

INSPECTION REPORT

**KINGSMEADOW COMMUNITY
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108410

Headteacher: Mr S Taylor

Reporting inspector: R C Drew
7281

Dates of inspection: 10 - 13 February 2003

Inspection number: 249135

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 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Market Lane
Dunston
Gateshead

Postcode: NE11 9NX

Telephone number: 0191 4606004

Fax number: 0191 4600295

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Keith Teasdale

Date of previous inspection: 12 February 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7281	Robert Drew	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9710	Elizabeth Burgess	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Art and design	
30899	Kenneth Boden	Team inspector	Citizenship Design and technology	
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	History Religious education	
10391	Valerie du Plergny	Team inspector	Music	
19586	Wendy Easterby	Team inspector	English	
2458	Alan Hamilton	Team inspector	Physical education	
27416	Thomas Howard	Team inspector	Gifted and talented Mathematics	
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Special educational needs Science	

16950	Caroline Orr	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages	
31879	David Rhodes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
10564	John Tomlinson	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kingsmeadow Community School is an 11 to 16 comprehensive school with 859 pupils on roll. It serves urban communities of western and central Gateshead and parts of the adjacent suburbs. While some pupils come from relatively affluent backgrounds, 40 per cent are entitled to free school meals, compared with 18 per cent nationally, and the social and economic challenges facing parts of the school's catchment area have led to the creation of an Education Action Zone.

Currently, about 19 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, slightly above the national average. Twenty-three pupils have formal statements of special educational needs – a high proportion – mostly for a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Quite recently, the proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs was as high as 47 per cent.

The vast majority of pupils are white. Fourteen pupils use English as an additional language, including eight pupils from refugee families. Only four pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition.

Since 1997, the school has been inspected twice. In 1998, it was judged to have serious weaknesses; in February 2001, this judgement was lifted, though it remained an 'under-achieving school'. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2001. The school is central to the local Education Action Zone and plays a significant role in the Excellence in Cities programme.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a rapidly improving school, already effective, and with many good features. It is very well led and managed; teaching, learning and achievement are good. Pupils behave well. Standards are below national averages but above those for similar schools and improving significantly. Value for money is good.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well in the longer term.
- Teaching and learning are good, with much that is very good.
- The headteacher provides excellent vision and the overall leadership and management of the school are very good.
- Results for both Year 9 and Year 11 are above the averages for similar schools and rising more rapidly than nationally.
- Behaviour and relationships are good.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of different learning opportunities, and is very effectively linked to the work of primary schools and post-16 centres.
- The school provides very good support and monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress.
- Special educational needs provision is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, design and technology (resistant materials and electronics), physical education and modern languages are lower than the school's average.
- Leadership and management of physical education, modern languages, information and communications technology (ICT), guidance and music are unsatisfactory.
- Attendance levels have improved but are still too low.
- Numeracy and ICT are not regularly reinforced as part of day-to-day teaching.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some areas, notably the library and Block E.
- Pupils are not encouraged to become independent learners, because of poor library accommodation and resources and too great a reliance on teacher-led lessons.
- The current timetabling arrangements, the structure of the school day and the impact of the setting and banding policies hamper learning and tutor time is not used efficiently.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 2001. It was beginning to improve rapidly, but was still judged to be under-achieving. It was required to improve teaching, raise attendance levels, improve basic skills provision and broaden the curriculum. Management systems had to be improved, so that self-evaluation and long-term planning could bring about further improvements in standards. The work of the governing body and the involvement of parents needed to improve.

In the two years that have elapsed, the school has made very good overall improvement. It has tackled most of the key issues from the 2001 inspection very well, even though some still need further improvement. In addition, its teaching, results and accommodation have risen in quality by far more than could be expected.

STANDARDS

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

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

Results at the end of Year 9 in National Curriculum tests are above average compared with similar schools, but well below average for all schools. In view of the very limited skills and prior knowledge of many pupils entering the school, these results represent good progress in lessons and good long-term achievement. Results for Year 9 are rising faster than nationally and are much better than at the time of the previous inspection. Science results in 2002 were among the best 5 per cent nationally for schools in this free school meals category. English results were above average and mathematics results average in comparison with those for similar schools. Compared with results for all schools, results for science and English were below average, and those for mathematics well below average. In the work seen during the inspection, Year 9 standards were below average in all three core subjects, but were higher than the standards reflected by recent results and indicate that pupils are achieving well. Among the other subjects, current Year 9 pupils are matching national standards in art, geography and ICT, but standards are well below average in modern languages.

At the end of Year 11, pupils' results are above the average for similar schools and well below the average for all schools. GCSE and GNVQ results are improving far more rapidly than nationally and the demanding targets agreed with the LEA for 2001 and 2002 have both been met. Year 11 results already show that good achievement is being made across Years 10 and 11, but the standards and rates of progress seen during the inspection were better still. Standards are now just below national average for the school as a whole. In geography, standards are above average; they match national levels in art, drama, "core" physical education and ICT. Standards are well below average in English, mathematics, GCSE physical education and modern languages. Progress in lessons is good in most subjects, but it is very good in geography and unsatisfactory in modern languages.

Girls out-perform boys in Year 9 tests, although no more so than nationally. Results of examinations in Year 11 show that girls again do better overall than boys, but the gap is narrower than nationally.

The school has a significant proportion of pupils with special educational need, and in general they make very good progress. The few pupils using English as an additional language and those identified as gifted or talented make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The great majority of pupils are positive about their school and wear its uniform with some pride. A small minority have negative attitudes, and absenteeism, while falling, is still too high.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in nearly all lessons. They are lively but sensible around the school, and those who lack self-discipline respond well to teachers' controlling influence.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Teachers treat pupils with respect and pupils return this: as a result, pupils form good relationships with staff and are also considerate to other pupils. Many pupils take up the opportunities for involvement in school life with enthusiasm, but a significant number remain uninvolved.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance levels have risen owing to the school's strenuous efforts, but too many pupils damage their own progress and that of others by persistent absence. Much of this is condoned by parents.

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.

Teaching and learning in the school are both good, and in more than one-third of lessons observed, the quality was very good; this is considerably better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers are consistently good at setting well-planned, demanding work that meets the full range of pupils' needs. They use assessment data well and they are especially successful at managing pupils constructively. As a result, pupils learn well, often very well, and are now making good progress across Years 7 to 9 and across Years 10 and 11. The school has moved from being an 'under-achieving school' to one in which pupils achieve well.

There is scope for further improvement: teachers reinforce literacy skills well but do not provide regular opportunities to develop numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils learn well in most respects, but they are less confident in independent study and oral discussion and group work in lessons.

Some subjects have consistently very good teaching and learning across the school: notably, history, science and religious education. The quality of teaching and learning is equally good in geography in Years 10 and 11. In English, mathematics and nearly all other subjects, the overall quality is good. In modern languages, teaching is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs, pupils using English as an additional language and pupils deemed gifted and talented is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Across Years 7 to 11 the school offers not only the usual range of necessary courses, but also many additional programmes, especially General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and work-related courses. It also provides well for pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, as well as linking its curriculum very effectively with those of primary schools and post-16 centres. However, ICT in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are particularly well diagnosed and supported, which contributes very significantly to the school's work, as nearly a quarter of pupils have special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The limited number of pupils using English as an additional language receive well-organised support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. The school makes good provision for pupils' social and moral development, and this is a key factor behind the good behaviour and relationships in school. Cultural development is well promoted, while spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school has very good systems for monitoring pupils' academic and personal progress and ensuring that they study within a secure environment. Staff also have the energy and commitment to make the systems work well. The school is good at working with parents and is constantly seeking ways to involve even more parents in pupils' progress.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. The school provides very good information to parents and works hard to establish good links with them. A growing proportion of parents is responding positively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and vision. He is ably supported by very good senior managers, who work with him as a most effective team. Many middle managers are also very good, especially heads of house and subject leaders in geography, history, art and special educational needs. There are unsatisfactory aspects to management in ICT, modern languages, music and physical education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Much of the work of governors is now very good, especially their knowledge of, and strategic support for, the school. This represents a marked improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Governors are not fulfilling their statutory duties regarding ICT in Years 10 and 11 and the daily act of worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. It is now one of the school's strengths that it can analyse its own performance, build on strengths and act decisively on weaknesses. It is particularly good at longer-term planning, which in the previous report

	was a major weakness. It has improved resource and staffing levels to ensure that provision is sound, and has identified and planned to replace unsatisfactory accommodation.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Another aspect of leadership present in the school is the ability to direct funds towards key priorities, to find the most cost-effective approach and to compare the school's performance appropriately. There has also been considerable success in bidding for additional resources to speed up the rate of improvement in provision and standards.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>A very high proportion of parents expressing views believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has high expectations. • The school is very approachable. • Teaching in the school is good. • Their children make good progress. 	<p>A minority of parents expressing views would prefer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information about their children's progress. • Closer liaison between home and school. • Improved arrangements for setting and marking homework.

The judgements of inspectors fully support the positive views of the majority of parents. The features above that please parents are amongst many strengths identified by the inspection team.

In terms of areas for improvement, inspectors judged that:

- the information to parents is very good.
- liaison between home and school is better than average.
- homework arrangements are good, compared to those in most schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. By the end of Year 9, pupils' combined results in National Curriculum tests are well below average for all schools, but above average compared with results in similar schools. The trend in results over the last five years has been strongly upward, rising at a faster rate than nationally.
2. Given that pupils generally enter the school in Year 7 with very low standards, the achievement of pupils in their first three years in this school is good. Achievement is good for virtually all subjects and in none do pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Pupils' progress reflects the good, and often very good, quality teaching they receive. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 in drama and modern languages is satisfactory rather than good, and pupils' achievement is sound, when in most subjects it is better than this. Boys in Year 9 attain lower standards than girls, but the gap is closing and is now no greater than the national difference in standards between boys and girls.
3. The school's examination results at the end of Year 11 are well below national averages. In 2002, for example, 33 per cent of pupils gained A* to C passes at GCSE, compared to 49 per cent nationally. However, in previous years, the proportion of A* to C passes was as low as 15 per cent (2000), so a rapid upward trend has been established. Compared to similar schools, current results are above average. These positive features have ensured that all the ambitious targets for GCSE performance, agreed with the local education authority (LEA) for 2001 and 2002, have been met.
4. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards being reached by current Year 11 pupils were below, rather than well below, average. Indeed, there is evidence from internal assessments that overall standards are now close to the national average, which confirms the positive trend seen in recent examination results. In some subjects, pupils attain at a particularly pleasing level. In geography, for example, recent examination results already exceed national averages, and current Year 11 pupils are also working to above-average standards. In the work of current Year 11 pupils, standards match national averages in drama, art and physical education. Results in 2002 were well below average in English, mathematics, modern languages, GCSE physical education and aspects of design and technology. Literacy standards, while below average, are much improved: they have received good regular reinforcement in lessons since the previous inspection. Numeracy and ICT skills are not yet promoted satisfactorily and standards are well below average: programmes designed to develop these areas started later than the literacy project but have also lacked the good quality of coordination seen in literacy practice.
5. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is now good. In the past pupils were achieving less well than they should, but the current Year 11 pupils entered the school with well below average prior attainment, and the standard of their work now indicates that they have made sustained good progress. This progress reflects the fact that, through excellent leadership by the present headteacher and successful work by his predecessor, the staff of the school have committed themselves to improvement. Numerous strategies have encouraged and supported teachers in their drive to plan more explicitly for high standards of behaviour and attainment.
6. Achievement is particularly strong in geography in Years 10 and 11, largely because of the very good teaching, but also because the precise skills and knowledge required to reach the highest GCSE grades are given prominence in lessons. Achievement is good in most other subjects; it is improving, but still satisfactory rather than good, in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Too little achievement is made in modern languages, largely because the good quality teaching seen in some language lessons is not consistently matched in others, and because schemes of work and leadership of the department have not set clear enough and high enough objectives.

Boys attain less well than girls in Year 11 examinations, but the gap between girls and boys is less than the national one. The school is aware that the aspirations of girls in the area are not always as high as they are nationally, and is taking numerous steps to rectify this.

7. The school caters well for different groups of pupils. Some pupils with special educational needs enter the school with poor literacy skills, which seriously compromises their ability to cope with the secondary school curriculum. During their first three years, these pupils advance their reading age by an average of two years. Improvement in literacy forms the basis for very good progress throughout the wider curriculum. Pupils whose behavioural problems limited progress in primary school also achieve well. Pupils achieve higher standards in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations than is indicated by their attainment on entry.
8. Standards achieved by gifted and talented pupils are above the national average. Gifted and talented pupils progress well in their learning and, since the last inspection, have shown good improvement in national test results. They achieve particularly well in art and physical education, where provision is good.
9. There are 14 pupils with English as an additional language, of whom four are at an early stage of learning English. The department has records only of current pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests and assessments in Year 9, and none of performance over time or the results of past pupils at GCSE. Currently, pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils in their class in the National Curriculum tests and make good progress. Those at an early stage of learning English make good progress in lessons, when they have additional support.
10. Compared to standards at the time of the previous inspection, the current situation represents a marked improvement, and confirms that the school is no longer under-achieving, but is in fact allowing pupils to achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. Those who attend regularly do so with a reasonable level of enthusiasm, and participate fully in well-planned lessons. Even lower-attaining pupils in Year 8, with weak literacy skills, showed excellent levels of perseverance in a science lesson concentrating on learning key words, and rose to the challenge presented by some excellent teaching. A group of Year 7 pupils with special educational needs made an excellent response to a lesson exploring myths and legends, where the work set was very well matched to their individual needs. In the best lessons pupils work at a rapid pace and are eager to show their success: for example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where pupils were estimating square roots. In another Year 9 history lesson, higher-attaining pupils made an excellent response to the teacher's careful planning and preparation, and were fully involved in a role-play session, acting as newshounds interviewing Hitler about his policies towards Jews prior to the second world war. However, when teaching is not so closely matched to pupils' needs, lower-attaining pupils in particular show a lack of interest, and waste time, call out, or wander about the room. Year 10 pupils found it hard to evaluate their own progress in an ICT lesson, and in a Year 10 design and technology lesson, pupils were passive and truculent.
12. Behaviour in the school is good, and in lessons often very good. A small number of pupils, often boys, misbehave, and in one Year 10 lesson some pupils ignored a clear instruction not to access the Internet. When their individual needs are not being met in lessons, pupils become restless and waste time. Movement around the school site is generally orderly and is satisfactory in the crowded dining area at break and lunch times, although the queues are sometimes disorderly. A considerable number of pupils arrive early to gather in the breakfast club, and behave very well with minimum supervision from the learning mentors. The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs and those who work in the learning support centre is consistently very good.

13. Exclusions for a fixed term are high, but have fallen by over a half since the last inspection, owing to the intervention of the social inclusion team and the learning support centre. Two pupils have been excluded during the current school year, after all other strategies to keep them in full-time education failed.
14. Pupils' ability to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility is satisfactory. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities provided, and some are involved in sporting, dramatic or musical activities outside lessons. Pupils say the school council is ineffective, and not used enough to involve them fully in the school's development. Some attend study support groups after school; ICT is especially popular, and pupils do well as a result.
15. Relationships in the school are good. Pupils show respect for their teachers, and generally work productively in pairs and small groups when asked to do so. Good teacher–pupil relationships are a feature of some of the best lessons, where individual pupils' needs are well met. Pupils respect the differing views of others, as was demonstrated by the response of Year 10 pupils to a religious education lesson dealing with the sanctity of life and euthanasia. They listened and watched attentively, and worked well together on case studies. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others; for example Year 7 pupils became noisy, disrupting the lesson, until the class became visibly embarrassed and showed that they understood their behaviour was unacceptable.
16. Pupils make a satisfactory response to the school's provision for personal development. They are attentive and reflective in assemblies, and were particularly impressed by a very good assembly on the theme of teamwork held during the inspection week. Year 9 pupils were talking about the video clip of flying geese, and the support they give each other during long-distance formation flying. Much later in the morning, they were able to relate this to their own team experiences. Pupils are keen to contribute to social and team-building events organised on a house basis, such as those put on just before Christmas. Some individuals show initiative, such as organising a Blue Peter bring and buy sale or collecting goods to fill hampers to distribute to senior citizens; often this is part of an organised scheme, such as community service within the Duke of Edinburgh Award, for which a small group of pupils organised a tea dance for elderly people.
17. Attendance is unsatisfactory, although it has improved since the last inspection. Authorised and unauthorised absence rates are higher than the average in secondary schools, both nationally and within the local education authority. Over 1 per cent of authorised absence is due to parents taking their children on holiday during term time. A lot of absence is due to a number of very poor attenders, some with records as low as 4 per cent. During the Autumn Term in 2002, 43 per cent of all pupils had attendance records above 95 per cent, and 133 of these achieved full attendance over the period. The best-attending class in the previous school year was encouraged through the reward system; as their prize they chose to visit the cinema and Metroland and have a meal.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching and learning for the school as a whole is good. About 98 per cent of the lessons observed during the inspection had satisfactory or better teaching and learning, and the proportion with very good or excellent teaching was 35 per cent. Compared with teaching and learning at the time of the previous inspection, this represents good improvement. In 2001, only 13 per cent of lessons had very good or excellent teaching, and there were twice as many lessons with unsatisfactory teaching.
19. In all year groups, teachers are good at virtually all aspects of their work. They plan well-structured lessons, and use assessment data to devise a wide range of strategies to meet the very varied needs of pupils. Pace is nearly always strong. Teachers are well qualified and confident in their subject knowledge, and the vast majority communicate their knowledge very successfully. A consistently very good feature is the way teachers manage pupils: they establish good relationships, reward effort and success very obviously, and follow the school policy on sanctions and referral very closely. The most successful lessons actively involve pupils and place very high demands on them. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson, teaching was excellent because of first-rate planning and a commitment to involving pupils a great deal. Questioning

- encouraged pupils to think, and to make extended responses wherever possible. The very clear objectives set from the start helped to give strong direction to the lesson, and a highly effective plenary session drew out the key progress made. Pupils were confident about the knowledge and ideas they had learnt.
20. A Year 9 mathematics lesson with excellent teaching and learning benefited from very strong pace and high levels of challenge throughout. Pupils worked at an excellent rate as a result. The class and the teacher both had a very clear grasp of the different levels pupils were at, and the targets they should be aiming for. Tasks were designed with these targets in mind. The very effective use of group work was evident in a Year 11 geography lesson. Pupils made very secure yet rapid gains in understanding as they discussed the arguments for and against major engineering works in China. Such carefully timed and focused thinking and open discussion are a successful feature of many geography lessons, but are not used as widely by the school as a whole.
 21. Teachers have a few general areas of weakness. Whereas literacy skills are consistently taught well, teachers are less confident and consistent at reinforcing pupils' grasp of numeracy and ICT. The teaching of these two basic skills is unsatisfactory as a result. Very occasionally, teachers do not follow some of the key principles that generally lead to so many successful lessons. For example, in a Year 7 physical education lesson, most aspects of teaching were secure, but the general level of demand made of pupils was too low and pupils made less progress than they should have.
 22. The learning of pupils is good, largely because of the good quality of teaching that predominates, but pupils also help themselves by the positive attitudes they bring to lessons. They are good at most aspects of learning; they have a clear picture of the standards to which they should aspire and are willing to work hard and concentrate well. In a great many lessons, pupils show real interest and enthusiasm. Their skills at working independently of their teachers are less well developed. Many pupils show a lack of confidence in taking the initiative, speaking at length or conducting independent research. This lack of confidence partly reflects their personal disposition, but lessons tend not to offer as much opportunity for gaining confidence in these areas as they might. The library, although well organised, is far too small for large numbers of pupils to use it regularly for independent study.
 23. There are no major differences between the quality of teaching and learning across Years 7 to 9 and the quality in Years 10 and 11, but there are variations between subjects. The quality of both teaching and learning is very good across the school in history, religious education and science, and it is equally good in Year 10 and 11 geography lessons. The high quality is due to the impressive skills of individual teachers in these subjects, the particularly careful interpretation of examination board requirements, and the close match that teachers consistently make between pupils' needs across the full ability range and the work they set. When teaching is satisfactory overall, as in modern languages, there is evidence of some very good individual work, but a lack of consistency of approach. In turn, this reflects limited support and guidance and failure to set high collective objectives by the head of department.
 24. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs and small groups withdrawn to the special needs base is always at least very good and often excellent. It is characterised by tremendous enthusiasm, which produces a quite remarkable response in pupils. They work at great pace and intensity, throughout lessons that are very well planned and include a rich variety of appropriate learning opportunities. Learning support assistants make a most effective contribution to this specialised work. In-class support provided by teachers and learning support assistants is always good and often very good. Teachers and ancillary staff work together as fellow professionals to create an effective learning environment for all the pupils in each supported class.
 25. Learning of pupils with special educational needs in classes where there is no support is usually good or better. All teachers are sensitive to the problems experienced by pupils with special educational needs, and they are very well informed about pupils' difficulties by the individual education plans, which also suggest good strategies for helping pupils. Good order in class allows teachers to give much individual support, so pupils can usually keep up with their peers.

26. Teaching of gifted and talented pupils is good, and they learn well. Many departments provide suitable extension materials or open-ended activities, providing opportunities for pupils to reach higher levels of attainment. For example, in mathematics lessons, pupils sample exercises to confirm their understanding, then move on to questions that are more challenging. However, this provision is variable, and not all subjects provide specific learning opportunities beyond those normally offered to higher-attaining groups of pupils.
27. Similarly, the liaison between specialist teaching of pupils using English as an additional language, support assistants and subject teachers is good, and these pupils learn well as a result. The quality of individual support teaching is good overall.
28. In general, much has been done to make sure that senior managers are aware of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Good use has been made of advanced skills teachers, and there is far more monitoring of teaching than at the time of the previous inspection. Good practice has been built on and decisive action taken where practice was unsatisfactory. There are now far more effective systems for pupil management and target setting in place than in 2001. These have contributed significantly to the very good improvement in teaching and learning since the previous inspection, to the good, often very good, rate of pupils' progress in lessons, and to the good longer-term achievement they make over different phases of their education.

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

29. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils are good. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are taught all National Curriculum subjects, religious education and drama. Personal, social health education and citizenship are taught through the guidance course. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are taught the National Curriculum subjects, with the exception of ICT. The school does not meet statutory requirements to provide opportunities for all pupils to be taught all aspects of ICT. The school does not have a curriculum policy to guide its planning and curricular provision.
30. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced throughout all years. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a range of opportunities: in addition to the GCSE examination courses, the school has recently introduced several GNVQ courses. This development has improved the possibilities for vocational education since the last inspection. Pupils can take GNVQ courses in business studies, science, ICT and health and social care. The school has plans to extend this provision by reintroducing leisure and tourism.
31. There are some unsatisfactory aspects of curricular provision related to the ten-day timetable and the setting of groups. In some subjects there is an uneven distribution of lessons across the two weeks, which creates problems of continuity. It is particularly acute in music, but also unhelpful in geography. The setting arrangements for science in Year 10 prevent some pupils from taking the GNVQ science course, and also result in several classes having more than one teacher, which does not help to raise standards.
32. A small number of Year 11 pupils follow the Kingsmeadow Alternative Provision (KAP), enabling these pupils to have a programme tailored to meet their needs. Part of this provision involves early entry for some GCSE examinations in Year 10; this is a brave development, and one that requires careful evaluation. In Year 10, a similar group of pupils is following the ASDAN Bronze Award programme. In many cases this has been successful in improving attendance and increasing the motivation of potentially disaffected pupils. Several pupils who might otherwise have truanted have been able to achieve at least one GCSE grade. This programme is a worthwhile development.

33. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Withdrawal for specialist teaching is carefully organised so that pupils' entitlement to the full National Curriculum is not compromised. In most subjects, pupils are taught in small groups, by teachers who are very skilled at helping them to overcome their difficulties. The courses that are offered as an alternative to GCSE, particularly the newly introduced ASDAN course, provide very well for the needs of these pupils.
34. Curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils is good overall, as most pupils in this category are taught in the higher-attaining sets. Extension materials are provided for talented artists and there is peripatetic music provision. There is extra-curricular provision in several subjects, and in physical education there are opportunities for pupils to take part in team activities, which include specialist coaching.
35. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is in line with Gateshead local education authority guidelines. The provision entails a combination of in-class support and a small amount of pupil withdrawal for intensive language learning.
36. Staff provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. These include a large variety of sporting activities, such as football (for both boys and girls), trampolining, basketball, netball and kwik cricket. Altogether, there are 15 different activities, with approximately a fifth of pupils participating in at least one. There are opportunities for study support in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and there is an Internet club that is hugely popular. The ICT facilities are made available on two evenings per week for any purpose, and at lunch and break times for use in enhancing the presentation of coursework in many subjects. There is an off-timetable series of competitions for three days just before Christmas, which is very successful. Provision of extra-curricular musical activities is very good: there is a choir, a vocal group and a keyboard club, among other things. The school runs a modest Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The annual drama productions are major events in the life of the school, and are extremely successful. Pupils appreciate the opportunities provided for them and the school is rightly proud of its extra-curricular provision.
37. The school's provision for pupils' personal development is good. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory; provision for their social, moral and cultural development is good. The contribution made by each subject area to personal development ("Guidance") has not been systematically assessed throughout the school, but there are plans to do this. Some subject areas, such as drama and religious education, make a very good contribution to personal development, as does the house system. However, apart from in Year 7, tutorial time is used inconsistently and inadequately.
38. Good practice in promoting pupils' spiritual awareness is seen during assemblies. Pupils are given time to reflect, for instance on how teamwork promotes effectiveness. However, opportunities to extend such themes in tutorials are not consistently taken. The school has close links with the local church, and pupils from each house attend carol services at Christmas. The school does not meet its statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
39. Pupils' moral development is well provided for in many subject areas. They are taught the difference between right and wrong. This is an essential component of the work with pupils with special educational needs. Pupils in religious education listened intently to a video clip from "Eastenders" dealing with the moral dilemma of euthanasia. In an English lesson, pupils came to understand the workings of Macbeth's mind through active role-play.
40. Provision for social and cultural development is good. Pupils discuss work together in small groups, for example in geography. In drama they work together to explore social issues, such as bullying and racism. Visitors such as local police officers and the local vicar provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about society. Pupils study literature, including Shakespeare, from Year 7, and have good cultural opportunities in art. They are introduced to many cultures and religions, for example, to Sikhism in religious education and to the Amazon Indians in

geography. In English, poetry from other cultures is analysed. There are no exchange visits organised at present, nor any foreign language assistants.

41. The provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. All pupils have one lesson of guidance each week. The programme includes drugs awareness, sex education and careers education, and it has recently been extended to include citizenship. The overall plans are limited and have no overall philosophy or rationale. The schemes of work are mainly about content and do not include anything on teaching and learning strategies or provide opportunities for assessment. The teaching of this course, in lessons observed during the inspection, was satisfactory, and in some cases good.
42. The arrangements for careers education are satisfactory. Pupils are provided with opportunities to consider courses and the skills that are required for employment in Years 10 and 11. All pupils take part in the work-experience scheme in Year 10.
43. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. The business studies pupils benefit from links with the Metro Centre, and the good links with Go Gateshead have been very useful in improving the school's profile and rewarding their good behaviour. The Dunston Community Festival also provides a good opportunity for pupils and the community to work harmoniously together.
44. There are very good links with local primary schools. Year 6 pupils have been invited into Kingsmeadow for ICT work, and more recently the drama teachers have carried out some work in feeder schools. Year 7 pupils return to primary schools with the story-bag scheme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school's arrangements to protect the health, welfare and safety of all groups of pupils are very good. The pastoral teams in each house provide very good support and guidance, and are well informed by a good system of record keeping. Risk assessments to protect the health and safety of staff and pupils are almost fully in place, and appropriate attention is given to the establishment of a safe and secure working environment. Very good procedures have been adopted to deal with matters of child protection. All groups of pupils, irrespective of ethnic background, gender, social class or level of attainment, are helped and encouraged by a wide range of strategies to attend, behave well and make progress, with a suitable curriculum. Tutors adopt caring attitudes to their pupils and many tutorial periods, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are well structured to promote personal development. However, too many tutor periods, especially in Years 10 and 11, are primarily used for socialising, and apart from formal registration are largely wasted and do not provide a good start to the working day.
46. The school's assessment and monitoring of academic performance and personal development are good. A wide range of data is collected and used well to determine pupil groupings, set targets and raise standards. Work done in the class and at home is clearly and consistently marked, and regular reviews are undertaken to monitor progress. Individuals and groups of pupils are encouraged by the use of a range of rewards for personal and academic achievement.
47. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good and have raised attendance levels by 1 per cent a year since the last inspection, although attendance rates have yet to reach local or national averages. An electronic registration system is used, and the parents and carers of pupils who are absent without reason are contacted on the first day of absence. The system records reasons for absence and lateness, and the data is analysed well. The school uses a variety of ways of promoting good attendance, and most pupils are encouraged by the rewards offered. The social inclusion officer and other staff work hard with primary schools, parents and others to raise the attendance levels. The provision of breakfast encourages many pupils to come into school early and benefit from the catering and social atmosphere.

48. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. There is a clear and consistently used set of procedures to track pupils with behaviour problems, and a well-used hierarchy of sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. Procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour are good, but some pupils still express unfounded assumptions about what is appropriate for boys as opposed to girls. Pupils at risk of exclusion, or who have become disaffected by school for any reason, may be referred to the learning support centre. Staff work closely with parents, departmental teaching staff and outside agencies to provide a short period of respite from mainstream classes. Pupils' work and attitudes are closely monitored, and this continues until the pupil is fully reintegrated into a normal timetable. After-school sessions may be offered to pupils and their parents as an alternative to a fixed-term exclusion; these are effective in providing continuity of learning.

49. Assessment data and guidance procedures are used well to raise pupils' achievement. Assessment procedures are good overall, and particularly good in science and for pupils with special educational needs. Work is marked well and assessed against clear criteria. Pupils are given target National Curriculum levels to achieve in Year 9, and GCSE grades to achieve in Year 11, based on their prior performance. Termly grade books monitor achievement against these targets, as well as monitoring homework, behaviour and effort in each subject. These are appropriately shared with pupils and parents. Assessment data are used well to evaluate the curriculum, enabling some pupils to participate in relevant vocational courses and other activities that stimulate their learning, such as the successful graffiti exhibition in which pupils on the Kingsmeadow Alternative Programme participated last year. Data are used from an early stage to set pupils in attainment groups for the majority of subjects, which usually promotes effective learning. However, the setting arrangements for some subjects in which success is not necessarily dictated by intellectual ability, such as drama, are not always effective.
50. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are excellent. Their progress is closely monitored, and as a result they achieve very well.
51. Since the last inspection, improved assessment procedures have been used effectively to involve pupils in a curriculum relevant to their needs, which, with the work of the learning support centre and social inclusion team, has reduced exclusions, improved attendance and led to a better working environment for all. The house system provides pupils and their parents with a smaller social unit with which to identify, and it is used well to promote and monitor personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. Parents and carers are satisfied with the education provided, especially those whose children are in their first year and who feel that their children will benefit from the improvements made since the last inspection. The inspectors agree that the school has high expectations for their children, is approachable, provides an interesting range of activities outside school and has good teachers. A minority of parents disagree that their children are set the right amount of homework, but the inspection team found that homework is used well to support class work. Some parents have reservations about the information they receive on their children's progress and the strength of the school's partnership with parents. The inspectors found that the grade books, which are liked by most parents, provide a regular picture of how pupils are progressing, but that annual reports do not always provide sufficient detail on how to improve in some subjects. They also found that the school works hard at many levels to involve all parents in the life of the school and the work of their children, but parents do not yet reciprocate as fully as they could.
53. Overall, the school has effective links with parents. Information provided is very good, both that of a general nature, such as the prospectus, the governors' annual report to parents and regular newsletters, and information relating to an individual pupil. The termly grade sheets provide a good, regular picture of progress against potential, but in some subjects, especially English, the annual written comments do not always make clear what specific actions are needed to effect improvement.
54. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. There is a parent association, but at present very few parents are involved. When the school requests a consultation with parents most respond well, but attendance at consultation evenings is unsatisfactory. The success of the learning support centre is in part due to the close contact it maintains with parents, with parent-pupil contracts being signed at the start and daily communication thereafter. Parents of pupils with special educational needs also respond well when asked to attend progress reviews, and most are fully involved in their children's education. A few parents spoke very positively about specialist classes that they attend in school, where they learn ways in which they can help their children at home, for example by using educational games. Some parents maintain contact well through the pupils' diaries. The establishment of lines dedicated to learning mentors and to report absence have helped to make telephone contact easier.

55. Since the last inspection, a stronger partnership with parents has developed. The school tries hard to involve them and keeps them very well informed, but not enough parents yet reciprocate as fully as they could.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. Leadership and management of the school as a whole is very good, primarily because the headteacher, working with his very capable senior management team, provides excellent leadership. His commitment and clarity of vision have encouraged the staff to work together to raise standards of attainment and radically upgrade all that the school offers its pupils. Current leaders and managers have built on the changes initiated by the previous headteacher, but have been decisive and successful in the introduction of many new, well-chosen strategies. These strategies have led to very good improvement since the previous inspection, when many positive trends were noted but much still remained to be done to lift the judgement that this was an under-achieving school. Since 2001, the drive and skilful decision-making of the current headteacher has galvanised staff; they are teaching and providing for pupils so much more effectively that GCSE A* to C grades have more than doubled, and exclusions halved.
57. At senior level, the quality of leadership is distinguished by a successful blend of independent action and very effective teamwork. The main areas of success at this level include the coherent and clear approach to development planning. Planning was unsatisfactory at the time of the 2001 inspection, but is now one reason why the school's short- and longer-term objectives are so well understood and promoted by the whole staff. At the time of the last inspection, limited use was made of target setting and the systematic reviewing of pupils' progress by reference to assessment data, but this has been rapidly developed to a position of strength. Monitoring of teaching and the work of middle managers has been improved to the point where it is good: it is now used to identify and expand strengths in teaching or leadership and to pick up weakness and deal with them. Senior managers have also brought about radical changes to the curriculum and, through the new house system, to the monitoring and support of pupils. Both changes are having a marked beneficial impact on pupils' standards of attainment and their behaviour and confidence.
58. Heads of department and heads of house provide good overall middle management. The quality is very good in the case of heads of house and heads of special educational needs, geography, history and art. However, in modern languages, physical education, guidance, ICT and music, the quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. In all of these except music, schemes of work offer too little guidance and support and there is a lack of clarity about expectations and how these should be maintained. In physical education and music, those currently taking responsibility for the subjects are working effectively, but they require a more clearly defined framework of objectives and support within which to operate.
59. The quality of financial management is very good. Funds are efficiently handled by a process of regular internal auditing with frequent statements from the bursar to the headteacher and the chair of the Governing Body's finance sub-committee. The most recent LEA audit confirms this level of efficiency. The school has been very successful at bidding for and securing additional monies: these have helped enable the headteacher to plan for and carry out significant improvements to the accommodation and expansion of the curriculum, make far better links with primary schools and post-16 education centres, and make good appointments to leadership of key subjects and pastoral posts. The principles of "best value" are used very effectively in all areas of the schools' work from funding decisions about enhancing the curriculum's appeal to disaffected pupils to paying for supervision of toilets in order to ensure they remain permanently in good order.
60. The governing body is contributing very effectively to the work of the school. Governors have a very detailed knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, partly through frequent, well-organised meetings spent discussing reports and other information from senior managers, but far more through visits to the school to see pupils and staff and observe the context in which they work. As a result of their secure knowledge of the school, the governors are able to provide very good

strategic advice and support to the headteacher and other managers. On occasion, they have been instrumental in initiating proposals that the headteacher has assessed and subsequently adopted. Most of the governors' statutory duties are properly fulfilled, but requirements to provide ICT in Years 10 and 11 and a daily act of worship for all pupils are not being met. However, since the previous inspection of 2001 the governing body has improved its role dramatically, from being unsatisfactory to providing a very good oversight of the school.

61. The governing body, through the designated governor, the headteacher, senior management and all teaching and non-teaching staff, shares the commitment of the special educational needs department to maximising the achievement of pupils who have difficulties with learning. Leadership and management within the department are very good. Full use is made of outside agencies. All aspects of the wider school provision, including training for teachers, are equally well managed.
62. The organisation and provision for the teaching of gifted and talented pupils is very good. The co-ordinator led a working party, on which all departments were represented, in producing a schedule of provision within each subject. However, there is insufficient monitoring of departments' commitment to delivering specific teaching programmes for gifted and talented pupils, which has resulted in variable provision across departments. There are very close links with the local education authority and local universities to enhance the quality of expertise available. The school is piloting tests and pupil profiles that will enhance the identification and learning needs of these pupils.
63. Management of provision for pupils with English as an additional language, which is overseen by a deputy head, is broadly satisfactory. In documentation, however, pupils with a minority ethnic background are not separated from pupils with English as an additional language. The file of pupils' performance and progress is not up-to-date and needs revision to include targets and final GCSE performance.

Staffing

64. There are enough teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. Almost all of the teachers are appropriately qualified for the posts they hold, and there is a good mix of experienced teachers and those relatively new to the profession. Although the school inevitably has some long-term absences with which to contend, it takes effective steps to fill these posts with skilled supply teachers who have appropriate qualifications. There are some areas where improvement may be needed in order to support developments, but the school makes the best use of the staff it has at the moment. For instance, in art, there are four teachers, of whom only two are trained art teachers, but all work together for the good of the pupils and the development of the non-specialist staff. The departments of physical education, modern languages, music, ICT and guidance all currently lack secure and effective leadership and management, although the school has made sure that there are enough staff to cover the necessary teaching.
65. There are two teaching assistants at the moment, appointed recently, and they enhance the work of the school, particularly work that is done for the benefit of pupils with special educational needs. There is currently no clerical assistance for the extensive and efficient special education function. There are enough technicians and bursarial, secretarial and clerical staff to support the work of the school.
66. The induction procedures for initial teacher training students and for newly qualified teachers are pertinent, rigorous and very effective indeed. Some of these procedures are used to help supply teachers, and teachers new to the school, settle in quickly and effectively. One of the key aspects of the attention given to supply teachers, who perform such a valuable task, is that the school includes them in its in-service training programmes, where appropriate, and pays them for taking part. The quality assurance procedures, involving all personnel new to the school, indicate that the training and induction are much appreciated and very effective.

Accommodation

67. Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school makes good use of its accommodation – it has been recently re-decorated and is kept in a good state of repair. However, the quality of facilities in the East building is unsatisfactory. In this building, the accommodation for science is poor and there are insufficient rooms for its teaching. Other rooms are too small, and some have no natural light or ventilation, particularly one art and design room and one of the drama studios. Some rooms have no direct access and can only be entered by going through adjoining rooms. In the West building, the accommodation for the library is unsatisfactory. It is too small and insufficiently equipped. The governors have made appropriate improvements to the existing accommodation since the last inspection, in particular making good improvements to physical education facilities, the toilets and the general state of repair and decoration. The governors are aware of the problems and are in the process of making a bid to pull down and replace the East building. The school makes good use of display, and this creates an attractive and stimulating environment in many parts of the school.

Resources

68. Overall, resources are adequate for all subjects, except for science and music, which is short of ICT resources to support the subject. Budgets are appropriately spent and well managed. Resources for physical education are very good and resources for mathematics, art and design, special educational needs and the subject of ICT are good. The stocks of books in the library are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to continue the school's strongly improving trend, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) Promote further rises in standards in those subjects with recent results lower than the school's average, namely English, mathematics, science, design and technology (resistant materials and electronics), physical education and modern languages. (See paragraphs 4, 72, 81, 83, 90, 112, 113, 114, 153, 154, 157, 167)
 - (2) Take steps to ensure that leadership and management of physical education, modern languages, ICT, guidance and music is secure and effective. (See paragraphs 37, 41, 58, 66, 144, 148, 156, 162, 168, 169)
 - (3) Intensify existing strategies for raising attendance levels and devise additional means to ensure that national levels are reached by 2004. (See paragraphs 17, 47, 73, 75, 94, 99, 101, 141, 142, 143)
 - (4) Provide additional training, support and monitoring to establish sound numeracy and ICT reinforcement as part of day-to-day teaching. (See paragraphs 4, 21, 29, 75, 87, 94, 115, 131, 150)
 - (5) Improve accommodation in several areas, in particular the library and Block E. (See paragraphs 67, 68, 96, 103, 117, 123, 133, 162)
 - (6) Promote pupils' confidence as independent learners by improving library accommodation and resources, and by including more activities in which pairs, groups and individuals learn independently of their teachers for significant periods during lessons. (See paragraphs 22, 67, 68, 75, 77, 78, 84, 103, 115)

Minor issues

- (1) Use tutor time in a more efficient and standardised manner. *(See paragraphs 37, 45)*
- (2) Address timetabling and the structure of the school day to rectify the current deficiencies of a late start, widely separated lessons (particularly in music and modern languages) and the impact of the setting and banding policy. *(See paragraphs 31, 49, 86, 95, 122, 160)*
- (3) Ensure that ICT meets statutory requirements. *(See paragraphs 29, 60, 146)*
- (4) Ensure that requirements for a daily act of collective worship are met. *(See paragraphs 38, 60)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	142
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	40	54	36	2	1	0
Percentage	7	28	38	25	1.5	0.5	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	859
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	317

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	150

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	46

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.9

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	95	81	176

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	39	52
	Girls	43	35	48
	Total	70	74	100
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (64)	42 (47)	57 (55)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (30)	23 (19)	21 (18)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	37	38
	Girls	54	37	42
	Total	98	74	80
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (55)	43 (53)	46 (56)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (7)	24 (18)	19 (13)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	97	71	168

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	28	78	84
	Girls	27	58	60
	Total	55	136	144
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	33 (23)	81 (78)	86 (83)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	30.7

per pupil	National	39.8
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	201	13	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	646	51	3

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	286

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.4
Key Stage 4	20.5

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	2,544,050
Total expenditure	2,549,107
Expenditure per pupil	2,992
Balance brought forward from previous year	-5,057
Balance carried forward to next year	124,766

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
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	859
Number of questionnaires returned	148

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	60	7	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	32	58	8	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	48	9	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	50	16	7	2
The teaching is good.	28	62	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	49	21	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	47	4	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	42	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	45	20	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	34	51	2	1	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	52	10	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	40	6	3	11

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching results in good achievement over Years 7 to 9, and improving achievement in Years 10 to 11.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in class are good, leading to good learning by regular attenders.
- Good management has led to the efficient introduction of new initiatives.
- There is very good shared commitment within the department to improving standards further.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are below those in some other subjects.
- In the higher sets, assessment is not used sufficiently to motivate pupils to raise standards.
- In the higher sets, there is insufficient emphasis on teaching pupils how to analyse the way language is used.
- Not enough use is made of computers to promote learning.

70. Results of the national tests for pupils in Year 9 are below national averages. In 2002, results were average when compared to pupils' prior attainment, and above average compared to pupils from schools with a similar intake. Pupils do better in English than in mathematics, but less well than they do in science. Results are rising. Girls do better than boys by a wider margin than nationally.
71. Standards of Year 9 work seen during the inspection confirm that standards are below national averages. However, taking into account pupils' very low standards of literacy on entry to the school, this represents good achievement over the three years. Higher-attaining pupils produce accurate written work that sustains the interest of the reader. They understand what they read, including Shakespeare, but are less confident in analysing language and its effects. They speak sensibly and can extend their answers. Average-attaining pupils have weaknesses in spelling and punctuation, but write in a sustained way when given help in structuring their writing. The writing of lower-attaining pupils is poorly formed and they need constant reminders of how to spell and punctuate. They are very quiet and lack confidence in speaking. They follow the plot of 'Macbeth', and understand why the characters behave as they do.
72. Results in examinations for pupils in Year 11 are well below average. Very few pupils attain the highest grades. Compared to schools with a similar intake, the results are average; compared to pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9, they are average. Results have improved considerably over the past five years, in both English and English literature. Girls do better than boys by about the same margin as they do nationally. Pupils do less well in English than they do in many of their other subjects.
73. Standards in the work of Year 11 pupils seen during the inspection confirm these well-below-average standards. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Progress is often good in lessons, but progress over time is adversely affected by absence. Not only do pupils miss valuable work, but time is also wasted in lessons while teachers make sure that those returning are up to date enough to join in the work in progress. Higher-attaining pupils read perceptively and develop their own ideas independently of the teacher. Their imaginative writing is accurate and consciously crafted. Several pupils are attaining the highest grades, but many do not analyse how language is used in sufficient detail. Average-attaining pupils compare texts at a basic level of plot and character motivation. Their writing is reasonably accurate. They contribute ideas better in groups than before the class. Lower-attaining pupils make many mistakes in their writing and need a

- great deal of support to extend their ideas beyond brief comments. Their reading shows understanding of plot and an awareness of characters.
74. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across Years 7 to 11. They receive a great deal of individual help, precisely matched to their needs. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 to 11. They are identified by the school, but rarely have work specifically designed for them. Insufficient evidence was gained to make overall judgements on the progress of pupils with English as an additional language.
75. Teaching and learning are good. They are especially good among the average- and lower-attaining pupils. Unfortunately, absence rates are high, so learning is often not consolidated. Teachers manage classes very well. They maintain pleasant relationships through humour and good knowledge of pupils' individual needs, and as a result pupils progress well in gaining knowledge and skills. Teachers use an interesting variety of methods to maintain learning at a good pace, and pupils are interested and hard working. For example, in a Year 10 lesson exploring Shakespeare's sonnets, pupils were surrounded by copies of the poem on monitors around the room and the sound of the sonnet being read by Hugh Grant. The lesson moved through listening, reading, discussion and pupils' own writing, so that motivation was maintained and pupils' interest developed. In another Year 10 lesson, pupils came to understand and remember a Simon Armitage poem by enactment and recording their performance on video. In the higher sets, teachers do not focus closely enough on the way language is used. Assessment is regular and helpful. Teachers give good advice on how to improve, and pupils know their targets. However, assessment criteria are not used sufficiently to motivate pupils to improve their levels and grades, especially in the higher sets. Schemes of work are thorough for Years 7 to 9, but lack precise detail in Years 10 and 11. Computers are used in the classroom, but not in a systematic way and not enough. The library, although pleasant, is far too small to be a useful resource for the department.
76. The quality of leadership and management is good. New systems and initiatives, such as the National Literacy Strategy, are introduced efficiently and thoughtfully. There is very good shared commitment within the department; members of the team work closely together to develop ways to improve standards further. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Standards and the quality of teaching and learning have improved.

Literacy

77. The school makes good provision for the development of pupils' literacy across the school. Standards of literacy are well below average when pupils enter the school. Standards improve considerably over Years 7 to 11, to below average. Pupils are reticent speakers. They listen well, quietly and politely, but do not join in class discussion enthusiastically. They work better in small groups and pairs. Opportunities to develop and explore ideas through talking about them are sometimes missed, but occur frequently in some subject areas, such as English, drama, geography, history and religious education. For example, Year 9 pupils deepened their understanding about Bangladesh in geography through structured paired and group work. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to explain their thoughts and reasoning behind their answers, and to invent sentences including words that have just been introduced to them.
78. Pupils read well enough to understand the texts they are using, but do not read for pleasure sufficiently. The library, although a pleasant room, is very small. It has insufficient stock, though what is there is of good quality and well chosen.
79. Important words are introduced well in most subject areas, and displayed around the room. Teachers stress the importance of accuracy in expression. In art, for example, work is re-drafted to improve it. Pupils are often given outline structures to help them develop their ideas in more detail and more systematically, for example in history and religious education; this considerably improves written expression.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The department is well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Standards within lessons and in national tests are improving.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in national tests are well below the national averages.
- There is a wide variation in the quality of presentation and mathematical rigour in pupils' work.
- Pupils have immature learning skills and do not take responsibility for their own learning.
- Some groups of pupils are taught by more than one teacher, adversely affecting the continuity of learning.

80. Pupils enter the school with well-below-average attainment in mathematics. There are very few higher-attaining pupils.
81. In 2002, results of National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were well below the national average. Pupils' attainment was the equivalent of one year behind national expectations. When compared to similar schools, these results were average overall, and above average in terms of the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades. This reflects the continued rise in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades, a trend that has been evident since the last inspection. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement. However, many pupils failed to reach their predicted target grade, and only 14 per cent achieved better than predicted. Pupils' performance in mathematics was below that in English and science. There were no significant differences between the results of boys and girls.
82. Standards in the work of pupils in Year 9, observed during the inspection, were below average. Progress during lessons is good and pupils are achieving well, owing to the improved teaching since the last inspection. The general level of numeracy is well below average, and is being improved by use of the National Numeracy Strategy, now fully implemented in Years 7 to 9. Use of the strategy was evident in a Year 8 lesson, in which pupils displayed an excellent grasp of techniques for estimating results of products of difficult numbers. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 made excellent progress during a lesson on powers of ten, and were able to use the 'standard form' notation competently by the end of the lesson. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are improving, and lower-attaining pupils are often eager to show their understanding of what they have learnt. This enthusiasm was evident in a lesson on determining volumes of cuboids, where pupils were keen to explain what they understood and had observed. However, the concentration span of many pupils is limited and personal learning skills are weak, which reduces the quality of the learning atmosphere in some lessons. Generally, there are good attitudes to work. Pupils engage fully in question and answer sessions and are willing to present their ideas to the class using overhead projectors or the electronic whiteboard. Enhanced confidence and enthusiasm for the subject is a factor in the rising achievement of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress during lessons, in line with others in their groups. Generally, boys and girls perform equally well in lessons.
83. Results in GCSE examinations in Year 11 were well below the national average. The percentage achieving A* to C grades was in line with similar schools, based on pupils' previous performance in tests at the end of Year 9. These results represented satisfactory achievement for pupils across Years 10 and 11. Over the past three years, there has been a 3 per cent improvement in the number of pupils achieving A* to C grades. This improvement has coincided with an increasing proportion of pupils being entered for mathematics, and represents a modest improvement since the last inspection. Overall, there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, but, over recent years, boys have out-performed girls in attaining

the higher grades. There is no evidence of variations in the results of pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds.

84. Standards in the work of Year 11 pupils seen during the inspection are well below average. The majority of the higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 are being entered for the intermediate-level GCSE examination, with only a very few entering for the higher examination. This represents satisfactory achievement for this group of pupils and is in line with their predicted grades. Achievement and attainment are better in Year 10. Current Year 10 pupils' books show that they are studying higher-level topics than pupils currently in Year 11, and higher-attaining pupils are on target for entry to the higher-tier examination at GCSE level. Lack of numeracy skills often inhibits good progress during lessons. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on factorising quadratic expressions; pupils clearly understood the process, but stumbled over the simple number relationships required within the process. Pupils' files and books are not usually well presented, and their work lacks mathematical rigour, which hinders understanding and revision. Pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition are well supported and make good progress, in line with their level of attainment. The general ability of pupils to control their own learning and application to their work is very low, requiring constant intervention and support by teachers, and slowing the pace of progress for all pupils.
85. Teaching is good in all years, and is typified by well-planned, often challenging, lessons. In the few instances where pupils' full attention could not be maintained, lessons were less successful. The high quality of teachers' subject knowledge, and their use of a wide variety of teaching styles, helps them communicate new concepts to pupils. Very good use is made of calculators, overhead projectors and the interactive whiteboard. Good pupil-teacher relationships within the classroom mean that pupils have the confidence to seek support whenever it is required, enabling learning to be developed. Regular assessment of pupils' work and the use of the grade book are helping pupils to become more aware of their own progress. Good provision of work for pupils with differing levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and those gifted in mathematics, ensures that all pupils are learning at an appropriate level. Extra-curricular support for pupils is provided, both formally during review sessions after school, and informally by way of invitations to pupils to drop in to see teachers if they have any difficulties. Pupils' progress during lessons is better than their retention of facts over time, reducing the impact of good teaching.
86. The new head of department is providing good leadership and management in developing strategies to improve pupils' attainment. New schemes of work are being developed, in line with new exam entry policies for GCSE. The development of ICT as a teaching tool by the department is well advanced, and planning is under way to provide a suite of computers for pupils' use. Staffing of the department is good, with three specialists new to the department. However, the use of teachers from other subject areas often results in classes being taught by more than one teacher, which has a negative impact on the continuity of pupils' learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and the department has good capacity to continue this improvement further.

Numeracy

87. The provision for developing numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school has held a training day, but many departments do not see this as training in numeracy development for their particular subject. There is no numeracy co-ordinator, nor is there a whole-school policy, and many departments have no policy for promoting the numeracy of pupils. The general level of numeracy within the school is well below average, which has a negative impact on pupils' learning in science and geography lessons and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11. The mathematics department has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy into lessons in years 7 to 9, and this has produced an improvement in pupils' basic skills. Other major contributors to, and users of, pupils' numeracy are the science, geography and design and technology departments. In science, teaching of numeracy is good, but it is not co-ordinated as part of the whole curriculum. The geography department provides many opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy skills, through their use of graphs, coordinates and survey data. In design and technology subjects, pupils use a variety of units for measuring lengths, weights and volumes. A good example of

numeracy development was seen in a personal, health and social education lesson, in which pupils studied alcohol abuse. They measured volumes, calculated units of consumption and produced graphs from their findings. In lessons observed during the inspection, opportunities for developing numeracy skills in other subjects were often overlooked. For example, during physical education lessons, there were many occasions when measurement and recording could have been a focus for pupils' learning. Subject departments are failing to recognise opportunities for developing pupils' numeracy skills, and the lack of a whole-school policy to co-ordinate contributions made by all subject areas has a negative impact.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning are resulting in steadily rising standards.
- Good leadership and management are bringing about improvements in all aspects of the department's work, including the curriculum and assessment of pupils' progress.
- Teachers' very good relationships with their pupils are based on accurate understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and result in well-motivated and enthusiastic pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Curricular arrangements and the criteria used for grouping pupils are limiting the learning opportunities for some pupils.
- Poor accommodation is limiting the learning opportunities for all pupils.

88. Results in the national tests taken by Year 9 pupils in 2002 were below the national average, but were well above the standards achieved by pupils in similar schools or by pupils who were of equivalent attainment when starting secondary education. All pupils shared this good achievement. Standards have risen significantly over the last three years.
89. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that this improvement in standards is continuing. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is well below national expectations. Many have poor literacy and numeracy skills: for example, many pupils in the Year 7 top set who had grasped the meaning of 'pitch' when applied to sound found a question difficult because they did not understand the ordinary meaning of 'range'. Lower-attaining pupils found that using Bunsen burners to heat carbon tested their manipulative skills to the full. As pupils move through the school, improvements in all these basic skills are evident. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 all recognised that putting acid onto carbonates results in the production of carbon dioxide, and had no difficulty in testing the gas. Pupils in the top set in Year 9 all possess an above-average understanding of the states of matter and good experimental skills.
90. GCSE results in 2002 were well below national averages, but above average compared to those obtained by similar pupils in other schools. In contrast with the national figures, boys gained better results than girls. As these same pupils were well below national averages in Year 9, this level of achievement is satisfactory. Over recent years, there has been slow but steady improvement in results.
91. During the inspection, observation of lessons and examination of pupils' notebooks and test records indicated that the rate of improvement is accelerating. The syllabus now followed is modular, and pupils in Year 11 already have assessed work that should form the basis of better examination results in 2003. For example, pupils from the top set, who are learning about genetically caused diseases, can all explain the role of dominant and recessive genes with the level of understanding needed for a higher grade (A* to C) pass at GCSE. Standards in Year 10 indicate that these pupils have the potential for even better performance. Changes to the curriculum are also resulting in improved performance by lower-attaining pupils. The lowest set in Year 10 was able to complete a difficult practical exercise comparing the reactivity of four different

metals. Pupils worked with great care, a lot of enthusiasm and clearly increasing self-confidence. If the level of progress observed is maintained, the future results will show a better overall pass rate and an increasing proportion gaining higher grades.

92. Teaching and learning are very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and more than half the lessons seen were very good or excellent. The level of difficulty of each lesson is finely judged, so that pupils are stretched but not overwhelmed. Lessons always build well on pupils' previous learning and their general knowledge. Many lessons are planned with great imagination and work is presented in ways that capture pupils' interest; the result is effective and enthusiastic learning. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 learned about pressure by pretending to be circus artists. They had to measure the area of one hand and use their own weight to calculate the pressure they would exert on the floor. By the end of a thoroughly enjoyable lesson, every pupil understood that pressure is force per unit area. Year 10 pupils studying electricity gained very secure theoretical knowledge of the three-pin plug, because the work was presented as a practical problem, using equipment of the highest quality. Teachers have high expectations of all the pupils they teach. A Year 8 class, most of whom had statements of special educational needs, spent a lesson that had to be taken in an ordinary classroom thoroughly learning all the technical terminology associated with dissolving. Teachers have very high levels of commitment to their pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils are responding to this evident care by working enthusiastically and behaving very well. Sadly, a significant number of pupils cannot take advantage of this high-quality provision, because of their frequent absences from school.
93. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, because they are grouped in small classes and taught by teachers who fully understand their difficulties with learning. All teachers show great awareness of pupils' potential difficulties with technical terminology, and skilfully help them to acquire good scientific vocabularies.
94. The use of ICT to enrich the learning of science is unsatisfactory, because of the lack of equipment. Pupils' problems with number work are dealt with sensitively, but there is no whole-school focus on this aspect of pupils' learning.
95. The way that the curriculum and timetable are organised is not satisfactory. In Year 11, only one group of pupils can take double science. The situation in Year 10 is better but not ideal. Pupils placed in the 'Y' band are automatically debarred from taking double science and the new GNVQ science course. Some teaching groups in the junior part of the school include pupils with a very wide range of attainment. In these classes, even the best teaching cannot always provide tasks of suitable difficulty for all pupils. Half the pupils in Year 9 have all their science lessons during the last period of the day, when their appetite for learning is at its lowest ebb.
96. Accommodation is poor. There are not enough laboratories for all lessons, and most of them are entirely unsuitable for today's requirements. Five of the six have too few services (gas taps, sinks, etc.), and those that are available are sited in the wrong places. Only one laboratory is properly designed for a whole class to carry out experimental work. In addition, some have a complete lack of natural lighting and very poor ventilation. These rooms do not provide a suitable climate for learning and place undue stress on the teachers who work in them all day.
97. After a period of uncertainty, leadership and management are now good. Schemes of work for the first three years have been redesigned using the National Science Strategy, and are leading to better learning. A more appropriate GCSE course has been introduced, which is already resulting in higher standards. A pilot scheme to introduce a more vocational alternative to GCSE is proving to be popular and successful. Pupils' progress is assessed very well, and the data gathered is used to set ambitious but realistic targets for pupils and to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. All staff, including the excellent technician, work together as a mutually supportive team, sharing a commitment to high standards in all their work.
98. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning. The potential for further improvement is good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and show good attitudes to their work.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, and this ensures that pupils make good progress.
- Subject planning and schemes of work are very good.
- There is very good subject leadership from the head of department.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Some examination pupils' progress with their coursework is hampered by frequent absences from school.
- One of the classrooms lacks natural light and ventilation.
- Too little use is made of ICT for image development.

99. Pupils' attainment is equivalent to the national average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, pupils' attainment was below the national average, due to the unsatisfactory attendance of some pupils, which meant that their coursework was not fully completed. In the 2002 intermediate GNVQ examination, pupils attained broadly average results. Girls usually attain better than boys.
100. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' work and progress are guided by very good schemes of work and satisfactory assessment procedures. The use of carefully planned learning objectives, supported by relevant resources, is helping pupils to become more aware of their own standards. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, thanks to very good, detailed preparation of resources by the teacher, the pupils were able to apply a design to a face to give the impression that it was being camouflaged with leaves and similar objects. They showed a good awareness of how line, tone and colour can be used to create effects.
101. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good, with some examples of very good teaching. As a result of the teaching, pupils make good progress. Because of very good teaching, pupils in a Year 8 class had previously completed watercolour landscape paintings of a high standard. In an observed lesson, they were very effectively developing wool-weaving techniques to produce a design interpretation of the colours and textures in a landscape. They showed a very good application of technique, bearing in mind the purpose of their work and evaluating and developing it well. Very good use is often made of literacy skills, and pupils use computers well to research and record information about artists and other aspects of their work. The use of computers for image development is underdeveloped. The use of numeracy skills is starting to be satisfactorily developed. Teachers have high expectations and conduct their lessons at a good pace, using the available time well. As lessons progress, there is a good use of ongoing assessment. The progress and learning of pupils in Years 10 and 11, their productivity and pace of working and their self-knowledge of their learning is supported well by the teachers, who give them individual input. This level of attention is overcoming, to some extent, the sometimes frequent absences of some of the pupils, which affect their eventual examination standards.
102. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, show good attitudes to their work. They are attentive, listen well, quickly settle down to their tasks and work with good levels of enthusiasm and motivation.
103. Leadership of the subject is very good. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, when the leadership was also very good. The head of department has put into place very good schemes of work and has allocated a satisfactory level of resources for their development. The department has its own range of books and pictures on the work of artists, but the provision of books and resources to support the subject in the school library is unsatisfactory.

Two of the existing three art rooms have a satisfactory level of accommodation, but the third art room is unsatisfactory. It has no natural light and the ventilation is poor.

104. Good attention is given to pupils' cultural development; artists from a wide range of cultures are studied. Homework is frequently set and is connected well to the work in classes. Because teachers give their time freely, pupils can attend during lunch times for extra help whenever they want. Good contacts are made with the local community. A number of primary schools send pupils from Year 5 to be very effectively taught by the head of department.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The school has chosen to introduce citizenship as part of a wider programme of pupil guidance.
- Many opportunities, both within the curriculum and as additional activities, are provided for pupils to develop responsible attitudes and behaviour.
- Strong partnerships with outside agencies give pupils a thorough preparation for the world beyond school.
- Individual lessons are planned and taught well.

Areas for improvement

- Overall planning lacks sufficient detail for effective co-ordinated teaching.
- The curriculum has not yet been audited to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- No whole-staff training has yet taken place.

105. Overall standards by the end of Year 9 are average. By the end of Year 11, pupils can demonstrate above-average levels of responsible action. A tangible result of this is the acknowledged good behaviour on school buses. Pupils have average levels of understanding about their responsibility to become informed and active citizens. Some higher-attaining pupils can work in an independent way, organise their thoughts and present a coherent argument, showing good communication skills. Most pupils, however, find this difficult, and need considerable help from teachers. In general, pupils' skills of enquiry and communication are average.
106. During specific modules in the guidance curriculum, pupils are taught the individual and collective responsibilities that are the hallmark of good citizenship. Year 7 pupils, for example, contributed enthusiastically to a well-planned lesson on the social implications of waste disposal. Most were able to relate the practical procedures of collection and disposal to the monetary and environmental costs. With good contributions from the schools' 'Connexions' advisor, a group of Year 9 pupils improved their understanding of the importance of making informed choices. The lesson made a valuable link between personal choice and the individual's place in society. Pupils gained valuable experience in working together, considering the views of others and arriving at collective decisions based on 'finding out' and 'enquiring about'.
107. Pupils are encouraged to exercise responsibilities as part of the school community, and also as members of a wider society. School prefects play a valuable role in acting as role models for younger pupils, representatives are elected to the school council and groups of pupils work with disabled people and elderly people. A small group of pupils arranged an afternoon tea dance for older people as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils represent the school at the Gateshead Youth Assembly, and civic, media and political figures are involved in school activities.
108. Examples of good practice can be seen in many areas of the curriculum. In drama and health and social care, for example, some pupils develop a good understanding of the feelings and attitudes of others, as they explore the social and moral consequences of bullying, substance abuse and peer-group pressure. Practical role-play activities in drama enabled Year 8 pupils to develop individual responsibility and greater sensitivity to persuasive language in order to resist

undesirable peer-group influences. During a very constructive health and social care lesson dealing with substance abuse, Year 10 pupils were able to supplement their own (often anecdotal) knowledge and experience of the topic with that of the front-line professionals of the police arrest referral unit. Pupils were aware of the wider social consequences and, although some lower-attaining pupils were not confident in forming and expressing opinions, most could engage in discussion of the topic. In art and design, pupils are able to offer supportive and constructive comments on other pupils' work by participating in collective evaluations.

109. Teaching is good overall and most lessons use a variety of teaching techniques to involve pupils actively in the learning process. For example, a good combination of group work, practical experiment, class discussion and teacher input was effective in raising awareness of alcohol dangers among Year 11 pupils. A pupil with English as an additional language was fully included in the lesson, understood the difference between imperial and metric measures and contributed to the discussion. Good planning in other lessons enabled teachers to support pupils' literacy and numeracy development. Good co-operation with a learning support assistant enabled Year 7 pupils with low literacy skills to understand the key words associated with recycling waste and to complete the associated calculations of quantities involved.
110. During the absence of the head of guidance, an experienced senior manager has taken the lead in co-ordinating citizenship, an effective short-term measure. For example, lessons during the inspection were well planned and taught by well-briefed teachers. But overall, too little progress has been made in the planning and implementation of the citizenship curriculum. Policy documents and schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed to enable the effective delivery of citizenship modules within the guidance programme. Citizenship is not mentioned in departmental documentation and, despite pockets of good practice within many curricular areas, the overall contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of becoming informed citizens has not been audited to provide an accurate map of pupils' experiences. The position and relevance of citizenship has not yet been given enough prominence through staff discussion and training. Plans to remedy this have yet to be implemented.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- New leadership of the subject has resulted in a clear assessment of weaknesses, and these are being systematically addressed.
- Good teaching in food technology, textiles and graphics has led to improved standards in these subject areas.
- Good relationships lead to a positive learning atmosphere in most subject areas.
- Overall, pupils' progress and achievement are good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in resistant materials and electronics are too low, and pupils do not achieve their potential in these subject areas.
- Assessment of pupils' work is not being used precisely enough to identify under-achievement and take effective action.
- ICT is not yet integrated fully into project work, particularly computer-aided design and manufacture in resistant materials.
- The structure and content of the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 does not provide a sound basis for independent design work at GCSE level.

111. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above average, and do not provide an accurate picture of pupils' attainment. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are sound, but systems for standardising the assessments do not make sufficient use of nationally available exemplar material.

112. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average, lower than in 2001, but this was a reversal of the previously rising trend. The low number of A* to C grades disguises the wide variation in performance between each technology subject. Results were above average in textiles and average in food technology. Very poor results in electronics and resistant materials, caused by staffing difficulties over a period of time, have masked the achievements of pupils and teachers in higher-attaining areas. Because food and textiles subjects attract more girls than boys, the performance gap between the two is greater than that expected nationally. The recent introduction of graphics as an examination subject is attracting a better balance of boys and girls.
113. In work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils attain higher standards in food, textiles and graphics than in resistant materials and electronics, because courses are structured and taught in a more systematic way, enabling pupils of all abilities to develop an understanding of design processes. Higher-attaining pupils can conduct simple research tasks, analyse the information and generate design ideas. For example, pupils can adapt Internet material for multi-cultural food projects. Textiles and graphics work is colourful and imaginative, and pupils take care with presentation. Higher-attaining pupils in graphics can discuss the social and cultural aspects of product 'branding'. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from structured course materials. Low-quality work in resistant materials and electronics reflects the disruption and lack of continuity caused by staffing difficulties. Pupils do not have a clear understanding of design processes, and folders lack individual research and care with presentation. Pupils work better in a practical situation. For example, Year 9 pupils in a resistant materials class worked in an organised way with tools and machinery to shape acrylic sheets to make clocks. Folder work, however, was not sufficiently detailed to support the production process. Pupils have very low attainment levels on entry to the school, so they are making good progress overall. Pupils' achievements are particularly good in food and textiles, but in resistant materials and electronics pupils are not achieving their potential.
114. Pupils' standards of work at the end of Year 11 are below average. Inspection findings reflect the same differences between subject areas highlighted by examination results. Some pupils are capable of high-quality work, as can be seen, for example, in the detailed and well-presented food technology folder of one higher-attaining pupil. Where pupils use ICT, their quality of work is improved; however, in general, ICT is not used enough. Pupils with special needs, and those with English as an additional language, are given good support. For example, two Year 11 pupils with limited English were able to produce similar graphic work to their peers, because of the practical nature of the task and good teacher help. GCSE resistant materials folders show a lack of clarity in design thinking. Design terminology is often confused, and 'research' mainly consists of theory notes from textbooks. Progress for most pupils is good, and they build on earlier achievements. Achievement for pupils in resistant materials and electronics is unsatisfactory.
115. Teaching is good overall. In just over half of the lessons observed, teaching was good, and in the remainder it was satisfactory. The best teaching provides a good structure, within which pupils can develop independent learning skills. Most pupils find this difficult, and need a strong framework to succeed. This framework was provided in one well-taught Year 11 food technology lesson, where good preparation, clear lesson objectives and positive management enabled pupils of all abilities to prepare cakes. One pupil with special needs was confident enough to give assistance to other pupils. Teachers support pupils' technical vocabulary well, but strategies for developing numeracy are not yet fully formed. The quality of teaching is directly related to pupils' quality of learning. Where teaching is only satisfactory, it does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills. Homework is generally used well, but in some cases is not accompanied by clear instructions to support learning effectively. In subject areas attaining higher standards, pupils' work is supported by thorough marking and constructive comments. Teachers' work is made more effective by good technician support.
116. Good teaching has created constructive relationships and a positive learning atmosphere in most lessons but, because many pupils have difficulty in consolidating the information, long-term learning is less secure. Pupils respond to good teaching with responsible behaviour. They enjoy

the work and generally co-operate well with each other and with teachers. The quality of learning is enriched by extra-curricular opportunities provided by teachers.

117. Leadership is good. The head of department has established a clear direction for development and a programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. A curricular audit has identified weaknesses, which are now being addressed. The effectiveness of management, however, has been reduced by difficult staffing circumstances. A number of issues highlighted in the last report have yet to be corrected, and these are having an adverse effect on standards and the balance of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been improved by the inclusion of graphics and GNVQ health and social care. Both subjects make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and ability to work independently. Data from good assessment procedures is not yet used precisely enough to identify under-achievement and take effective action. Accommodation is adequate for present curricular needs, but it is not appropriate for textiles to be taught in a food area.
118. Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements in standards and teaching in food technology, textiles and graphics.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement is good.
- Pupils do better in their drama examinations than in most of their other subjects.
- Drama makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 to 11.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are too variable.
- Setting arrangements are to the disadvantage of some pupils.
- There are insufficient links with English, both in the curriculum and in assessment.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation adversely affects standards.

119. Standards seen in Year 9 are below average. Pupils co-operate well in their groups. Higher-attaining pupils take on roles, for example of children in the playground, convincingly. They use gesture and facial expression to convey emotion. Lower-attaining pupils are reticent about performing and chatter instead of concentrating. Achievement is satisfactory.
120. Results in examinations for pupils in Year 11 are well below average. They went down in 2002, from previously below-average results, but pupils did better in drama than in most of their other subjects.
121. Standards of work in Year 11 seen during the inspection were average. Pupils had been well prepared for their practical examinations, and were able to work independently of the teacher, devising and extending performances. They used technical vocabulary accurately and understood dramatic theory, for example, the notion of minimalism; higher-attaining pupils achieved the single word, gesture and staging demanded by this technique. Lower-attaining pupils tend to become too detailed in their presentations. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11, including pupils with special educational needs, who join in well, including in school performances. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress, having the opportunity to perform in the regular school productions such as 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', and to visit the theatre.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but there is much variation. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, and they are satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, but some teaching here is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good, pupils co-operate with each other and

the teacher well, developing self-control, but where it is unsatisfactory, pupils are noisy and lack concentration. The teacher uses threats rather than praise, which does not create a harmonious atmosphere. The disturbance restricts the pace of the lesson and pupils do not make progress. Teaching pupils in groups set according to attainment has an adverse effect on standards, as pupils in lower-attaining groups lack role models to emulate. There is underuse of practical demonstration by the teacher to show pupils how to act and stimulate their interest. Lessons are well planned, developing from warm-up exercises, through group work, to performance and analysis. Drama makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, a Year 10 group explored the effects of bullying, both on the victim and on the perpetrators.

123. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. One of the two drama rooms is too small, with no natural light and insufficient ventilation, making it uncomfortable and adversely affecting standards. The two rooms are too far apart for effective communication. Pupils enter with muddy shoes, making the carpet dirty and unsuitable for sitting on.
124. The quality of leadership and management is good. The department is efficiently led. Systems of assessment are clear, both across Years 7 to 9 and across Years 10 to 11. Schemes of work are carefully planned to make sure that pupils progress systematically. Teaching is monitored, but not enough is done to ensure that good practice is disseminated through the department.
125. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Too little has been done to make the links with English recommended in the previous report.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 progress well and achieve above-average results in GCSE examinations.
- Teaching is good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers work well as a team and have professional attitudes.
- The management of pupils is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum levels is still not sharp enough.
- Planning for citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not as helpful as it should be.
- Higher-attaining pupils, although they are in separate sets, are not challenged sufficiently to ensure that as many as possible achieve GCSE passes at grades A* and A.

126. The results of teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2002 were below national averages. The girls achieved slightly better than the boys overall, and the gap between boys and girls is slightly larger than the national difference. The standard of work seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection was average. The reason for this difference is that some of the marking of assessments did not use National Curriculum levels as accurately as might have been possible with greater familiarity.
127. The results of GCSE examinations in 2002 were above national averages, and girls produced better results than boys, although this has not been the usual pattern. The proportion of higher grades is small, but this is not unexpected given the pupils' previous learning. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirmed these above-average grades. The GCSE results have been above average for the last three years.

128. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils have a good sense of place and can give good descriptions of areas they have studied. A Year 7 boy produced an excellent description of life in the Amazon rainforest. The higher-attaining pupils can locate their case studies, but the average- and lower-attaining pupils find it difficult to locate places and have a poorly developed knowledge of world locations. Their knowledge of Ordnance Survey maps is also limited. Pupils in the top set in Year 7 are not familiar with six-figure grid references, and only a minority are able to use contours. The higher-attaining pupils are aware of cause and effect and can apply this to the flooding in Bangladesh.
129. In Year 10, pupils produce good individual studies for their GCSE work. The studies of land use in Gateshead enable them to show their abilities in data collection and analysis. The majority produce good data analysis, but their interpretations are sometimes limited. They are better at description than explanation and evaluation. Many pupils distinguish landforms from processes, but some are not very clear about the distinction.
130. The achievement of pupils is good through Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils arrive with general levels of education well below average, and with mixed experience of geography. However, by the end of Year 9 they have made good progress, and most are working at standards in line with the national average. By the end of Year 11, those pupils who continue to study geography make very good progress, and most are just above the national average. Many perform better than their earlier results would predict. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, because subject teachers are dedicated and provide good individual support, aided by small group sizes in the lower-attaining sets. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress, because teachers modify work to match their needs, but this is not developed as far as it could be to further challenge these pupils.
131. Teaching is good, and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Teachers are good geographers, are up to date with the subject and convey their own interest and enthusiasm. A lesson with the lower-attaining set in Year 10 was a good example of the attitude of the teacher having a positive influence on learning. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching of basic skills is good, with sensible use of writing frames and key words, but there are still areas for improvement. There has not been a thorough audit of literacy, numeracy or ICT teaching to ensure that there is clear progression in the development of these skills in geography. Planning is good, and effective in raising standards. The schemes of work are well considered, and show expectations for pupils of different attainment. However, there are omissions in these schemes, for example insufficient specific attention to the teaching of basic skills and a lack of planning for citizenship teaching and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lesson planning is good, with clear learning objectives that are explained to pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11. These high expectations are seen in the good use of technical vocabulary and the use of examination-type questions to provide good preparation for pupils. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods, and this maintains the concentration and motivation of the majority of pupils for much of the time.
132. The management of pupils is very good and is a strong feature of the department. While setting pupils has many advantages, it can create potentially difficult lower-attaining groups. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils, and handle difficult situations professionally and with a great deal of sensitivity. They show respect for pupils and this is reciprocated, leading to good learning environments in all classrooms.
133. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear educational direction within the department, and a consistent approach to work. There is a young and enthusiastic team of well-qualified and professional geographers. The teamwork is evident, and there is a shared commitment to improve and an openness and willingness to share ideas and materials. The monitoring of the department is informal and the overall evaluation is at an early stage. The resources and accommodation are satisfactory, although many classrooms have poor ventilation and severely limited natural light. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The teaching of history is very good, with some excellent features, and leads to very good learning.
- History is very well planned and managed by the head of department.
- There is appropriate emphasis on literacy in all lessons.
- Pupils make good progress from low attainment at entry.
- Positive teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships encourage and support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in tests and examinations at both Year 9 and Year 11 is still well below national expectations.
- Pupils do not have sufficient access to ICT to enhance their learning.
- Pupils do not have textbooks to take home to help them review their work or research and prepare for the next lesson.

134. Standards of attainment on entry to the school of pupils who now are in Year 9 are well below average. Standards of attainment of the same pupils in teacher-assessed attainment tests in Year 9, with 38.4 per cent achieving level 5 and above, are well below the national levels. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work confirm that in Year 9, attainment in class work is below national expectations. All pupils are able to use a wide range of materials, including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames, card packs and a range of primary and secondary evidence. The average-attaining pupils develop a wide range of subject skills, including interpretation of evidence, prioritising of historical issues and the understanding of chronology. For example, in their studies of Nazi Germany, they can assume the role of journalists in order to pose a series of pertinent questions to 'Adolf Hitler', played by the teacher, about his domestic policy. Higher-attaining pupils analyse Hitler's answers fully and link them effectively to the manifestations of his policy, such as the attacks on the Jews and the building of concentration camps.
135. Pupils across all levels of attainment make good progress in their first three years in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, in line with other pupils, because their teachers know them well, use good differentiated materials, and provide effective guidance in lessons. However, pupils' overall progress is hampered by their weak oral and literacy skills. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of textbooks, which prevents pupils being able to take home books in order to read and review their work and research and prepare for their next lesson. Pupils also lack sufficient access to ICT to support their understanding of the subject and improve the presentation of work.
136. At GCSE, pupils' attainment is well below the national average. GCSE results in 2002 showed that, from a relatively small cohort of only thirteen entrants, 38.4 per cent attained grades A to C. There is currently no Year 11 group. However, there are two Year 10 groups, with a total of 40 pupils. Pupils' overall work is still below national levels. However, work in class is often at a standard at least in line with national expectations. Pupils develop their analytical skills effectively and achieve well in lessons. For example, Year 10 pupils studying the development of medicine not only traced the history of medicine from ancient times, but also correctly distinguished between important but relatively developmental contributions to medicine, such as the work done by William Harvey, and the crucial breakthrough turning points, such as the work of Vesalius in the field of dissection. Higher-attaining pupils ascribed appropriate importance to this latter contribution, even though it preceded the former by several centuries. Given their low level of attainment when they start the GCSE course, pupils are making make good progress.
137. Teaching is very good overall, and was excellent in one lesson. A similarly strong profile of teaching applies to all years. Teachers know their subject very well and have an obvious love for it, and this commitment is strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning.

Lessons are well planned, and teachers use a wide range of methods that support learning well. There is appropriate emphasis on literacy, and high profiles are set for reading and for the use of correct technical language. Homework is set regularly, and marking is well focused, supporting progress, learning and achievement.

138. Learning is very good. Very good relationships underpin learning, because pupils listen intently to each other and work well together in all years. In several lessons, pupils worked very effectively in mixed pairs, a method of organisation thoughtfully employed by the department to support the attainment of both girls and boys. Pupils mostly behave well, with high concentration and focus, although a small but not insignificant minority, mainly lower-attaining pupils, lack concentration skills and behave in a challenging way. Overall attainment, both across time and in examinations, is hampered by the lack of retention skills, weak examination techniques and a lack of wider and deeper reading.
139. Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of department has produced documents that are informed and informative, and which underpin much of the good work of the department, particularly, but not exclusively, in the area of assessment. She has a clear vision of establishing the subject in the minds of the pupils as a serious option at GCSE, and the resurgence of interest in history in Year 10 is a testimony to her early success. In this, she is supported effectively by the senior management of the school and by her colleagues, whom she, in turn, supports. The whole team shows a strong commitment to raising standards.
140. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last report, particularly in pupils' learning. This improvement is a direct result of the higher degree of challenge set to all pupils by very good teaching. The rising standards in classes seen indicate strong potential for increasing proportions of A* to C grades, if the current cohorts maintain their progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- There is much good and enthusiastic teaching by well-qualified staff.
- ICT resources and accommodation are good.
- There has been significant improvement in recent years, and there are plans in place to continue this improvement.
- Achievement over time is good in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 are below national expectations.
- There is no scheme of work or assessment in ICT capability for pupils who do not follow an examination course in Years 10 and 11.
- Cross-curricular provision of ICT is patchy and is not monitored rigorously enough.
- Statutory requirements are not being met in Years 10 and 11, as significant elements of the National Curriculum programme of study are not being taught.

141. The 2002 teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 show results below national averages. These levels are a considerable improvement on assessments in preceding years, and also represent significant achievement by pupils, given their low levels of attainment on entry to the school.
142. Results at GCSE are below national averages. About half the pupils in Year 11 are studying GNVQ ICT or GNVQ business studies, and early indications are that results should show a considerable improvement in performance. All the pupils in Year 10 will be entered early for GCSE business and communications systems, and the indications are that a higher percentage of passes at grade C will be attained. Results in ICT are in line with the school's averages.

143. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below national averages, but all pupils now follow a challenging course with a suitable time allocation over Years 7, 8 and 9. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress. Some pupils make poor progress, because of their poor attendance. Pupils use desk-top publishing and presentational software to communicate information, reaching appropriate levels of achievement. Most can successfully model financial information using spreadsheets. They can also manipulate graphical images from a variety of sources. Pupils are familiar with the Internet, usually making good use of the available material, but occasionally using the resources for inappropriate purposes. Achievement over time is good, given the very low levels of attainment on entry.
144. Standards in Year 11 are below national expectations. About half the pupils in Year 11 follow examination courses. The rest derive their ICT learning from the other subjects. Standards attained by the pupils in the GNVQ ICT groups in Year 11 are around national expectations. In an observed lesson, they demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of basic database design when they linked records for customers, suppliers and products. Their work is well presented and organised, but not all annotate their work to indicate a critical awareness of what they have achieved and what they can do to improve.
145. The cross-curricular provision of ICT is satisfactory overall. It is good or very good in some subjects where ICT is used effectively as a tool to aid learning, but this provision does not extend to all subjects, and there is no whole-school scheme of work or school-wide procedure to assess pupils' performance.
146. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, the requirements of the National Curriculum are met by the ICT course that they all follow, and the National Strategy for ICT has been introduced as a pilot scheme. However, half the pupils in Year 11 do not follow a dedicated ICT course, and their only chance of receiving their full entitlement is through cross-curricular ICT. Also, the courses followed by the pupils in Years 10 and 11 omit significant elements of the programme of study – they do not apply the concepts and techniques of using ICT to measure, record, respond to, control and automate events. The school fails to meet the statutory requirement in this area, as these topics are not taught in other subjects either.
147. Teaching of the ICT courses is good overall. The full-time teachers in the department have a good level of knowledge that underpins their work. Lesson planning is generally good. Lesson aims are clearly stated and displayed, and pupils are generally clear about what is expected of them. Pupils are given good-quality support material that helps them to become more independent, and are set targets for the completion of tasks. Teachers are firm with pupils who are sometimes difficult to motivate, and make sure that they are involved in lessons – a few isolated incidents of ill-discipline during the inspection were quickly and effectively dealt with. Specialist teachers use their good knowledge to encourage progress, working around classes to promote individual progress. The best teaching features energy and enthusiasm, giving pupils the clear message that ICT is well worth the effort. Setting of homework is not consistent; many pupils rarely have homework set.
148. The management arrangements for ICT are unsatisfactory. The legitimate leave of absence of the head of department and the abrupt departure of another key member of the department has created a difficult situation. There is very little departmental documentation, and short- and medium-term planning is left to individual teachers. Two very competent supply teachers and the dedication of the acting head of department have alleviated the problem. One highly capable technician provides essential support, keeping the extensive school-wide network of approximately 200 computers functioning fairly smoothly. Technical problems that arise are promptly dealt with, and only very occasionally are any pupils required to share a computer in a lesson. Each of the four ICT rooms is well equipped with a suite of networked computers, a video projector for demonstration purposes and scanning and printing facilities, although the absence of colour printing does detract from the final presentation of pupils' work. There is a clear Internet access policy that requires pupils and their parents to sign a responsible use agreement, and access rights are withdrawn in the unusual event of inappropriate use.

149. There is a Lifelong Learning Centre, funded jointly by the local authority and the further education sector, on the school site. It has excellent ICT facilities, which are regularly used by the school. Plans are in place to link the network in the centre to the school's curricular network, to facilitate the transfer of pupils' work, which at present is achieved using floppy discs. Pupils appreciate the adult learning environment that the centre provides, and respond accordingly.

150. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The curricular weakness in Years 7 to 9 identified in the last inspection report have mostly been rectified, but there are still serious curricular weaknesses in Years 10 and 11. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching, and resources have continued to improve. The programme of ICT training for teachers has considerably extended the capability of the whole staff to deliver ICT skills.

MODERN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is mostly good or very good.
- Lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 are mostly taught well in the small groups created for them.
- The e-mail contact with Spanish pupils is promising.

Areas for improvement

- Results at GCSE are not high enough.
- Teachers often use too much English in lessons.
- Activities in lessons do not do enough to encourage pupils to practise the foreign language and sustain consistent learning.
- There are no trips to France or contacts with French pupils.
- Schemes of work for French lack clarity and detail.

151. In Year 7, all pupils start either French or, in alternate years, Spanish. They continue to study that one language until Year 9. In Year 10, those who opt for a modern language continue with the language they have done already – this year it is Spanish. The system was different in the previous year, i.e. for current Year 11 pupils. The higher-attaining pupils had to continue with French, the language they had been studying for three years, as a core subject, and other pupils could not take a modern language.
152. Standards in Year 9 work and lessons, seen during the inspection, were well below average overall. Pupils' listening skills are better developed than their speaking and writing skills. Many pupils find it difficult to recall words they have come across previously, and they need continual support and repetition to make progress, particularly in reading skills. A minority of higher and average attainers develop some confidence in speaking, but most are very hesitant, because they do not have the amount of practice in speaking the foreign language that they need. In writing, most of the few higher-attaining pupils gain some understanding of using the past and future tense, but the writing of most pupils is limited to copy writing. The overall picture of attainment, including that of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, is that achievement is just satisfactory, given the well-below-average attainment of pupils in language-based subjects on entry to the school. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 confirm this picture of overall attainment.
153. Standards in Year 11 work and lessons, seen during the inspection, were well below average. In the small group of higher-attaining pupils who take modern languages, all but a few are reluctant to participate in even simple dialogues about themselves. With much guidance, and re-drafting of their work, pupils can write about, for example, themselves and their school with reasonable accuracy. A few manage to write about their experiences on past holidays, and can use both the past and future tense, although still with much teacher help. However, most pupils have very limited vocabularies, and need much explanation in reading, and repetition in listening activities. Most pupils just make satisfactory progress in lessons and pay attention, but over time they do not achieve as well as they should. The teacher reported that levels of interest and overall commitment to the subject were very low among current Year 11 pupils, because the subject was not an option for them. Current Year 10 pupils who have chosen to study Spanish show positive attitudes to the language and make better progress in lessons.
154. In 2002, GCSE results in Spanish were well below the national average. Girls performed better than boys but, overall, pupils performed worse in Spanish than in most of their other subjects. Over the past four years, results in both French and Spanish have been well below average, even though the 2002 results showed a significant improvement on the previous year.
155. Teaching is satisfactory overall. A few lessons had good or very good features, and teachers have recently given thought to developments in teaching inherent in National Strategy. However, many

pupils do not learn effectively enough, mainly because the teaching does not yet enable them to retain key words and phrases from lesson to lesson. Therefore, although teaching is generally adequate overall, there are important areas needing improvement. Teachers use too much English in lessons. Simple instructions and phrases for praise and encouragement are not in the foreign language, and teachers do not use enough intensive language practice. They do not choose enough activities such as video excerpts and language games with cards and the overhead projector, which would engage the pupils in practising the language they had just heard. Teachers do not give enough importance to assessing pupils' listening and speaking skills, and giving them immediate feedback on their performance, with rewards and praise during the lesson. On the other hand, good features of teaching in many lessons include: careful planning to cover most attainment targets, with the important exception of speaking; and good management of pupils, so that pupils listen well and do not interrupt the progress of others. Teachers generally use the lesson well, allowing time to state the objectives and, at the end of the lesson, to finish with a plenary session. Occasionally, teaching of the literacy skills of accuracy and good presentation is closely linked to general skills of good personal organisation and behaviour; this concentration is of enormous benefit to pupils in lower-attaining groups, including those with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9.

156. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall. The department is to some extent in transition, but despite some important initiatives, there are significant areas of weakness outstanding since the previous inspection. Overall, there has been inadequate improvement in teaching and learning. The department has identified the need to revise the schemes of work, but some written schemes of work lack clarity and detail. ICT work, the monitoring of teaching and exercise books, trips to France and contacts with French pupils are underdeveloped.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils sustain good achievement over their first three years at the school.
- There is already a good range of extra-curricular activities, and this is growing.

Areas for improvement

- Timetabling arrangements hinder the continuity and progression of pupils' learning.
- The management of the department is unsatisfactory.
- There is no GCSE music course.
- ICT provision is insufficient.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

157. The standard of pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is below average. However, as pupils almost always come into the school with a set of skills and knowledge well below average, this represents good achievement on their part over the three-year period. Pupils in Year 7 learned how to record sounds using symbols, and thus learned the rudiments of a graphic score. They composed a series of sounds to illustrate a video clip of a space shuttle take-off, and were excited by the effects they created. Pupils in Year 8 worked effectively together to achieve a rhythmic stomp in response to a video clip of a professional stomp troupe. Pupils in Year 9 were learning about the blues, and composed short pieces consisting of a call and a response – to illustrate the 'hollering' that is at the root of the blues.
158. Teaching is consistently good in the music department. The peripatetic tutors make an increasingly valuable contribution to the musical life of the school, as more pupils take up the opportunities that they offer. The strengths of the class teaching are: the insistence on good manners and the requirement that pupils work well and happily together; teachers' strong subject knowledge; and the spirit of enquiry strongly promoted by the teaching.

159. Pupils' learning is only satisfactory overall, even though the teaching is good. Pupils learn well in lessons with the peripatetic tutors, in the extra-curricular activities, and in lessons where there have not been significant gaps between their lessons. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and are comfortable in the department, but they often show a very short concentration span. Even where they are successful, such as in the composition of the call and response in the blues work, they do not readily seek to develop their work of their own accord. They do work well together when they are required to, although they do not always work at a smart pace.
160. The curriculum is planned well, with a good range of activities and areas to be covered in order to extend pupils' musical knowledge and skills. Despite this good planning, it is difficult to provide the continuity and progression in pupils' learning necessary to raise standards of attainment, as pupils in Year 8 currently have only one lesson per fortnight – a long time to remember newly-acquired skills – and half the groups in Years 7 and 9 have to remember their work over almost a fortnight, as their two lessons are very close together.
161. The extra-curricular work is increasingly effective, and offers a range of experiences, including choir, stomp group, keyboard club and theory club, which is specifically aimed at those pupils who may appreciate the opportunity of taking music at examination level. At Christmas, each house gave its own carol service, and the music department provided much-appreciated assistance to all of them.
162. The management of the music department is unsatisfactory, because there is no secure system to bring about the raising of standards in the subject. As a result of this situation, there has been little improvement since the last inspection. Standards have dropped slightly since then; there is no GCSE course; there is very little monitoring and evaluation of the department's work; there is still insufficient IT provision; the accommodation has lost three of its four practice rooms; there is still no soundproofing of any area within the department; there has not yet been a risk assessment with regard to the cables and wires for the electronic keyboards, though this was an alert on the last report; the timetabling arrangements seriously prejudice pupils' learning and attainment; and there are inadequate arrangements for the professional development of the department and its personnel.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good; management of pupils and lesson planning are very good.
- The quality of learning is good.
- Behaviour and relationships are good.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment at the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Attainment in GCSE examinations is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership of the department is not sufficiently effective.
- Medium- and longer-term development planning is inadequate.
- The allocation of available time to units of work is insufficient.
- Very limited use is made of level descriptions to raise standards.

163. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average overall; they are average in dance and below average in gymnastics. In games, standards are average in football; in netball and badminton they are well below average. Stroke production is well below average in badminton, and technique is poor. In netball, passing, catching and shooting skills are weak. In games generally, a small proportion of pupils show inventiveness, flair or the ability to think ahead, anticipate the responses of other players and use space effectively. Pupils have a limited understanding of tactics,

positional play and principles of play. On entry to the school, attainment is well below average overall, although a small number of pupils achieve well, most notably in games, and especially in football. Basic techniques are improving slowly as a result of good teaching, the use of task cards and the impact of different teaching styles, which are helping pupils to plan, observe, compare and evaluate their movement and skills that at present lack fluency and versatility.

164. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average overall. In 'core' physical education lessons, pupils work hard and achieve average standards in games and fitness work. In football, almost all boys can select and combine technique, skills and ideas and apply them consistently, showing good control and fluency in small-sided games. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of fitness and health are sound and are relative strengths, because the importance of preparation for exercise and the effects and benefits of physical activity are stressed by all teachers. Warming up and stretching exercises are good features of all lessons; on occasions, pupils manage their own warming up routines. A small proportion of pupils have a good understanding of muscle groups.
165. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in GCSE examinations has been below average in each of the last three years. In 2002, attainment was well below the national average; a very low percentage of pupils achieved A* to C grades, and the number of pupils achieving the higher A and B grades was very low indeed. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A* to G grades in 2002 was marginally higher than the national average. Inspection evidence and recent test results indicate that success rates at A* to C level will be higher in 2003. In practical work for GCSE, standards in trampolining by girls are well above average, and in table tennis both boys and girls achieve at the expected level. In football, the attainment of boys is average, but in badminton, standards fall below that level because pupils are unable to modify and refine skills and techniques and draw on knowledge of tactics to improve performance. In practical GCSE lessons, girls achieve higher standards than boys. In GCSE theory work, pupils use appropriate and well-prepared worksheets. The volume of written work is satisfactory. Files contain mainly short pieces of work, and extended writing is not well developed by most pupils. Diagrams are good; they are usually neatly labelled and promote learning. Presentation of work varies, but overall it is unsatisfactory. The work of lower-attaining pupils is often incomplete and careless. Writing is legible. Accuracy varies, but the spelling and grammar of higher-attaining pupils is sound. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of such topics as health and fitness, the muscular system, the respiratory system, somatotypes, training methods and the positive and negative influence of the media on sport. The majority of pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the technical language used in sport.
166. Teaching is good across all years. Teachers are enthusiastic and work hard to enthuse their pupils, who respond well. A strength is teachers' lesson planning, which is detailed in terms of structure and timing and identifies key questions and important teaching points. Pupils are very well managed and relationships are good. Pupils are attentive on the whole, although some pupils have a low span of concentration. Teachers involve pupils in an understanding of lesson content and objectives; they describe intended learning outcomes, review progress and check targets for improvement. Clear explanations, supported by effective demonstrations and clarity of questioning, have positive effects on learning. Pupils are required to evaluate their work, and more able pupils observe and assess their work well. Lower-attaining pupils rely on teacher-led evaluation, which helps them to learn more effectively. There is insufficient practice of simple techniques for lower-attaining pupils, and not enough use is made of sustained time-limited skills drills performed at speed.
167. Relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils are good. Pupils respond well to the praise and encouragement that are used to good effect by all teachers. As a result of effective teaching and maximum participation by all pupils, learning is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils make good progress in improving their learning skills because their behaviour is good, they listen attentively in most lessons, observe the work of others and evaluate outcomes. They also co-operate well together in pairs and larger groups. In a Year 8 dance lesson, pupils made good progress in improving the quality of their technique, through practising steps, jumps, turns, balances and gesture. Most were able to replicate their partners' actions in a movement sequence to music, showing fluency

and good timing. Many of the pupils in this lesson shared ideas and developed their thinking as a result of the effective teaching, which enabled pupils to observe and make suggestions for improvement. Pupils responded well by developing imaginative and creative dance. In a Year 11 football lesson, pupils worked hard in small-group practices to improve their heading and ball-control skills. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons, and make good progress at both key stages.

168. The quality of leadership and management has been unsatisfactory, although the current arrangements have brought about short-term improvements. The absence of the head of department has created difficulties. The senior management team has acted decisively in making interim arrangements, and organisation since January 2003 has enabled departmental routines and procedures to run smoothly and effectively. While individual lesson planning is very good in its attention to structure and detail, departmental documentation in respect of policy and longer-term planning has omissions and shortcomings. The allocation of time to different units of work is not precise. Units of work are too short to make provision for the effective development of technique, skills, principles of play and tactical understanding, especially for lower-attaining pupils. Development planning gives very little indication of strategies and initiatives designed to raise attainment in 'core' physical education lessons and GCSE examinations. Policies designed to support pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are sketchy, and there are no policies for identifying the subject's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are no departmental arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. The previous report expressed concerns about the structure of units of work, assessment arrangements in respect of continuity and progression, and greater use of level descriptions. Teachers know and understand the level descriptions; however, there is no coherent policy designed to use level descriptions to raise standards of attainment and improve further the present good standards of teaching and learning.
169. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. There have been some improvements in provision since the previous inspection, and teaching and learning are good overall. However, standards in Years 7 to 9 have fallen, while standards in Years 10 and 11 remain at an average level.
170. Approximately one fifth of pupils take part in at least one of the 15 extra-curricular activities in physical education, and these experiences contribute to raising standards of attainment.
171. Accommodation is good and resources for learning are very good. Both have a positive effect on standards, teaching and learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress from a very low level of attainment at entry to the school in Year 7.
- Very good teaching by specialist staff leads to very good learning.
- Leadership and management of the department is good.
- The subject makes a very effective contribution to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' attainment in the subject is still well below national norms.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning.
- The lack of textbooks prevents pupils from reading, researching and preparing for the next lesson.

172. Results of teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 are well below the average in similar schools. Standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 9 in their class work and in lessons seen are below those found on average in similar schools. At the end of this stage of

their education, lower-attaining pupils know some of the central beliefs and practices of Christianity, and those of other major world religions. Higher-attaining pupils use the appropriate technical religious language to show how some features of religions underpin ritual and practice. For example, in studies of Sikhism, the higher-attaining pupils effectively and correctly use words such as 'nam simran' when describing the practices used by Sikhs to achieve that state of mind necessary to find true peace and harmony. Boys are often quicker to respond in oral work than girls, although the written work of girls demonstrates more concern for accuracy and neatness of presentation. Generally, however, pupils' attainment across time is affected by their poor levels of oracy and literacy and their lack of concentration skills and retention techniques; consequently, they attain below the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Nevertheless, these standards are higher than might be expected from the pupils, based on their attainment at entry to the school at Year 7, which was far below national averages.

173. Results for the small cohort of pupils who undertake the full GCSE long course are 100 per cent A* to C. However, the small numbers involved invalidate national comparisons. In the short course, studied by all other pupils in Years 10 and 11, attainment, at 34 per cent A* to C, was well below national expectations. Attainment in work seen during the inspection is below national averages overall, although in class attainment is sometimes in line with national averages. Most pupils account effectively and accurately for different religious practices and lifestyles as portrayed in their modern cultural context, and they understand ways in which a religious theme has been dealt with in the media. For example, Year 11 pupils studied the film 'City of Angels' and examined the key Christian beliefs depicted in the film, such as life after death, the existence of angels and the existence of God. Lower-attaining pupils describe effectively how these themes are dealt with in the film. The higher-attaining pupils analyse and give reasons for techniques adopted in the film to deal with the theme, and they evaluate the success of the film in achieving its target. These pupils attain at least in line with national averages, yet as a result of weak retention skills and examination techniques, they lack confidence when analysing and evaluating acts of religious expression, and this leads to attainment falling well below expected levels.
174. However, given that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study the short course, and given their prior attainment at entry, the overall progress they make is good. Indeed, progress for pupils is good at all stages between Years 7 and 11. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well, because their teachers know them and provide appropriate work for them. Classes do not benefit from the deployment of support staff.
175. Teaching is very good overall, and occasionally excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are very well planned and prepared, and lead to very good learning. In the best lessons, teachers' planning is augmented by the use of a range of teaching resources, which stimulate the pupils and encourages them to think and learn independently. In such lessons, there is a good level of inclusion, particularly of the lower-attaining pupils. However, insufficient attention is paid to the identification and development of the gifted and talented pupils. The response of the vast majority of pupils is good. Pupils show application to their work, concentrating on the task in hand. They show pride in their work, although some pupils' presentation could be improved.
176. For the first three years of school, the religious education curriculum is planned effectively. It promotes progression and follows the syllabus that has been agreed by all schools in the borough. The syllabus meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. In Years 10 and 11, the allocation of time for the teaching of religious education is sufficient to allow coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. The department is well staffed with specialist teachers. Their knowledge and expertise allows the department to meet the requirements of the syllabuses and the needs of pupils.
177. Religious education contributes very effectively to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, by providing pupils with knowledge and insight into concepts of right and wrong and asking them to apply those concepts to a range of fundamental issues that

confront them in real life. There is also some study of other faiths, which teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths.

178. There are few artefacts, nor do pupils have sufficient access ICT to enhance their learning. There are too few textbooks in Years 7 to 9 for pupils to be able to take them home to use for revision and preparation for their next lesson. These shortcomings in resources have an adverse effect on pupils' attainment. Moreover, the current accommodation of the department does not allow for sufficient storage and is not conducive to learning.

179. Leadership and management of the department are good. The department is managed ably and effectively by the head of department, under whose leadership the department has produced a range of strategic planning documents, which are informed and informative and support all aspects of the department's provision. The head of department is committed to raising standards at all stages. In this, she is supported by the senior management team and by her colleagues in the department, whom she, in turn, supports.
180. The department has built on the successes reported in the last inspection and has continued to make good improvement.