

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **KING JAMES'S SCHOOL**

Almondbury

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique Reference Number: 107754

Acting Headteacher: Miss P Dodgshon

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe  
1025

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2002

Inspection number: 249130

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
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Prof C Bamford
Dates of previous inspection:	4 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector		Attendance
13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector		Partnership with parents
5038	Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language; gifted and talented pupils	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; drama	
30576	Mr P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science	
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art; design and technology	
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency: staffing, accommodation and learning resources
4603	Mr A F Ryan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; assessment
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
10448	Mr M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This smallish, mixed comprehensive school educates about 772 pupils, aged 11-16. The school is steadily growing in size. The social and economic background of pupils is average. The overall level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 has moved from below average at the time of the last inspection in 1996 to a point that is now a little above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is a little lower than usual, but that with statements of such need is above average. About eight per cent of pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage (close to the national pattern), but no pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

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

This is, overall, a good and steadily improving school. It has many commendable features and few weaknesses. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is average and continues to be so in GCSE examinations in Year 11. This rate of progress from a below average start in Year 7 represents a good achievement by the school and its pupils. The majority of pupils make good progress and display commitment and maturity in their work. Most teaching is effective. Senior and middle management have worked hard, especially over the last three years, to raise standards. The school provides a generally good standard of education for its pupils. On its above average income and expenditure, it gives good value for money.

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

- Most pupils make good progress in their studies throughout the school.
- The school's senior and middle management have secured steady improvement and rising standards.
- The school's overall attendance rate is good.
- Most teaching and learning is of good quality and higher than it was at the last inspection.
- Pupils are taught a good range of subjects, especially with a choice of four foreign languages.
- The school has a very thorough system of setting academic targets for pupils and monitoring their progress.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and much better than in 1996.

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

- Weaknesses in a minority of teaching, especially in rigour, discipline and oral work.
- Aspects of the school's provision for gifted and talented children.
- Some important features of the school's provision for the health and safety of pupils and staff.
- Providing enough teaching of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Aspects of the school's accommodation and some shortages in textbooks and equipment.
- The school's evaluation of its overall performance.
- The provision of daily collective worship for all pupils.

*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 progress since 1996 and good progress overall since 1999. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 has risen faster than the improvement nationally. Their overall level of

attainment in GCSE examinations is higher than it was at the last inspection: in 2001, for instance, 50 per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A\*-C, compared with 47 per cent in 1996, but the figure rose to 58 per cent in 2002. The school's teaching has improved further. Its ethos remains generally hard-working and caring. Led sensitively and effectively from the top, the school has shown a good capacity to improve the education it provides.

The school has also improved most of the major weaknesses identified at the last inspection. It has, for example:

- raised levels of attainment significantly in science. They are now at least average throughout the school;
- ensured that pupils, parents, staff and governors can participate effectively in the school's development;
- sharpened its financial planning considerably (although its provision for learning resources is still too low); and
- ensured that all pupils receive sufficient teaching of religious education (RE).

It is still, however, 25 minutes short of teaching pupils in Years 10-11 for the full 25 hours per week that is nationally recommended and has not done enough to make sure that all pupils experience daily collective worship. More remains to be done to ensure that all pupils experience sufficient ICT and have enough textbooks.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C

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

The school's results in the Year 9 national tests in 2001 were close to average in all of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The overall results were slightly below the average for schools of a similar kind (as measured only by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals): they were in line with the group average in English and science, but well below it in mathematics. Standards have risen over the 1997-2001 period and at a faster rate than the rise nationally. The school's 2002 results were, overall, the highest ever.

By the end of Year 9, standards in most subjects are average. They are above average overall, however, in art, design and technology, ICT and physical education (PE). Boys and girls tend to do equally well in most subjects, although (as nationally) girls do better than boys in English. The majority of pupils make good progress in their studies between Years 7 and 9.

Results in GCSE were close to the national average in 2001 for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C and for average points scored. They were above average on some other measures. Until 2001, results had largely plateaued since 1996 and not quite risen at the rate they had nationally. The average results in 2001 were, however, a good achievement, bearing in mind the below-average attainment of the Year 7 intake. Pupils' overall standard in 2001 was similar to that generally achieved in schools of a similar character. The 2002 results were the best in the school's recent history. Pupils have tended to do better in history and classical studies (and often in English language) and worse in mathematics than in most of their other subjects.



By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall standard is average in most subjects. It is, however, below average in ICT (insufficient teaching is the prime reason) and French, but above average in art, design and technology, history, German, Spanish and classical studies. Taking into account that pupils' overall level of attainment on entry to the school was below average, the majority of pupils make good progress during Years 10 and 11. The school's targets for examination results and the quality of grades obtained are reasonable. Pupils' academic performance represents, in the main, a commendable achievement by the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are keen on school, act sensibly and work hard. Casual and inconsiderate attitudes sometimes mar this good overall picture. Most treat the buildings and other school property with care.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The vast majority behave well and responsibly, and are a pleasure to teach. A minority of pupils are silly and immature, and a few are troublesome.
Personal development and relationships	The school is a harmonious community, with warm relationships between pupils of different social backgrounds and ethnic origins.
Attendance	Good: in most years it is better than the national pattern. Punctuality for school and lessons is normally good.

The influence and attitudes of the majority ensure that the school is a pleasant place to be. The school works hard to help and retain pupils with problems. It provides a solid base for pupils to grow up in and learn effectively.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall throughout Years 7-11 and in most subjects. It is very good in classical studies and (in Years 10-11) in RE as well as for pupils with special education needs. It is satisfactory in art and ICT as well as in Years 7-9 in science, geography, modern foreign languages and RE. The teaching of the personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) course varies widely, is broadly satisfactory overall, but requires improvement. Teaching is very good (and occasionally outstanding) in about one in every five lessons. Most unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 9. The overall quality of teaching is slightly higher than at the last inspection. Literacy is well promoted; numeracy less so, but improving. Homework was set reasonably during the inspection. In the best lessons pupils make good progress through teaching that is well planned and explained, suitably brisk, thorough and stimulating. The minority of unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by poor class control, slowness, dullness or obscurity. As a result of the school's predominantly good teaching, the vast majority of pupils – although the gifted and talented require still more challenge – sustain their interest and learn well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Except for insufficient ICT the school provides a wide range of courses, including four foreign languages. Vocational work is growing.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The overall quality of provision is high: as a result of very good teaching, pupils progress well. Still more teaching help is, however, required.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils do at least as well as pupils overall. Further enrichment on technical language and English idiom is being actively planned.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision is sound overall: this judgement is true of most aspects, but pupils' social development is the best feature. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school generally provides a high level of care for pupils' personal and academic development. There are also important gaps to close.

A distinctive feature of the school is the teaching of Latin and classical civilisation in addition to French, German and Spanish. A vocational course in leisure and tourism has just started. The provision of ICT is not enough to meet statutory requirements: Latin pupils do not have a separate ICT lesson in Years 8-9 and ICT teaching in Years 10-11 is thin. The monitoring of pupils' progress is a strength. Weekly teaching time is a little low. The monitoring of health and safety issues is not good enough and action is required on many fronts.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Much improved over the last three years: through a clear vision and a consultative style of leadership, senior management has established appropriate goals and policies and set the school on a clear, upward path.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors show commitment and take an increasing part in long-term planning. They still do not, however, have enough strategic oversight.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has many useful measures and evaluates pupils' progress carefully. It does not have a complete management information system.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management, planning and review are strong and much improved since 1996. "Best value" is carefully observed in spending.

Strong senior management and effective middle managers have revitalised the school. The provision of teachers is good, but the amount of technical help is a little low. The school has enough accommodation (just) and an attractive site, but many inadequacies in its buildings. There are shortages of textbooks and equipment.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school's ethos of hard work and achievement.</li><li>• Pupils make good progress in their studies.</li><li>• The high quality of leadership and management.</li><li>• The school's approachability and care for pupils.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More information about pupils' studies.</li><li>• Homework being set more consistently.</li><li>• More extracurricular activities.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree that the impact of senior management in particular has resulted in a school that is caring, values hard work and recognises achievement in its many forms. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress in their studies. The expressed desire of a minority of parents for more information on curricular matters and academic progress is well founded and the school recognises the need to enhance its provision. Homework was set reasonably during the inspection. A modest range of extracurricular activities is provided.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' standard of attainment in their school work varies widely, but is average overall by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. In external assessments, pupils' overall level of attainment is also broadly average in the national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Since the last inspection in 1996, pupils' overall attainment in both the Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations has risen: over the 1997-2001 period, the rise has been at a greater rate than the rise nationally in Year 9 tests, but slightly below the national improvement in GCSE. Both sets of results in 2002, however, were the school's best ever as a comprehensive school and underlined the upward trend of improvement.
2. The level of attainment of pupils coming to the school has risen noticeably over the last few years. The overall attainment of the 2001 intake (the latest data nationally available at the time of the inspection), for example, was slightly above average. Prior to 1999 the intake was below average. The proportion of high-attaining pupils joining the school, in particular, has risen considerably: it was only about half the national average in 1998, for instance, but was noticeably above average in each of the years 1999-2001.
3. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the proportion of pupils who reached at least the expected basic national standard of Level 5 was close to average in English and science, but slightly below average in mathematics. The proportion who reached the higher Level 6 was average in English and mathematics, but above average in science. The results in 1998 and 1999 were again broadly average, but in 2000 were above average. The 2002 results were the highest the school has gained. As indicated above, the results achieved over the last few years show a greater rise than has happened nationally.
4. Girls are consistently ahead of boys overall in English by the end of Year 9, similar to the national pattern. Girls also tend to do slightly better than boys in mathematics. Girls and boys usually do equally well, however, in science. Teachers' assessments of pupils in these three subjects are usually fairly close to the test results pupils achieve.
5. When these 2001 Key Stage 3 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed slightly below the group average – in line with it in English and science, but well below it in mathematics. Results in 2000 were mostly average, apart from the well above average performance in English.
6. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 2001, school staff judged the overall attainment of pupils as above average in design and technology, geography, and information and communication technology (ICT), and around average in history and modern foreign languages. In respect of these pupils (currently in Year 10), inspectors generally agree with teachers' judgements, but consider that the overall level of pupils' attainment is average in geography.
7. As pupils move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9, the limited statistical evidence available from national tests suggests that they generally make good progress: by the time the Year 7 intake of 1998 had reached the end of Year 9 in 2001, for example, their performance had risen to be much closer to the expected national standard for their age than it had been three years earlier. The evidence of pupils' work seen during the inspection also confirms that pupils' progress and achievement are good overall. Pupils make substantial progress where the teaching is well planned, suitably brisk, thorough and firmly controls classes. Progress is less than it could be in a minority of lessons where there is insufficient rigour or depth in study or discussion, where teachers' expectations

are generally too low or where minor indiscipline impedes the learning of the whole class.

8. In the GCSE examinations of 2001, pupils' level of attainment was a good average overall. Half the pupils gained at least five grades in the range A\*-C: both this proportion and the average points that pupils scored were fractionally above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five A\*-G grades was above average. The results were also close to average for the proportion (40 per cent) gaining at least grade C in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school's 2002 GCSE results were the best ever: 58 per cent of pupils, for example, gained at least five A\*-C grades.
9. In the core subjects, pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A\*-C in GCSE in 2001 was broadly average in English, below average in mathematics, but above average in science. Over the last four years, English results have been consistently around the national average (and with boys improving); mathematics has been generally slightly below average (and with girls declining a little); whilst science results have shown an improving trend (with boys' and girls' attainment fairly close together). There was a similar pattern to the results in these three subjects in 2002.
10. The quality of GCSE grades obtained amongst all subjects taken was broadly average overall in 2001 and 2002, with a fair share of the highest A\* and A grades. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in either 2001 or 2002, however, in mathematics, design and technology (resistant materials or textiles) or music. Over the last few years pupils have tended to achieve better in history and classical studies (and often in English language) than in their other subjects, but to do worse in mathematics; the school has now taken specific steps to improve the position in mathematics.
11. Girls achieved a much greater proportion of the higher (A\*-C) grades in GCSE than boys over the 1996-2000 period, when the overall gap between the sexes was much larger than it was nationally. Both sexes did equally well, however, in 2001 and boys did much better than boys tend to do nationally. In 2002 the gap between the overall performance of boys and girls was similar to that nationally. Whereas white pupils achieve about the same as white pupils across the local authority, Asian and black pupils often do better than usual, partly because of their higher attainment on intake.
12. When compared with that in schools of a similar background, this school's performance has varied widely. It was in line with the group average in 2001 and above it in 1998, but below it in 1999 and well below it in 2000. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance in 2001 was broadly average in English, above average in science, but below average in mathematics. In 2001, the school achieved nearly all its reasonable GCSE targets. It fully achieved its higher targets in 2002.
13. The school's GCSE results were largely stable from the last inspection in 1996 up to 2001 – within, for example, the range of 42 (in 2000) to 52 (in 1999) per cent of pupils gaining at least five A\*-C grades. The proportion was 50 per cent in 2001 (the most recent year for which full national comparisons can be made). This generally good performance did not, however, keep pace with the rate of rise nationally up to 2001. The higher performance of 58 per cent in 2002 has moved the trend in the school's results firmly upwards. It is a testimony to the effective work of teachers and pupils, including the focused attention on standards and assessment by the school's management, that recent GCSE results generally indicate a good level of progress from Year 7 onwards.
14. Although the school does not have a complete system for tracking and evaluating pupils' progress fully throughout the whole of their secondary education (despite being very thorough over shorter periods of time), the limited evidence available indicates that most pupils make good progress in their studies over Years 10-11 as well as from their start in Year 7.
15. There are several reasons for this rate of progress through the school. The school has created a climate where both teachers and pupils are encouraged to focus hard on standards achieved and attainable. A very solid and well-grounded process of target-setting and review enables pupils to understand their progress clearly and to believe in their capabilities to achieve. It has put high importance on trying to secure a good standard of teaching through the formal monitoring of lessons.

Its monitoring and evaluation of pupils' attainment and progress has increased substantially since 1996.

16. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 was average overall in most subjects. It is above average, however, in art, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE). By the end of Year 11, the level of work is also of an average standard in most subjects. It is below average in ICT (largely owing to insufficient teaching), but above average in art, design and technology, history and classical studies. In modern foreign languages, overall attainment by the end of Year 11 is below average in French, but above average in German and Spanish. The standard of work in the personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) course varies widely: it is satisfactory overall, but could be higher. Pupils (including those for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs) generally achieve well in this school. Gifted and talented pupils make sound progress, but could be stretched further intellectually in a significant minority of classes.
17. In English, pupils' overall level of attainment is average by the end of Years 9 and 11. This is the standard, too, of nearly all the aspects of reading, writing, speaking and listening. A particular strength is the department's insistence on pupils citing evidence from their reading of texts to support a point of view. In contrast, the standard and frequency of pupils' discussion to develop their ideas is a little lower than often found, because pupils are not given enough opportunities to do so. The clarity of pupils' speech is better overall in Years 7-9 than later in the school.
18. In other subjects across the school, pupils' standard of reading is average overall for fluency, accuracy and understanding. Some pupils read with thoughtful expression, precise intonation and obvious enjoyment. A significant minority lack confidence in reading aloud and tend to mumble monotonously. Pupils are helped to improve their capability in reading aloud in history, but this aspect is underexploited in science, design and technology, and modern foreign languages.
19. Pupils' standard of writing is broadly average overall. Most writing is clearly structured, often because of careful guidance or frameworks such as worksheets from teachers. The redrafting or reshaping of work is not a strong feature. Note-taking is usually of an average standard, but could be better overall with specific training in the skills involved. Presentation and neatness are generally reasonable: good standards are reached in such subjects as science (Years 10-11) and history, and by more girls than boys. The standard of spelling and punctuation varies widely, but is average overall. A sizeable minority of pupils are weak spellers of technical words, even when they are displayed in class; dictionaries are not widely available in classrooms. Handwriting is average overall.
20. The quality of speaking in class varies very widely from the highly articulate, precise and confidently expressed to halting, mumbled expressions or embarrassment at giving a view at all, but it is close to average overall. The use of technical vocabulary is generally good in design and technology, geography and history. Too many pupils across the school, however, do not speak up clearly or express articulate views. This is at least partly due to not enough teachers giving pupils the opportunity to practise extended, interactive discussion. The school currently gives insufficient importance to the frequency and quality of discussion, the formal presentation of oral viewpoints and the overall quality of articulate and audible speech. Pupils generally listen carefully.
21. Pupils' current standard in mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum is average overall. Most pupils have reasonable confidence in handling numbers and units of measurement. They draw and interpret graphs satisfactorily – as, for example, nutritional analyses in food technology, and histograms and pie-charts in geography. Attainment in ICT is above average in the specialist-taught lessons in Years 7-9, but is below average generally within other subjects, owing to pupils being given insufficient experience of ICT uses; home use of computers and ancillary equipment by many pupils goes some way to remedying the deficit, but the auditing and consistency of ICT usage and standards require improvement across the school.

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

22. Overall, pupils are keen to come to school and make good use of the educational opportunities that the school provides for them. Their attitudes and behaviour are, on the whole, positive, offering a secure base for their effective learning, progress and personal development.
23. There is, however, a minor but significant undercurrent of unsatisfactory attitudes that arises, in part, from a small group of troubled children who have difficulty in complying with the school's rules and expectations. Moreover, there are more widespread examples of immature and inconsiderate behaviour shown by some pupils as they move around the school's admittedly restricted circulation areas. This sometimes shows itself in a casual approach to the needs of others and a disregard of basic rules and conventions of courtesy and good conduct. Such immaturity and lack of consideration for others detract from the good standards of behaviour shown by most pupils.
24. In class, pupils' behaviour and demeanour are generally good. In two-thirds of lessons seen during the inspection pupils showed good (and sometimes very good) behaviour and behaved satisfactorily in a further fifth. In one in every nine lessons, however, attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory or poor: the majority of these instances occur in Year 8 and (particularly) in Year 9. On some occasions, unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour are associated with low expectations or poor management by teachers. In other cases, a small minority of pupils are not readily disposed to settle to work, distracting the whole class by time-wasting, chatting and persistent inattention.
25. Pupils generally treat the building, its resources and equipment, with appropriate care and respect. There are very few graffiti around and acts of vandalism are rare. The exception to this good picture is in the toilets, which are an unsatisfactory feature of the school's environment. The maintenance of all basic requirements and high standards in them require firm action and greater vigilance.
26. Despite the presence of sometimes immature or thoughtless behaviour by some pupils, there is no evidence of any significant level of bullying in the school. Pupils report that staff deal effectively and swiftly with incidents, whenever they are reported to them. The school is a harmonious community, with positive relationships between girls and boys and between pupils with different social backgrounds and ethnic origins. There is a general sense of respect for others and for their values and beliefs, as well as a willingness to cooperate and work amicably together.
27. The level of pupil exclusions is about average for a school of this size and type. The school works hard to retain pupils in education and to help them to stabilise their behaviour. Pupils form constructive relationships with one another, with members of staff and with other adults and visitors to the school.
28. The school provides some good examples of pupils' ability to exercise initiative and take on responsibility. The School Council has become, over the last year or so, an effective forum through which pupils can have some say on the policies and direction of the school as well as show a capacity to organise themselves and conduct formal business. In other instances, pupils take responsibility as "Senior Students", as library assistants and in supporting community and charitable initiatives.

## **Attendance**

29. The attendance level of pupils is good, although it has fluctuated a little over the past few years. It was very good at 93.6 per cent at the time of the last inspection in 1996 and in most subsequent years. It was two to three per cent lower in 1998-1999 and in 2000-2001. It improved noticeably, however, to the good position of 92.5 per cent in the last academic year. The attendance of all year groups reached at least 90 per cent. The main reason for absence, in over half the cases, was illness, followed by the taking of holidays in term-time (the latter accounting for one in every ten absences). In the previous

(2000-2001) academic year the level of authorised absence was a little above average at 8.6 per cent, whereas the amount of absence without good reason (0.7 per cent) was fractionally better than the national picture.

30. The attendance of only a small number of pupils is low: these absences are due to long illness, occasionally taking a long holiday abroad or casual, condoned absence. The school adopts a wide range of imaginative means to sustain attendance or to help poor attenders to still do satisfactorily in their studies – as, for example, by doing all it can to keep pupils at risk of exclusion within its study programme.
31. The school's attendance policy and staff handbook give clear guidance on matters of attendance and punctuality. Its semi-computerised system for recording pupils' attendance is used well to monitor attendance patterns and to help to identify problems. The school undertakes occasional spot-checks to remain alert to truancy and follows up any resulting absences very carefully. Its *Student Planner* incorporates a brief, personal attendance chart. In contrast, its prospectus makes no reference to the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
32. Punctuality for lessons is generally good, but a small minority of pupils dawdle and so prevent a brisk start to some lessons. Punctuality in coming to school on time is good overall. Although 78 pupils were late for school on the first day of the inspection (in nearly all cases because of late buses), approximately 15 pupils are late for school on a typical day.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

33. The quality of teaching varies from outstanding to unsatisfactory, but is good overall across the school. It is at least satisfactory in over nine out of every ten lessons – satisfactory in about three-tenths and good in over two-fifths of them. Additionally, teaching is very good (and very occasionally outstanding) in about one in every five lessons. Just 14 of the 169 lessons inspected, however, had teaching that was largely unsatisfactory. The majority of these lessons were taught by relatively inexperienced, temporary or non-specialist staff.
34. The overall quality of teaching has improved a little since the last inspection. In 1996, 90 per cent of the teaching was said to be satisfactory or better and one in every ten lessons was judged to be unsatisfactory. Now eight per cent of teaching falls below a satisfactory level. Thirteen per cent of the teaching was very good (or better) at the last inspection, but that proportion has risen to 19 per cent. Now teaching is at least good in nearly two-thirds of lessons. This good teaching quality is now fairly evenly spread throughout the school, but is at its best in Years 7, 10 and 11.
35. The quality of teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, music and PE. It is also good in Years 10-11 in science, geography and modern foreign languages. It is satisfactory overall in art and ICT as well as in Years 7-9 in science, geography, modern foreign languages and RE. It is also satisfactory (for the most part) in the PSHCE course, but needs improvement. An outstanding lesson was taught in mathematics in Year 8. The teaching in classical studies and the specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs – as well as for RE and drama in Years 10-11 – is very good. Over half the unsatisfactory lessons were taught to pupils in Year 9 – quite often because a minority of pupils in some classes were immature and silly, disturbing the learning of the majority.
36. In nearly all lessons teachers are well in command of the subjects they teach. They have sufficient knowledge to offer clear guidance to pupils about the content of lessons and the connections between different parts of the courses being studied. They draw appropriately on their knowledge to illustrate topics convincingly and clarify new concepts by relevant examples. They frequently make interesting “asides” (as in history) that provide additional pieces of stimulating information. Quite a number of teachers enthuse pupils with their own love of their subject: as a result, pupils listen very carefully and become excited by what they learn. During the inspection teachers were well prepared for lessons.



37. Most lessons where the teaching is of high quality are characterised by a range of common features. Teachers are always well prepared. Partly as a result, they start lessons very clearly and crisply, explaining carefully to pupils the purpose and importance of lessons (and often writing aims up on a whiteboard), and outline to pupils the learning steps along the way. Importantly, they set clear timescales for activities, share and discuss these with pupils and keep to them during lessons.
38. The beginnings of these good lessons are marked by a quick revision of previous work that focuses squarely on key features and draws out from pupils what they have remembered. Humour, praise and brisk encouragement are frequently used. Lessons end with a short but comprehensive review of the ground covered. This is often done by a mixture of teacher commentary and checking out orally the understanding of a wide cross-section of pupils, so that pupils are absolutely clear about the significance of what they have learned.
39. The intermediate stages of good lessons contain a well-chosen range of teaching methods that ensure that pupils are actively involved, sustain their interest and make sure that they have to think and work hard. Teachers set the scene clearly, but then move on to activities that require pupils to examine topics in depth – either through, for instance, initial brainstorming, individual or paired work, or through group discussion, research and notetaking. The best lessons have probing and extended discussions about key issues that require pupils to articulate their views clearly and to demonstrate their competence and confidence with key concepts and specialist vocabulary. The intellectual or creative level in writing or discussion is high.
40. In these good lessons teachers expect a high standard of punctuality, concentration, commitment and effort. Pupils cannot coast along. They enjoy the lessons partly because teachers manage classes well and maintain firm, friendly discipline through their confident bearing, briskness, humour, sensitivity and obvious enjoyment: even the presence of a minority of immature or difficult pupils is not allowed to impede the learning of the class. All lesson time is used well. Pupils' work and efforts are carefully assessed and sensitively encouraged during lessons. Homework (which was generally set conscientiously and appropriately during the inspection) is thoroughly marked, with constructive comments for improvement.
41. About one fifth of lessons were particularly well taught. In a classical studies lesson in Year 10 on Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, the teacher very briskly conducted a review of the key points of the previous lesson by all pupils contributing their thoughts and recollections. The next learning objectives were quickly outlined and effectively supported by prepared worksheets. The emphasis throughout was on careful analysis of the text and a class-sharing of perceptions. Interest and insight were further enhanced by a short, video-recorded extract from a recent film on the same scenes, after which pupils contrasted the original story with its filmed adaptation. This helped to reinforce the key elements of the text. The lesson concluded with a short review and the setting of suitable homework. Pupils enjoyed and learned much, partly as a result of clear, stimulating and well-paced teaching.
42. In an outstanding mathematics lesson with average-attaining pupils in Year 8, almost all of them were engrossed for the entire lesson. The teacher made the lesson entirely relevant and highly interesting. A whole-class starter activity, in which hard work was made fun, stimulated pupils to want to learn and to work at an impressive rate, as they drew straight-line graphs in algebra and understood the concept of "interception". The teacher's knowledge, high standards, humour, organisation and watchfulness ensured that all pupils made considerable progress.
43. In contrast, about eight per cent of lessons were unsatisfactorily taught and there were unsatisfactory features in some others. In these cases, teachers often do not introduce lessons clearly. Aims and objectives are not specified (or only vaguely identified), with the result that pupils are neither stimulated nor clear about what they should do. The essence of previous lessons is largely ignored. The pace and rigour of learning are shallow. Pupils are not challenged, or expected, to think deeply enough – a weakness particularly in a significant minority of lessons for the most able pupils. A few pupils may be called upon to answer questions, but the majority are overlooked. Sometimes teachers "talk at" pupils too much and give them little opportunity to learn things themselves.

44. In a small minority of lessons teachers do too much of the work for pupils. Sometimes they waste their time and energy by, for instance, inefficiently distributing materials or worksheets to every pupil themselves. In a larger minority of classes some teachers do not secure sufficient control over chattering, silliness, annoyance or occasional rudeness and defiance – a major element in unsatisfactory teaching. Although the majority of teachers and subjects mark pupils' work well, a few books are unmarked (or marked very superficially) for long periods of time.
45. Most teachers pay good attention to the basic skills of literacy and satisfactory attention to numeracy. Literacy is thoughtfully promoted in English – as, for example, on spelling patterns and common errors. There is a strong emphasis on the use of correct technical language in, for example, English, design and technology, and history. Key words are prominently displayed in most classes (but not enough in English and science), although less frequently referred to in lessons. Fair attention is drawn to misspellings, but more needs to be done. Teachers do not, however, give enough guidance to pupils on the craft of note-taking and too often allow pupils to give brief, mumbled answers to questions.
46. As a result of good teaching in most classes, pupils (including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language) make generally good progress in their studies. They acquire a wide body of knowledge, skills and understanding. Most sustain their concentration reasonably throughout lessons and keep up a fair pace of learning. Pupils tend, however, to show a little less initiative and intellectual independence than is often found: this is at least partly because teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for these qualities to be exercised. The most gifted and talented pupils generally make satisfactory progress, but could do better in a significant minority of classes with greater stimulus and deeper teaching and discussion. Overall, however, teaching is good in most subjects and year groups across the school.

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

47. The school's curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities that mostly meet the needs of all pupils. Following a wide-ranging review and consultation, and in partnership with other local secondary schools and a further education college, pupils in Years 10-11 are now offered the opportunity to study vocational courses in addition to the more traditional GCSE subjects. The curriculum is enriched with effective provision to improve pupils' literacy skills and with support and guidance of good quality for future employment or further education.
48. In Years 7-9, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are good overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are taught. All pupils study French, and higher-attaining pupils also have the opportunity to study Spanish, German and Latin during Years 8 and 9. Pupils are taught drama and a well-planned course of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE).
49. In Years 10-11, a good range of subjects is offered. Pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, PE, RE, a foreign language chosen from French, Spanish, German and Latin, and PSHCE. In addition, pupils choose three from an appropriate list of ten other subjects to study at GCSE level. The list includes PE, sociology, the vocationally orientated course of business studies and (for a small number of pupils) leisure and tourism. Almost half the pupils gain a good quality experience by studying GCSE Latin and/or classical civilisation, a distinctive feature of the school. The first course leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) has just started in Year 10 in leisure and tourism.
50. The school works with Huddersfield Technical College to provide valuable opportunities for pupils for whom the full range of GCSE subjects is not deemed suitable. These pupils may spend up to one day each week studying such subjects as electronics, construction, hairdressing and animal care, some of which lead to a National Vocational Qualification certificate. The time pupils spend with their form tutors at the start of the day is used purposefully for supporting pupils with a worthwhile programme of mentoring and setting targets for improvement.

51. The school has planned effective provision to raise standards of literacy as part of the National Literacy Strategy. The strategy is firmly embedded in the teaching of English. In order to support the teaching of literacy in all subjects, a literacy coordinator has been appointed, a clear policy has been agreed and staff training has taken place. Most subject departments have successfully implemented appropriate ways of improving literacy skills: these sensibly include a focus on key words and improving pupils' comprehension of the written text. The school has planned a similar strategy to raise standards of numeracy in all subject departments as part of the National Numeracy Strategy: work to introduce the agreed strategies across the curriculum is, however, at an early stage of development.
52. The school's planned teaching time of 24.6 hours each week is slightly below the minimum recommended by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). All subjects receive an adequate allocation of teaching time. This represents a considerable improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The timetable pattern is satisfactory for all subjects except design and technology in Years 10-11, where the single periods allocated do not always allow enough time for pupils to complete their work.
53. The curriculum meets all statutory requirement except those for ICT. The requirement to teach pupils to use ICT to control equipment is not met. Higher-attaining pupils who study Latin in Years 8 and 9 are unable to participate in the ICT course followed by other pupils and no alternative provision is made for them. There is no time specifically allocated in Years 10-11 to teach ICT and the programmes of study are not taught sufficiently in other subjects across the curriculum. As a result, the teaching of ICT does not meet statutory requirements. This deficiency was reported at the time of the previous inspection and inadequate progress has been made by the school in addressing this issue. The teaching of RE meets all national requirements: this represents a considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection.
54. All pupils have the opportunity, within the limitations noted above, to study the full range of subjects offered. Pupils are grouped appropriately in classes by their prior attainment. This arrangement is effective when work is matched appropriately to the differing needs of pupils: only in the case of gifted and talented pupils is insufficient intellectual demand made in a minority of classes.
55. A clear policy statement underpins an annual review of the curriculum by governors and staff. An increasingly wide-ranging consultation process leads to curricular decision-making, although a strategy to involve parents and pupils remains unimplemented. Senior managers monitor the curriculum effectively through discussions with heads of department and the monitoring of teaching. As a result, plans for the future are clear and sharply focused. Subject schemes of work are of good quality in English, design and technology, history and music. They are satisfactory elsewhere.
56. A satisfactory range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Pupils travel to Greece, for instance, to study ancient civilisations, to France to study World War I battlefields and to Germany for linguistic studies. In the local area they take part in fieldwork and visit theatres. A successful school production is staged annually and a number of musical activities take place regularly. There is a sound range of sporting activities. One third of pupils, for example, take part in a well-organised programme of inter-school sports fixtures. They are supported by the strong, voluntary commitment of four members of staff. Most subjects make appropriate provision to support pupils in their studies with help for coursework, homework and revision.
57. Provision for careers education and guidance is of good quality and is effectively coordinated. Careers education forms part of the PSHCE programme and is well organised, with an appropriate scheme of work. This is enhanced by visits from local training providers, colleges of further education and an annual careers convention that is enthusiastically supported by over 30 local employers. Pupils receive comprehensive, thoughtful and impartial guidance, provided by an external careers officer. Guidance is sensibly focused on those pupils in greatest need, but regular opportunities are provided for other pupils to receive support. A successful and worthwhile programme of mock interviews with employers is popular with pupils.

58. Pupils are introduced to the careers library, which is well maintained and readily accessible. The library has a limited selection of booklets, pamphlets and videos. An ordering system effectively enables pupils to gain access to additional material. Opportunities to use ICT to access careers information are poor. All pupils in Year 10 participate for two weeks in an efficiently organised programme of work experience. They are thoroughly prepared, complete a diary while on the placement and are visited by a member of staff.
59. Links with the community are modest. Good relationships are enjoyed with the contributory primary schools. These have resulted in a successful programme of induction for new pupils and increasingly close links with some subject areas, notably mathematics, science and French. The school's association with other local secondary schools and colleges of further education is being further consolidated through consortium arrangements for some courses. Connections with institutions of initial teacher training are strong: the school hosts the training of up to ten students each year.
60. The overall quality of work with pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) is high. It has improved significantly from a low base some three years ago. Teaching is always at least good and often very good. Both teachers have specialist training in working with pupils with specific learning difficulties (including "dyslexia") and the school focuses its SEN efforts largely on the intensive development of skills with individuals and small groups. This is a sensible use of skilled teaching. There are, however, gaps in provision: any extension of the SEN work to a wider range of pupils requires additional staffing and accommodation.
61. Pupils with special educational needs learn well. They come to their lessons with enthusiasm, work hard and make good (and sometimes very good) progress. Funding and resources are adequate for the current brief of the department. Links with subject departments are basically sound, but not extensive enough. Subject teachers generally match the work in lessons satisfactorily to pupils' individual needs. The school has approached the new 2002 SEN Code of Practice sensibly and is implementing its requirements appropriately. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have been revised and are useful, but are not always referred to by all staff.
62. Most pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds have been educated throughout in the medium of English. There are no "early stage" learners of English as an additional language (EAL). Over the last two years, pupils in Year 11 from ethnic minorities have achieved at least as well in GCSE as pupils overall. The SEN staff are, however, developing linguistic programmes to enrich the understanding of some EAL pupils about technical terms and idiomatic usage.
63. There is no overall policy nor a common system of identification or provision for gifted and talented pupils. The former headteacher wrote an "ideas" paper that has been circulated internally. Although the most able pupils generally do soundly in their studies, this is not associated with any clear policies of planning, provision or assessment. This aspect of the school's work does not have a designated coordinator: it requires clarification and a consistently good quality of provision.
64. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is sound overall. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the school has effectively strengthened its teaching of RE. All pupils throughout the school now study the subject. Pupils are taught about all major faiths. In lessons, pupils have regular opportunities to reflect on beliefs and to experience meditation. Pupils in Year 8 visit a Buddhist Temple and, for other year groups, there are visits to various places of worship – as, for example, the local parish church and Friends' meeting house. Visitors to school include the vicar of the parish and an evangelical group who make presentations through drama.
65. The school's staff have had training in identifying opportunities for spiritual experiences within daily lessons. To this end, the head of RE has worked with several departments (as, for instance, art, where pupils identified religious themes and symbols in mask-making). In a science lesson during the inspection, candles were lit to create a calm environment. Although music is occasionally

played as pupils come into assemblies, staff do not pay enough attention to producing an atmosphere in which pupils experience reverence and reflection. All pupils were, however, reminded about the anniversary of “9/11”, which they marked with a minute of silence. The school’s rolling, wooded site and the oldest of its buildings convey a degree of aesthetic charm. The school does not, however, meet the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

66. Moral education is promoted satisfactorily. As a matter of policy, where pupils’ behaviour is unacceptable, teachers require them to think about the implications of their actions. Most pupils respond well to this approach. Whilst some senior staff regularly supervise pupils as they move around the school at breaks and lunchtimes, too few teachers pay strict attention to pupils’ conduct in the corridors and around the school generally. There is insufficient supervision during the lunchtime break around the school’s site, with its extensive grounds and many “nooks and crannies”. In lessons most teachers expect and achieve an appropriate standard of behaviour and mutual respect.
67. Firm messages about personal and social conduct are given out in assemblies and pupils discuss moral issues in, for instance, their RE and PSHCE lessons. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions that is well understood by pupils. In lessons, pupils study and reflect satisfactorily on moral issues. In geography, for example, they discuss the effects and implications of dam-building supposedly undertaken for the good of “the majority”; in history, they learn about Hiroshima; and drama lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to assimilate other people’s viewpoints that may differ significantly from their own.
68. Provision for pupils’ social development is good overall. The school provides a fair range of extracurricular activities – as, for example, in sport and music – in which pupils form a wide range of friendships. A large number of pupils take part in the regular musical productions. New friendships are also fostered on school visits, and particularly on the residential visit to Borreaton Park (Shropshire) in which all pupils in Year 8 take part. Some rooms (notably the library and music room) are open to pupils during lunchtime: these allow pupils both to work and to maintain their friendships. In fine weather the school’s site and buildings provide a wide variety of spaces in which pupils congregate to chat or meet for informal games.
69. The school council serves to represent and discuss pupils’ views and complaints. Pupils learn about political representation through participation in mock elections from time to time. Selected pupils attend local events, such as the *Schools’ PHSE Conference* and the World Aid conference. Pupils raise money for a variety of charities, including *Mind* and *Sport Relief*. The range of opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, however, remains limited. During the inspection, for instance, there were very few examples of pupils helping with routines around the school.
70. Within lessons, pupils work effectively in groups and pairs. In music they collaborate in composing pieces and in science work together on investigations. They also experience team work in, for example, PE, classical studies and drama.
71. Pupils’ cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. Pupils come together from a fair range of ethnic and social backgrounds. Relationships amongst these different groups are very good; pupils learn from one another about various traditions and beliefs. Their knowledge of cross-cultural issues is also reinforced well in RE lessons. In other lessons (as, for example, art and music), they learn about other people by studying artefacts and different musical genres. In lessons on Indian classical music taught during the inspection, for instance, pupils in Year 11 quickly came to realise that sitar improvisation is highly valued by musicians from many cultures for its remarkable form and intricacy.
72. A good range of educational visits serves to enrich pupils’ cultural perceptions. These visits include a poetry festival, a theatre visit to York and a geography conference in Leeds. Pupils from Year 9 have visited the battlefields in France and pupils make fieldwork visits to Malham. Some pupils

have visited Greece in association with their classical studies. In history, pupils study the application of medicine in ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and medieval British societies. There is a school band, choirs and ensembles that perform at school events.

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

73. The school generally provides a high level of care for pupils' personal development and academic progress. Staff show positive attitudes towards the welfare and personal needs of pupils and work hard to enable them to enjoy all aspects of school life. Arrangements for Child Protection are sound.
74. The teams of year heads and form tutors provide effective guidance and support for pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils generally feel confident and secure in such staff and look to them first, when they face problems or difficulties. The school uses external agencies well to provide more specialised support for pupils and the two school nurses provide a welcome and confidential support service in the limited time they have available. There is insufficient evidence to determine whether the school's provision is adequate to provide a full service of confidential guidance to meet all pupils' needs.
75. The programmes provided for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) are sound and comprehensive. These are largely taught through an hour's weekly lesson and are taken by form tutors. The quality of these lessons varies from good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall: it is, however, of overall poorer quality than the rest of the teaching in the school. This is due to some lack of experience, awareness or training on the part of some of the teachers concerned.
76. In a small but significant number of areas, however, this high standard of care is not maintained, resulting in poor provision. The systems for monitoring the health and safety of pupils are not adequately coordinated and recorded. Incidents that may represent a hazard to pupils are treated as isolated events rather than as part of a systematic pattern of health and safety routines and procedures. Certain specific hazards were noted during the inspection and indicated to staff and governors. Amongst the most important of these are:
- access to the school site and buildings is poorly regulated;
  - there is no adequate system for dust extraction in woodworking areas;
  - the condition of many toilets is unacceptably low;
  - many features of the original building present hazards to those using it;
  - there are inadequate numbers of supervisory staff deployed during lunchtime and breaks;
  - there is no suitable medical room where pupils who may be ill or distressed can be accommodated and supervised in appropriate privacy.

The lack of lockers for pupils' belongings and the lack of ready access to drinking water further reduce the quality of the school's welfare provision for pupils.

77. The school has developed sound and generally effective policies to monitor and regulate pupils' attendance and behaviour. These are well known to staff who, in the main, work together in effective teams to achieve good overall levels of behaviour. Incidents are carefully analysed, so that policies and procedures can be adapted and improved. The programmes provided for pupils with statements of special educational need generally satisfy the specifications of those statements.
78. The school's assessment policy provides clear guidance on the assessment, marking and reporting of pupils' work. Within subject departments, the quality of day-to-day assessments of individual pupils' work is good overall. It is satisfactory in English and ICT and in Years 7-9 in RE. In some subjects (as, for instance, music and PE), the criteria for success at various National Curriculum levels are described and displayed especially well for pupils. In geography, very careful

assessment enables the department to review pupils' progress accurately. Overall, the marking of pupils' work is satisfactory except in science and modern foreign languages. In the samples of pupils' work submitted for inspection, there were examples of units of work in a number of subjects that were not marked with sufficient diligence.

79. A very good feature of assessment is the high emphasis that the school puts on target-setting. In connection with this, there is a common system of grades (1-10), linked to National Curriculum levels, that also helps staff and pupils to identify progress in each subject within every National Curriculum level; the highest (10) level requires extension, however, for the most gifted and talented pupils.
80. The school has worked hard and very successfully to improve its systems for the assessment, recording and collation of data to identify the progress made by individual pupils as they move through the school. These good systems now require further refinement, in order to allow the school to select the most relevant data on which not only individual pupils' long-term progress, but also the performance of year groups, individual subject departments and the whole school's performance, can be thoroughly analysed and evaluated.
81. Reports to parents are presented in a common format, with a clear grading system. Grades are given for "progress" (but as a conflation of judgements about attainment and progress) and for effort in both lessons and homework. Written comments on pupils' attainment, progress and attitudes give, in most cases, a reasonable indication of how pupils are getting on at school. In some subjects, however, the written comments lack precision in conveying to parents the attainment and progress of their children and what they need to do to improve. In the better examples of report writing, attainment, progress and attitudes are clearly separated, specified and exemplified.
82. The *Record of Achievement* gives a comprehensive indication of individual pupils' academic and personal development and achievements, including such aspects as certificates gained in sport. The document also includes pupils' evaluations of their own strengths. For pupils with special educational needs (SEN), assessment procedures and practice are very good. The assessment of reading and spelling are thorough and well recorded. The quality of pupils' SEN files is good and their Statements are generally well implemented.

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

83. Parents generally hold the school in high regard for what it offers and achieves for their children. They are pleased with the progress their children make, find the school approachable and responsive, and generally support the expectations of the school that children will work hard to achieve their best. This belief and support is borne out by the good and improving results attained by pupils. Parents also feel the school is well led and managed.
84. The school has worked hard to increase its links with parents since the last inspection, particularly during the last three years. Some examples of this increased contact are the involvement of the Parent Link group in helping to form the school's behaviour policy, the seeking of parents' views by questionnaire and the encouragement of greater pupil contributions to the termly newsletter.
85. Despite these efforts, there was only a small return of the parents' and carers' pre-inspection questionnaire (a rate similar to that at the last inspection). About one fifth of those returned felt that the school did not work closely enough with parents. The survey also indicated that a similar minority were unhappy with information about their children's progress and the provision of extracurricular activities. The setting of homework and pupils' behaviour were also matters of concern to a minority of parents who responded.
86. Some of these concerns are well founded and the school recognises that it needs to keep parental contacts under active review. It does not, for example, provide an adequate range of written, curricular information to parents, especially about the content of subjects studied in Years 7-9. This

was a weakness identified at the last inspection. The Parent Link group ebbs and flows with activity and the frequency of correspondence and newsletters to parents is rather low for a school situated some distance outside its catchment area. Little use is made of the school's website to provide parents with a useful, up-to-date range of information. The range of extracurricular activities is fair for a school of this size, especially as nearly all pupils live some distance away from the school.

87. The school has close links with its contributory primary schools and introduces new Year 7 pupils carefully into the school. Formal reports to parents are written to a common format and include a very clear, summative information sheet about pupils' targets and subject attainments that easily allows parents to compare their children's attainment across all subjects. There are, however, some unhelpful inconsistencies in the information provided across subjects. Parents' consultation evenings are held regularly for each year group, but the level of parental attendance is relatively low.
88. A particular strength of the school is its provision and involvement with parents of children who have special educational needs: parents are positively involved in both the half-yearly and annual reviews of their children's progress. During the inspection, good use was made of the *Student Planners* in both class and registration time to indicate homework, attendance or behavioural issues; additionally, in modern foreign languages, for example, key words for learning are written in the planners. Overall, links with parents are satisfactory, but require strengthening.

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

89. The senior leadership of the school has undergone significant changes of personnel in the period since the last inspection. The appointment three years ago of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher led to substantial, relevant action to improve the school's direction and overall management. A full cycle of developmental planning was instituted, setting out clear aims, objectives and targets for the school. Appropriate new management structures and communication patterns were introduced. In 2001, the school successfully achieved the award of *Investors in People* status and a consultative style of management took root. These initiatives enabled the school's professional leaders to involve governors and staff more closely than hitherto in setting the direction of the school. They have contributed to many areas of improvement in teaching and learning as well as a higher performance in GCSE examinations when measured against pupils' prior achievements. These steps represent considerable improvement since the last inspection.
90. With the recent departure of the headteacher (1999-2002), the deputy headteacher (as acting headteacher) is working hard, with a revised senior leadership group, to sustain the momentum of these important changes, pending the arrival of the new headteacher in January 2003. The record of the past three years demonstrates that the school's leadership has had both the will and the capacity to initiate and successfully see through improvement in the school's performance. The quality and effectiveness of those teachers with leadership responsibility for subject and pastoral areas range from satisfactory to very good, but are good overall. The SEN coordinator's effective leadership is well regarded across the school and by outside agencies.
91. The school's overall aims and values are succinctly laid out. They appropriately cover five broad aims that set out to ensure positive relationships, an emphasis on achievement and an ethos which embraces pupils from all backgrounds and abilities. In the main, these aims are soundly reflected in the daily life of the school, although there is still work to be done in correcting the inconsiderate behaviour shown by some pupils as they move around the school.
92. There is a sound and effective pattern of staff communications and meetings. The cycle of meetings is well designed to support the work of managers at all levels and encourages collaboration across different areas of the school by, for example, facilitating meetings between staff responsible for subjects, pastoral work and pupils with special educational needs.



93. Over the last three years, the governing body has become more actively involved in helping to set the strategic direction of the school. Governors now make a more substantial contribution to issues of long-term planning as well as day-to-day decisions about the running of the school. They approach their tasks with commitment and enthusiasm. They do not yet have, however, a sufficiently detailed and accurate picture of the school's overall performance that would allow them to exercise fully their monitoring and evaluation functions. In certain areas they have not adopted sufficiently systematic measures to discharge their responsibilities. These include matters of health and safety (where there are significant shortcomings), compliance with National Curriculum requirements (such as shortfalls in the teaching of ICT), clear oversight of the use and condition of the school's buildings and premises, and the effective monitoring of progress on the key issues for improvement identified at the last inspection.
94. Senior management has set in place many useful measures by which the quality of the school's performance can be assessed, including a very thorough system for recording pupils' progress and setting achievement targets. These substantial measures still do not, however, constitute a comprehensive management information system that enables senior staff and governors to assess fully the school's overall effectiveness. The national system for performance review of teaching staff has been smoothly incorporated into the already established system for monitoring and supporting teaching.
95. The quality of the school's development plan is high. For the cycle 1999-2002, review and adaptation have taken place and there is a manageable and well-defined set of targets in each key area. Similar developmental planning has been successfully extended to the work of individual departments in the school.
96. The school's financial management and planning are satisfactory and support its educational priorities appropriately. A deficit of approximately £60,000 of three years ago has been paid off and the school now carries forward a small surplus. A detailed strategic plan provides secure, long-term financial planning, the lack of which was identified as a weakness at last inspection. Governors are well informed about the school's spending patterns: although they discuss issues in detail and comment on them, they do not take the initiative on financial planning.
97. The school's financial management and administration are well undertaken by the acting headteacher. The bursar keeps a tight control of the spending. There is, however, sometimes an inflexibility in allocating finances that at times prevents the school from responding quickly and adequately to the changing educational demands made upon it. Day-to-day financial administration is carefully monitored. The most recent external audit raised only a few minor issues, to which the school responded appropriately.
98. The school has generally made suitable and effective use of specific funds and grants. Funds from the budget for pupils' transition from primary to secondary schooling have, for instance, been used to purchase books for the library to encourage pupils (and especially boys) to read for both pleasure and research. The proportion of the school's expenditure on professional training is above average. This spending is closely and appropriately linked both to projects set out in the school's improvement plan and to those training needs identified through the performance management of individual staff. Other specific grants and funds are used appropriately – as, for example, that for newly qualified teachers, who are well supported during their first year of teaching.
99. The school makes satisfactory use of such new technologies as e-mail and the Internet. Pupils' attendance is recorded electronically and the library has an electronic system for issuing books.
100. When purchasing services, the school carefully takes "best value" into account. The contract for the maintenance of the school grounds, for instance, has been examined carefully to ensure good value. A much-needed upgrading of the kitchen and dining area has been possible as a result of the choice of the catering contract. The use of school caretaking staff to carry out small maintenance work is beneficial financially to the school.

101. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is broadly average. The provision of teachers is good and almost all lessons are taught by specialists. Non-specialists who are employed in the school on a permanent basis do not have a detrimental impact on pupils' learning. The provision of teachers for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers spend an average proportion of their time in teaching. The ratio of pupils to teachers is less favourable than that usually seen.
102. There is insufficient technical help in science (where one technician has to support six teachers) as well as in art and in design and technology (two practical subjects that share a technician). The administrative and clerical staff provide good support for the teaching staff on a slightly below-average number of hours per week in total. The school's Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are experienced and make a positive contribution. There is a good system of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching.
103. The school has sufficient accommodation except for music, but the number of pupils on roll is projected to continue rising. As at the time of the last inspection, a significant proportion of the accommodation is unsuitable for its purpose. Mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography and history all have one or more rooms that are too small for the classes taught in them: these small rooms restrict the range of teaching and learning styles that can be used, making group work (for instance) difficult. The new, "open" classroom in the centre of the design and technology building suffers from intermittent noise from the surrounding areas.
104. Recent changes have improved some of the accommodation – as, for instance, in the drama studio and new science laboratories. In these two subjects, however, some accommodation is still poor. The common room, when used for drama teaching, is inadequate and two science laboratories are outdated. The gymnasium and sports hall are of good quality, although the changing rooms are too small.
105. The school buildings are a mixture of very old and more recent additions. The older parts, some of which have "listed" building status, are attractive from the outside, but are largely unsuitable for modern teaching and administration. The main entrance to the school is cramped, insignificant and poorly signed. The whole range of buildings forms a complex network of corridors, staircases and interconnecting rooms. Many of the corridors and staircases are narrow and lead to potentially dangerous congestion at the beginning and end of lessons. Some doors are dangerously low.
106. Parts of the exterior are very attractive. Mature trees provide a pleasant outlook and there are some areas in which pupils may sit in break and lunchtimes. A few untidy areas detract from the otherwise pleasant environment. There is very little evidence of graffiti and little litter. The state of some of the pupils' toilets is poor, an issue of concern to some parents and pupils.
107. As at the time of the last inspection, the spending on learning resources is very low. The provision of resources overall is unsatisfactory and too little progress has been made on remedying deficiencies. There are insufficient textbooks in mathematics, science, history and RE: pupils cannot regularly take books home and this adversely affects the development of independent learning – a problem also highlighted at the last inspection. There is insufficient equipment in mathematics (a department that has, for instance, no mini-whiteboards for pupils), in ICT (which lacks facilities for data-logging and the control of devices) and in music (where there are not enough instruments such as sitars and tablas).
108. The provision of ICT in English, mathematics, science and history is unsatisfactory. In these subjects there are insufficient, up-to-date computers available for pupils to use. Although they have relatively easy access to centrally provided computers, these subjects do not adequately cover the ICT work needed to teach ICT across the curriculum. The number of computers for pupils' use in the school is below the average. Almost all, however, are relatively new, industry-standard machines.

109. The library / Independent Learning Centre has been open for only one year. Although it is still being developed, it is a large, welcoming and attractive area and represents a good learning resource. It is a considerable improvement over the situation at the time of the last inspection. Senior management and the librarian have built it up from scratch and, although the book stock is currently below that expected, much of the stock is quite new: all the fiction, for example, is less than two years old. One quality newspaper and two periodicals are available in the library. There are 20 new computers with Internet access that pupils may book for use at lunchtime. This area is deservedly popular with pupils and used well by staff, who bring classes into the area for research lessons.
110. Taking into account the good rate of progress that most pupils make, the generally good quality of teaching and learning, and the school's effective leadership and management, set alongside an income and expenditure per pupil that is above average, the school gives good value for money.

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

111. To improve and build upon the generally good quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors and senior management of the school, in consultation with other bodies (where necessary and appropriate), should:
- (a) remove the range of weaknesses in a minority of teaching that are identified in the main body of the report, and in particular those relating to clarity of teaching objectives, class control and pupils' behaviour, and oral work (## 7, 17, 18, 20, 24, 43-46);
  - (b) pay greater attention to the learning needs of the school's gifted and talented pupils by:
    - formulating a whole-school policy to guide the teaching of all subjects;
    - ensuring that lessons for these pupils always have sufficient depth, pace and stimulation; and
    - monitoring the progress and diverse achievements of these pupils (## 16, 46, 54, 63, 79).
  - (c) improve the present poor provision for the security and the health and safety of pupils and staff by:
    - formulating a comprehensive system for auditing and actioning health and safety matters;
    - ensuring that all visitors enter the school's buildings only through the main reception area;
    - totally segregating the public footpath that runs along one edge of the school's site from the school's grounds by a secure barrier;
    - working to remove – and, in the immediate future, demarcating and protecting much more effectively – the hazards presented by a wide range of sub-standard features in the original school building;
    - increasing the amount of lunchtime supervision and the corporate communication and responsibility amongst all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, across the school's extensive site;
    - raising the standards, servicing and supervision of pupils' toilets to an acceptable level;
    - providing effective extraction of wood dust in design and technology; and
    - removing a range of other hazards, reported separately to the governing body (## 25, 76, 105-106);
  - (d) ensure that the curriculum offered is enhanced by:
    - top-band pupils in Years 8-9 and all pupils in Years 10-11 receiving sufficient experience of information and communication technology (ICT);
    - all pupils receiving teaching about the ICT aspect of "controlling" devices; and

- teaching time being increased to the nationally recommended minimum of 25 hours per week (## 16, 21, 52-53);
- (e) formulate a realistic plan to remedy the resource deficiencies noted in the main body of the report by:
- improving as far as possible the substandard features of the school's accommodation; and
  - meeting the shortfalls in learning resources in mathematics, science, art, geography, history, ICT, music and RE (## 103-108);
- (f) enhance the school's very thorough system for judging the attainment of individual pupils by developing a robust system of analytical tools to evaluate precisely the school's overall performance in both academic and other matters (## 14, 80, 93, 94);
- (g) ensure that all pupils experience a daily act of collective worship – a deficiency noted as a key issue for action by the school six years ago (# 65).

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 19, 23, 24, 49, 51, 52, 55, 66, 75, 78, 81, 85-87, 91, 97, 102 and in subject reports.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	169
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	83

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	31	74	49	14	0	0
Percentage	1	18	44	29	8	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	772
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	87

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	33
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	100

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	40

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

### Attendance

<b>Authorised absence</b>		<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	
	%		%
School data	8.6	School data	0.7
National comparative data	8.1	National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2000-2001.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	86	72	158

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	54	60
	Girls	56	45	44
	Total	102	99	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (78)	63 (76)	66 (64)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (35)	37 (39)	37 (20)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	56	53
	Girls	57	49	44
	Total	101	105	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (67)	67 (71)	62 (80)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (33)	49 (37)	28 (39)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2001	85	62	147

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	79	85
	Girls	31	58	60
	Total	74	137	145
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (42)	93 (96)	99 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.7 (35.4)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

Figures in brackets refer to 2000.

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: Interm-Part 1	0	n/a
	National		n/a

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

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

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

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
704	35	1
0	0	0
5	0	0
0	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0
28	4	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
7	2	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
17	0	0
0	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	213

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	20.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,212,954
Total expenditure	2,180,185
Expenditure per pupil	2,825
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,152
Balance carried forward to next year	32,769



**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.0

  

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	772
Number of questionnaires returned	130

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	62	5	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	40	50	6	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	56	16	5	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	55	25	5	0
The teaching is good.	20	62	11	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	54	17	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	52	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	3	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	58	17	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	25	64	5	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	57	12	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	46	17	6	20

### **Other issues raised by parents**

There were additional comments from parents on 14 of the questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points mentioned were:

- pleasure at the good progress pupils make in their studies;
- the high quality of the school's care for pupils.

Amongst the concerns expressed in questionnaires were:

- the low amount or variability in the setting of homework.

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES: YEARS 7-11

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- The high level of teachers' subject knowledge.
- The progress made by pupils over Years 7-11.
- The use of data to track pupils' attainment and progress.
- The quality of leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement

- The proportion of boys gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE English language.
- The quality of pupils' speaking and listening.
- More use of ICT.

112. On entry to the school in Year 7, the proportion of pupils who had reached the benchmark of Level 4 in the national tests in their primary schools has increased substantially since 1998 and in both 2000 and 2001 was above the national average. The proportion of pupils entering the school at the higher Level 5 has increased over the period 1998-2001 and was above the national average in 1999 and 2000. Results continued to be high in 2002.
113. Over the period 1998-2001, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved overall and that improvement was maintained in 2002. In 1999 and 2000, the results were above the national average. They were average in 2001. When compared with the attainment of pupils with similar socio-economic backgrounds, pupils' performance was in line with the national group average. The attainment of both boys and girls was average for their age group for the period 1998-2001. Whilst the overall attainment of girls is higher than that of boys, boys' attainment has also improved over the same period.
114. In GCSE English language in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the A\*-C range was at the national average and was average for schools in similar socio-economic circumstances. The proportion of A\*-C grades obtained over the period 1998-2000 has varied very little and has also been around the national average. Overall, girls gained more A\* or A grades than boys over the 1998-2001 period. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C in English literature was significantly above the national average in 2001.
115. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard in the subject is at the national average. The majority of pupils read fluently and with expression. They use an appropriate range of reading strategies to predict, sequence ideas and use evidence from a text to support their points of view. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for instance, having read the first chapter of *The Monster Garden* by Vivien Alcock, reviewed what had happened and then used evidence from the novel to support their viewpoints. In another Year 7 class, pupils read the early chapters of the novel *Skellig* by David Almond, focused on the account of the first meeting between Michael and Skellig, and went on to consider how that event could be organised and structured as a play script.
116. Pupils in a Year 8 class, reading *Room 13* by Robert Swindells, developed their understanding of the characters in the novel well and then considered thoughtfully how Lisa felt when she was shown up by the teacher in front of other pupils. Pupils in another Year 8 class revised the use of the apostrophe: most understood the ways in which it may be used to indicate either possession or letter-omission. A Year 9 class read the poem, *The Hangman*, by Maurice Ogden, considered the

sequence of events carefully and then discussed quite perceptively the meaning and effect of word choices such as “sinister air”. Pupils’ progress in the lesson was enhanced by the use of their annotation of the text, modelled by the teacher using an overhead projector.

117. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall in Years 7-9. Part of the reason for this is the incorporation of the National Literacy Strategy’s lesson objectives and word- and sentence-level activities into most lessons, leading to high teaching and learning expectations. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for example, identified rules for making the letter ‘c’ sound hard or soft – as, for example, in “cot” and “civil”. Another Year 7 class carefully sorted words which contained either the long “o” or long “i” sound. A lower-ability Year 9 set, working on plural word-endings such as “s” and “es”, were given an appropriate level of support to help them to consider the plural form of “scarf”. Pupils’ progress is particularly enhanced when lessons are structured to include a “starter” and a concluding plenary session. Pupils regularly work in pairs or small groups, in order to deepen their understanding of aspects of language or literature.
118. By the end of Year 11, pupils’ overall level of attainment is average. Most pupils (including those with special educational needs) make good progress. The progress made by gifted and talented pupils is broadly satisfactory, but could be greater. Pupils satisfactorily use evidence from texts to support their points of view and use their knowledge of the purpose and audience of texts to consider a writer’s choice of language.
119. In a Year 10 class, for instance, studying the language of editorials in two national newspapers, pupils increased their understanding considerably by noting where short sentences or complex sentences were used and by discussing their impact on the reader. Another Year 10 class, working on their own original writing, reviewed well the principles of drafting and the use of imagery before suggesting word and sentence choices for the teacher, who acted as “scribe” and recorded the pupils’ drafting on an overhead projector. In a Year 11 class, the teacher’s probing questions on the character of Crooks in the novel, *‘Of Mice and Men’*, by John Steinbeck resulted in pupils looking carefully themselves for similarities between characters, noting that Lennie, George and Crooks all dream about their futures. A lower-ability Year 11 class interpreted an advertisement for a camera and considered how adjectives and questions were used and why “facts” were included.
120. Pupils’ overall standard of writing is of an average level by the end of Year 11. Pupils successfully plan and draft written assignments, explaining their points of view and identifying textual references to support their interpretations. The written work of high attainers is coherent, well constructed and accurately presented. The standard of spelling and punctuation, though showing variation, is of an average standard overall. Pupils’ standard of speaking also varies widely from the precise and highly articulate to limited mumbling. There is less interactive discussion amongst pupils – and a consequent lower standard – than usually found, because teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to debate issues in depth.
121. Pupils’ attitudes to the subject and their learning are good throughout the school. Most pupils are well motivated towards their work and listen well to instructions. They respond particularly well in lessons that are well planned, carefully structured and allow them to experience a range of ways of learning. Pupils work well when asked to take part in paired work or group activities.
122. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7-11. The specialist teachers in the department have a very high level of subject knowledge and obvious enthusiasm for the subject. Well-planned lessons in Years 7-11 include lesson objectives and plenary sessions. In Years 7-9, many lessons include interactive, “starter” activities that help pupils to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Many lessons include oral activities that effectively stimulate pupils to want to learn, although the amount of subsequent discussion amongst pupils is quite frequently constrained by teachers. The department places a strong emphasis on the teaching of basic literacy.
123. The department is ably and strongly led and has a clear sense of purpose. Staffing problems in the year preceding the inspection added to the management and monitoring load of the department.

The day-to-day administration of the department is well managed and the schemes of work are of good quality: all staff have been closely involved in the redrafting of these to incorporate the National Literacy Strategy's priorities. The department effectively tracks and monitors pupils' attainment and intervenes appropriately to support pupils who are identified as working below their capability. The department has insufficient links, however, with drama, especially about the statutory assessment of pupils' speaking and listening at the end of Year 9. The study of English language and literature makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The department organises a number of extracurricular activities that include theatre trips.

124. Across other subjects in Years 7-11, most pupils are reasonably fluent and accurate when reading; this is especially so in art and history. The overall standard of pupils' reading and writing is average. Speaking and listening are close to average overall, but standards are below average in mathematics and music. Listening skills are above average in geography, history and music. The use of ICT to support work in English is unsatisfactory.
125. **Drama** is taught in Years 7-11 and is offered as a GCSE subject in Years 10 and 11. The overall standard of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10-11. Drama is a successful GCSE subject in the school. Pupils in a Year 7 class had their first lesson of drama and were introduced soundly to activities to develop their listening and concentration. In a Year 10 class, working on the theme of a happy family, the teacher planned a series of activities that incorporated several dramatic techniques which helped pupils to reflect constructively on how they could interpret characters. In a Year 11 drama group, working on the theme of "the victim", pupils developed their interpretations of characters through freeze-frames and the outcomes of a brainstorming activity.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The assessment of pupils' work is carefully done.

### Areas for improvement

- More variation in the styles of teaching.
- The leadership and management of the subject.
- Departmental accommodation and the range and use of learning resources.

126. At the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils who gained at least the basic standard expected of 14 year olds in the 2001 national tests was below the national average. Based upon average points scored by all pupils, the school's results were also below the national average for all schools and well below those in similar circumstances. Girls performed better than boys. These results marked a dip back to the position in 1998, after two years of steady improvement. The results in 2002 were a significant improvement on those in 2001: the proportions of pupils obtaining either the basic standard or the higher levels were both above the respective national averages for 2001.
127. The proportion of pupils who gained grades in the range A\*-C in the GCSE examination in 2001 was below the national average. Unlike the previous three years, boys' overall performance was better than that of girls. Boys' results were in line with the boys' national average, whilst those of girls were well below that for girls. Overall, however, these results halted a steady decline over the three years from 1997. Results in 2002 fell slightly. Girls once again performed better than boys, in keeping with their results in the Year 9 national tests of 2000. No pupil attained an A\* grade in the last two years. The proportion of pupils who gain a grade in the range A\*-G is regularly at least in line with the national average. Based upon the average grade attained by pupils who were entered

for the examination in 2001, pupils made less progress in mathematics than in most other subjects. The overall results were below the average for schools nationally in similar socio-economic circumstances. Relative to pupils' prior attainment on entry to the school, however, these results demonstrate fairish achievement for most pupils.

128. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work of a larger than average proportion of pupils is at least at the level expected of 14 year olds. The proportion of pupils attaining a standard higher than Level 5 could, however, be higher. Good teaching throughout Years 7-9 helps pupils to make good progress to think mathematically, use terminology accurately and present work logically. Pupils are given ample opportunities to consolidate techniques in number work, algebra and data-handling by practising routine textbook questions. They are rarely given opportunities to attempt problems presented to them in an unusual way. Neither are they encouraged to check answers by either estimating or using alternative methods. For example, whilst the best pupils solve simultaneous equations accurately, using algebraic methods, they do not follow this up by drawing graphs to check where the two lines intersect.
129. During their first year in the school, pupils make good progress. From the first week, they are placed in attainment groups within the mixed-ability classes and given tasks that require them to work at a suitable level. In one such lesson, for instance, pupils added and subtracted positive and negative integers confidently, many using the idea of building up a sequence of questions suggested by the teacher. They found the mid-points of two different integers, using a number line to help them to visualise the size of the numbers. Pupils were sensibly allowed to use their own methods and given good opportunities to explain these to other pupils. Too often pupils were passive, however, when the teacher used oral question-and-answer techniques with the whole class to explain concepts. This is because the school does not have the number fans or whiteboards now commonly used in schools. As a result, not all pupils have the chance to answer questions and the pace of lessons slows.
130. In Years 8 and 9, where pupils are grouped in sets according to their ability, overall progress continues to be good, because teachers use methods in keeping with the National Numeracy Strategy, despite the lack of equipment to embrace it fully. Average Year 8 pupils were engrossed in their work from start to finish in one excellent lesson where they were actively involved throughout. They all worked eagerly within strict time limits to calculate a three-digit answer, using the basic arithmetic operations on six smaller numbers in the style of a well-known television programme. They maintained their interest to achieve very highly for their ability. They drew straight-line, algebraic graphs accurately and talked confidently about why they knew they were correct. This was because they had plotted an extra point to check accuracy and been encouraged to think hard about the key concepts of gradient and intercept, including adding them to the list of key words in their planners.
131. In a minority of lessons, however, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. This happens when teachers spend too long talking to the entire class or interrupt the lesson too often, when one pupil makes an error. Although the numbers of boys and girls vary in the upper and lower sets in Years 7-9, both sexes do equally well overall. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, whether taught in mainstream classes or during withdrawal time. Individual education plans are used suitably by teachers, ably supported by learning assistants to provide good, individual help. Whilst gifted and talented pupils make progress broadly in line with the others – and a good proportion attain high levels – they are not clearly identified, and hence no particularly challenging activities are planned for them.
132. Although the attainment of previous year-groups has been below average by the end of Year 11, those in the current Year 11 are on course to attain typical national standards, including the highest A\* grade. In one lesson, higher-attaining pupils were well motivated, because in a starter activity the teacher sowed the seeds of quick methods of solving otherwise difficult two-digit by two-digit multiplication questions. The class spotted the method quickly, because a time limit had been imposed on the activity. More importantly, they were encouraged to discover the higher level,

algebraic reasoning that underpinned why this method works. Overall, these pupils gained a good working knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling. They built up the confidence to tackle problems by applying what they already knew to new situations.

133. Pupils in the middle sets also make good progress. In a lesson on enlargement, for example, pupils identified five errors in an attempted enlargement of a house presented to them on a worksheet. This activity grabbed their attention and they became confident in enlarging shapes in different ways. More importantly, these pupils demonstrated a good working knowledge and understanding of the concept of similarity, as well as constructing diagrams accurately by using routine techniques. Pupils in the lowest sets work at least in line with their ability. The high expectations of teachers and the suitably low numbers in the class allowed teachers to ensure that all pupils are able, for instance, to plot straight-line graphs from a given linear equation.
134. In contrast, during some lessons, teachers neither captured the attention of pupils at the start, nor set time limits for activities, being over-concerned that pupils did not make minor errors. They followed rote techniques rather than encouraging independence. As a result, the attainment of these pupils was not as high as it could have been and progress was no more than satisfactory.
135. Progress in Year 10 is good. The higher-attaining pupils work rapidly through, for example, difficult profit-and-loss calculations and move on suitably to the idea of compound interest. In a lesson with a top set, pupils demonstrated the ability to calculate this accurately. Whilst the teacher was very successful in creating a very good working atmosphere, an opportunity was missed to ask the class to devise, for homework, a short-cut method to calculate compound interest.
136. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils also achieve well overall. In a good lesson on rounding, lower-attaining pupils accurately rounded numbers to the nearest integer, ten, hundred and thousand. They also made good decisions about the most suitable levels of accuracy for people's heights and football match crowds. The teacher's determination, high expectations and efforts to relate the work to real life were largely responsible for motivating the class to work so well during the last lesson of the day in a small room that was cramped and with curtains too shabby to prevent the sun shining into the room.
137. Pupils generally respond well to the teaching they receive. Sometimes their attitudes are very good (or even excellent), but occasionally, when they are insufficiently challenged to participate actively, their behaviour is unsatisfactory. This weakness occurs more frequently in Years 8 and 9, mainly where teaching styles lack variety. In Years 10 and 11, even the pupils who find concentration difficult, have matured and are always respectful to teachers. Pupils persevere well and are productive in almost all lessons. They present work logically and tidily. They come to school extremely well prepared with basic equipment and respect school property. They are often, however, denied opportunities to show initiative. Teachers usually give out exercise books and textbooks at the start of lessons; rarely are pupils given the chance to take textbooks home, thus stifling enthusiasm for independent learning.
138. Relationships between teachers and pupils are usually good and often very good. Whilst relationships amongst pupils are usually good, these are insufficiently encouraged, because teachers rarely plan group or paired work as part of the learning process.
139. Teaching is good overall. In more than a quarter of lessons it is very good or excellent. It is occasionally unsatisfactory. Teachers are all specialists. The department has been boosted very recently by the appointment of two new teachers, one of whom is newly qualified. This has helped to stabilise a department that has needed to rely on supply teachers in recent years. The new recruits are also helping to bring new ideas and resources to a department that in the past has relied too heavily on teacher talk, followed by pupils completing routine textbook exercises to consolidate concepts. All teachers are competent with the classes they currently teach and display a determination to help their pupils to succeed.

140. The best lessons are characterised by teachers smiling and welcoming pupils at the start. Where the objectives and programme for the lesson are shared meaningfully with pupils, they always respond well. Learning is very good where teachers intersperse discussion with pupils' activity, where time limits are set and enforced, and where transitions between short bursts of activity are sharp. Reinforcement through routine exercises is not seen as a chore in such lessons, whereas in less effective lessons routine work provides the main body of the work and does not engage pupils' interest sufficiently.
141. Practical work is underused. Where it is used, such as in an activity with lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 to investigate the relationship between the circumference of a circle and its diameter, it stimulates meaningful discussion amongst pupils and more durable learning. Overall, there is insufficient use of resources, including overhead projectors and computers. This aspect has not improved since the last inspection.
142. During lessons, teachers make accurate, ongoing assessments of pupils' understanding. This results in mistakes and misconceptions being rectified at an early stage. Pupils have a good awareness of their attainment and progress. The department sets meaningful targets for pupils on a medium- and long-term basis, but most teachers do not write short-term targets in pupils' exercise books to give them clear advice on how to improve. There are, however, some very good examples of this type of marking, particularly where pupils are approaching examinations. Homework is set regularly and marked accurately. Whilst providing a good method of assessing what pupils should have learned, it is rarely used either to promote independent work or to allow pupils to read up and show initiative prior to starting a new topic.
143. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but have unsatisfactory features and could be better. Pupils' progress is tracked meaningfully and staff are set suitable targets from observations of their teaching. The head of department does not, however, teach pupils above Year 7, a practice that is difficult to sustain long-term. Resources are run down and the teaching of the numeracy strategy is not as effective as it could be. Whilst there are extra classes offered for pupils approaching examinations in the spring and summer terms, there are no extracurricular clubs. The head of department is now well supported by two colleagues in the running of the department and mathematics is only just becoming an enjoyable subject for most pupils.
144. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although teachers benefit from the four classrooms being close together, one is small and curtains are ineffective in keeping out any unwanted sunshine. As there are six mathematics staff, teachers often teach in different rooms to share equably the use of the small room. This also has the negative effect of inhibiting teachers from stamping their own personality on any room by means of displays or seating arrangements. The department has a shortage of textbooks and computers.
145. Overall, the department has made broadly satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Whilst standards are much the same, they are on a rising trend. Teaching has improved significantly and promises to get better, now that the department is well staffed and funds have been earmarked for an electronic whiteboard and other Numeracy Strategy resources. The department's performance requires close monitoring, however, to ensure that pupils attain as well in this subject as in English and science.
146. Pupils' general standard of numeracy across the curriculum is at least average (and often higher) in Years 7-9, partly because of the implementation of the Numeracy Strategy in contributory primary schools. In Years 10 and 11 it is average. It has improved since the last inspection and is sufficient to support learning in other subjects throughout the school, despite some difficulties in science with labelling axes and drawing a line of best fit in Years 7-9 graph work; in Year 10 science, however, pupils used formulae appropriately, when experimenting with velocity. In design and technology, pupils are good at interpreting data to analyse nutritional values in food technology, use measurement well in resistant materials and are confident with numbers in graphics. In geography



and ICT, pupils draw and interpret formulae and graphs accurately. Pupils in history understand population graphs sufficiently to spot trends and calculate the scale factor for population increase.

147. The school has a good policy for numeracy across the curriculum. An audit has been carried out of when subjects require the use of mathematical skills and standard practices have been agreed for various techniques – as, for example, the labelling of graphs and ways of setting out calculations. The school does not, however, have an accurate picture of the extent to which the policy is being implemented.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Pupils' GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Modular tests ensure that pupils know how well they are doing.
- Strong leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Developing an increased range of teaching and learning strategies.
- Consistent operation by all teachers of the literacy and marking policies.

148. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment in 2001 was well above the national average. This is a significant, positive change since the last inspection. Pupils' overall entry standard has risen in the last four years at a rate above the national trend. In 2001, for example, nearly all new entrants had reached the national expectation of at least Level 4 and half of them had reached the higher Level 5 grade (nationally one third), compared with only one in three in 1999 and less than one in ten in 1998. The impact of these higher entry standards has not, of course, worked its way through to GCSE.
149. Over the last four years, pupils' overall attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 has been close to the national average at the minimum expected Level 5, but consistently above (or well above) average at the higher Level 6 over the last four years. When compared with the science results in other schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, this school's results are close to the group average, albeit with some variations over the years. Boys and girls generally do equally well in these tests.
150. In 2001, the GCSE double-award science results were a little above both the national average and the average for schools of a similar socio-economic kind for the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C. Results have improved over the last few years from being below the national average to the stronger position they now enjoy – a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when the department's performance was regarded as a weakness. This improvement is well founded, despite the significant drop in results in 2000 (which was mainly caused by a succession of short-term supply teachers covering two posts). Pupils tend to perform as well in science as they do in their other subjects. Boys and girls do equally well in most years, although in 2001 boys' results were noticeably better than those of the girls.
151. In most years pupils make good progress, because the overall attainment in GCSE is relatively higher than has been attained earlier on in the school. The most able pupils usually achieve the top A\*-B grades, broadly in line with the national pattern. Few opportunities exist, however, for them to be stretched through extension work or additional, challenging experiences.
152. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is broadly average. In Year 9, for example, in a lesson on microbes, pupils appreciated the need for accurate measurement of the volume of the products from a mixture of yeast and flour linked to changes in temperature and were successful in doing so. Year 9 pupils in top sets understood the action of yeast on flour and the generation of carbon

dioxide and the release of energy. Year 10 pupils demonstrated a suitable competency in the use of ticker-tape timers and the subsequent manipulation of the data collected.

153. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment is close to the national average. High-attaining pupils generally achieve an appropriately high standard and the top sets demonstrate, for example, above average competency in the use of graphs. There is still, however, room for many of them to acquire a greater depth of knowledge and understanding through demanding questioning and debate. In a Year 11 lesson, lower attainers demonstrated a clear understanding of covalent bonds and the arrangement of electrons in simple compounds. In some lessons, however – as in a Year 11 lesson on the energy released from a range of fuels – standards of understanding the implications of science are lower than they should be, because pupils have very few opportunities to debate the issues with their teachers or classmates. Where opportunities arise, such topics generate interest and produce deep consideration – as when, for example, in a lesson on blood and its circulation in the body discussion extended to heart surgery. Year 11 pupils talk positively about their interest in science and their desire to continue to study the subject in further education.
154. The standard of both written and practical aspects of investigative work is above average. It is often word processed, and some pupils in Years 10 and 11 use spreadsheets to generate graphs and pie charts. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy practical work and readily acquire new skills. In the large amount of practical work performed in lessons, pupils handle equipment safely and correctly. They work collaboratively and effectively in small groups. A Year 7 class, for instance, successfully considered continuous and non-continuous variables linked to hair colour, height and physical attributes.
155. Most pupils, in all year groups, have reasonable competence in the planning of fair tests, choosing variables, making predictions and subsequently analysing their findings. A factor in pupils' successful application of these skills is the increasingly close relationship with the principal contributory primary schools that ensures some continuity when pupils transfer to this school.
156. Pupils make good progress in the subject in Years 7-9 and Years 10-11. A major contributory factor to this positive achievement is the quality of teaching in the department. The best lessons are those that are based on detailed planning with timed sequences and that contain a suitable variety of exposition, sharing objectives with pupils, include question-and-answer sessions and incorporate work summaries on the board. Some very good board summaries were observed, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on human senses, during which pupils were encouraged to add supplementary ideas, as they transferred the notes to their exercise books. The teacher emphasised that this would be an essential skill, if the subject were to be studied at a higher level.
157. Pupils work hard in science. The behaviour of pupils in higher sets is always good, but at times a small minority of pupils in lower sets do not pay attention and are prone to chattering. The majority of pupils have good relationships with their peers and teachers.
158. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and sound overall. In Years 7-9, two unsatisfactory lessons were observed: a major weaknesses was the unfamiliarity of a teacher new to the school in the use of sanctions to curb the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils. Over half of the other lessons in this stage were good or very good. In Years 10-11, the quality of teaching is good overall and all lessons were at least satisfactory. At the last inspection, the majority of lessons observed were judged unsatisfactory. A considerable improvement has occurred with a complete change of teachers.
159. Some teachers regularly mark pupils' work by adding appropriate comments. This practice is not, however, sufficiently common throughout the department or consistently applied. Where it does occur, pupils are particularly appreciative. The presentation of written work in Years 7-9 is often poor and there is insufficient attention to the spelling of both scientific and non-specialist words in the notes that pupils make.

160. All teaching staff have secure knowledge, but some employ a limited range of teaching methods. The better lessons usually have more stages to them and a range of approaches – a feature used to best advantage in Years 10-11. Some lessons in Years 7-9 lack the necessary variety to engage pupils' interest for the whole time. One card-matching exercise was, however, successfully used in a Year 8 class to highlight the important features of the lesson and reinforce new words being introduced. Good lessons are typified by scientific and technological examples drawn from everyday life and often supplemented by the use of appropriate videorecorded programmes – as, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on the functions of the heart. Some staff who have entered teaching after a career in industry bring reality to many lessons with snippets of relevant scientific facts and experiences.
161. Few whole-class demonstrations were observed to illustrate and reinforce important aspects of the subject and to explore pupils' understanding of scientific principles and concepts. Where they occurred – as, for example, in a Year 11 biology lesson on human reflexes – pupils appreciated the masterful performance from the teacher, as a pupil's reflexes were sensitively monitored. Pupils respond very positively to lessons that contain well-planned sequences which demonstrate a concept and then logically progress to a more advanced or important aspect. In some lessons too much time is allocated to the copying and/or colouring of diagrams.
162. From Year 8 onwards, pupils are taught in classes of similar attainment, with half-year groups being divided into sets. This arrangement works well. In Year 7, classes start the year without full primary school records being available and teachers have difficulty pitching questions to match the ability of individual pupils in the mixed-ability classes. In Years 9 and 11, approximately one third of pupils are entered for the higher-tiered test or examination papers.
163. Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate help from learning assistants. Generally, these pupils make good progress. The department has responded particularly well to the needs of a visually impaired pupil, for instance, by making modifications to teaching whiteboards and room layout and by marking equipment with paint. One learning assistant is attached to the department, an important factor in the progress that pupils with special educational needs make, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
164. The department is conscious of the need to develop pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy, but does this insufficiently in Years 7-9. Some staff systematically correct the spelling of key scientific words in pupils' books. Most units of work have a list of the more important scientific words. Lessons seldom, however, feature the listing of salient scientific words on the board, nor are the pertinent ones always displayed on the walls of laboratories. Insufficient time is spent checking pupils' understanding of scientific vocabulary by searching questioning and supplementary follow-up.
165. In many lessons teachers' questioning seldom progresses beyond the level of recalling facts and information covered a few minutes earlier. Few teachers reinforce pupils' literacy skills by, for instance, encouraging them to read aloud sections of text or expecting them to present scientific explanations orally. The presentation of written work in the books of some middle- and lower-attaining pupils is typified by untidy layout, inaccurate spellings of common words and the infrequent use of a ruler.
166. The number of topics in pupils' books where competency in numeracy is required or practised is less than normally seen, but the examples observed were good. Pupils prepare graphs quickly and accurately, and then interpret them appropriately. Pupils' recording of investigative work for GCSE was of a high standard.
167. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection where a teacher used ICT to demonstrate scientific phenomena and stimulate discussion. The department has only one computer for use with classes, moving to ICT suites when required. The scheme of work indicates that ICT equipment is used for word processing, encyclopaedic exercises and Internet searching. Whilst pupils have the necessary skills to search for relevant information, staff do not always check that pupils use their time profitably and select pertinent information – as, for example, when preparing a biography or a poster. The department has a limited stock of datalogging equipment. Overall, the use of ICT in

science is less than usually found in similar types of school. Staff have, however, undertaken training in ICT as part of the national scheme.

168. There has been good progress since the last inspection in all aspects of the department's work. The acting head of department has collated an extensive bank of statistics that cover pupils' attainment in their primary schools and throughout Years 7-11. The results of modular tests, used consistently across the department, underpin the organisation of teaching sets. The department has a thorough system for analysing pupils' attainments and achievements. Target grades are worked out for staff use and tracking purposes. Revision classes are popular with pupils prior to GCSE final examinations and the Year 9 national tests.
169. The leadership and management of the department are good. A team of conscientious, hardworking teachers is effectively led by a caring and enthusiastic acting head of department. He manages his team particularly well, utilising their strengths and projecting a positive and exciting image of the subject in the school. Management monitoring and information systems are used effectively to raise standards. Suitable systems are in place to support newly qualified and part-time teachers.
170. There is a sufficient number of laboratories to cover the quantity of science taught. Most have been made into attractive learning environments by the use of well-chosen and colourful wall displays of pupils' work, but two laboratories remain outdated. The department has a limited supply of textbooks and other materials. These are extensively used to good purpose. The photocopied sheets that are often distributed to supplement textbooks are not always retained securely for revision purposes. Revision and booster classes are well attended by pupils in Years 9 and 11. Pupils have limited opportunities to visit relevant local industries. The efforts of one hardworking technician are a contributory factor to the department's success, but the limited amount of technician time available imposes some restriction on the pupils' opportunities for practical work.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Pupils' overall standard of attainment in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of observational drawing, painting and pastel studies.
- The use of sketchbooks for research.

### Areas for improvement

- Ways of helping pupils in Years 10 and 11 to work more independently.
- The use of the evidence of sketchbooks to track pupils' progress.
- Increased use of ICT.
- The standard of surface decoration in ceramics.

171. The overall standard of work in two-dimensional drawing, painting and research (using books and the Internet) is above average by the end of both Years 9 and 11. In contrast, the overall level of attainment (and pupils' opportunities) in three-dimensional work, design work using computer software, and formal discussion and oral presentations are a little below average and lower than they could be. Pupils' levels of achievement in relation to their slightly above average overall standard on entry to the school are satisfactory in Years 7-11.
172. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment was assessed by their teachers in 2001 as above average. Most pupils produce a standard of work that is typical for their age and a significant minority do better. The evidence seen in sketchbooks, drawing and painting indicates that pupils' overall attainment is slightly above average by the end of Year 9.

173. The GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades and average for grades A\*-G. Pupils' level of performance was higher in 2002. In 2001, pupils tended to achieve as well in this subject as they did in most of their other subjects, an improvement over the position in 1996-1999. Girls generally did better than boys, but gained a smaller proportion of the higher grades than girls did nationally. There has been a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection.
174. By the end of Year 9, as a result of the department's focus on observational drawing and its associated skills, pupils' rate of progress in acquiring artistic skills is now good. Sensitive tonal studies, appropriate use of colour and well-observed shapes are regular features in sketchbooks. A focus on key artistic words and on understanding the meaning of technical terms has raised pupils' understanding and led to improved written work for most pupils.
175. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 7 are well supported by a classroom assistant and make good progress, but this level of provision is not made available in other year groups. In a Year 8 lesson, for instance, with a literacy focus and no assistance, progress in writing slowed, when the teacher's attention was also diverted to administrative tasks rather than teaching. Pupils with particular talent in this subject generally make sound progress.
176. Whilst many pupils use computers at home, the standard of using computers for drawing, design work or research in school is lower than it could be, because pupils have insufficient opportunities to use them regularly. When they do use them, girls in particular often show a fear of making mistakes and consequently waste time while waiting for a teacher's attention. There is also less use of the area surrounding the school as a stimulus to produce high-quality work than is usually found, partly because of large class sizes. The lower standards and limited experience of ceramics are in part due to the lack of sufficient technical help.
177. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work is a little above average – a satisfactory level of achievement. The new art kits, bought by the pupils themselves, have contributed to raising higher attainers' expectations of what can be achieved, with the result that they produce good colour toning in, for instance, their copies of Marc Chagall's dream imagery. Middle and lower attainers, however, read the poems provided too literally and do not adequately understand the analogies contained in the text: many refuse to listen to explanations and tend to brush aside any ideas that do not match their first impressions.
178. In a Year 11 class seen, the majority of pupils drew confidently; girls outnumbered boys and demanded more of the teacher's time. Only one boy in this group is achieving well, having produced a very effective abstract colour panel, using ICT, after the style of Mondrian. The other two boys were content to copy images of cars. Part of the reason for the disparity of standards between boys and girls was that the teacher had higher expectations of girls and had given insufficient thought to boys' needs. A weakness in Years 10-11 is that most pupils wait to be told what to do, so inevitably slowing their progress.
179. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Most pupils know right from wrong and form positive relationships with their teachers. The exception is one class of pupils in Year 9 who behaved very badly and learned little during the lesson observed. A constant feature, however, of even well-behaved classes is the chewing of gum, even when talking to visitors.
180. Teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. The strengths of the department are in teachers' subject knowledge (including ICT), the teaching of basic skills, the procedures for assessing pupils' work and the setting of homework. Weaknesses occur in the management of pupils, planning work, the narrow range of teaching methods used and expectations that are not high enough. As a result, pupils often do not produce enough work and lose interest and concentration. Teachers currently do too much for pupils.

181. Whilst general assessment data are well used to set targets for the future, the department does not have an adequate baseline of art testing or analysis when pupils enter the school from which to measure pupils' specifically artistic progress. Work in sketchbooks is dated, but is not used to track individual achievement. Pupils' cultural development includes the study of western and non-western artists, but few visits have been made to art galleries in recent years nor are arrangements made for artists to visit the school.
182. The leadership and management of the department are broadly satisfactory, but the subject leader is on secondment to another school. The teacher currently in charge is aware of what needs to be done to improve provision, but is partly limited by large class sizes and the lack of technical help. Whilst departmental documentation has many good features, there is no policy for gifted and talented pupils. Statutory requirements for the subject are met. Good progress has been made in addressing the deficiencies raised by the previous report by improving pupils' overall standard of attainment and providing better opportunities for drawing and the acquisition of artistic skills. Technical help is not consistently available.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching and learning is good and improving.</li> <li>• The above average standards reached by the end of Years 9 and 11.</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress throughout the school.</li> <li>• The strong departmental team spirit and a determination to improve further.</li> </ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision and use of ICT.</li> <li>• Attention to the disruptive behaviour of a significant minority of pupils.</li> <li>• Addressing health and safety issues effectively.</li> </ul>
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183. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard of attainment is above the national average. In recent years teachers' formal assessments have indicated that standards have improved rapidly by the end of Year 9, with more pupils annually reaching the national benchmark of Level 5 and exceeding the proportion who do so nationally. Attainment at Level 6 and above is average.
184. In GCSE in 2001, pupils' overall standard of attainment was above average. Both girls and boys achieved similar grades to those they obtained in most of their other school subjects. In 2002 the improving trend was maintained. The standard of work observed in lessons and an analysis of pupils' work-folders also indicate an overall level of attainment that is above average. There is clear evidence of continuing improvement in pupils' work with most materials and the potential for greater success by meeting the targets set for the 2003 GCSE examinations. Attainment in GCSE is improving, because pupils have had continuous experience in all aspects of the subject in Years 7-9 – a direct result of improvements made to the planning and teaching of the subject since the previous inspection.
185. By the end of Year 9, higher attainers work independently and make sensible decisions – as, for example, while researching information as part of a project to produce suitable educational toys for a young child. Although gifted and talented pupils are not formally identified, they make good progress and show suitable initiative. Not all pupils are good at thinking for themselves, however, or linking ideas together.
186. Lower attainers are often too reliant on adult help. Where there is no learning support assistant present, some pupils' progress is too slow. This happened in a food lesson focusing on literacy and

study skills, when too many of those present had learning problems. Pupils with identified special educational needs make good progress, because teachers plan effectively for their needs and ensure that appropriate resources are available. Whilst most pupils' handwriting is legible and well formed, a significant number show weaknesses in spelling.

187. The majority of pupils in Years 7-9 make good progress and achieve well in gaining new knowledge, consolidating what they have already learned and improving their skills. In Year 7, for example, pupils' intuitive knowledge of the local textiles industry is drawn upon effectively to reinforce understanding of health and safety issues in class. Pupils in Year 8 undertake practical tasks efficiently, but progress slows for lower-attaining pupils when reading tasks are involved. A number of boys in particular are lazy readers and too reliant upon their teacher.
188. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to make good progress to achieve their above average results. Progress in using numeracy is strong. Pupils following the food technology course in Years 10-11, for example, use ICT well to analyse the nutritional content of food and to produce graphs showing the results. Whilst the majority of pupils enjoy the range and depth of learning opportunities available to them, a small number of lower attainers do not cope with the research and design requirements of the GCSE resistant materials course; there is currently no alternative vocational qualification offered.
189. Throughout the school, pupils' progress in using ICT is satisfactory, because many pupils have computers at home and use word processing and graphics well to present their work. The use and impact of ICT within lessons, however, is less than normally seen. Pupils' standard of speaking and listening is average overall, but higher in group discussions than when pupils are required to give formal reports. In the latter case, many pupils are embarrassed and either say little or mutter incoherently. This happened, for instance, in an otherwise very successful lesson concerned with analysing dessert products.
190. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, generally good and occasionally very good: it is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. Work is well planned and expectations are high, particularly in food and textiles. Homework is set regularly. Assessment procedures are appropriate: pupils in Years 10-11 have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they should do to improve, and this good practice is currently being extended to Years 7-9. Marking is generally good, but in a minority of cases insufficiently helps pupils to understand or remedy errors in spelling. Key subject words are displayed in class and technical words are introduced appropriately, but dictionaries are rarely available for pupils to consult.
191. The best teaching follows a three-part plan of an introduction, activities and time for finding out what pupils have learned. The final part is missing from some lessons, however, so denying pupils (and their teacher) the opportunity to understand fully what they and others have learned. The greatest variation in departmental teaching is seen in how far teachers allow pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. Whilst the worksheets used are appropriate, not all teachers recognise that pupils require time to read aloud or stress to pupils the importance of speaking clearly and audibly.
192. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Relationships are generally warm and in some classes very positive. Boys and girls work well together. Pupils from different ethnic groups mingle freely and harmoniously both within and outside lessons. Problems usually arise in the afternoons when a significant minority of pupils (often boys) do not settle to work and behave immaturely: these pupils arrive late for lessons, waste their own and others' time, and on occasions absent themselves from the class without their teacher's permission. Chewing gum is a further problem (mainly from girls) with all year groups. Not all teachers currently take sufficient notice of this problem and, as a result, pupils do not take the school's ban seriously.
193. The quality of leadership and management is good. The new subject leader has made a good start with auditing the department's resources, monitoring teaching and learning, and implementing appropriate change. The newly refurbished rooms and the interesting displays create a good

working environment; extraneous noise, however, sometimes hampers work in a recently converted classroom. Teachers are well supported by a very efficient and skilful technician, but more assistance is required, because technical help is shared with art. Single periods do not always allow pupils to finish their practical work properly. The subject's schemes of work are of good quality.

194. Links with industry are very limited, but links with local schools are increasing. There are health and safety weaknesses relating to dust extraction and to risk assessments within lessons. Statutory requirements for the curriculum are met. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection on raising pupils' standards of attainment and improving the teaching of the subject.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 10-11.
- Teachers plan their work well and manage pupils skilfully.
- A wide range of high-quality opportunities for fieldwork and the use of ICT.

### Areas for improvement

- A better match of work for pupils with special educational needs.
- Greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation in two classrooms.

195. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2001 at the end of Year 9, results indicated that the overall standard was slightly above that expected nationally. In 2002, attainment was broadly similar. These mirror the standards achieved in the previous three years. Girls and boys achieve broadly similar standards. During the inspection the overall standard of work seen was average.
196. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is also average. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were above the national average for the subject: this represents a distinct improvement on the results achieved in the previous three years which were well below average. The results gained by pupils in this subject are broadly similar to those they achieved in most of their other subjects. The lower results achieved in the 2002 GCSE examination were clearly due to a group of eight pupils who gained extremely low marks for their coursework. The department has developed clear strategies for addressing this issue. Boys generally achieve more of the higher (A\*/A) grades than girls. During the inspection, the overall standard of work seen was average.
197. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound knowledge of how landscapes are formed, how natural events such as flooding, earthquakes and volcanoes occur and affect the lives of people. They have good knowledge of a limited number of places and different environments and use that information to describe the nature of life in these places. Pupils in Year 8, for example, write clearly to describe how life in Kenya is changing, and in Year 9 write accurately about life on Baffin Island in northern Canada.
198. By the end of Year 11, pupils' satisfactory understanding of the subject is supported by a sound knowledge of relevant examples. They can illustrate their knowledge of the problems faced by people moving into cities through the example of the migration of people to Cape Town in South Africa and their knowledge of how coasts are shaped through the example of the coast of Dorset. Pupils have good skills in extracting information from such resource material as textbooks, videorecordings and diagrams, and use it to answer questions accurately.



199. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 10 quickly extracted information from a magazine article about life in the city of Delhi in India. They used this information very effectively to produce a fact file and to discuss the problems the city faces. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have a secure knowledge of simple geographical facts and generally answer questions correctly. Pupils write full answers to questions and use their knowledge of geographical terms appropriately. They analyse such numerical data such as climate graphs correctly, but their knowledge of the range of methods of displaying data is limited.
200. Throughout the school, higher-attaining pupils offer clear reasons for such geographical features as small-scale changes in climate around the school. The majority of pupils, however, find it difficult to explain the features they describe. Pupils' general knowledge is weak and teachers work hard to improve this deficiency by, for instance, looking at the geographical background to topical news stories. Overall, pupils have a poor knowledge of where places are, as they are not encouraged to make sufficient use of atlases.
201. All examination results are analysed very carefully by the department. A strategy for improvement has been implemented, including a change in the GCSE syllabus studied. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress both in Years 7-9 and in Years 10-11. The rate of progress does, however, improve a little in Years 10-11, because the overall quality of teaching is better. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. They are fully involved in lessons and receive good support and encouragement to complete work accurately, but the work set for them is not matched sufficiently closely to their individual needs. Higher-attaining pupils make broadly satisfactory progress, but could make more: teachers do not develop sufficient depth of understanding in these pupils through effective challenge with incisive questions and specifically designed materials.
202. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10-11. The preparation and organisation of lessons are good, so that lessons move from one activity to another smoothly and a brisk pace is maintained. The aims of the work are often not made clear to pupils at the start, so that they are uncertain about the focus of the lesson. The failure of teachers to conclude lessons with a review of whether lesson aims have been achieved was also reported as a weakness at the time of the previous inspection.
203. Teachers use their good knowledge to plan lessons carefully with a variety of well-focused exercises. These provide information that is skilfully reinforced by well-structured activities, enabling pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. In one lesson, for instance, pupils in Year 10 made good progress in understanding the use of water. Following a brief review of the main sources of water, pupils quickly drew a graph to show the amount of fresh water available for people to use and rapidly listed its uses. They then gained a deeper understanding through studying a series of photographs of people using water in Ethiopia, and discussing and answering a series of well-structured questions, comparing the accessibility and use of water in the UK and Ethiopia.
204. Relationships with pupils are friendly, but firm. Teachers are quick to ensure that pupils remain focused on the task set, with the result that behaviour in lessons is good and a harmonious working atmosphere is established. Steady progress is maintained, as lessons are taught at an appropriate level to present a realistic challenge to most pupils. In the lessons seen, however, no additional materials were used to support the work of pupils with special educational needs or to extend the understanding of higher attainers, so slowing the rate of progress of these groups. A strength of teaching, particularly in Years 10-11, is the attention that teachers give to deepening pupils' linguistic skills. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of geographical terms, reinforce comprehension skills and make sure that pupils know how to use a textbook correctly. Appropriate homework is set.
205. Pupils learn well and make steady progress. Many lessons arouse their interest and curiosity, especially when teaching is imaginative – as, for instance, when the teacher used a discussion of the layers of cloud visible through the classroom window to introduce a study of the weather. The

majority of pupils work hard, assimilate information quickly and maintain focus throughout due to skilful management, good lesson planning and the wide variety of activities provided. Teachers expect good behaviour and accurate work, with the result that pupils are generally well motivated. Where marking is not sufficiently rigorous, the work of boys is often poorly presented. A small minority of pupils who have poor concentration are very dependent on the teacher to help them to maintain focus. Pupils cooperate effectively with each other, when working in pairs.

206. The curriculum is structured carefully and complies fully with national requirements. The scheme of work is being revised to provide a more sharply focused and coherent support for teaching. An appropriate and well-organised programme of fieldwork and very useful opportunities to use ICT are effectively woven into the scheme. Marking is satisfactory, with comments informing pupils of what they have done well and what needs to be improved, but few remarks inform them of exactly how they can do better. The system of assessment has recently been revised to provide more precise details about the progress of individual pupils, but there is no formal method of making full use of this information. There are adequate teaching resources and they are of good quality. Two of the three main teaching rooms are of poor quality and too small: these factors limit the possible range of activities (especially group work) and restrict the teachers' movement around the class to support individual pupils.
207. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear sense of direction, standards have risen during the last two years, the revised teaching and assessment schemes are a distinct improvement and there are good opportunities for fieldwork and the use of ICT. The department meets regularly and the degree of shared responsibility and teamwork has improved since the time of the last inspection. The department has the capacity to succeed in raising standards further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers manage pupils very well and expect them to work to the best of their ability.
- The behaviour and attitudes of most pupils are very good.
- Most pupils make good progress.

### Areas for improvement

- The demands of the work set for the highest-attaining pupils.
- The comments written on pupils' work to help them to improve still further.
- The provision of sufficient textbooks to enable pupils to use them for homework.

208. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment overall is broadly in line with that expected nationally. This is a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils begin Year 7 with a level of attainment that is in line with the national average. In 2001, teachers assessed their pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as close to the national average. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with the national average, although a significant proportion produce some work that is above average in standard. Only a very small number of pupils in Year 9 have a low standard of work.
209. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although most reach a below average standard. Most pupils make good progress in learning new knowledge and understanding about the past. The highest-attaining pupils, however, do not make sufficient progress in acquiring such higher-level skills as evaluating sources or explaining different interpretations of the past, because they are not given enough opportunities by their teachers to use and strengthen these skills.

210. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-C in the GCSE examination was above the national average in 2001. The results in 2002 were a little higher than those of 2001. Overall, both boys and girls attain a standard that is above their respective national averages. In 2001, the proportion gaining grades A\* or A was in line with the national average, but this proportion rose significantly in 2002: almost one third of pupils who took the course gained an A\* or A grade in 2002. These standards are an improvement on those reported at the last inspection. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was above average and included much with clear potential for the highest grades.
211. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have good knowledge and understanding about the past. They explain the reasons for past events well – as, for example, in work on the causes of World War I and the rise to power of Hitler. They understand and explain changes over time well. Pupils in Year 9, for instance, demonstrated clear understanding of how aspects of Britain had changed between 1750 and 1900, basing their conclusions on text, pictures and graphical sources. The higher attainers successfully made valid links between the changes. The lower attainers understood what changed, but had difficulty explaining why the changes happened.
212. Most pupils use historical sources satisfactorily for evidence about the past. Pupils in a Year 8 group, for instance, used sources satisfactorily to describe some of the characteristics of Henry VII. Many, however, found the task difficult without prompting from the teacher. The highest attainers gave valid suggestions, backing them up with appropriate evidence from sources. The standard of the written work of the majority of pupils is broadly average. Many write well at length; only a small proportion of written work is below average.
213. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have generally good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. They identify and explain changes over time well – as for instance, in their work on medical advances in Greek and Roman times. Pupils in a group in Year 11, for example, quickly identified the key points about Roman medicine and could compare it with what they knew of Greek medical practices. Most pupils read effectively for information: a group of pupils in Year 11 successfully extracted the salient points from several textual sources to compile a list of the medical achievements of Vesalius.
214. The highest attainers compare and evaluate sources well. They clearly understand, and use appropriately, terms such as “hyperinflation” and “democracy”. Most pupils explain well the reasons why events have happened in the past. Pupils in Year 10, for example, understood the reasons for Germany’s increasing power in the early twentieth century. Lower attainers demonstrate sound knowledge about the past, but their understanding often lacks depth. They have difficulty evaluating the usefulness of sources to historians.
215. Teaching is of consistently good quality, an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers know their subject well and communicate it effectively, so that most pupils acquire solid knowledge and understanding about the past. Teachers make the aims of lessons clear for pupils and almost always return to these aims at the end of lessons to check what has been learned. Lessons proceed at a good pace: teachers set deadlines that keep pupils working throughout the lesson and ensure that no time is wasted. Teachers use questioning effectively to involve pupils in lessons, but at times take up a pupil’s first, often brief, answer and continue it themselves, instead of asking the pupil to develop the answer in greater depth. This strategy leads to a lack of real challenge for the highest attainers. As at the time of the last inspection, the comments written on pupils’ work vary in quality and often do not give pupils clear guidelines as to how to improve.
216. An improvement since the last inspection is the teachers’ use of a variety of teaching methods. Whole-class teaching is invariably done well – as, for example, in a lesson on timelines with a class in Year 7, in which the teacher’s approach stimulated interest among the pupils. Work done in

groups by pupils in Year 11 was successful, as the teacher managed the composition and organisation of the groups well. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard and behave well.

217. The vast majority of pupils have a very positive approach to their work. They concentrate on their tasks and usually behave very well – important contributory factors to their often good progress in lessons. This is especially true of the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11. A very small minority have a poor attitude to their own work and that of others. When this is likely to affect the work of the whole group, it is dealt with firmly and effectively by teachers. Most pupils listen well to teachers' instructions and explanations, and hence are clear about the work they are asked to do.
218. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear understanding of the strengths of the department and of the areas where improvement is needed, and is taking steps to ensure that the department continues to improve. Success can already be seen in the rising standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE results. The increasing number of pupils wishing to take the subject in Year 10 indicates that the department is a successful one. The work of the department is now monitored satisfactorily, an improvement since the last inspection.
219. The department has sufficient accommodation, but one room is much too small for the classes taught in it, a factor that limits the teaching activities which can be used. The overall provision of resources is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks for pupils to use at home; this restricts the opportunities for independent learning, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The department does not have any computers in classrooms, so limiting its contribution to whole-school work in ICT. The department's scheme of work and its use of fieldwork are, however, good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The emphasis on high standards and personal responsibility for learning.
- High expectations and challenge in all specialist ICT lessons.
- Improved computer facilities since the last inspection.
- Assessment arrangements for ICT in Years 7-9.

### Areas for improvement:

- Provision of their full entitlement to ICT for all pupils.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the use of ICT in all subjects.
- Pupils in Years 7-9 being informed of their attainment and how to improve.

220. During the inspection, there were no ICT lessons where pupils had an opportunity to work with computers, because the school's fileserver was not functioning as a result of technical problems and further difficulties with connection to the local authority's broadband network. Although a small number of ICT theory lessons were observed, judgements on attainment and progress have largely been based on evidence gained from a detailed examination of pupils' work portfolios, departmental assessment records and an analysis of pupils' stored work files.
221. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is above average. Over Years 7-9, pupils make good progress and at the end of Year 9 most achieve above the nationally expected standard. In 2001, teachers' assessments indicated that the proportion of Year 9 pupils reaching the national expectation of at least Level 5 was above average, at 75 per cent of pupils.
222. With the exception of a short GCSE course in information systems, which is offered on an extracurricular basis to a small group of pupils, there is no discrete ICT teaching for pupils in Years

- 10 and 11. Pupils' experiences are entirely dependent on subject departments using computer suites to teach appropriate elements of ICT.
223. By the end of Year 9, pupils are competent and confident in the efficient use of ICT applications, including word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheets. By this stage almost all pupils are well able to use a common set of tools for word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and presentation. They use spreadsheets and multimedia presentation software with increasing confidence and accuracy.
224. In Year 7, pupils learn essential ICT vocabulary and acquire elementary skills in using a range of software, with the help of worksheets. They create, develop, load and save work correctly. They learn to create, for example, a computer-based presentation about types of animal habitats, using presentation software to create linked slides with a script. Homework and other non-computer based work is well targeted to build pupils' ICT skills and to develop critical skills in judging the effectiveness of ICT, compared to other forms of communication. Pupils know about passwords and networks and how to log on to the school network to access their work files.
225. Pupils in Year 8 continue to use the main software programs satisfactorily to produce attractive and well-designed work. They extend their use of ICT by using spreadsheets to handle information, entering data and carrying out complex enquiries, and produce well-designed and thoughtful work in multimedia presentations. They reflect thoughtfully on their uses of ICT, its benefits and limitations, and how it is used in society. They study, for example, the ways in which weather information is presented in the media and use this to build their own public information system, using a presentation package.
226. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of attainment is below average, largely because many pupils have too little school experience of ICT. The work of a minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrates, however, their increased capability to use ICT effectively. Many of these pupils produce work to a very professional standard of sophistication and quality. For example, they design and develop a wide range of marketing literature for an estate agency, producing business cards, newspaper advertisements, letterheads and leaflets, and showing an appropriate awareness of the design requirements for each type of information. Some pupils, taking the voluntary, GCSE course after school, effectively use several ICT applications in combination to carry out their coursework assignments: they save data and images from the Internet, for example, and use these within word processing and desktop publishing programs.
227. Most pupils normally take the opportunity to work on the computers in the Independent Learning Centre outside lesson times, receiving good support from teachers and support staff each lunchtime. Opportunities to use ICT after school, however, are limited, since, because of the nature of the school's catchment area, most pupils leave the premises on school transport soon after the end of the day.
228. Overall, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in acquiring or extending their ICT skills – they do so well in Years 7-9, but not enough in Years 10-11. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of the intensive and sensitive help of teachers and the close support of learning assistants. Higher-attaining pupils also make satisfactory progress overall by moving more quickly than others onto work that requires a wider and more complex use of ICT. They require, however, more challenging work by the end of Year 9, in order to reach the highest levels of attainment in ICT – they have little experience, for example, of designing complex multimedia presentations and information systems or learning to program computer-controlled devices to capture environmental data with sensors.
229. Most pupils in Year 7 make good progress in their studies by quickly learning to use both the network and the computer keyboard efficiently, so increasing the pace and accuracy of their text-based work. In Year 8 they improve their understanding, speed and technical accuracy in using industry-standard software. In Year 9 they continue to make good progress by, for instance,

extending their knowledge of spreadsheets beyond handling and organising data to the development and testing of scenarios and models. They design and build, for example, an attractive spreadsheet to help Gert's Grocery Store track their sales of fruit and learn to use formulae to predict profit over different time-scales.

230. Pupils are cooperative and responsive in ICT lessons and show a willingness to work hard and participate thoughtfully in discussions. They demonstrate persistence in drafting and producing improved versions of their work. They take increasing responsibility for their own progress and for saving their work on the network. Pupils' annotations on their work files indicate an appreciation of the need to evaluate critically the quality and accuracy of their work.
231. The quality of specialist teaching and learning is sound overall throughout the school. Teachers praise achievement appropriately. Good teaching is characterised by a brisk pace and a highly disciplined (yet pleasant and relaxed) classroom climate, with high levels of expectation. Teachers interact with pupils effectively, sensitively and with humour to encourage them and to identify any problems. Their subject knowledge, lesson planning and classroom management are good: lessons are well structured, with clear introductions and carefully timed sequences of activities.
232. The two teachers working within the department are well led by a member of staff from within the science department who has held the post of subject coordinator for the past two years. Her developing vision for the role of ICT in the school's curriculum is beginning to secure improvements in the subject: her influence is a significant factor in pupils' achievement of above average standards by the end of Year 9. The coordinator carries out her role as subject leader with zeal and dedication, but teaches a full science timetable and has insufficient time or resources to address the many tasks involved in raising the quality of ICT provision.
233. Although the technician has recently begun to produce some guides on network use and on software such as spreadsheets and databases, teaching resources to help pupils to improve their ICT skills are inadequate, especially in Year 7. Although the school's pupil : computer ratio at 7:1 is slightly worse than the national average, machines are up to date and many are less than a year old. Accommodation problems and difficulties posed by the building's "listed" status have so far prevented the expansion of the school network, which only partially links the four computer suites.
234. Pupils have access to a small range of office productivity software and to a selection of encyclopedias and subject specific, CD-ROM titles for science and RE. There is a shortage of software, however, to meet the wider needs of the ICT curriculum in Years 7-9 – particularly software for controlling and operating external devices and for recording and logging data. The assessment of pupils' work in ICT is secure: the coordinator conducts a rigorous and thorough assessment of pupils' attainment at the end of each year. Pupils have a good knowledge of their progress and achievement as a result of teachers' marking and feedback. Pupils in Years 7-9 are not, however, made sufficiently aware of ICT National Curriculum level descriptors and their achievement in relation to these.
235. The school has made good progress on many aspects of ICT since its last inspection, but not enough overall. There is now, for instance, an effective system in place for the assessment of pupils' attainment in ICT in Years 7-9. All pupils have increased time for ICT lessons from September 2002. The school has increased its stock of computers, with new computers and up-to-date software of good quality in four ICT rooms, including an attractive and very well used learning centre, which combines traditional library and reading facilities with access to 25 new computers. These resources are complemented by access to the Internet for pupils and staff.
236. Additionally, ICT is effectively supported by a well-qualified technician, who responds rapidly and efficiently to technical problems or to staff requests for support. Over the last two years almost half the staff have completed a *New Opportunities Fund* ICT-training programme, using the Learning Schools Programme as a provider, with in-house mentoring and support provided by the ICT coordinator. In contrast, there is no evidence of progress in establishing a formal entitlement to ICT

for all pupils in Years 10-11, particularly with regard to the provision of externally accredited courses. The use of ICT in Years 10-11 remains weak and variable.

237. Despite the school's commitment since the last inspection to the wider use of ICT in all subjects – with associated training and increased provision of hardware – there is still inconsistency in the application of ICT within departments. The use of ICT outside the specialist department is variable, with significant gaps. The school does not have effective monitoring and evaluation of all subjects' use of ICT.
238. Pupils make limited use of ICT in science lessons, using spreadsheets to collect and model data gleaned from the results of experiments – as, for example, measuring electrical resistance at successive points on a length of wire and creating graphs from their data to learn about electrical resistance theory, using word processing for homework or using the Internet for research. Limited use is made of ICT in design and technology, where some pupils use a computer-controlled milling machine to produce their existing designs. The department does not, however, adequately cover the computer control aspects of the National Curriculum. The use of ICT work is unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and RE. In art, pupils use ICT for research, to produce homework and to scan work into a computer, but more use is needed. Over the last year in geography, pupils have had regular sessions in the ICT suites, in order to use ICT for the research, collation and presentation of information. In music, pupils have used a popular CD-ROM encyclopedia for research and have used ICT in musical composition and notation. Good use of ICT is made in PE.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The good quality of teaching in Years 10-11.</li><li>• The good results and high achievement in GCSE in German and Spanish.</li><li>• The wide range of foreign languages available to pupils to study.</li></ul>
Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The quality and consistency of teachers' marking in Years 7-9.</li><li>• The presentation of much pupils' work.</li><li>• Sharing lesson aims with pupils and rounding lessons off with a review of learning.</li></ul>

239. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 suggested that pupils' overall level of attainment in French was below the national average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, however, suggest that the proportions of pupils attaining Levels 5 or 6 have risen and that girls perform much better than boys. The evidence of the inspection is that pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly average.
240. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-C in the full-course examination in French in 2001 was close to the national average. The results were an improvement on those for 2000, even though more boys and fewer girls were entered for the 2001 examination. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-G was in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in 2002 was lower than in the previous year: the department's work in French was adversely affected by the long-term absence of one teacher.
241. In GCSE examinations taken in German by a small group of pupils in 2001, the proportion attaining a grade in the range A\*-C in the full-course examination was well above the national average: all 13 pupils secured these grades. In GCSE examinations in Spanish in 2002, a much larger group of pupils achieved well: over two-thirds of the 47 pupils entered, for example, gained a grade in the range A\*-C.

242. The curricular provision for different foreign languages in Years 8-11 is good. Higher-attaining pupils in French at the end of Year 7 have the opportunity to begin the study of a second modern foreign language in Year 8: German and Spanish are offered in alternate years. Pupils in the current Year 8 have just begun Spanish and pupils in Year 9 are starting their second year of German. Because of the absence of the permanent German teacher during the inspection, only a limited judgement could be made of pupils' standards: written evidence indicates that pupils are on target to attain an average overall standard by the end of Year 9.
243. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment in French is average. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the foreign language, which the teachers use well and at appropriate levels in class. At this early stage in the academic year, pupils in Year 8 understand the tasks they are set and the basic questions they are asked. They repeat in chorus or independently what they see and hear, reading aloud and pronouncing French to a generally satisfactory standard. Some pupils use French to ask for help and are encouraged by their teachers to do so. In two Year 8 classes, for example, pupils competently picked out the correct monsters from their textbook, after reading five different descriptions. In their written work, pupils copy sentences with reasonable accuracy. They write at appropriate levels about themselves, about travel to places by different means of transport, and give their likes and dislikes. By the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils reach an appropriate standard of writing about past and future events. Few pupils, however, redraft their work or complete corrections in order to improve its accuracy.
244. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 11 is below average. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 talked about themselves, using prompts, but were not very confident speakers. In another Year 11 class, higher-attaining pupils read aloud without sufficient expression, but answered questions competently. Lower-attaining pupils in a small Year 11 class, taught last year by a temporary, non-specialist teacher, have only a very basic level of understanding and speaking: with much support from their teacher, they understand questions and give short answers.
245. Pupils have a reasonable understanding of the foreign language used by teachers and when extracting information from conversations on cassette. In two Year 10 classes, for instance, pupils noted with fair competence the names and details that they heard on cassette. They used the French alphabet to spell names. In their written coursework, pupils in Years 10 and 11 write about their region, their "school of the future" or describe a holiday. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of relevant vocabulary and write accurately, using different tenses appropriately. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils display similar knowledge of vocabulary, but are less consistently accurate in grammatical constructions.
246. Pupils' overall levels of attainment in German and Spanish by the end of Year 11 are above average. In their written German, Year 11 pupils display a good range of verbal constructions. They write accurately about such subjects as keeping fit and household tasks, using appropriate vocabulary. They are conversant with subordinate clauses and inversion. In their written Spanish, Year 10 pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of the relevant topic vocabulary. They use the preterite and future tenses well. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils answered questions about a text, which they had just heard on cassette, quickly and with confidence. The majority of the lesson was conducted in Spanish and pupils encountered few problems.
247. The achievement and rate of progress of most pupils are satisfactory in French in Years 7-11 and in German and Spanish in Years 7-9. Pupils achieve well in German and Spanish in Years 10-11. The department takes an active part in strengthening pupils' literacy in many lessons through a focus on key nouns and verbs. In some classes, the testing of key words takes place on a weekly basis. Pronunciation is practised through reciting in chorus and individually. Key words are displayed in classrooms. Pupils acquire a sound knowledge of the vocabulary relevant to the topics studied – as for example, about families or personal characteristics. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils used the numbers 1-20, which they had just learned, to give their age and to complete simple additions and subtractions. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into their classes and



largely make progress similar to other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils generally make good progress.

248. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning vary from unsatisfactory to very good, but are satisfactory overall. In three Year 9 lessons observed, a significant minority of pupils failed to cooperate with teachers, were noisy and showed reluctance to work. They impeded the progress of the whole class. In contrast, pupils in a Year 7 class responded very enthusiastically to their teacher, applied themselves well to their tasks and enjoyed the lesson. In many other lessons, too, pupils listened attentively and work hard. They work cooperatively in pairs. The presentation of the written work in many pupils' books is, however, not good enough.
249. The quality of teaching varies from unsatisfactory to very good, but is satisfactory overall: the teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory and in Years 10-11 generally good. All teachers on the permanent staff have a solid knowledge of their subject and make good use of the foreign language in most lessons. The teaching of basic skills is sound.
250. Teachers begin every lesson with revision and introduce different activities and skills to help pupils to maintain their concentration and interest during lessons. In a good lesson in French in Year 10 with lower-attaining pupils, for instance, the teacher practised the French alphabet around the class; pupils then heard short extracts on cassette and noted the names. After working together in pairs, asking and answering questions, they linked up English to French phrases correctly. Pupils were thus able to consolidate their oral, aural and reading skills. There are good opportunities for pupils to hear the foreign languages and to speak them. The aims and objectives of lessons are, however, insufficiently shared with pupils at the outset and lessons do not always conclude with a crisp evaluation of what has been learned.
251. Teachers' expectations are sound, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers prepare their pupils well for their coursework option. Such teaching methods as paired work, chorus work and guessing games are effective and enjoyed in many lessons. Pupils responded well to a lesson in Year 8, for instance, with a game of *Jacques dit* connected with parts of the body.
252. The management of pupils and relationships are generally good. Teachers make good use of resources (particularly of worksheets) which help pupils to consolidate or test their knowledge. Homework is set regularly and pupils note details of it in their planners. The marking of pupils' written work in Years 7-9 is, in many instances, too superficial: there are often no helpful comments or targets to help pupils to improve or marks to guide their progress.
253. Three unsatisfactory lessons were taught in Year 9. In one instance, pupils were unwilling to cooperate with the teacher. In a second lesson, incorrect teaching strategies led to a loss of interest and concentration among pupils, so that little work was done. In the third unsatisfactory lesson (with a different teacher), pupils behaved badly, despite all the teacher's attempts to correct this, with the result that pupils did not learn enough.
254. The department meets statutory requirements for teaching the National Curriculum. Temporary teachers in the last academic year who covered the long-term absence of teachers were not language specialists. For several classes this has led to demotivation and a lack of continuity. The head of department has worked hard to minimise this disruption and has been well supported by the other teachers.
255. Although one of the teachers is a French native speaker, the majority of pupils have no regular contact with native speakers in any of the three languages. French textbooks in Years 7-9 are now outdated, and many German textbooks are in poor condition. The accommodation provided for many classes is unsuitable: pupils are cramped in small rooms and teachers are unable to circulate easily to inspect pupils' books or to assist individuals.

256. Progress since the last report has been satisfactory. The good curricular provision, mentioned in the previous report, has been maintained and enhanced by the arrival of an additional Spanish teacher, who will also assist the subject leader in his duties. The number of pupils studying two languages for GCSE has increased. Good links have been established with four primary schools and a local sixth-form college. Assessment procedures, despite weaknesses, have improved considerably since the previous inspection.

### Classical studies

257. Both Latin and classical civilisation are taught from Year 9 onwards and are a distinctive feature of the school. Overall, there are more Classics entries in GCSE examinations than for geography or history. The teaching of both Latin and classical civilisation is always at least good and usually very good. Partly as a result, pupils learn with enthusiasm and make good progress. Pupils tend to do better in GCSE in both the linguistic and civilisation courses than they do in most of their other subjects.
258. The language course proves stimulating and engaging to the more able pupils, who proceed to take the language for GCSE. Classical civilisation has a focus on literature, with Homer's *Odyssey* and Greek drama prominent features. These aspects are skilfully and interestingly taught: teachers make good use of texts, illustrative materials (including video-recordings), artefacts and a biennial visit to Greece by some 40 pupils. Classical studies make a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The quality of assessment of pupils' work.
- The department's ethos and its contribution to pupils' social and cultural education.

### Areas for improvement

- The unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7-9.
- Provision of an additional music room and practice spaces.

259. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, their overall attainment is in line with the national average in performance and listening. Teachers' formal assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 and 2001 indicated that the proportion of pupils achieving at least the national benchmark of Level 5 were 54 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. Girls tend to reach a higher level than boys. These results need, however, to be treated with caution, since there are no national norms available.
260. By the end of Year 9, pupils perform and compose to at least an average standard, using electronic keyboards. They gain good familiarity with the keyboard. Many pupils read and play simple tunes without the help of letter names. Most pupils improvise acceptable phrases in the "blues" style. They play in time with the familiar blues chord sequence, which they also produce with the left hand (single finger, "autochord" facility). Their attainment in this particular activity is higher than that normally seen in similar schools. Pupils attain a satisfactory level of understanding and use of the technical language of music, chord symbols and some knowledge of the main historical periods, major composers and well-known pieces. They also acquire a reasonable knowledge of instruments used in Indian classical music, such as sitar, tabla and tambura.
261. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 11 is in line with the national average. In the 2000 and 2001 GCSE examinations, taken together, 12 out of 15 pupils gained grades in the range of A\*-C. One pupil gained an A\* grade.

262. In the work seen during the inspection, the overall standard of performance, composition and listening was broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 11. In the present Year 11, only one third of the pupils play orchestral instruments. Much class work is done on keyboards. In two consecutive lessons with this year group, pupils were introduced to Indian classical music. They were required to analyse the musical form and instrumentation in an example of an Indian raga. On their first hearing, some showed no affinity with the music. After some practical work on the rhythms and scales, they learnt that this music has great beauty and complexity. They then went on to develop an improvisation of their own, based on the elements of the raga.
263. The quality of learning in Years 7-9 is good overall. Pupils now enter the school with an overall educational attainment that is above average, but their experience in music is very varied. Early lessons focus on the basic elements of music, especially through rhythm games, which they learn very quickly. In one lesson, for instance, pupils in Year 7 were taught three different rhythm patterns, which they clapped in groups. They then clapped these different patterns together correctly, to a common beat.
264. Most pupils are interested in their lessons. A significant minority, however, come to lessons with little motivation to work. They waste time in lessons as a result of inattention and silly behaviour, and this slows the pace of learning of all pupils in the class. Those who do wish to work, however, make good progress, especially in learning to play the keyboard and to know how music is notated. They also become familiar with the instruments of the orchestra and well-known musical forms such as march and waltz. Pupils with special educational needs are well involved in all class music activities. Where the teaching is good, these pupils make good progress. Some of them achieve standards in some aspects of music-making that compare favourably with those of their peers. Musically talented pupils also make good progress overall and often take leading parts in group work and rehearsals.
265. In Years 10-11, most pupils learn well and make good progress. The requirements of the GCSE course help to motivate pupils to reach appropriate standards in performing, composing and musical understanding. In one lesson, pupils in Year 10 composed simple yet effective pieces, using a five-note scale and according to strict formal rules. The pieces were both performed and notated accurately and played back to the class. In the process of composing, pupils readily used such musical terminology as "figuration", "pentatonic" and "ostinato", when discussing their work.
266. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good overall throughout the school and especially so in Year 10, where they quickly develop a mature approach to the subject. Unfortunately, pupils do not have practice rooms where they can work independently. Most pupils behave well and responsibly in Years 10-11.
267. Teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is good overall. In the best lessons, the teacher uses his or her own musical expertise well, in order to present examples as illustrations or to help pupils with technical difficulties in their performance. The teaching of literacy is good, especially in Years 10-11 where special emphasis is placed on using musical terms correctly. This practice clearly facilitates efficiency in rehearsals and group composition. Pupils' writing in connection with GCSE study is done well.
268. Teachers always prepare lessons in fair detail, with the sections of lessons timed. In most lessons pupils are managed effectively, without unpleasant confrontation. Appropriate, individual attention is given to pupils with special educational needs in order to clarify their task or to regain their attention. In a few lessons the management of pupils is unsatisfactory, because they are allowed to be continuously inattentive and sometimes quite defiant and disobedient. Where this happens, the whole pace of the lesson is seriously slowed and those pupils who do wish to work hard cannot have the individual attention they need.
269. The department is well led and managed. Instrumental lessons are effectively timetabled. Pupils in Years 10-11 make good use of ICT, especially for composition and notation. As a matter of urgency, additional teaching spaces are needed – in particular a second music room for class teaching. Practice

rooms are also badly needed for pupils to work independently in groups. At present, four classes in Years 8 and 9 are disadvantaged, because they may only use the music room (and its equipment) in alternate weeks. This has a detrimental effect on standards.

270. The department runs several extracurricular groups, including a Year 7 band, a choir, a string group and a saxophone ensemble. All pupils in Years 7-9 form a choir, which sings on special occasions. Music makes a good contribution to the social and cultural life of the school. A team of seven visiting instrumental teachers gives lessons to around 35 pupils. These teachers make a good contribution to the musical education of these pupils.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- The good standard of teaching.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The effective leadership and management of the department.

### Areas for improvement:

- More opportunities for pupils to analyse and discuss the quality of their work.
- The condition of the fitness room and the number of agility mats.

271. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C in the GCSE examination in 2001 was just below the national average. The 2002 results were also of a similar standard. Boys and girls take the examination in equal numbers and produce similar standards of work. About two-thirds of the pupils submitted good research topics, writing to an acceptable standard and reporting their findings clearly. About half the pupils make extensive use of ICT, using an appropriate range of skills. Higher-attaining pupils write clearly and with obvious enthusiasm, producing very good work. Occasionally, some less able pupils are careless with presentation, resulting in written work that is both incomplete and untidy.
272. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard of attainment in practical activities is above average for both boys and girls. More than half the Year 9 boys, for instance, have good ball control in soccer: many backheel the ball effectively, appropriately and accurately. They have the necessary concentration to devise appropriate practices and drills, when the teacher encourages them to do so, and games progress well. Year 7 girls have good skills in gymnastics. A substantial majority can transfer weight onto their arms and then carry out a whole range of interesting skills and sequences. Many comfortably perform the cartwheel, round-off, and forward and back walk-overs. They construct sequences of movements that are skilfully linked together. Year 9 boys work well at gymnastics, but do not have sufficient awareness of the factors that influence quality.
273. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of attainment is average. In practical work, pupils vary widely in their standards. Girls generally produce good work in trampolining and aerobic dance. A minority somersault both forwards and backwards on the trampoline, showing appropriate awareness of form; about a quarter have effective routines. Girls work enthusiastically in aerobic dance, making sustained efforts to improve, and progress very well. Boys' standards of basketball are average overall. In a lesson inspected, none showed any advanced skills or particularly well-developed tactical awareness. Girls concentrate better than boys in theory lessons. Throughout the school, both boys and girls with special educational needs progress well in relation to their previous levels of attainment.
274. The standard of teaching is good overall. Most lessons are well prepared and have clear aims and objectives that are shared with pupils at the outset of lessons. The best teaching allows pupils the freedom to plan, evaluate and discuss their work and results in them producing imaginative work in

dance, gymnastics and games. Teachers' relationships with classes are generally good. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows, when teaching does not respond quickly and flexibly enough to what pupils require or when explanations are too laboured.

275. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Occasionally they are very good indeed. A Year 11 class of girls doing aerobic dance, for instance, worked throughout a lesson in exemplary fashion, showing strong motivation and a determination to improve their work. Year 7 pupils have very good attitudes in gymnastics lessons. They cooperate and collaborate very well. With only one exception, the classes observed had very few pupils "sitting out" without a valid excuse. The great majority of pupils – both boys and girls – clearly enjoy the subject.
276. The subject has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The assessment of pupils' work has received careful attention: the good system now used relates clearly to the levels of attainment in the National Curriculum and is clearly displayed to pupils.
277. The leadership and management of the department are good. Policies are up to date and modified as necessary. Aims, objectives and schemes of work are thorough. The curriculum, appropriate and meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum, ensures that both boys and girls of all levels of ability receive an appropriate range of experiences. There are many very good displays within the department to provide information for pupils and to celebrate their achievements.
278. Accommodation is largely satisfactory. A large gymnasium and sports hall are the main provision, although the latter is both cold in winter and unavailable to the department for much of the summer term because of its use for examinations in other subjects. There is no designated room for the teaching of the examination course in PE. The fitness room is of poor quality: it is untidy and too cold to use safely for most of the year. The gymnasium requires more agility mats. Extracurricular provision is adequate, although the amount of gymnastics and dance offered is light.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Departmental leadership and management..

### Areas for improvement:

- The use of assessment as a tool for learning.
- The provision of textbooks for homework and revision.
- The need to use specialist teachers in Years 7-9.

279. The school first entered candidates for the GCSE (short course) RE examination in 2001. All pupils had followed the course and nearly half were entered for the examination. Most of those who were entered achieved a grade in the range A\*-C: the results of those entered were above the national average. In 2002 two-thirds of the pupils who had followed the course were entered: all but one obtained a grade and a quarter achieved an A\*-C grade. At the end of Year 9, the school measures pupils' performance in RE by using the scale of attainment in the local agreed syllabus. By this measurement most pupils reach at least the expected Level 5.
280. Pupils begin Year 7 at the standard expected and reach the normally expected standard by the end of Year 9. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. They learn about Christianity and the other major religions. They explain the significance of beliefs and practices, using appropriate religious vocabulary. They learn about the variety of expression in religion, but do not generally explain adequately the different uses of language and symbolism in religions and do not compare different beliefs and practices. Pupils learn much about themselves

from their studies, partly by asking a range of questions and understanding the moral implications of actions. They write fluently and with confidence, when reflecting on their own experience, but are less confident when reflecting on the qualities of others. In their attitudes, behaviour and personal relationships pupils show an appropriate level of maturity.

281. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is broadly average; pupils' attainment is, however, rising over time. Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall and improving. Pupils have a satisfactory level of knowledge, for example, about Christianity and Judaism. Their knowledge of religious belief and practice is at the right level for GCSE and, although many lack the skills and precision necessary for grades A\*-C, a substantial proportion are close to the standard required for grade C. Most pupils continue to show the expected level of personal maturity in their attitudes, behaviour and relationships, but in Year 11 a small but significant minority shows resistance or even overt hostility in lessons.
282. In Years 7-9, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In those lessons taken by non-specialist teachers the teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, whilst in the lessons taught by specialist teachers they are always good. Teachers' management of pupils is good and no teachers lack the knowledge that they are meant to convey to pupils. As at the last inspection, teachers plan their lessons well and set clear learning objectives. Homework is set, but tends to be a problem in all years: either the task is too difficult to be completed without a textbook or it is too undemanding to be of real value.
283. Both the observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show that pupils are unfamiliar with the "levels" used to describe their attainment: teachers do not use end-of-unit assessments to show pupils what level they are at and how they can improve and pupils do not regard the level descriptors as a way of setting themselves targets. The department has itself identified in its development plan the need for a greater use of assessment as a important tool for learning.
284. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good. Specialist teachers show thorough knowledge of the requirements of the course and pupils receive very confident and competent teaching. Pupils learn well both the content and the skills that they need for the examination. Teachers' planning is very good and their expectations are high. The management and motivation of reluctant (and sometimes resistant) pupils are very good. Teachers' very good use of examination level descriptors and techniques enables pupils to assess their strengths and weaknesses in the completion of tasks, but GCSE grades A\*-G are not used to indicate to pupils the standard they have already reached or are likely to reach in the examination.
285. A weakness of the department is that pupils do not have their own copy of the textbook. The lack of a textbook imposes severe limitations on what pupils can do for homework and revision. For most pupils, work at home on a regular basis is severely hampered without a textbook. Pupils' files show that they would benefit from work done in class being extended and developed by tasks done at home.
286. The curriculum meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus. The amount of time allocated on the timetable is below the recommended minimum, but not so far below as to be unreasonable. The programmes of study are broad, balanced and relevant. The emphasis of the course is, appropriately, not only on what pupils learn about religions, but also on what pupils may learn about themselves from their study of religion.
287. In Years 7-9, the programmes of study incorporate regular opportunities for assessment, but there is no systematic use of assessment to enhance pupils' progress and to guide curricular planning. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course provides good content and a valuable incentive. The course includes both the necessary knowledge and understanding and the required skills of explanation and evaluation. It not only prepares pupils well for the examination, but also contributes well to their personal development.

288. Departmental leadership and management are very good. The school's decision to comply with the minimum statutory requirements has begun to establish RE as a subject that is valued within the school. The department has led and managed the change in Years 10 and 11 with great success. Two years ago no pupil left the school with any qualification in RE. Now two out of three pupils leave with a qualification. The departmental development plan is practical and identifies appropriate priorities for the future of RE in the school.
289. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching already exist, but are capable of further development. The department is very committed to its own improvement and has a high capacity to succeed. All pupils have the benefit of specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11 and provision has been substantially aided by teachers' attendance on training courses. More specialist teaching is required for pupils in Years 7-9. The provision of more textbooks, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11, is an urgent priority.
290. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school now gives all pupils their minimum educational entitlement. In the second year of GCSE entry, more pupils were entered than in the first year. Most pupils continue to show the appropriate level of personal maturity in attitudes and behaviour. Teachers manage pupils well in lessons and pupils make satisfactory progress.