staffing situation is now stable and the subject is well led and managed. The head of faculty provides strong leadership, carries out monitoring and evaluation in order to improve teaching and has a clear vision of the department's aims. Departmental plans are clear and informative and give good direction to the teachers who have a strong shared commitment to raising standards. New assessment systems have been introduced and are working reasonably well; pupils participate in their own evaluation of work and target setting. However lower attaining pupils are not always sure of the level they are working at, as they muddle effort and attainment. Strategies are in place to raise the achievement of boys and there are early signs of these beginning to have a positive effect. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall and, while standards have dropped due to staffing difficulties, they are now beginning to rise again due to the predominantly good teaching and learning.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Management of the introduction of citizenship education is very good.
- The quality of curriculum planning is very good.
- Management and leadership are very strong.
- The programmes of study across Years 7 to 11 are comprehensive.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are underdeveloped.
- There are insufficient links with the community.

123. A very good start has been made to the introduction of citizenship education. The school operated one year ahead of mandatory requirements by setting up and evaluating the provision of citizenship education. A co-ordinator was appointed in 2001, an audit of existing practice was made and methods of teaching were decided upon. During the inspection, one citizenship lesson in each of Years 7 to 11 was observed.
124. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are good. Pupils in Year 7 know that a large proportion of the world's population has insufficient food to eat and that Africa is one of the poorest areas of the world. Many of the pupils in one Year 7 class had learning problems, but, through carefully focused teaching, they all gained an insight into the reasons for poverty in Africa. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 have a very secure understanding of the importance of healthy eating as an important factor in a good quality of life in today's fast-moving society. Year 9 pupils are aware of the role of international peacekeepers and are gaining knowledge of the problems they have to face. For example, higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 class made perceptive comments about a speech made by Kofi Annan.
125. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are good. Year 10 pupils have a broad, general view about the nature of crime nationally and locally. In one lesson, they made good sense of data analysis on crime statistics. They debated gender differences relating to responsibility for crime in a mature way and had a productive discussion about serious crime by ten and 11 year old children. In a Year 11 class, pupils had limited oral skills and were fairly slow thinkers, but they debated points with tenacity. They understood, for example, the implications of immigration by various ethnic and religious groups into the Manchester area. Although some of them had innate prejudices, they were prepared to listen to alternative points of view and understood the reason why immigrants want to come to England.
126. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and is good in Years 10 and 11. The co-ordinator has produced detailed programmes of study and lesson notes for all modules of work in citizenship across the school and these make a significant contribution to why teaching is good. Lessons are very well prepared and strategies are successfully used to raise the interest of the pupils. The attention of a Year 7 class was consistently maintained through the lesson by the teacher's well-prepared information, presented with the aid of an interactive white board. A Year 8 class became engrossed in a game in which pupils' pulses were timed before and after taking part in

exhausting physical and intellectual tasks. Teachers make pupils think for themselves individually and in groups. They always deal with sensitive matters in a very careful way. Brainstorming is a technique successfully enabling pupils of all capabilities to become actively involved. Teachers of citizenship make a point of always bringing into discussion less able and less communicative members of the class. Pupils achieve well in lessons due to the quality of the teaching.

127. Pupils' attitudes to citizenship education are very good throughout the school. Most pupils see the relevance of the subject to their lives and welcome opportunities to discover more information about what they read and see on television. In the lessons observed, they clearly enjoyed the topics covered. Concentration levels are high, even by the less able in hour-long lessons and all pupils are sufficiently comfortable to put forward their opinions, as they know that the teachers and other pupils will carefully consider their views. Pupils demonstrate sensitivity to world problems, as, for example, Year 7 pupils' response to photographs of starving African children. Older pupils holding stereotypical views about gender, race and politics, are prepared to have their statements challenged.
128. Management and leadership of citizenship education are very good. The co-ordinator is committed to the subject and has very thoroughly prepared the way for its successful introduction. Sixteen members of staff teach citizenship as a discrete subject and every pupil in the school receives a discrete lesson once a week. The co-ordinator meets all subject teachers approximately once every five or six weeks to evaluate how the modules are progressing and to discuss teaching styles and approaches. She spent the summer break at the end of the first year updating programmes of study. It is a problem that timetable pressures upon the co-ordinator restrict her from directly monitoring what is happening in the classroom in citizenship lessons. Strategies are in operation for bringing in outside personnel to teach aspects of the subject. Currently, such links are not extensive enough to enrich and enhance citizenship education.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The subjects is well managed and led.
- Teaching is good overall; lessons are planned well and proceed at a good pace.
- Pupils' attainment and progress is monitored rigorously.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- ICT is not used consistently enough as a tool to support learning.

129. In the end of Year 9 teachers' assessment in 2002, the attainment of pupils was below the national average but better than in 2001. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 results for A*-C grades were below average and showed no improvement on the previous year. Attainment in the graphic products option was below that attained in other aspects of the subject. The performance of girls is better than boys overall and girls perform significantly better at higher levels. The department has suffered from some problems in staffing in recent years. The difficulties in acquiring a stable teaching team have undoubtedly adversely affected attainment.
130. Standards of work produced in Year 9 are average and show an improvement over the previous year. The pupils enter the school with standards that are below average. Their drawing and illustration skills are not at a high enough level and this aspect is not covered adequately. They make good progress through Years 7 to 9. The planned practical activities are sufficiently challenging. Pupils make better progress in manufacturing and standards are higher in this aspect of their work. Standards of designing are average. The use of research and evaluation is a strength when preparing a design brief or specification. In Year 9, pupils record and communicate their ideas well and improve them as they progress. For example, in a textiles lesson pupils prepared designs for a bag. Their drawings were of a good standard and gave a good impression of the finished product.
131. The emphasis in most lessons is on manufacturing, to ensure the pupils finish making their products in the limited time available. Lesson plans ensure that pupils apply and build on previous learning as they

move through the year. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the subject by the age of 14. They know how to use tools and equipment to a satisfactory standard and achieve a satisfactory level of consistency. Good standards were seen in their food technology products, textiles and resistant materials projects. Their knowledge of the use of control systems and computer aided design is limited.

132. Inspection evidence shows that standards achieved by 16 year olds are broadly average. All evidence indicates that, although standards could be higher and examination results for 16 year olds could be better, the quality of teaching has been effective in promoting good achievement. Current groups in Year 11 are achieving a better standard in their practical work, although their folder work is not consistently at a satisfactory stage of completion for this time in the year. Year 11 pupils have satisfactorily mastered a range of skills in making products and their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials is generally good. Though overall standards are average, higher attaining students are attempting a range of projects and use their skills well to develop their ideas. Their research is thorough and helps to shape designs. For example, in a packaging project in Year 11, based on commercial designs, pupils sketched and developed their own ideas and designs to suit the materials and their individual skills. Pupils use ICT in the presentation of design folders, particularly text and graphics processing. Computer aided design is beginning to be used, for example, to produce circuit board designs and simple line drawings, although there is no consistent planned approach.
133. Pupils generally work purposefully and demonstrate a positive attitude to the subject. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are confident in practical work and help each other in their tasks, offering comment and criticism in a positive manner. All evaluate their own work and this gives them an indication of their attainment and progress. Pupils are encouraged to continue with project work during after school clubs.
134. Teaching and its impact on learning, is good. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes. Teachers' subject knowledge and experience are good. Teachers plan lessons well; lessons are clearly focused and learning objectives are shared with pupils. Key learning points are systematically reinforced through questioning and discussion. There are good introductions to lessons, which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help students understand and extend their vocabulary. There is good practice of individual mentoring and assessment and teachers build up comprehensive records of individual pupils' progress. Progress is reviewed effectively in the plenary session of lessons. Teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engages students. Their skilful handling of materials and equipment enables students to acquire skills which they then use successfully themselves. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. In a Year 8 food technology lesson pupils were keen to share their success when preparing different types of pizza to a specification. The differing needs of pupils are well met and they work well with pupils with special educational needs and are aware of targets in individual education plans. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the teachers provide extra support for learning. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words; they provide writing frames and design frames and this helps pupils to deal with the written elements of examinations. There is an emphasis on health and safety during lessons.
135. The display of pupils' work in classrooms and the open areas around the department is good, contributing to pupils' interest and the development of their ideas. Teachers use homework satisfactorily contributing markedly to students' learning. Classes are competently managed and students are attentive, co-operative and eager to learn. The use of ICT is not integrated in the schemes of work; there are too few opportunities to use computers to support teaching and learning. There are missed opportunities particularly for lower achieving pupils who might benefit from the use of computers to enhance their work.
136. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department can improve and this is shared by all staff. There is a clear focus on raising standards. The development plan is detailed and the capacity for improvement is good. The department has a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all. There is good delegation of responsibilities to make best use of teachers' different areas of expertise. The curriculum is well planned with activities relevant to all pupils. Accommodation for the subject is good. The technician provides a good level of support and makes an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There has been improvement in management of the subject, curriculum planning, teaching and health and safety.

Child Development (GCSE)

137. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, results were below average and there has been no improvement over the last three years.
138. Pupils complete several projects in Years 10 and 11 for their coursework assignments. The individual practical projects are of a satisfactory standard and include research and observational studies. The work seen during the one lesson observation and the scrutiny of pupils' assignments showed the standard to be sound. Pupils are keen to discuss their work and do so with a level of confidence. They enjoy the work which provides stimulus and challenge and they try to succeed through patience and determination. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are satisfactory overall though some pupils do not always maintain good levels of concentration or work to their best standards. The higher attaining pupils take responsibility for organising their tasks and there is much independent work.
139. Teaching is satisfactory. The teacher has good subject knowledge. In the lesson seen, there were clear, short-term objectives and careful attention was paid to the sequence of activities, though this did not always contribute to a good pace. Activities were well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individual pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. Work was sufficiently linked to the requirements of the examination syllabus. The teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour were satisfactory. Work was flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work was marked regularly and the teacher gave helpful oral and written comments that were informative, constructive and encouraging to all pupils. Homework was set to reinforce the content of lessons.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good on the GCSE course.
- Pupils make good progress.
- Leadership and management are good with a clear view of how to improve.
- The department makes a very good contribution to the teaching of citizenship.
- Very good use is made of computer aided demonstrations to intensify learning through powerful images.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little teaching time in Years 7 to 9 to meet the statutory obligation to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum.
- Provision to improve pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are unsatisfactory.
- Effective teaching skills seen during the inspection are not sufficiently well shared.

140. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the attainment of pupils was, as in previous years, below average. This represents good progress because what many Year 7 pupils know, understand and can do, is well below average. Many do not know north, south, east and west, or recognise the shape of the British Isles or Italy on a map. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, pupils attained below the national average, but not significantly so and results were better than in 2001. Boys did better than girls. Geography attracts fewer pupils to the GCSE course than other subjects and few of its higher attainers. Taking into account their performance in the National Curriculum tests in 2000, they performed very well in the GCSE examinations. A few pupils who joined the school after the beginning of Year 10 started the GCSE course but did not complete it and some poor attenders and those who were excluded were not entered for the examination.
141. Inspection evidence shows that standards obtained by 14 year olds are below average. Pupils in Year 9 lack practical and enquiry skills because they experience insufficient fieldwork and computer-based enquiries. For example, pupils have not experienced micro-climatic studies or developed in depth local studies of traffic or land use surveys before the age of 14 or written up the results using computer techniques. Nevertheless, pupils achieve well in the geography they do learn in class and their progress between the ages of 11 and 14 is good overall. Progress is good amongst the highest and middle

attainers and is better amongst the girls than the boys. The few pupils with English as a second language receive no support and those with special educational needs receive no additional support in class to help them make suitable progress.

142. Pupils in Year 11 obtain standards that are broadly below average. They achieve well between the ages of 14 and 16 but cannot easily make up for the time lost between the ages of 11 and 14. Pupils in Year 11 have a sound grasp of the economics that underpin the tourist industry. Boys in particular achieve well, showing that they can produce arguments from several viewpoints as they learn well about the ecology of the Galapagos Islands and discuss whether or not the environment which inspired the theory of evolution can survive in the face of tourist development.
143. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is better on the GCSE course than in Years 7 to 9. Just under half of the teaching is good and some is very good. Most of the rest is satisfactory but in just over one lesson in ten, teaching is unsatisfactory. Most teaching is by subject specialists with a minimal contribution from one non-specialist. Their subject knowledge is secure and explanations and lesson organisation enables pupils to gain in knowledge and understanding.
144. Teachers plan well to teach basic skills but shortage of time between the ages of 11 and 14 inhibits the development of extended writing. The plan to use number skills is not yet fully included into teaching. Pupils do not use computers enough, nor do they enquire in depth into geographical problems. Consequently they do not receive their statutory right to have part of their learning through ICT and pupils are not exposed sufficiently often to the higher levels of the National Curriculum. They do not gain the skills in Years 7 to 9 that contribute to coursework marks at GCSE. Marking is satisfactory overall but more thorough and constructive on the GCSE course than between the ages of 11 and 14. On the GCSE course pupils know their target grades and have agreed to them with their teachers but pupils do not know how to improve their work.
145. Where teaching is good or very good, teachers challenge pupils, they keep the pace of learning fast and use questioning effectively to ensure pupils are actively involved in lessons. There is often a buzz of excited learning. Then they work hard and behave well. For example, in a Year 10 lesson for lower attaining pupils who often show challenging behaviour, a girl was able to work out for herself why the undergrowth in an equatorial forest was thicker nearer to rivers than in the depth of the forest and to explain that this has to do with the penetration of light and not with the availability of water. A boy was able to work out why the tropical rain forest of deciduous trees is always green. In this type of lesson pupils invest much intellectual energy. For some pupils the one hour lesson is too long and others flag visibly well before the end of the last lesson of the long morning.
146. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace of learning is sedate; the teacher gives information to pupils, uses less questioning and provides less variety of activity. Pupils are passive listeners and watchers and written work is less challenging. Where teaching is unsatisfactory the teacher talks for too long, is too concerned with controlling behaviour and tasks are unchallenging.
147. Specialist teachers use visual aids and presentations effectively and pupils react strongly to the powerful video images of earthquakes and describe the sharp differences between the reactions of more and less economically developed countries to natural disasters. The very good use of computer aided demonstrations has a stunning impact on learning. Images of earthquakes, floods and tropical forests rivet the attention of all pupils. For example, a Year 7 girl had tears in her eyes as she described how a mother sacrificed her own life to save that of her baby in a helicopter rescue from a flood in Mozambique. Skilful variation in notes around the pictures allows pupils of all levels of prior attainment to attempt writing tasks. Consequently, pupils work at their own level and pace through suitable challenging tasks so that progress is good at Key Stage 3 and very good on the GCSE course.
148. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Standards are rising and there is a clear view of how to improve. Teachers' assessments are accurate and they use the information well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Systems for Years 7 to 9 to show pupils how to improve their work are not fully implemented. There is insufficient time allocated to geography in Years 7 to 9 so the school does not meet its statutory obligation to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. Teachers plan to teach some themes in depth to maintain the interest of pupils rather than try to meet legal requirements. Some classes lose their single weekly lesson for administrative reasons which means

they fall considerably behind pupils in other groups in the same year. The contribution to developing world citizenship skills is very good. Pupils learn well about such topics as population, the environment, the differences between more and less economically developed countries and their responses to such phenomena as earthquakes and flooding. Monitoring of teaching does not yet share sufficiently well the good teaching practice within the department.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods.
- Progress made by pupils in Years 9 and 10 is good.
- Assessment practice in Years 7 to 9 is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards obtained at GCSE are too low.
- Higher attaining pupils do not make enough progress.
- Evidence-handling skills are underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9.

149. In teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 the attainment of pupils was below average overall and similar to results in 2001. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE level was well below the national average but this represented a considerable improvement on the previous year, when results were poor. Whilst pupils performed relatively less well in history than in other subjects, they made satisfactory progress when their attainment on entry is taken into account. Thus, despite modest attainment, the progress made by pupils over Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory.
150. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils demonstrate appropriate subject knowledge. They interpret and make simple inferences from documentary and visual sources, such as portraits of Elizabeth I. However, they lack understanding of the origin and value of source material that would enable them to evaluate sources as evidence. Lower attaining pupils in a particularly well-taught Year 9 lesson sort evidence to form competing views about the treatment of Black Americans in the period of 'Reconstruction' following the Civil War and offer explanations for the differences based on the possibility that *Blacks were treated differently at different times or in different parts of the country*. Where teaching is less well organised, pupils of all levels of prior attainment are insufficiently challenged.
151. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average, despite good progress made in Year 10. In Year 10, pupils can interpret, evaluate and compare visual sources, such as photographs and paintings, relating to various aspects of the Home Front during the First World War and can comment on their usefulness as evidence to a historian. In coursework, they demonstrate well-developed techniques for extended writing, which they use to construct causal explanations, for example, of increases in employment opportunities for women during the war. In contrast to this, the work of pupils in Year 11 is grammatically weak. Moreover, it is characterised by poor subject knowledge, descriptive narratives and face-value interpretation of source material such as political cartoons.
152. Broadly, the picture is one of well below average attainment in national examinations but satisfactory progress in history lessons. This can be explained by the re-staffing of the history department in September 2001 and by improvements in teaching and learning that have subsequently occurred, including particular emphasis on the development of literacy skills.
153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. One example of good teaching was observed and one example where teaching was unsatisfactory. In the best practice, the teacher uses a wide range of learning activities that are consistent with the notion of active learning and with the development of thinking and communication skills. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, one pupil from each group was allowed to look at a picture of a motte and bailey castle and then had to describe it to the rest of the group whose task was to draw the castle. Almost without knowing it, these pupils became experts on the details of motte and bailey castles. In such lessons, pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well and make rapid progress because they have equal access to the task and *can respond at different levels*

according to their ability. Less successful teaching is associated with poor management of activities, lack of pace and pupil disaffection. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils became restive because of the time it took several groups to 'report back' their responses to portraits of Elizabeth I. Similar behaviour occurred on other occasions when pupils were not sure of what to do, or could not see the purpose behind a task.

154. Other factors have had a significant impact on pupils' achievement. There has been an increase in teacher expectation of pupil learning since the new appointments and an increase in what teachers are prepared to do for their pupils. This is evident in the scheme of assessment that is being developed in the department. This is designed to provide opportunities for very accurate, diagnostic feedback to pupils, pointing out specific strengths and weaknesses and indicating what pupils need to do to improve their work. On the other hand, the desire to improve standards is undermined by two major factors: history's limited curriculum share of one hour-long lesson per week in Years 7 to 9 and the chronic shortage of sets of good quality text books for Years 8 and 9.
155. The department is competently managed and operates within the larger unit of the humanities faculty. The head of department has produced a thoughtful scheme of work, which makes clear links between teaching methods and learning objectives. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in Years 7 to 9; however, there is too much emphasis on Black American history in Year 9 and not enough on local history generally across the key stage. No formal monitoring of lessons occurs but both history teachers have been observed by the head of faculty as part of the performance management cycle. A range of effective strategies for teaching, assessment and the monitoring of pupils' progress are in development and the department is united in its determination to raise standards of pupil attainment.
156. Steady improvement has occurred since the last inspection. Subject leadership has been established and teachers have higher expectations of pupils. Through careful planning, pupils are exposed to a much wider range of teaching methods and learning experiences and, consequently, demonstrate understanding of a wider range of historical ideas and techniques. GCSE results are still well below average but are slowly improving as a result of these recent developments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for ICT is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them well in class work and in answering routine questions and are achieving well overall.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils share ideas freely and work well together.
- The department is improving the quality and range of learning resources.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their ICT competencies in other subjects.
- The management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

157. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed that the attainment of pupils was above the national average and had improved over recent years. The GCSE and GNVQ examinations results in ICT at the end of Year 11 in 2002 were in line with the national average and have risen in recent years.
158. For the present Year 9, standards in ICT are broadly average within the range of activities in the subject. In lessons, pupils demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make calculations. They use desktop publishing to a good level of competence. The use of computers for all strands of the programmes of study is in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age. They have insufficient opportunity to develop these aspects in other subjects. Pupils have access to the Internet and use this to download images and data. They create and retrieve information from a database successfully.

159. In Years 10 and 11, standards are in line with those expected for 16 year olds. In the GCSE lessons and GNVQ option pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desktop publishing, use of database and using spreadsheets to simulate business practice. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. There is limited use of computers in other subjects and too few opportunities to apply their skills. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete.
160. Pupils use computers confidently and know how to use the Internet to research topics. Their keyboard skills are good and they use spreadsheets and databases to model costs and store and retrieve information. There are no significant differences between the standards achieved by girls and those of the boys. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate for the needs of the courses being offered. Pupils develop and apply their skills further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects and calculations for which they use spreadsheets.
161. Pupils' achievement is good. Currently, pupils are reaching satisfactory standards at this stage of the course. Coursework folders are now organised well in Year 11 as are the examples of work seen in Year 10. Pupils enter Year 10 with a wide range of skills and experience. They make satisfactory, often good progress because the quality of teaching is good and there is reliable provision. Pupils with special needs make similar progress in ICT to others because they are provided with appropriately challenging work. The targets in education plans are well-known to teachers and the help they provide is specific.
162. Pupils have positive attitudes and are making a good effort to improve their skills. They are responding well to the regular and structured teaching being provided. Behaviour is good overall. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils arrive promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.
163. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' expertise contributes to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment and this careful matching of work to pupils' needs motivates pupils and maintains their interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence.
164. Overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The school has responded to the last inspection and improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils and improvement of access. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 are assessed and fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network but the ICT skills of individual teachers have not been used effectively to deliver the curriculum. At present opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are not always sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Technical support is very good. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunchtime and at other times when pupils can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.
165. The leadership and management provide a vision and direction which have the potential to lead to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements and develop the use of ICT across the curriculum. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in its work. There is a good team ethos in the department, staff work hard to achieve improvements and the capacity to succeed is high.
166. The systems of tracking pupil achievement throughout the school are good; there is regular monitoring of attainment and progress. Policies and the strategic plan outline clearly the aims and objectives for ICT. The assessment of attainment and progress is used effectively to inform teachers' planning. The development plan details priorities to secure high quality teaching and learning and to provide an ICT

curriculum across the school, all clearly targeted on raising standards. However, the role of the co-ordinator is not yet fully developed; the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is an area for improvement.

167. Accommodation is good; the size and number of rooms is suitable for the number of pupils being taught. The level of resources and equipment available in the department is in line with what might be expected for a school of this size. Improvements since the last inspection include offering a GCSE / GNVQ accreditation for all pupils and pupils now make good progress.
168. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise skills in other subjects, to help their progress. The majority of subject areas including English, science and mathematics have planned for the teaching of ICT in schemes of work but there was very little evidence of teaching and learning using computers. In music, however, the teaching and learning was seen as being good and pupils had good opportunities to develop their skills. The teaching of business studies also contributes effectively to developing pupils' ICT skills. Pupils can access the Internet to carry out research for projects and they use their own time to do this. At present pupils' achievements in ICT across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network. The opportunities for the consistent application and development of computers are not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression.
169. The number of computers available is in line with what might be expected nationally and most of the equipment is up to date.
170. The co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is no tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of information technology. The school plans to make sure that a greater range of opportunity is offered to pupils by producing a scheme of work which sets out just when and how ICT will be taught in all subjects taught in the school. There is a specific policy for ICT across the curriculum, but this has not been implemented.

Business studies - GCSE

171. The GCSE results are below average when compared to national averages and when compared to other subjects in the school. However, there has been some improvement over the last three years. The schemes of work offer good opportunities for pupils to be involved in business projects and the activities extend their knowledge and understanding of business.
172. The evidence from the work review shows that pupils have satisfactory skills in ICT and have an understanding of their use in business. They use spreadsheets, database and word processing to present information. Pupils cover the key skills adequately. Pupils are now developing the technique of preparing information for an audience and writing evaluations. There is good use of the Internet to carry out research for project work. The standard of pupils' portfolios is satisfactory.
173. Satisfactory standards of work are produced. Pupils develop their analytical thinking very well and have good opportunities to explore the more abstract concepts of the subject. Progress in lessons and through modules and projects is satisfactory overall; lower attaining pupils are actively supported to maintain these standards. Pupils' progress is better when they are actively involved in learning which encourages them to explore themes and make decisions for themselves. Pupils work well together.
174. There is a clear marking and assessment policy which involves formative, diagnostic and summative assessments. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' work well to inform future planning and teaching. The department uses its own internal system to verify its assessments effectively.
175. Pupils make good use of the computers in the department to extend their capabilities in using information technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and staff are committed.
- Pupils are well managed and this results in good relationships.
- Teaching is clearly related to the cultural context of the people who speak the languages.

Areas for improvement

- Too few pupils take modern foreign languages in Year 10.
- Pupils in Years 9 and 10 do not use the past tense soon enough to support their speaking and writing skills.
- There are too few planned opportunities for ICT.

French and Spanish

176. Each of these languages is taught to half the pupils in Years 7 to 9 and higher attainers have the opportunity to add the other language from Year 8 onwards. GCSE courses are now offered in Years 10 and 11 only as a subject of choice to small numbers of pupils, currently 17 in each language in Year 11. In Year 10, 22 pupils take French and ten take Spanish. These low numbers are a concern. Some pupils who wished to take Spanish could not do so because of the options system. No course has been provided specifically to replace the discontinued short courses, with the result that modern languages fail to attract many middle and low attaining pupils, though there are nevertheless a few low attaining pupils who achieve well in mixed ability classes. Two pupils in each of Years 10 and 11 take both languages.
177. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 attainment was below average and was lower than in previous years. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory overall in relation to their standards in English, mathematics and science when they entered the school in Year 7. There was good achievement by some higher attainers, approximately a quarter of the total. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, GCSE results were above average in French and well above in Spanish. Thirty-six pupils took French and 22 took Spanish, short courses having been discontinued in the school. Attainment of those pupils taking the course was above average and pupils' achievement was good and very good for those pupils who continued what was for them their second language. High standards at GCSE have been maintained since the previous inspection and results in 2002 were better than in 2001. In 2002 pupils did better in French than in most other subjects in the school and in relation to their other subjects they achieved almost a whole grade better than is the case nationally. Such comparisons cannot be made in Spanish because of the smaller numbers.
178. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average overall. Pupils do not learn to use the past tense to talk and write about what they have done, so cannot reach Level 5 of the National Curriculum. Pupils develop a good understanding of the working of language and of technical terms used to describe language, which contribute well to overall literacy skills, as does the training they receive in accurate writing and in listening. Pronunciation is good because pupils hear their foreign language spoken as much as practicable in lessons. Although formal planning for citizenship is not yet in place there is reference to both French and Spanish as world languages. In alternate years, very good experience is offered to those learning Spanish, who have the opportunity to stay with Spanish families; this contributes to their speaking skills as well as to their personal development. Numbers are routinely used in both languages for purposes of everyday communication, but opportunities are being missed to develop number skills further, for example by surveys which would produce information to be recorded in graph form. Pupils have some experience of the use of computers to support learning, but the facilities available are too limited to ensure that they all benefit. There is limited use of the Internet to access information in a foreign language but again access is insufficient.
179. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average overall, in both French and Spanish. Although there is a wide range of prior attainment in both French and Spanish classes, pupils have a good grasp of the grammar and can express themselves appropriately in speech and language.
180. Teaching is good in both French and Spanish, which are taught by different teams of teachers. Only one teacher teaches both. The teacher in charge of Spanish is a native speaker of the language and by her presence on the staff enriches the European ethos of the department. Three quarters of the lessons seen were good and one was very good. None were unsatisfactory, and there were no examples of poor behaviour adversely affecting learning. On the contrary, pupils' attitudes are good. Pupils relate well to

teachers who know and, manage them well. For example, lower attaining pupils in French lessons had had the same teachers for three years, knew exactly what was expected of them and responded well, leading to attainment that was below but not well below average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do the few pupils who have limited English. Good lesson planning leads to a brisk pace of teaching and learning. Pupils are encouraged to read for enjoyment, and good use is made of television and video to enhance pupils' cultural background as well as their listening skills. They have a wider range of vocabulary than many of their contemporaries in other schools. However, their long-term progress is slowed because they are not taught soon enough how to say and write what they have been doing, i.e., to use past tenses, a shortcoming in strategic planning in the middle years. This results in a lack of confidence with these structures as late as Year 11.

181. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have led, over the years, to high standards at GCSE. Although the two subject disciplines are separate, effective communication and monitoring ensure that there is sufficient common ground, for example in the use of assessment and in target setting. The teacher in charge of Spanish takes responsibility across the whole department for pupils with special needs. However at this time the scheme of work has shortcomings, notably in the need to take account of current national policies regarding numeracy, citizenship and the use of ICT.
182. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory progress. Consistently good teaching by a settled team of subject specialists has maintained good outcomes. Resources have improved. Nevertheless, too few pupils take modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.

PERFORMING ARTS

183. The school has had a long tradition of commitment to the performing arts and is planning to bid for arts specialist school status. The performing arts faculty comprises the music, drama and physical education departments. A detailed faculty document outlines a broad philosophical statement about arts provision in the school and details a common way through which the three curriculum areas are managed and taught. The school has recently obtained the Arts Mark Silver Award and holds Creative Partnership status, through which members of the performing arts faculty liaise with three other local secondary schools to raise pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of the school community through the arts. The three departments provide a wide range of links with the professional performing arts world, taking pupils to events outside the school and bringing performing artists into the school for workshops and presentations. Significant numbers of pupils are involved with extra-curricular arts activities. Large and small-scale productions by pupils bring deserved acclaim to the reputation of the school.

DRAMA

Overall, provision for drama is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The subject is very popular and pupils' response is positive and committed.
- GCSE results in 2002 were well above the national average.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to the school's cultural life.

Areas for improvement

- Specialist accommodation is limited for this rapidly growing subject.

184. By the age of 14, the overall standard of pupils' work is above that found nationally. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002, results were well above the national average and better than results in 2001.
185. By Year 9, standards are above average. Pupils evaluate the work of others with great sensitivity. They are aware of the audience and, when in role, they improvise extended speech appropriate to the character. During a lively 'hot-seating' exercise, pupils in one Year 9 class asked relevant and searching questions as part of their exploration of complex social and moral issues. By the age of 14, pupils work together purposefully and with growing maturity and confidence. In Year 7 pupils learn appropriate studio discipline. They listen and watch attentively and work effectively in small groups, quickly reaching agreed conclusions. In one group of high attaining pupils, for example, presentations were confident and

imaginative. Standards of movement, gesture, facial expression and improvised dialogue were above average. They sustained concentration well and, in the main, remained convincingly in rôle.

186. In Year 11 pupils have a wide range of high level skills and are enthusiastic and well motivated. When working together they are sensitive to the needs of others and have highly developed spatial awareness. By the age of 16 most pupils achieve a high general level of attainment reaching the highest grades at GCSE. They work with great commitment and enthusiasm. In improvised dialogue they are articulate, inventive and fluent. Their work is characterised by great energy and enjoyment.
187. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is very good in two-thirds of lessons. Teachers have a high standard of knowledge of the subject. They bring great enthusiasm to their work which communicates directly and immediately to the pupils. Lessons are very well prepared and studio management is skilful and constructive. Groups are carefully chosen and tasks are matched appropriately to pupils' level of attainment. Gifted and talented pupils are rigorously challenged. Relationships are very positive.
188. The subject is among the most popular in the school – over 40 pupils are following the course to GCSE. High standards spring from the mutual respect and trust between staff and pupils who appreciate the great expertise and enthusiasm of their teachers.
189. The subject is very well led and managed and has made good progress since the last inspection. Departmental documentation is very thorough and well informed. For a very successful and expanding department, accommodation is cramped and equipment restricting. The department regularly organises and puts on public performances.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision for music is **good**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- The contribution the subject makes to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.
- The contribution the subject makes to the life of the school community is very good.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used enough.
- Procedures to evaluate pupils' composition and performance skills are not thorough enough.
- Strategies for the teaching of musical literacy and notation are not good enough.

190. The end of Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2002 showed most pupils to be working in line with the national average and results to have improved since 2001. The majority of pupils enter the school with standards below average and make good progress across Years 7 to 9. Trends in recent GCSE examinations have fluctuated. In 2000, the seven pupils gained results above average. In 2001, the eight pupils gained GCSE results very much below average. This was an unusual cohort, with most pupils having particularly low standards of practical performance at the start of Year 10. In 2002, overall results by the 18 pupils were below average. Practical standards of performance let them down and members of the department are now paying attention to this element of the examination and have changed the examination board to a more appropriate one.

191. Inspection evidence indicates standards are broadly average and match teachers' assessments. Year 9 pupils have good aural perception and can, for example, correctly identify ethnic instrumentation when appraising music from Brazil. They have a thorough awareness of the background to ethnic music and can name the countries having a principal influence upon Brazilian music. Pupils perform complicated rhythmic patterns confidently in up to five parts when doing ensemble work. The quality of singing is good, particularly in Year 7 and pupils project their voices well. Less able pupils achieve well in practical work because all lesson planning includes achievable targets aimed specifically at them. Challenging targets are set in order to extend more able pupils.
192. By the end of Year 11, pupils are working in line with the national average. In Years 10 and 11 there is a complete range of practical ability. All pupils are gradually developing confidence to perform in front of each other. Year 10 pupils have a good knowledge of rondo form. They can correctly identify this form when listening to rondos and can compose in the same structure. In a lesson observed, one more able pupil used many elements of jazz idioms successfully in his composition. Year 11 pupils understand how serial music is written and can competently write and vary their own tone rows. Pupils make very good progress across the two years because of the informed and challenging teaching.
193. Pupils have good attitudes to music in Years 7 to 9 and very good attitudes in Years 10 and 11. They listen closely to instructions and are well focused in practical work. They enjoy singing. Attitudes to the subject are reflected in that the music rooms are always busy at lunchtimes and breaks, with pupils doing private practice, notably on the steel pan drums.
194. Teaching is good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are very well prepared and are developed thoroughly and at a fast pace. Very occasionally, the pace can be restricted by pupils having to copy notes from the board, particularly in relation to the teaching of notation and musical literacy. Good provision is made for pupils of different capability to make progress in every lesson. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to challenge pupils in Years 10 and 11 appropriately. There is a good choice of music to be studied in all years and this attracts pupils to the subject. Lessons are well shaped, usually ending with individual or group performances, which demonstrate how pupils have progressed.
195. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards of practical musicianship by GCSE pupils are being much more closely monitored. Pupils now have to perform regularly in front of their peers, in order to gain their confidence, before final performances at the end of Year 11. Assessment is regular and ongoing. At present, it does not include sufficient taped recording of composition and performance, which demonstrates progress over time. ICT is not used enough, though the department has acquired appropriate software which, when installed, should provide opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills.
196. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Teaching is observed and evaluated and improvements planned to support all staff. A detailed handbook outlines the aims and objectives of the subject and exactly how it will be taught. The department plays a significant part in developing the spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of the pupils and members of staff ensure that pupils of all ability are included in active music-making and are given tasks through which they can achieve success. Teachers emphasise citizenship roles by ensuring that pupils respect the instruments they use and that they listen attentively to them and sensitively to one another during performances. The music department works effectively in cross-curricular and extra-curricular teams with the drama department for public performance and contributes significantly to the life of the school. The steel pan band has a valued reputation in the local community and has successfully undertaken foreign tours.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- The relationships between pupils and teachers are good and contribute to pupils' learning.
- Lessons have a good focus on health related fitness.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocation for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is too little.
- Schemes of work do not clearly identify methods to support progress for all pupils.
- Assessment information is not consistently linked to target setting.
- The highest attaining pupils are not consistently challenged.
- Outdoor facilities are unsatisfactory.
- There are too few opportunities for teachers to discuss and share existing good practice.

197. In the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2002, attainment was broadly in line with the national average and has improved since the previous year. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 the proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades was close to the national average and was better than in 2001. Results were well above the average grades for the rest of the school although there were no A* or A grades.
198. Inspection evidence shows that the standards in Year 9 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory progress during pupils' first three years in the school in most areas of the curriculum. Most pupils apply the appropriate techniques and skills to football, rugby, badminton and gymnastics. Standards are above the national average in girls' gymnastics, where girls have a good knowledge and understanding of what constitutes quality of movement and translate this into their own performances, building a good sequence of a range of balance positions, showing precision, control and fluency. They work very well together and evaluate and analyse their own and the performance of others in the group in order to improve. In football most boys understand the rules and their basic skills provide a sound basis for improvement though they have little tactical awareness. This is evident in rugby too. For example, in an average ability Year 9 group, boys displayed consistent accuracy in their passing and received and passed at speed, though they had very little tactical awareness. A significant minority of more able boys in both football and rugby were not given the opportunity to extend their skills. Overall, the ability of pupils in Year 9 to observe and analyse performance is still developing but where it does occur it is contributing to improvement in pupils' performance, especially in gymnastics.
199. Standards in Year 11 are in line with the national average overall. Evidence from GCSE course-work and from a GCSE theory lesson on the effects of exercise on the heart indicate a good understanding of many aspects of the physiology and anatomy units. Pupils in a GCSE practical lesson on aerobic fitness were able to apply their theoretical knowledge of physiology, anatomy and aspects of fitness, to planning and developing a range of aerobic exercises. Standards for those pupils not taking GCSE are average although standards in a Year 10 basketball lesson were significantly below average and their progress over a three year period has been unsatisfactory. This is because the time allocated for core physical education for these pupils is not sufficient to cover the curriculum in sufficient depth or breadth and because there has been insufficient focus on the progress of these pupils in this activity. Inconsistencies in timetabling also contribute to lack of progress as it is often not possible for pupils to revisit activities during Years 10 and 11.
200. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good throughout the school. Most pupils are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are generally attentive and are able to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are usually very positive and this is a significant factor in the progress made in most lessons. There are limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach.
201. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. It is generally good in all year groups and was unsatisfactory in only one lesson. It was very good or good in over half of the lessons observed. In the best lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning is also a feature of these lessons and discipline and class management are good. In the unsatisfactory lesson and to a lesser extent in other

lessons that were not so good, management of the pupils was unsatisfactory, planning was not specific or detailed enough and the range and type of activities was not appropriate, particularly with respect to extending the most able pupils. Assessment of performance by teachers in the best lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching but even in some of these lessons individual pupils are only rarely set clear targets for improvement. Observation and evaluation by pupils in lessons, to help improve performance, is still developing and is not consistently applied though it was used very effectively in a girls' gymnastics lesson. The recording of assessment using specific criteria linked to the National Curriculum is developing but does not yet involve pupils in setting their own targets and is not contributing to their progress.

202. The curriculum meets statutory requirements at both key stages although insufficient time is allocated for Years 10 and 11. For these pupils progress is also restricted because many are unable to revisit activities to build on previous learning. Schemes of work and curriculum planning are not making an appropriate contribution to either teaching or learning and there is no specific guidance on developing the potential of the most able pupils. Although provision for the use of ICT is identified in schemes of work there was no evidence of this in any of the work or lessons. There is a well focused emphasis in most lessons on the importance of health related fitness and pupils have a good understanding of the importance of fitness to a healthy life-style but there is insufficient allocation of time in lessons to develop levels of fitness. There is an appropriate range of sports activities after school and at lunchtime for pupils to extend and develop their skills and the school plays matches against other schools. For girls the range of activities is particularly good.
203. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and the day-to-day organisation of the department is good. All members of the department are committed to raising standards and several are generous with their time. The departmental handbook contains most policies and procedures but is not consistently adhered to and is more a statement of intent than a reflection of departmental practice. Although teaching and learning in the department is now being monitored there are few opportunities for the department to share good practice and for this to affect the overall quality of teaching in different activities. The provision for outdoor physical education is unsatisfactory.
204. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The time allocation for Years 10 and 11 is still inappropriate and planning for the progress of these pupils is still developing. With the exception of gymnastics there are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or to develop skills of analysis and evaluation to help them improve performance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- There is some good and occasionally very good teaching.
- Pupils taking the subject achieve satisfactorily.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Half of Year 11 pupils are not taught religious education.
- A group of Year 10 pupils is withdrawn from religious education to study another subject.

205. Provision is unsatisfactory because the school is not meeting its statutory obligation to teach the Salford agreed syllabus for religious education to all pupils.

206. In the 2002 GCSE Short Course examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grade A*-C passes was well below the national average. Their average point score was well below the national average point score. This was the first time the school entered pupils for the examination. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils only were taught the syllabus and sat the examination. No provision was made for lower attaining Year 11 pupils to be taught religious education.
207. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils in Year 9 was below the expectations of the agreed syllabus for their age. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion and of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country and of their origins and distinctive features, is superficial. Their understanding of why the beliefs of practising members of different faith communities are important to them and how they shape their lives, lacks depth. Their evaluative skills are underdeveloped. Within that context, they have a sound knowledge of religious vocabulary.
208. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of upper band pupils in Year 11 was below the expectations of the agreed syllabus and the examination syllabus for their age. Standards seen were higher than those evidenced in the 2002 GCSE short course examination, because the recently introduced syllabus is becoming more securely embedded and teachers are gaining in experience in teaching it. Lower band Year 11 pupils, who comprise half the year group, are still not taught the subject and neither are a group of Year 10 pupils, withdrawn to study GCSE music.
209. The achievement of both boys and girls is satisfactory overall at age 14 and at age 16 where they study the subject. With the exception of Year 8, where they are insufficiently stretched, they are challenged with work of increasing depth and complexity as they move through the school. However, progress is limited on how well some lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 can achieve, by the weak literacy skills they bring to lessons and by a lack of in-class support for pupils with special educational needs.
210. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject, know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn and routinely share their aims with them. They plan their lessons well to achieve their aims and catch and hold pupils' interest through a good variety of stimulating and challenging activities and tasks that are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 9 pupils studying Hinduism made good gains in understanding the principle of Karma in life. This was because the pupils' interest was caught by an imaginative and enjoyable task, devising board games in small groups based on the traditional Hindu game of *Snakes and Ladders*. This enabled them to grasp how actions have moral impacts that determine the individual's place in the cycle of life, death and rebirth.
211. The best teaching does much to promote pupils' literacy skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Such good teaching is underpinned by the good relationships that teachers engender with pupils, based on high expectations and mutual respect.
212. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers' skills in managing pupil behaviour are insecure. A contributory factor is a lack of extra support for pupils known to exhibit challenging behaviour. Teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are included in whole class activities, such as reading or discussion. Marking is supportive, but does not always do enough to help pupils understand how to improve the level of their attainment.
213. An experienced non-specialist teacher is acting as head of department, until the school can recruit a specialist to a permanent post. She is exercising effective leadership and day-to-day management of the subject, although she is not teaching it. In particular, she is giving good support to the two newly qualified teachers who teach all the lessons.
214. There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the previous inspection, when teaching was poor, pupils' attitudes and achievements poor and their attainment well below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. The quality of teaching has been significantly improved; teaching is observed and evaluated and suitable methods adopted to improve. Pupils now have more positive attitudes to their work and achieve and attain more highly, although attainment is still too low.

215. However, the school and its governing body have not addressed a key issue of the previous report, when they were not fulfilling their statutory duty to make appropriate provision for the agreed syllabus to be taught to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. They are still not doing so, although they are planning to address the issue for the next academic year. The provision of learning resources has improved overall, but there is a shortage of textbooks in Years 10 and 11, which is having an adverse impact on the development of pupils' skills of independent learning.