

INSPECTION REPORT

BOLDON SCHOOL

Boldon Colliery

Tyne & Wear

LEA area: South Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108730

Headteacher: Mr Colin Whitfield

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 28th to 31st October 2002

Inspection number: 249141

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Boldon School
New Road
Boldon Colliery
Tyne and Wear

Postcode: NE35 9DZ

Telephone number: 0191 5362176

Fax number: 0191 5374073

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Councillor Miss Joanne Bell

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3268	George Knights	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are students taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
27416	Tom Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Science	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
11969	John Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	
27416	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	Geography	
21971	John Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education	
15396	Ron Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music	
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Art and design	
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

TWA INSPECTIONS LTD
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	33

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Boldon School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years of age. The school is located on the southern boundary of South Tyneside, about 10 miles south-east of Newcastle. Students generally live quite close to the school, although a small but significant number come from beyond the natural catchment area. Around four-fifths of the pupils come from four primary schools in the neighbourhood, the remaining pupils coming from around 20 other schools. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is broadly average. There are 1032 pupils on roll, making the school about the same size as other secondary schools nationally. All places in the school are filled. The school is situated in a former mining area and many pupils come from homes with relatively low socio-economic circumstances. Unemployment in the area is above the national average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. Roughly 5 per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, though very few of these have English as an additional language. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is below the national average, as is the number with Statements of Special Educational Need. Around three-quarters of pupils remain in full-time education at the end of Year 11, transferring either to sixth forms or further education colleges.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Boldon School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some strengths, but also some important areas requiring further development. Standards are improving as a result of consistently good teaching. While leadership and management in the school are satisfactory, the lack of a long-term strategic plan for improvement or rigorous evaluation arrangements mean that some key aspects of leadership and management are inadequate. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Consistently good teaching and learning help pupils achieve well.
- It has maintained a steady improvement in standards in public tests and examinations.
- It provides a good programme of personal, social and health education, which includes very good careers education and guidance.
- Pupils are encouraged to adopt positive attitudes to their work and to form good relationships.
- It provides a good programme of activities for pupils to take part in outside lessons.

What could be improved

- Long-term strategic planning, involving governors and all members of staff in helping shape the future direction for the school.
- The programme of rigorous evaluation of all aspects of the school's work.
- Arrangements for behaviour management in the school.
- The quality of marking and assessment across the school.
- Arrangements to enable all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to study a course in religious education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have improved steadily throughout the school for the past five years. Teaching and learning are good in a higher proportion of lessons than they were at the time of the previous inspection. The school has made satisfactory progress in dealing with the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. Good progress has been made in improving the number of pupils gaining A grades in GCSE examinations. Resource levels in departments have improved and are now adequate, and the timetable has been reviewed to provide a framework which no longer compromises teaching quality. Despite the difficulties posed by the poor quality of the accommodation, satisfactory progress has been made in dealing with the health and safety matters identified by the previous inspection team. Although there has been a small increase in the specialist staffing for work with pupils with special educational needs, there is still a shortage of learning support assistants to help work with these pupils. The initial success in producing a long-term plan for strategic development was not maintained and long-term planning remains a key priority for the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds, based on average point scores in national tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Key Stage 3 tests	C	C	B	A	
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	n/a	

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

Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen at a faster rate than nationally in the years to 2001 and this improvement was maintained in 2002. In national tests, results in English were well above the national average, while those in mathematics and science were broadly average. The results in all three subjects were well above the average for similar schools. GCSE results in 2002 were broadly average and were higher than in the previous year. They were also close to the average for similar schools. Results at this level have been improving at a faster rate than nationally for the past five years. Standards of literacy and numeracy in English and mathematics are good, but are not well developed in other subject contexts. The school met its targets for test results at the end of Year 9 in 2002, but narrowly failed to meet its targets for GCSE results. Targets for coming years are challenging but achievable. Throughout the school, pupils are achieving well because teachers provide interesting lessons and pupils want to learn.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in lessons, where they are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is satisfactory overall, though a small number of pupils find it difficult to maintain good standards of behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	These are good. Relationships, both among pupils and with teachers, are positive and are an important feature in making most lessons successful. Pupils' personal development is good.
Attendance	This is close to the national average.

The school's attempts to manage the small number who have difficulty in behaving well require modification, with more positive reinforcement of good behaviour. Pupils are confident that the small amount of oppressive behaviour which occurs in school is dealt with very effectively and they feel safe when at school. Pupils are encouraged to support others and their commitment to raising money for charity is commendable. The school's arrangements for authorising absence are inadequate and mask a problem in attendance by a small number of pupils.

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 is good overall, with very good or excellent teaching occurring in almost a third of lessons. There is some unsatisfactory or poor teaching in the school and too great a variation in teaching quality to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Teaching is good in English and mathematics and is very good in science throughout the school. In English and mathematics, careful attention is given to helping pupils develop good literacy and numeracy skills. This work is not well supported in other subjects, where the application of these skills is not well developed. Similarly, teachers in other subjects are not supporting the application of pupils' computer skills, which they are satisfactorily

taught in information and communication technology lessons. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils. This applies both to what they can achieve and to their attitudes and behaviour. In too many lessons, however, the behaviour of a small number of pupils slows the pace of learning. Lesson planning is good, with most teachers presenting stimulating and interesting lessons. As a result, pupils work hard and achieve well. Teachers generally know pupils' needs and this is especially true of those who have special educational needs. They work hard to support these pupils, but there are too few learning support assistants, which makes it particularly difficult to ensure that these pupils make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is satisfactory. Some good steps have been taken to provide courses which meet the needs of older pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is satisfactory. Teachers work hard to provide for the needs of these pupils, but a shortage of learning support assistants limits what can be provided.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has very few of these pupils. Provision for their needs is satisfactory and is made on an individual basis.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good overall. It is particularly effective in promoting good moral and social development, and the contribution to pupils' multi-cultural awareness also has some good features. Neither in the curriculum nor in assemblies is close attention paid to developing pupils' spiritual awareness and this aspect is only satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for pupils' general development. There are significant weaknesses in its arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress, mainly because assessment procedures are not sufficiently well developed.

The school's work with parents is satisfactory. Parents are given adequate information about the general life and work of the school. Reports and meetings to outline pupils' progress are satisfactory, but not well timed during the school year. The involvement of parents in recent target setting days for pupils in Years 9 and 10 is a good initiative in helping engage parents in their children's education. The provision of a work-related learning programme for some pupils, recently introduced into Year 10, enhances the range of courses available and helps ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. The school does not provide for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to follow a course in religious education that meets statutory requirements. Arrangements for the use of a large amount of assessment data available on each child are not effective in guiding improvement in performance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	While both leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, there are some weaknesses arising from a lack of long-term strategic planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors do not adequately fulfil their responsibilities, either in helping to shape the direction in which the school is moving or in ensuring that pupils receive their entitlement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is unsatisfactory. Although arrangements are in place to monitor what is happening, the school does not focus on an evaluation of the impact of its actions on provision and quality.
The strategic use of resources	Adequate overall, though not enough attention is paid to ensuring that decisions about how resources are used are evaluated.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis because of efficient short-term management. Because there is no long-term strategic plan for improvement, development in the school is slow. This slow development restricts the efficiency with which resources are used. The school has adequate teaching staff, but far too few learning support assistants to provide help for pupils who are in need of additional support. Resources are generally adequate, though the number of books in the library and access to computers in subject departments are both unsatisfactory. Accommodation is inadequate and its poor condition poses significant constraints on what is possible. The lack of evaluation means that the school does not adequately apply the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Before the inspection, 24 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector. Questionnaires were returned by 74 parents (7 per cent) and additional comments were appended to around 20 of them.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards being achieved in the school. • Good teaching encourages pupils to work hard and helps them make good progress. • They are confident to approach the school if they have a concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the school works closely with them. • The information which parents receive on the progress their children are making. • Arrangements for giving homework to pupils. • Standards of behaviour in the school.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views about the school. The good teaching results in successful learning and good progress. Arrangements for dealing with parental questions or concerns are generally good, though occasionally there is some inconsistency between teachers in the speed of their response to messages. Inspectors agree that the school could do more to work closely with parents and to provide them with more useful information about how well their children are doing. Inspectors believe that arrangements for homework are satisfactory, but again there is some inconsistency which leads to confusion for pupils and their parents. Inspectors believe that standards of behaviour in the school are satisfactory overall, though acknowledge that the behaviour of a small number of pupils is not well managed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. All abilities are represented in each year group in the school. Pupils make good progress during their first three years in school and gain results in national tests when they are 14 which are above the national average. Satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to gain results in their GCSE examinations which are close to the national average.
- 2 Results in national tests for 14 year olds in 2002 were above the national average. Results were well above the national average in English and were close to the average in mathematics and science. These results continue a pattern of steady improvement in these tests over the past few years, which is the outcome of better teaching quality in the school. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in these tests. When compared with similar schools¹, results in 2002 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Full details of test results are given in Table 1. The school met its targets for results in national tests in 2002 and has set challenging targets for the coming year.
- 3 In other subjects, attainment by the end of Year 9 is close to the national average in most subjects. It is above average in physical education and well above average in design and technology. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in design and technology. Attainment in information and communication technology lessons is broadly average, but pupils' abilities to apply their information and communication technology knowledge and skills in other subjects are not well developed and are thus below average.

Table 1: Key Stage 3 (Year 9) results 2002

Subject	Boys	Girls	Total	Standards compared to similar schools 2002 are	Recent school trends
English	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average	Improving
Mathematics	Average	Average	Average	Well above average	Improving
Science	Average	Average	Average	Well above average	Improving
All core subjects	Average	Average	Above average	Well above average	Improving

- 4 The reasons for improving standards and results at the end of Year 9 are evident in most classrooms. Pupils are keen to learn and teachers seek to make lessons stimulating and enjoyable. As a result, pupils generally achieve well in most subjects. Standards in lessons seen in Year 9 are above average in English, science, design and technology and physical education and are average in all other subjects. Pupils achieve well in most subjects, though achievement is only satisfactory in ICT, history, geography and religious education lessons.
- 5 Those pupils who completed their GCSE courses in 2001 and 2002 made satisfactory progress, building on their average performance in national tests and assessments when they were 14 years old. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were broadly average and were above average when compared with similar schools. Boys did less well than girls, but at a similar rate to that nationally, in 2001, but in 2002 there was little difference between the results of boys and girls. The number of

¹ Similar school comparisons are made with schools having a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

pupils leaving the school with five or more grades G or better was well above both national and similar school averages. This represents good work to support less able pupils. Improved results in GCSE examinations in 2002 maintained an overall improvement in results at a faster rate than nationally since 1997. Results in GCSE examinations are better than at the time of the previous inspection. In 2002 the numbers of pupils gaining at last a C grade were above average in physical education, business studies and drama. They were close to the national average in most other subjects, though significantly below average in English language, mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, history and French.

- 6 The school sets itself targets for performance in GCSE examinations that are challenging but achievable. It has, however, narrowly failed to meet its targets for the past three years. This is because it failed to achieve the anticipated numbers of pupils gaining five or more grades C or better. It has successfully met its targets for lower grades. Targets for the coming years show a commitment to continuing to raise standards. The results for 2002 are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Year 2002 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results

	2002			Standards compared to all schools 2002 are	Standards compared to similar schools 2002 are	Recent school trends
	Boys	Girls	Total			
Percentage 5+ A*-C grades or GNVQ equivalent	48	48	48	Average	Above average	Improving rapidly
Percentage 5+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent	97	94	96	Well above average	Well above average	Steady
Percentage 1+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent	99	98	99	Well above average	Well above average	Improving
Average total GCSE points score per pupil	33.3	35.4	34.4	Average	Above average	Improving rapidly

- 7 Results in both English language and literature in 2002 were well below the national average, but represented a significant improvement on the previous year, especially amongst boys. In mathematics, results were below average in 2002, but, as in English, results were better than in the previous year. Science results were broadly average in 2002, also showing an improvement on results in 2001. Results for other subjects in 2002 are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Year 2002 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results by subject (percent A* to C grades)

Subject	School			National			Recent school trends
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
English language	42	51	46	52	67	60	Improving
English literature	56	64	60	57	72	65	Improving
Mathematics	45	42	43	52	53	52	Improving
Science (combined)	54	49	51	50	53	52	Improving
Information technology	26	26	26	54	63	58	Improving
Art and design	57	80	68	55	76	67	Steady
DT – Electronic products	50	100	52				Improving
DT – Food technology	33	62	57				
DT - Graphics	15	67	43				
DT – Resistant materials	60	83	67				
Design and technology				45	61	53	
Geography	32	47	40	57	63	60	Improving
History	21	53	36	59	65	62	Improving
MFL French	21	35	29	44	58	52	Improving
MFL German	41	70	56	49	63	56	Improving
Music	71	73	72	66	74	70	Steady
PE or sports studies	50	96	65	54	57	55	Improving

Statistics	100	100	100				
Business studies	85	72	80	53	58	55	
Drama	100	100	100	62	76	71	

N.B. Gaps in tables indicate that there were too few candidates to make reliable comparisons.

- 8 Pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are working in their lessons at average levels and are achieving well. Standards in lessons are above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, art and design and physical education and are average in all other subjects except geography and religious education, where they are below average. Only in religious education are pupils not achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.
- 9 Throughout the school, standards of literacy are satisfactory. The English department makes a valuable contribution to the development of literacy across the curriculum and, as a result, standards are good. In particular, good steps have been taken to help those pupils who arrive in the school with below average standards in English to make rapid progress. The general standard of numeracy in the school is broadly average and pupils use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils, for instance, present data in a variety of graphical forms in science and geography lessons.
- 10 Throughout the school, attention is paid to the needs of all pupils. Those who are gifted and talented make good progress as a result of the support they are being given, both in lessons and in additional activities. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects except design and technology and information and communication technology, where their progress is satisfactory, and in religious education where because they have insufficient time it is unsatisfactory. Where these pupils make good progress it is because teachers take careful account of their particular needs, which are made known to them by the school's special educational needs co-ordinator. Work is modified to meet these needs. The good efforts of teachers are somewhat compromised by the shortage of learning support assistants which thus slows these pupils' progress. The school has only a very small number of pupils with English as an additional language. While there is no monitoring of the progress of these pupils, their needs are dealt with adequately on an individual basis and they make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 11 Pupils' attitudes to the school are good and they enjoy attending. Relationships, both among pupils and between pupils and teachers, are supportive and friendly. This helps to create an atmosphere where pupils are learning effectively. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, with the majority of pupils behaving well. A small minority, however, find it difficult to maintain good standards of behaviour. The positive picture of attitudes, relationships and behaviour seen during the previous inspection has been successfully maintained.
- 12 Pupils display a keen enthusiasm for lessons and parents indicate that their children like attending school. Pupils are willing participants in all aspects of school life. They are confident in expressing their opinions or volunteering answers. Positive attitudes were clearly displayed in a Year 8 religious education lesson exploring how different religious groups view the environment. The expert way the teacher allowed pupils to summarise views from a Hindu, Jewish and Christian perspective, and the way they were challenged to think for themselves, helped to arouse their curiosity and interest. Because pupils were lively and thoughtful, they started a discussion about genetic engineering, which the teacher sensibly and sensitively allowed to continue.

- 13 Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. In most lessons, the behaviour is good and pupils, therefore, learn effectively. Occasionally, a small number of pupils struggle to listen carefully to teachers all the time and once distracted will readily chat to their neighbours, disrupting the otherwise good progress of lessons. Pupils are mostly courteous, trustworthy and respectful. There is some litter and vandalism, but the site is very open, and the poor state of the buildings means there is little to stimulate pupils' pride in their surroundings. Pupils acknowledge that bullying and oppressive behaviour occur, but feel it is handled well by staff. They trust that teachers will listen to them and take action to overcome bullying. Inspectors agree that this is the case.
- 14 The number of pupils temporarily excluded is high compared with other schools nationally, though similar to numbers in other schools in the area. There has been a significant rise in temporary exclusions since the previous inspection. The school does take in a number of pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools. Many of these pupils arrive with a range of social issues affecting their lives, including significant behaviour and attendance problems.
- 15 Relationships within the school are good and pupils make significant progress in developing their social skills. They contribute enthusiastically to the life of the school, especially in the areas of music, drama and sport, where a good number are regular participants. Prefects accept their responsibilities with pride and dedication. Older pupils regularly help younger ones in, for instance, paired reading sessions. Pupils do an impressive amount of work for charity. Recently, 300 videos were collected for a children's hospital and, during the inspection week, pupils were often seen bringing in decorated shoeboxes to be sent abroad for Christmas. They have made a good contribution to the local community by planting trees in the new Great North Forest.
- 16 Pupils' attendance is close to the national average. It has remained stable since the previous inspection. A small number of pupils, mostly in Year 11, have transferred from other schools late in their career, bringing with them a history of poor attendance. These pupils contribute disproportionately to the school's overall absence numbers. One older pupil on the school's role has, for instance, only been present for one day. Currently, the educational welfare officer is trying to provide alternative provision for these pupils. The unauthorised absence figure is artificially low as there are some instances when the school authorises absence when parents do not provide genuine reasons for their child not being at school. Punctuality to school and to lessons is satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 17 The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. Teaching is very good or excellent in almost a third of lessons and is good or better in almost three quarters of lessons. This represents an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. There remains, however, too much variation in the overall quality of teaching across the school. While teaching is occasionally excellent, it is also unsatisfactory or poor in a small but significant number of lessons.
- 18 Teaching is very good in science for pupils of all ages. It is good in all other subjects except information and communication technology and history for pupils in all year groups and in geography for older pupils. In these three subjects, teaching is satisfactory. Where teaching is only satisfactory it is because lessons lack sufficient interest and stimulation to engage pupils well. As a result, levels of concentration are lower and pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to take responsibility for aspects of their learning.

- 19 Teachers generally know their subjects well and are thus able to present topics in ways that interest pupils. In the lessons where this is the case, pupils are actively involved in their learning, showing enthusiasm and concentrating well. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics and science. Teachers plan carefully and, particularly in lessons for pupils in their first three years in school, share their intentions for the lesson with pupils. In the best lessons, teachers then use these objectives to encourage pupils to identify, as the lesson develops, how successful they have been in their learning. This is not yet, however, a characteristic of all lessons. Teachers generally have good expectations of what pupils will achieve and this results in work being well matched to the needs of individuals. This is particularly well illustrated in music and science and in some lessons in mathematics. Where teachers' expectations are high, pupils respond by working hard and really trying to meet the challenges that teachers pose. As a result, these pupils make good or very good advances in their learning.
- 20 Generally teachers manage pupils well, maintaining good order by providing interesting and stimulating lessons. In a small number of lessons this is not the case. A small number of teachers fail to recognise that a key factor in encouraging pupils to behave well and to concentrate is to teach lessons that hold their interest. Instead, they spend too much time attempting to manage the very small number of pupils who find difficulty paying consistent attention to their work. This sometimes slows the learning of other pupils in the class who consistently behave well.
- 21 The main weakness in teaching is the limited use that teachers make of assessment to support learning. This is partly because they have been given too little training in how to undertake this form of assessment. As a result, pupils in most subjects do not have a sufficiently good understanding of how well they are doing, nor what they need to do to improve. The marking of pupils' books is inconsistent, both within and between subjects, and far too rarely do teachers provide written guidance to pupils about their work and progress. In almost all subjects, pupils do not know the level at which they are working. The exception to this is in science, where teachers use assessment well to support both their planning and pupils' learning. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of the progress they are making in learning science and this is helping them achieve well.
- 22 The teaching of literacy is good in English and has improved since the school belatedly started to embrace some aspects of the English strand of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Similarly the teaching of numeracy skills is well developed in mathematics lessons. The attention given to the development of numeracy and literacy skills in other subjects is, however, unsatisfactory. This is because the school does not adequately ensure that teachers in all subjects fulfil their responsibilities to reinforce and apply the basic skills which have been learned in mathematics and English. Training has been provided for all staff but more development work is necessary for the teaching of numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum to be successful. All pupils study a course in information and communication technology and the teaching of this course successfully helps pupils acquire a good range of skills in using computers. These skills are very rarely, however, applied in other subjects and thus pupils do not gain a clear understanding of the scope and range of computer applications. The exception here is in English, where pupils apply their computer skills well, particularly in word processing.
- 23 Generally, teachers are aware of the abilities and needs of their pupils. This is particularly the case for those pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs. Teachers are given clear information about the particular areas

where these pupils need help and, generally, work is modified well to help these pupils make good progress. However, grouping arrangements are such that these pupils are frequently taught in inappropriately large classes. This is compounded by the fact that the school employs far too few learning support assistants to give the necessary individual support to these pupils. Thus, in a small minority of cases, these pupils make slower progress than they could, despite the hard work of the teachers involved. The school has a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Teachers know these pupils well and modify work in ways that help them make good progress.

- 24 The wide variation in overall quality of teaching and learning is a consequence of the lack of a rigorous programme of evaluation of what happens in classrooms. The school has established a programme of self-review, which involves teachers in departments observing one another teach. Senior members of staff do not rigorously monitor this programme, however, and the criteria for assessing quality are not clearly defined. As a result, teachers are not provided with the clear guidance they need on how to improve. The very good teaching which does exist in the school is not sufficiently analysed to enable those qualities which make it successful to be shared with other teachers in order to help them teach better.

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

- 25 The curriculum meets requirements for pupils in the first three years in the school. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, together with a course in religious education. Those pupils who are good at languages can study a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9. Information and communication technology is taught as a separate subject and this ensures that pupils build up a good range of computer skills. However, information and communication technology skills are not well applied in most other subjects, mainly because teachers have not built computer applications into their courses. This is a weakness in the curriculum for these pupils.
- 26 A start has been made in the school to developing ideas from the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Satisfactory progress has been made in English and mathematics to introduce some of the methods advocated and this has helped ensure that literacy and numeracy standards in English and mathematics are satisfactory. Progress on developing coherent approaches to improving pupils' numeracy and literacy skills in other subjects has also been slow. The school has recently appointed staff with responsibility for introducing other aspects of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Whole school training has been held to guide teachers in how to incorporate the development of literacy and numeracy into other subjects and a working party has been formed to promote numeracy and literacy across all subjects. However, there are no whole school policies in place for developing numeracy and literacy and the development of these skills is not written into schemes of work.
- 27 For pupils in Years 10 and 11 some flexibility is provided in the subjects that pupils can study. The school is, however, careful to ensure that pupils select a broad range of courses which will prepare them well for the next stage of their education. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with a range of other courses, including a GNVQ course in health and social care. The main weakness in the curriculum for older pupils is the lack of a course in religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 that meets statutory requirements. Curricular provision in the school is regularly reviewed. Currently, the school is reconsidering what it offers to pupils in the light of national guidelines for the curriculum for pupils

aged 14 to 19 years. The school successfully provides a GCSE course in physical education and is planning to seek sports college status in the future.

- 28 All courses that the school provides are available to all pupils. The school has recognised the need to provide a course for some older pupils who would find a complete programme of academic studies difficult to sustain. This work-related learning course, successfully planned jointly with colleagues in local colleges, has been introduced into the current Year 10. Although early in its development, there are signs that this course is proving successful for around 35 pupils.
- 29 Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The particular needs of these pupils are made known to teachers who seek to modify work accordingly. Two factors limit the quality of work with these pupils, however. Firstly, grouping arrangements throughout the school mean that classes for these pupils are relatively large, making it particularly difficult for teachers to meet all needs successfully. Secondly, the school employs a very small number of learning support assistants to provide additional help for these pupils.
- 30 Pupils in all year groups study a course in personal, social and health education (PSHE), which includes attention to sex and drugs education. The good PSHE programme is one of the school's strengths and its success stems from the fact that it is regularly reviewed and updated each year. This means it reflects current thinking and is tailored to meet pupils' needs. Staff recognise the importance and worth of the programme and pupils value it. Boldon School has recently earned recognition as a 'Healthy School'. One of the main areas in which they improved while working for this award was education in drugs awareness. Teachers are now trained to a higher degree of expertise and outside speakers deliver a thorough and, by all accounts, inspiring programme to every year group. A good example of the effectiveness of regular review of PSHE is the way in which the school has accommodated the new requirements to offer a course in citizenship for all pupils. The programme had, for some years, included elements of this course, but has been revised to ensure that all aspects are covered, either in PSHE lessons or in other subject teaching.
- 31 A particularly successful aspect of the PHSE programme is the very good component dealing with careers education and guidance. This successfully prepares all pupils for their time after they leave Boldon School. It successfully enables them to gain a good grasp of the world of work and prepares them for the next stage of their education. The programme is supported well by a carefully planned and well-managed programme of work experience for all pupils.
- 32 Beyond the classroom, the school offers pupils a wide range of activities and experiences. A good extra-curricular activities programme operates both at lunch-time and after school and pupils demonstrate how much they value this by their good attendance. Many subjects provide trips and visits in order to enrich work undertaken in lessons.
- 33 There are strong and continually improving curriculum links with main partner primary schools. The school takes a lead in developing these contacts and this aspect of the school's work is carefully reviewed. Links cover most National Curriculum subjects and include Saturday schools for gifted and talented pupils, funded through the schools' involvement with Excellence in Cities².

² Excellence in Cities is the name of a government initiative designed to raise standards in selected urban areas.

- 34 The school acknowledges that it could do more to improve its range of contacts with local industry, commerce and community. There are a satisfactory number of community links, mainly through pupils' environmental work, fundraising for local charities and community performances with the school orchestra. Very good quality guidance is given to pupils in order to help them continue their studies when they leave and there are strong partnerships with the main providers of post-16 education in the area.
- 35 The overall quality of experiences that the school provides to support pupils' personal development is good. The contribution made to their moral, social and cultural development is good and to their spiritual development it is satisfactory. However, there is no policy framework to guide all departments in how they can contribute fully to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies are not planned or co-ordinated to ensure a balance of topics and themes. This was the case at the time of the previous inspection. This means that the leaders of many assemblies miss opportunities to make a significant impact on pupils' personal, and especially their spiritual, development.
- 36 Year group assemblies seen during the inspection were of a satisfactory quality. They contained strong moral and social messages, for example in helping pupils to appreciate the meanings behind Halloween, All Saints Day and Remembrance Day. Good quality performances from the school's bands and ensembles provide a stirring start and a positive feel in the mornings. There is a spiritual element to assemblies in the shared enjoyment of performing and listening to music. However, chances for quiet reflection and contemplation are often missed. Although not seen during the inspection, pupils explained their role in presenting class assemblies, which they enjoy. The school does not meet the requirement for all pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship.
- 37 The overall provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to discuss moral principles, especially in English, religious education and PSHE lessons. Topics such as gambling, environmental work and stereotyping by gender and race are covered in depth. The Youth Against Racism group visits school every year to work with pupils. The school promotes honesty, fairness and tolerance and a considerable emphasis is placed on the importance of equal opportunities and personal rights. Pupils are made well aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves and are given every encouragement to make a difference. They are currently supporting the local charity Jigsaw, a local hospice and for eight years sponsored the education of three African children. Two events in the school calendar, the Year 9 celebration of achievement evening and the Year 11 National Record of Achievement evening, show the degree to which the school shares in and celebrates pupils' successes by highlighting personal and academic development. The school provides few other opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development.
- 38 Year group councils and a school council are helping pupils to take responsibility and understand life in a democracy. More generally, good relationships throughout the school make a significant contribution to the school's positive atmosphere. There has been little involvement of pupils in drawing up a shared code of conduct that everyone believes in and aspires to. Sometimes, staff focus on poor behaviour rather than praising the positive and this does not contribute well to improving pupils' self-esteem.
- 39 Music and drama play important roles in enhancing pupils' cultural awareness. A good range of activities, especially musical workshops, ensures that pupils

appreciate the cultural diversity of British society. These have included Indian classical music, African drumming and music reflecting the mining culture of the area. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' cultural experiences through regular drama productions from the 'Boldon Productions' group. Good use is made of visits from theatre groups to add interest and variety to the curriculum. In the summer, a group of actors worked with pupils on a mock trial on the theme of teenage pregnancy. Everyone has the chance to visit the theatre with their year group with pupils last year going to see 'Grease'.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 40 Procedures for child protection, safety and welfare are firmly in place. Child protection procedures are good and the policy has been recently updated to take into account changes in procedure. Most staff have a good level of awareness and are kept up to date with new developments. The school acknowledges the need to ensure lunchtime staff are also briefed.
- 41 The good quality personal, social and health education programme deals well with personal safety. Boldon was recently awarded the accolade of being a 'Healthy School'. This means that there is a carefully planned emphasis on health related matters throughout the curriculum and a good drug education programme. A lesson on anorexia and eating disorders seen during the inspection typifies the appropriateness and relevance of the pastoral curriculum for pupils of today. The health and safety policy is well established and the school has designated a health and safety member of staff. Procedures have improved since the previous inspection, when they caused some concern. Staff do the best they can with an old building which constantly presents health and safety issues, many of which are not easily resolvable. Minor health and safety issues identified during the inspection were brought to the attention of the school.
- 42 The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. A small number of pupils, often from Year 11, have serious attendance problems which they had in previous schools. Form tutors and heads of year monitor attendance carefully. Heads of year meet regularly with Educational Welfare Officers, who are trying to find alternative provision for these pupils. The headteacher periodically reminds parents about the importance of not taking holidays during term time. Despite this, the number of term-time holidays continues to increase. The school does not fully comply with the statutory requirements for recording attendance, because pupils who take part in the paired reading programme are not registered present until the afternoon session. In addition, the unauthorised absence figure is artificially low as some reasons given by parents for absence are being accepted when the school knows that they are not legitimate causes for being away.
- 43 The arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory and help ensure that most of the pupils behave well. The school has already recognised the need to improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils, most of them older boys, and some strategies feature as a main priority in the school development plan. Most staff are experienced in dealing with poor behaviour and know that by teaching good quality, interesting lessons they can usually succeed in keeping pupils learning.
- 44 In a few cases, the quality of lessons is not of a high enough standard to keep pupils interested and motivated. Improving the quality of these few lessons is not yet seen as strategy to encourage good behaviour. Some teachers constantly focus on reprimanding negative behaviour instead of praising and rewarding aspects of good behaviour. Small issues quickly turn into confrontation if not handled well. There is

not a shared whole school approach to living by a clear code of conduct that everyone believes in and aspires to.

- 45 The school has a behaviour support unit where persistently disruptive pupils are placed for short periods of time. Its aims are to withdraw individuals in order to guide them in how to accept the school code of behaviour and then to reintegrate them back into class. The unit is unsuccessful for a minority of boys, mainly in Years 10 and 11, who are repeatedly placed in the unit and subsequently are temporarily excluded from school.
- 46 Senior staff do not monitor closely enough exactly what happens in lessons to trigger inappropriate behaviour. A small number of teachers do not handle poor behaviour in a consistent manner. Pupils consequently neither know where they stand nor what can be expected if they transgress. The focus is too much on imposing sanctions rather than on analysing reasons why behaviour deteriorates in the first place and then taking action to redress this. In addition, there are not enough classroom support staff to help pupils with behavioural difficulties remain focused in lessons and to provide them with the necessary levels of support and guidance.
- 47 The school has established an educational support centre funded through its involvement in Excellence in Cities, which supports pupils at risk of being permanently excluded. Under the direction of a recently appointed experienced teacher with very good behaviour management skills, it is providing good quality specialist support for disaffected pupils. Here, the focus is on praising and rewarding pupils for each small step they make, while teaching them ways to help themselves, for instance, to control their anger and to disassociate themselves from situations which are potentially likely to cause trouble. For one pupil, this meant recognising when a group of his peers were becoming noisy in class and asking to be moved away from them. In another case, it meant allowing a pupil to telephone home for the correct games kit, rather than risk him being reprimanded by a teacher in the lesson. Learning Mentors³, part of the education support centre team, also provide good support. Studies of past case histories show the centre is making a positive difference to the lives of pupils, many of whom are living with crisis situations.
- 48 There is a good anti bullying policy and records of instances of bullying and harassment are carefully kept. The school takes any reports of bullying seriously and investigates these fully, so much so that a survey is sent to pupils every year and the anti bullying policy is reviewed annually, in the light of the outcomes of this survey. The nature of some pupils' behavioural problems means that they may continue to react adversely, despite the schools best efforts.
- 49 Monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Teachers are very aware of and are mostly sensitive to the personal and home circumstances of each pupil. Form tutors use tracking sheets containing assessment data, such as test results and predicted grades, to help pupils set targets for themselves. This has recently been enhanced by a special target-setting day for Years 9 and 10 pupils, when parents and pupils meet with the form tutor to discuss progress and areas to work on for the next year.
- 50 The school's arrangements for reviewing how well pupils are attaining and progressing in relation to national criteria, criticised in the previous inspection report, remain unsatisfactory. The school has a lengthy, detailed, assessment policy, but it

³ Learning Mentors are people employed, using Excellence in Cities funds, to help pupils overcome problems - either school or home related - which prevent them from learning successfully.

is now rather dated and in need of revision to take account of the developments of the past few years. No senior member of staff has overall responsibility for promoting and co-ordinating the use of assessment data in improving pupils' standards of attainment. This leads to inconsistency from department to department.

- 51 The school's sources of information on pupils' attainment and progress are numerous and are potentially very useful. They include primary school records, outcomes of national attainment tests and statistics that predict performance in future external tests and examinations. Some subjects such as English, mathematics, design and technology and modern languages have good systems of assessment. Assessment in music is thorough, with sharply defined individual targets and detailed records of pupils' achievement. In most other subjects, assessment techniques are adequate, but many teachers neglect to discuss with pupils their standards in relation to National Curriculum levels. This omission is particularly evident in history and religious education, where assessment overall is unsatisfactory. The school makes insufficient use of assessment to guide improvements in the curriculum. Teachers rarely modify courses significantly as a direct consequence of the outcomes of assessment of pupils studying those courses.
- 52 A recent target-setting day for pupils starting their GCSE courses in Year 10 was very well attended, showing how keen pupils and parents are to be better informed and advised.
- 53 Heads of departments have very different degrees of understanding of how to use data to set targets, help pupils to track their own progress or predict their performance in external examinations. The lack of a standardised system means that the school has no firm basis for judging whether it is achieving its full potential.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 54 Parents have a positive view of the school. This is confirmed through views expressed in the parents' meeting with the Registered Inspector and results of the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire. The extent of the partnership between school and parents, being satisfactory, remains very much the same as it was at the time of the previous inspection.
- 55 On the whole, parents are pleased with the academic standards, the teaching and the way the school promotes positive values and attitudes. They agree that their children make good progress and they are happy to approach the school if they have a concern, knowing they will be helped. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.
- 56 A few issues emerged from the questionnaire. A quarter of those who replied do not feel the school works closely with them, one third of replies were not happy about the information parents receive about progress and smaller numbers expressed negative views about homework and behaviour. Some parents at the meeting expressed specific concerns about the timings of parent's evenings and felt there was not a lot of contact from the school in between. Inspectors agree that more needs to be done to work closely with parents and that the timings of parents' evenings should be reviewed. They do not share parents' concerns about homework, but believe that the school does not give enough attention to dealing with the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small but significant number of pupils.
- 57 Staff and parents work together satisfactorily, but there are areas the school can improve to make this relationship stronger. The award winning Boldon Bugle,

produced in association with a local paper, is a good example of the school communicating well with parents. Written and edited by pupils from different year groups, it provides an interesting read and gives parents an in-depth look at various aspects of life at the school.

- 58 The school does not consult parents fully to establish and act on their views, though it has made a good start by introducing target setting days for Years 9 and 10. Parents and pupils meet with the form tutor on these days to talk over progress and agree general targets for improvement. Parents and pupils appreciate this initiative and find it useful. Use of homework planners, both for recording homework and being signed, is inconsistent. Pupils spoke of planners rarely being used by teachers and some parents at the meeting did not feel they were used as well as they should be as a means of communication between home and school.
- 59 The school recognises the need for parents to be able to contact the school. During the school day, office staff provide a good service, dealing with both personal and telephone messages and requests efficiently. At other times, an automatic telephone answering service is provided. This has the potential to provide ready access of parents to heads of year, but staff use the facility inconsistently. Some parents reported not receiving replies to messages for several days. This situation is unsatisfactory.
- 60 Information provided to parents about pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. Year 11 parents' evenings are well timed at the start of the spring term. The timings of parents' evenings for pupils in other years, at the end of the academic year, are not best placed so that parents can help pupils during that year. It does mean that parents of pupils in Years 8 and 10 can go almost a year without any kind of planned contact. Parents in Year 7 have a 'settling in' evening in the autumn term and Year 9 parents have an options and progress evening in March. The school provides parents with interim reports when these are requested. Pupils' annual reports are of a satisfactory standard. Sometimes, comments are based more on pupils' attitudes towards subjects, at the expense of information about progress. Targets to help pupils improve, such as 'revise thoroughly and start early' are often too vague to be of much help.
- 61 Parents have a satisfactory level of involvement in school life. They enjoy the drama and musical productions the school regularly stages, which are usually a 'sell out'. 'Boldon Productions', a group of parents, friends and past and present pupils willingly help when the school needs them, for instance serving refreshments at parents' evenings. Other than this, parental involvement in school life remains limited.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 62 The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and many staff work very hard to bring about improvement. There are, however, significant weaknesses in some aspects of the leadership and management which have slowed improvement during the past few years.
- 63 There is a clear and well-articulated statement of intent, which is designed to guide all that happens in the school. The statement includes a commitment to raising standards, to establishing good relationships and to providing equality of access to all members of the school community. This document was written some years ago and has not recently been reviewed or up-dated, and staff do not systematically use it as a guide to planning.

- 64 The day-to-day management of the school is satisfactory. Effective routines are established and all members of the school staff know what is expected of them. This gives confidence to pupils and encourages them to respond positively to daily routines. Many members of staff work very hard to fulfil the responsibilities assigned to them. Particularly, heads of department and heads of year manage their teams of staff well. Arrangements for timetabling have been improved significantly since the previous inspection. However, over-complicated grouping arrangements lead to confusion and continue to create problems for the teaching of some classes and courses.
- 65 The co-ordinator of support for pupils with special educational needs ensures that all teachers are aware of what is needed to help those students. The management of support for these pupils is good. Documentation is up-to-date and the assessment of these pupils' needs is thorough. Communications with partner primary schools are effective and pupils' particular special educational needs are identified before children arrive at Boldon School. The monitoring of these pupils' progress and attainment is detailed and thorough records are being used to compile long-term profiles of their attainments. Parents are well informed about the attainment and progress of these pupils.
- 66 The previous inspection report identified the need for the establishment of a long-term plan for improvement in the school. In response to this a five-year plan was written. This plan has provided a framework for several subsequent one-year plans. The current year's plan identifies some pertinent areas that require work to bring about improvement, both at a whole school and departmental level. No attempt has been made, however, to maintain and continue a long-term plan for improvement. As a result, neither staff nor governors have a sufficiently clear view of what is required to take the school forward. In recent years, teachers and governors have not been sufficiently involved in shaping the annual plans for development. They have been able to respond to plans presented to them by the headteacher, but have not played a full part in identifying and shaping priorities.
- 67 A major weakness in the school is the lack of rigorous arrangements for accountability. Good moves have been made toward delegation of responsibilities. However, the headteacher does not hold his senior and middle management colleagues sufficiently to account for their areas of responsibility. Requirements to provide reports on developments lack the rigour or challenge necessary to bring about improvement. Similarly, governors are not robust enough in the way they require the headteacher to account for what is happening in the school. The headteacher reports regularly to the governing body, but governors do not require sufficient evaluative evidence within these reports for what is happening in the school. As a result, governors have some ideas of the strengths of the school, but are not in a good position to help draw up long-term plans for improvement.
- 68 This lack of accountability is a function of the school's generally limited understanding of the need to evaluate the impact of actions taken. The school development plan identifies priorities and sets out arrangements for monitoring that things are being done, but omits to evaluate the impact of these actions on provision and outcomes. As a result, the school cannot account for how far, or why, it is or is not being successful. The headteacher has introduced a programme of self-review for teachers, designed to look at what is happening in classrooms. Heads of department have been given some training in how to undertake this. The programme has not been successful because its implementation has not been kept under review. Senior members of staff, for example, do not work effectively with middle managers

to evaluate the success of the programme or to inject greater evaluation into the process. As a result, it is having little or no impact in improving quality in the school.

- 69 Despite these weaknesses, the teachers are hard-working, dedicated to the pupils and want to do their best for them. Their efforts, individually and in small teams, are the major reason for improvements in standards in recent years. There is a good team spirit, with support and administrative staff working hard to complement the efforts of teachers. The secretarial and clerical staff team provide a welcoming school office and contribute effectively to the administration and organisation of the school. The commitment of all staff to improvement in the school is, therefore, good. The lack of evaluation and the limited involvement of all staff and governors in helping shape the long-term direction of the school mean that the capacity to succeed is not better than satisfactory.
- 70 Governors are committed to the school and are supportive. A committee structure enables governors to talk in depth about a range of issues and there is a commitment to seeking ways of improving the school. Governors do not, however, have a sufficiently clear understanding of the priorities for improvement. They are beginning to develop their roles as critical friends and those members of the governing body who can do so make regular visits to the school. There is an effective working relationship between the headteacher and the chair of governors. Through their finance committee, governors keep a close watch on financial management and administration, but arrangements for governors to evaluate the impact of spending decisions are very weak. Governors do not fulfil their statutory responsibilities for ensuring that all pupils can take part in a daily act of collective worship. This issue was raised at the time of the previous inspection and has not been adequately dealt with. Nor do governors ensure that pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a course in religious education which meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for the subject.
- 71 The lack of a long-term plan for strategic development in the school means that long-term financial planning is also difficult. There is a good link between the budget for the current year and the existing one-year development plan, but governors are not in a position to plan the allocation of funds and resources carefully beyond the current year. Governors do not compare the school's expenditure patterns with those in other schools. So, for instance, they are not aware that the school's numbers of learning support assistants are very low when compared with other schools. They do not evaluate the educational consequences of their decisions and thus they are not aware, for example, of the impact of their decision to employ so few of these learning support assistants on pupils' progress.
- 72 The school does not have good arrangements for consulting all members of the school community. Parents are not systematically requested to provide their views on the school and its development. Similarly, the opinions of all pupils are not regularly taken into account, other than through year and school councils. Some moves have been taken to improve this with a recent survey of pupils' perspectives, but the outcomes of this have not played a great part in changing practice in the school. Given all of these factors, and the lack of adequate evaluation of most aspects of school life, the principles of best value are not being applied satisfactorily. However, the work of staff to bring about improvements in standards means that the school gives satisfactory value for money.
- 73 The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good and teachers are well-qualified in their subject areas. Technical support is also good, but there are not enough learning support assistants to meet the needs of pupils with special

educational needs. Arrangements for the professional development of teachers are good. Close attention is paid to the identification of individual teachers' development needs and how these can be matched to the school's priorities. The identification of the needs of non-teaching staff is at an early stage, although relevant courses have been planned for some of these staff. The school complies with statutory requirements for appraisal and performance management. Arrangements for the support and professional development of newly qualified teachers are good. They are valued by these members of staff.

74 Resource levels were criticised at the time of the previous inspection and have been improved significantly since then. Resources in departments are now adequate, though teachers, other than in information and communication technology, do not make satisfactory use of the computers available to them. This means that they cannot adequately meet the information and communication technology requirements of their subjects. The stock of books in the library is inadequate, as are the facilities for displaying these books, though the provision of computers in the library is good. Most subject departments make very little use of the library, mainly because its use is not written into departmental schemes of work.

75 The school has worked hard to minimise the adverse effect of poor accommodation on teaching and learning. The age of some of the buildings and the way they are spread over a large site has made the installation of networked computer systems very difficult. As a result, the school's use of new technology is no better than satisfactory. The school works hard to minimise the level of vandalism that occurs outside school hours, which results from the open nature of the site and the proximity to community facilities. Some areas of the school are particularly unpleasant and do not promote a positive feel for pupils. Their toilets, for instance, are in a poor state and many pupils report not feeling able to use them. Corridors and staircases are narrow and not adequate for the numbers of pupils moving around the building. The size and shape of some classrooms make successful teaching very difficult. Teachers work very hard to make classrooms as attractive as possible, developing displays which both celebrate pupils' good work and provide a stimulating environment for learning. Great efforts are made to keep the poor fabric in an acceptable condition of cleanliness. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, the overall accommodation is unsatisfactory

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76 In order to bring about the necessary improvements in the school, staff and governors should:

- develop an effective long-term strategic plan for improvement in the school, by:
 - reviewing school aims and putting in place plans for ensuring that they are matched by practice;
 - involving members of the governing body in helping shape the strategic direction of the school;
 - engaging all members of the staff at all stages of producing, implementing and evaluating the improvement plan;
 - focusing on major priorities, particularly associated with ensuring more consistency in implementation of school practices;

(paragraphs 43, 66-69, 71, 101, 120, 144, 150 and 167)

- draw up and implement plans for the rigorous evaluation of all aspects of the school, by:
 - ensuring that all policies and plans for improvement contain clear criteria which indicate the intended impact of actions;

- ensuring that all senior and middle managers are trained in the skills of rigorous evaluation;
 - developing procedures whereby governors hold senior managers to account for the implementation of the school's policies and plans for improvement;
 - ensuring that senior managers hold middle managers to account for their delegated management responsibilities;
- (paragraphs 24, 50, 67-69, 72, 111 and 120)
- develop a more effective programme of behaviour management, by:
 - undertaking a close analysis of why some pupils consistently misbehave in class;
 - modifying teaching to ensure that all pupils are actively engaged in learning;
 - providing more in-class support for pupils with challenging behaviours;
 (paragraphs 11, 13, 14, 38, 43-48, 56, 91, 104, 106 and 166)
 - ensure more consistent and effective marking and assessment of pupils' work, by:
 - improving the school's policies for marking and assessment;
 - training all teachers in the skills of assessment and data analysis;
 - making sure that all pupils receive better guidance on the levels at which they are working;
 - providing pupils with clear indications of what they need to do to improve their work;
 (paragraphs 21, 49-51, 65, 82, 92, 107, 109, 111, 118, 119, 121, 133, 138, 160 and 167)
 - provide a course in religious education for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 which meets requirements, by:
 - re-structuring the curriculum to make adequate time available;
 - ensuring adequate staffing and accommodation to enable the teaching of religious education to these pupils to take place.
 (paragraphs 27, 70, 162-168)

In addition, the following issues should be included in the school's action plan:

- improve the use made of information and communication technology by teachers of all subjects;
(paragraphs 22, 74,, 104, 107, 131, 141, 144, 154 and 158)
- increase the level of in-class support levels for pupils with special educational needs;
(paragraphs 10, 23, 29, 71, 73, 90, 95, 132 and 133)
- provide for all pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship;
(paragraphs 35, 36 and 70)
- pursue strategies for improving accommodation at the school.
(paragraphs 75, 84, 120, 144 and 161)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

Years 7 - 11

156

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

66

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	1	43	66	41	3	1	0
Percentage	1	28	42	26	2	1	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	1032
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	146

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	81

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	109	110	219

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	75	81	78
	Girls	96	90	77
	Total	171	171	155
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (69)	78 (69)	71 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	55 (33)	48 (45)	42 (30)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	71	80	75
	Girls	87	91	78
	Total	158	171	153
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (59)	78 (72)	70 (58)
	National	67 (65)	71 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	34 (28)	50 (41)	32 (31)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	33 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	107	107	214
--	------	-----	-----	-----

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	51	104	106
	Girls	51	101	105
	Total	102	205	211
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (43)	96 (97)	99 (97)
	National	51 (48)	87 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
Average (capped) point score per pupil	School 34.4 (37.0)
	National 34.6 (39.0)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year – when the average point score was not capped.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

No of pupils on roll
985

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
153	1

White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	13	9	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	18	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	4	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	3	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	361

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.0
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	20.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
----------------	-------------

	£
Total income	3,138,299
Total expenditure	3,095,521
Expenditure per pupil	2,918
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,934
Balance carried forward to next year	49,712

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17.9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	1032
Number of questionnaires returned	174

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	55	9	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	52	1	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	42	13	3	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	61	13	4	2
The teaching is good.	29	61	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	44	23	8	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	1	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	18	45	24	3	10
The school is well led and managed.	25	53	6	2	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	55	2	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	46	6	0	11

Other issues raised by parents

A small number of parents were concerned about being able to contact members of staff when an automatic telephone answering service is used. This is only used out of school hours and generally provides a useful service. Occasionally, some members of staff do not follow up messages promptly.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7,8 and 9 and attain above average results in national tests.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in the A* to C range at GCSE for English language and English literature.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress over time.

- 77 Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above both the national average and the results of similar schools. The subject performed better than mathematics and science, where results were average. Girls performed better than boys, but not by a significant margin compared with their national counterparts. These English results are an improvement on what has been attained in recent years and at the time of the last inspection when standards were average at Level 5 but below average at Level 6 and above. Pupils' performance in 2002 represents good achievement given that their attainment on entry to the school was average. The results in 2002 were an improvement on what was attained in 2001. This represents very good achievement.
- 78 Results in GCSE English language in 2002 were below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2002 English Language examinations was well below the national average, but was higher than in the previous year. Both boys and girls performed below the levels of their national counterparts. A small but increased number of pupils gained A* and A grades. All pupils entered for the subject obtained at least a G grade and this testifies to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. When account is taken of the results they gained at the end of Year 9 in the national tests, the progress of pupils is below what would be expected.
- 79 In English Literature, the 2001 results mirrored what was attained in English Language that year, except that the proportion of girls obtaining grades A* and A was in line with the national average for girls. As with English language, the 2002 results were a significant improvement on those in 2001 for A* to C grades and results in this year were close to the national average.
- 80 The standard of work seen in Year 11 is above average and this is as expected, given the above average performance of these pupils in the national tests at the end of their Year 9. Achievement has, therefore, been satisfactory. Pupils' extended writing is fluent and accurate and their analytical work on the set texts is very good. They make extensive use of computers to present their work to a high standard, which reflects their positive attitudes to the subject. A number of pupils do, however, have difficulty organising extended writing into paragraphs. Teachers are aware of this and their marking gives guidance on how to improve. Pupils have learnt to write in a range of styles and particularly good work was seen in factual accounts, critical appreciation of set texts and creative writing. In one Year 11 lesson comparing the poetry of Andrew Marvell with that of two modern writers, pupils of low prior attainment were able to contrast the portrayal of women in the poems and draw inferences about how perceptions have changed over time. This was work of a high

standard. By the end of Year 9, standards are also above average and this is good achievement given the average standards of pupils' attainment on entry to the school. All pupils achieve well. Particularly good work was seen in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were able to identify the distinguishing features of the Shakespearean sonnet and then imitate the style in their own creative writing. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the sensitive way in which teachers plan work for them. Good account is taken of their needs and materials are chosen which ensure that these pupils can build on what they have previously achieved.

- 81 Standards of speaking and listening are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are confident and articulate when expressing their ideas and opinions and are sensitive to context and audience when speaking. They communicate well with each other in small group work, but have not been helped sufficiently to join in discussions which involve the whole class. Pupils listen and reflect on what is being said to them and this is a significant factor in how well they learn. Standards of reading are very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection when reading standards, although generally good, were poor for a substantial number of pupils across the age range.
- 82 Standards in tests and examinations and in the work seen are improving because of the good quality of teaching and the positive attitudes pupils display towards the subject. The teaching seen was good overall and, at times, was very good. It was characterised by detailed planning with clear learning objectives which were put across simply and effectively at the start of each lesson. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and in the best lessons taught it in a way which challenged pupils to think for themselves. There was only one occasion when the work failed to stretch pupils and that was because poor use of time adversely affected the pace of the lesson. Teachers have established very good relationships with pupils and there was a positive learning environment in all lessons seen. Pupils respond well and are keen to learn. Even on the occasion when the pace slowed, pupils remained attentive and made progress. This is not done consistently, however, and is an area that needs attention. Teachers' on-going assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, but there is nothing in place at the moment to monitor pupils' progress over time. The department is aware of this and is working to develop a database to enable teachers to track how well pupils are progressing and take appropriate action if there is underachievement.
- 83 The subject makes a substantial contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills and, as a result, literacy standards in English are good. English teachers have reviewed provision and have drawn up an action plan to introduce the English strand of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. As a result, provision is effective and there is now consistent lesson planning and the use of more effective teaching and learning strategies to raise standards. This has meant, for example, that Year 8 pupils who come to the school with below average standards in English are now working at average standards because their writing is more fluent.
- 84 The quality of leadership and management are good under the guidance of a newly appointed head of department. She has already identified what needs to be done to improve provision further and is implementing strategies to achieve this. The department's plan for development sets out the priorities for raising standards of literacy and for improving GCSE examination results. Strategies have already been discussed and agreed for the monitoring of teaching to build on the current extensive sharing of good practice. Lines of accountability within the department are working well, but there is not the same clarity of accountability to the school's senior management team. This is a management issue which needs addressing to ensure

that effective support for the work of the department is in place and that its work is monitored and evaluated. Good use is now being made of available resources and there are extensive displays which improve the learning environment. Accommodation is satisfactory but the fabric and fittings are old and worn and need replacing.

- 85 The head of department is establishing an open and critical but mutually supportive culture. She is leading an able and committed team which has the capacity to build on the improving standards and raise the quality of provision further.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, providing well planned lessons.
- Examination and test results are improving.
- Very good leadership provides clear direction for departmental improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Further differentiation of materials and resources in order to support individual needs and reduce incidents of poor behaviour.
- Improved pupil access to computers and improved teachers' confidence in using new software.
- The range of learning experiences provided for pupils.

- 86 Pupils' attainment in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was at the national average. The number of pupils attaining Level 5 or better was above average, continuing a trend of improving attainment. Standards were well above average when compared to similar schools. This represents satisfactory achievement by pupils. Results in mathematics were below those in English and above those in science. The recent improvement in results is the outcome of good teaching and the fact that the departments has adopted some ideas from the mathematics strand of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy.

- 87 GCSE results in 2002 were better than those of 2001, although still below the national average, with both boys' and girls' results below the national averages for boys and girls. The improvement in results is in part due to the targeted revision opportunities provided by the mathematics department. Gifted pupils are given the opportunity to study statistics as an extra GCSE and they were successful in obtaining grades A* to B in 2002. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain in line with their potential and some are among the most successful in mathematics.

- 88 Overall, the standard of work seen in all years is above that expected nationally and pupils' achievement during Years 7 to 9 is good. In Years 7 and 8, pupils have benefited significantly from the introduction of the mathematics strand of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and demonstrate good levels of confidence in a range of mathematical skills. For example, in a Year 9 class studying angles in a polygon, pupils were able to discover relationships between angles and apply their understanding to discover missing information. The work expected of pupils in some groups, however, is not challenging enough, leading to unsatisfactory progress. Pupils have good numeric skills, giving them access to other mathematical topics and their algebraic understanding is good. These good skills support their learning well in other subject areas. This is particularly true of their ability to present data in a variety

of graphical forms in science and geography lessons. Some less able pupils are not confident in their use of technical words. They also find difficulty with some basic ideas, such as the difference between the mean and the median and between acute and obtuse angles.

- 89 Achievement during Years 10 and 11 is good and pupils currently in Year 11 work at above average standards. By the end of Year 11, the most capable pupils work at high levels of attainment, for instance using rules of indices and advanced trigonometry. Gifted pupils also study GCSE statistics, attending lessons after school, and are expected to attain good grades in their final examination. This expectation is supported by statistics coursework seen, which included an investigation of high standard. Pupils of all abilities in Years 10 and 11 work with interest and pace during their lessons, often showing maturity in their relationships with teachers and one another. These factors all enhance the learning environment and contribute to the good progress in these years.
- 90 Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and sometimes by skilled classroom assistants. When additional classroom support is not available, progress within those groups is slower. Good support was seen with a Year 7 lesson containing many pupils with special educational needs when the supporting teacher was able to intervene at an early stage of pupils' misunderstanding and clarify what was required. This gave these pupils better understanding and access to further learning. However, there is a need for a better match between the tasks set and pupil needs in order to ensure each pupil is challenged to work at an appropriate pace. All pupils can, if they wish, take a GCSE course, but the school successfully offers a Certificate of Achievement course for the least able pupils. Pupils identified as gifted in mathematics respond well to good levels of challenge in lessons and attend extra classes in order to cover more advanced topics. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress.
- 91 Teaching is good in all years. It is generally very good, with little unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to provide insightful, well planned lessons. The most successful lessons have good pace and challenge and are well structured to develop pupils' understanding of concepts and mathematical vocabulary. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, the slow pace and the lack of challenge mean that pupils do not learn effectively. Some behavioural problems develop where work is either too difficult or does not present a challenge, slowing progress for the whole group of pupils. The introduction of the mathematics strand of the national Key stage 3 Strategy has helped teachers consider how to broaden the range of teaching styles they use. However, during the inspection, lessons were predominantly teacher-led, with few opportunities for group or individual work. A significant feature to all lessons is the interest and enthusiasm shown by the majority of pupils, who bring excitement to their learning. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson where pupils of low ability worked with great enthusiasm, designing the perfect desk for their new school. Good relationships within most classrooms enable pupils to share their ideas with confidence and learn from the ideas put forward by others.
- 92 Management and leadership of the department are very good. The head of department has had a significant effect on progress and pupils' attainment over the past two years and there is a clear vision shared within the department of how to continue to improve. Teachers participate fully in the many extra-curricular initiatives and lessons on offer to pupils. The assessment and recording system, although not providing National Curriculum levels for pupils, is used well for ensuring pupils are on the correct courses and are achieving well. This has resulted in a good range of

provision for pupils of different abilities. As part of the introduction of the mathematics strand of the national Key stage 3 Strategy, the department has led a successful training day to promote numeracy across the curriculum. However, there remains confusion about who has overall responsibility for further development of this work in the school.

- 93 Resources in the department are adequate and are very well managed. However, the use of computers is infrequent, limiting the ability of the department to provide all pupils with the full range of experiences required. Teachers lack confidence in using new software and this further restricts what is offered to pupils. Classrooms fail to provide a stimulating learning environment because of their shape, size and state of repair.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching leads to good achievement by pupils.
- Leadership and management ensure a clear direction for the subject.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and want to do well.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' knowledge of their National Curriculum levels and of how to improve their work.
- The use of investigative approaches to all aspects of science.
- Textbooks to help pupils with their learning, especially at home.
- The evaluation of teaching in order to share good practice.

- 94 Standards are good. Results in national tests for pupils aged 14 years have shown a steady improvement for several years and in 2002 they were average overall and well above the average for similar schools. In GCSE examinations, results have also been steadily improving and were close to the national average in the 2002 examinations. There has also been an improvement since the previous inspection in the number of pupils gaining the highest grades.

- 95 Pupils throughout the school achieve well in science to attain these standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils when support is provided. However, when support is not available, their achievements are only satisfactory. This is because they often need a great deal of individual attention and support. This was seen in two large Year 9 classes where, although the task was clearly explained, the pupils quickly forgot the instructions. The teacher had to explain again and pupils wanted encouragement before starting experiments.

- 96 Pupils currently in Year 9 work at standards which are above average. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils conduct experiments with confidence, knowing the procedures. However, the area of scientific investigations is not well covered. For example, pupils are seldom required to complete predictions based on scientific knowledge, which is an essential element of the levels of which they are capable. When they carry out experiments, pupils frequently record their observations and make careful measurements, draw graphs and make conclusions, but without making predictions or drawing conclusions, giving reasons. Pupils' knowledge of life processes is good and they also have a good knowledge of materials, their properties and composition. For example, they can explain when metals react. Pupils' knowledge of physical processes is above average. They can use abstract ideas, such as the transfer of

energy, with understanding. They also have a good knowledge of space and use terms such as asteroids and moons with confidence.

- 97 Pupils currently in Year 11 work at the national average. In Year 11, pupils conduct experiments carefully, but their predictions and conclusions are often poor. For example, they seldom explain why they have made the prediction, or show that they understand the reasons for their conclusions. They have a sound knowledge of life processes and explain how biological systems function. They also relate cellular structure to life processes, such as nerve cells. Pupils also have a sound knowledge of particle theory and use equations and formulae accurately. Their knowledge of electricity is broadly average. They can also explain how tectonic movements in the earth are causing the plates that make up the surface of the earth to move.
- 98 The quality of teaching is very good and is based on teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, which lead to a high level of motivation and interest from pupils. All lessons are well planned and provide a good challenge for pupils. With the more able pupils the emphasis is on them thinking beyond the obvious and working out the possibilities. Questioning is very good, making pupils think hard. This was seen when the development of the earth's atmosphere was being discussed. Through skilful questioning, pupils realised how life became possible. Demonstrations are very good. This was well illustrated when a wave machine was used to show how electricity could be generated and the concept of renewable resources was explored, which made pupils think of possible problems.
- 99 Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by using computers to find out information, by working on group projects and also in revision lessons. Relationships are very good, ensuring that pupils are confident to ask teachers for help if they do not understand. Occasionally, pupils are not provided with sufficient work to keep them occupied and in these lessons pupils could achieve more. Marking of work is thorough, although targets for improvement are not always given.
- 100 Pupils enjoy science. They listen carefully, for instance when following detailed instructions when setting up experiments. They work well together and this was seen when they worked in groups to find the different sounds made from a variety of tubes. Here, they worked purposefully and without fuss and agreed the answers without argument. Most pupils take care with their written work and this was seen when they wrote down revision information in a format that would be helpful to them. They work very hard in lessons and there was a general sigh of disappointment in one lesson when they realised that it had ended. Pupils are interested and curious and this was seen in a lesson on the structure of a leaf when a pupil used reference material to find the exact meaning of the cell names.
- 101 Leadership and management of science are very good. The recently appointed head of department has written a clear development plan setting out what is needed to move the department forward. The curriculum is very good. In addition to double award science, the school offers the three separate sciences for above average pupils in Years 10 and 11 and single science for the less able in Year 10. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection.
- 102 Currently, pupils are not given sufficient information about their standards for each strand of the National Curriculum orders. Therefore, they do not know how to improve. The quality and amount of resources have improved since the time of the previous inspection, with the exception of textbooks. The lack of sufficient textbooks particularly makes setting relevant homework difficult. Information and communication technology is well used, given the limitations of accessibility. Two

laboratories have been refurbished since the time of the last inspection, but some are still small and in need of updating to meet modern requirements. Staffing in the department is very good and this contributes to the very good teaching. Technical staff provide excellent support, which contributes to the smooth running of the department. The department does not evaluate the very good teaching that takes place and so really good features of teaching are not identified or shared with colleagues.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards in GCSE examinations are close to the national average.
- Teaching is good for all year groups.
- Pupils achieve well in art throughout the school.
- The use of sketchbooks in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and the use of data to identify where improvement is needed, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for a broader range of three-dimensional work.
- The subject's use of information and communication technology.

103 Standards in art and design are average at the end of Year 9. They are best in drawing and painting work. By the end of Year 11, standards are above the national average for both boys and girls. Pupils' achievements in relation to their standards at the start of Year 7 are now good and they achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Drawing skills are strong and are developed through the use of sketchbooks for research and observational work in a range of media. After a period of staffing difficulties, good specialist teachers now have high expectations of pupils and are enabling them to develop their skills through well-structured lessons. In Years 10 and 11, attitudes to art are good and both portrait work in Year 10 and sketchbook work in Year 11 show very good progress since the start of this term. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, boys and girls attained results which were close to the national average for the numbers gaining A* to C grades. These results were similar to those gained in art in the previous year.

104 Standards of work, as seen during the inspection, are above average in drawing and observation work. By the end of Year 9, pupils handle a range of two-dimensional media with confidence and skill. Teachers now place great emphasis on the use of sketchbooks, which helps pupils to develop their confidence through more independent work. Pupils study the work of artists and use the results of their studies imaginatively to help them develop their own work. Teachers focus on literacy skills to develop pupils' knowledge of specialist terms and vocabulary and they make good use of questioning and discussion. Skills and processes are clearly and systematically demonstrated, helping all pupils and especially those with special educational needs to learn effectively. For example, a Year 9 class made good progress in developing relief images using card and made good progress because the teacher demonstrated the construction techniques clearly and used questioning to check understanding. Pupils are encouraged to work from a range of source materials, both natural and man-made. Year 7 pupils, for example, having studied insects through a range of media and drawing techniques, such as pointillism, create three-dimensional work based upon their drawings. Pupils have positive attitudes to

their work and lessons are characterised by good behaviour and relationships. While some pupils use computers to collect images, there are insufficient opportunities to use information and communication technology regularly.

- 105 By the end of Year 11, standards are above average overall with a particular strength in two-dimensional work. Pupils are now developing more imaginative and independent work in two and three dimensions. They are reflecting on ideas and developing more personal responses. Expectations are high and the specialist staff monitor and track progress, regularly giving good guidance on the requirements for coursework and how to improve. Pupils in Year 10 apply their skills from earlier years, handling a range of media with confidence and making very good progress. Year 11 pupils make use of a range of materials to develop imaginative designs based on their research in sketchbooks. Progress is generally good, but a few pupils make slow progress with their coursework because they do not attend school regularly.
- 106 Teaching in art and design is good throughout the school. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly to meet the needs of all pupils. They have high expectations for both work and behaviour and this helps pupils to learn well. Teachers regularly comment and give advice in lessons on how to improve, which helps pupils make progress. Homework is used to support work in lessons and pupils are encouraged to use the Internet for research, either at home or in school. A number of pupils, including some gifted artists, make use of the art club after school to extend their work.
- 107 Leadership and management of the department are good. Since the start of the term, progress on developing a scheme of work has been good. This places a strong emphasis on personal research and the use of sketchbooks for homework. The curriculum is satisfactory, but there is a lack of visits to galleries and other resource centres to broaden cultural experiences. Books and learning resources within the department are satisfactory, but the supply of art books in the school library is very limited. Teachers make good use of computers for administration and demonstration purposes, but too rarely do pupils make regular use of information and communication technology in art lessons. The assessment and monitoring arrangements for coursework in Years 10 and 11 are very good. There is, however, no system to track and monitor progress in Years 7 to 9. As a result, pupils do not understand their progress in relation to National Curriculum expectations. The specialist facilities in two rooms are well used and displays of work make the working environment attractive and inviting. Facilities for ceramics are currently out of commission and this constrains the range of three-dimensional work offered.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **good**

Strengths

- The well planned introduction of citizenship as a National curriculum subject.
- The involvement of a large number of staff to ensure a coherent, whole school approach to the subject.
- The vision and authority of the co-ordinator in taking the subject forward.
- Some good teaching, which sets a model for others to emulate.

Areas for Improvement

- Involving all pupils more in discussion and enquiry work.
- Providing all year groups with opportunities to develop skills of participation and responsibility through community work.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching to tackle areas of weakness.

- 108 Standards of work are average in all year groups. Pupils are mostly interested in their work and achievement by all abilities is satisfactory.
- 109 Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. The outcomes of their enquiries are recorded and filed in separate citizenship folders, as is required in order to enable the assessment of their work. Pupils are, therefore, aware of the topics that make up the citizenship course. In lessons observed, more able pupils in Year 8 clearly express their views on children's rights in paired work, while all effectively compared their opinions with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. Year 10 pupils enthusiastically learned about their rights and the law as it affects young people. The most confident and articulate among them reinforced their oral skills through group discussion. However, discussion and communication skills are less developed when the teaching does not involve all pupils, or pupils' attention is allowed to wander off task. Year 8 pupils are able to become involved in conservation work in the local Community Park. Such opportunities for encouraging skills of participation and responsible action, one of the three strands of citizenship, are not so well developed in other years.
- 110 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, based on the well-planned schemes of work and good resources. Their enthusiasm, promoted by good relationships with the pupils, encourages an interest in the topics. In the best lessons, imaginative and varied activities such as role-play engage all pupils and enhance their speaking skills. However, not all pupils benefit from discussion, nor are they fully involved in effective enquiry tasks when the teacher targets questioning too narrowly or provides too many answers for them. The oral and listening skills of quieter, less confident pupils are consequently less well developed.
- 111 The citizenship programme in Years 7 to 11 is well planned and meets statutory requirements. Responsibility lies with a committed subject co-ordinator who, as a head of year, has the authority to take the subject forward. It is taught predominantly through the well-established and popular personal, social and health education course and all staff have been trained in the new requirements. This has ensured a coherent, whole staff approach to the subject, helped by a successful subject audit to initially identify gaps in the programme and to avoid duplication in the personal, social and health education course. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place, as are arrangements to assess pupils' work in preparation for the first statutory assessment for Year 9 in 2004. However, teaching is not systematically evaluated in order to bring about improvement in areas of weakness.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.
- Consistently good teaching leads to lessons which are planned well and proceed at a good pace.

Areas for improvement

- The standards at GCSE, particularly among boys.
- Self-review procedures, which need to be more rigorous.
- The development plan.
- The quality of the accommodation.

- 112 By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well above nationally expected standards. Pupils have a secure knowledge of all aspects of the subject by the age of 14 years. They know how to use tools and equipment to a good standard and can work with various templates and jigs that help them to achieve a satisfactory level of consistency. Good standards were seen in their food technology products and in the resistant materials projects. Pupils' application of the design process is secure and they have the necessary graphic skills to present their work.
- 113 GCSE results in 2002 were average and were better than in the previous year. Girls perform better than boys in all aspects of the subject. Improved examination results are the consequence of good quality teaching and learning which have been effective in promoting good achievement.
- 114 Current groups in Year 11 are achieving well and their folder work is at a satisfactory stage of completion for this time in the year. In Year 11, pupils' attainment in lessons is average. They have satisfactorily mastered a range of skills in making products and their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials is generally good. Though overall standards are average, more able pupils are attempting a good range of products and are using drawing skills well to develop their ideas. Their research is thorough and helps to shape their designs. There is good use of computer software in the presentation of design folders, particularly in food technology, and in good coverage of computer aided design and machining. Pupils can also use the Internet for research and investigation.
- 115 Pupils work purposefully and demonstrate a positive attitude to the subject. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more confident in practical work and help each other in their tasks, offering comment and criticism in a positive manner. Pupils in the Year 11 electronics course are less confident and have fallen behind with their course work. This is because there were not enough specialist staff available to teach the course during the previous year.
- 116 Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and, as a result, relationships are mostly good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, using their knowledge to present topics in interesting ways that engage pupils. The best teaching is well planned. Teachers back up their planning with good quality materials which they use well and which pupils find useful. Teachers are good at the individual mentoring of pupils and

target setting. At the end of lessons, teachers regularly review with pupils what they have learned and this helps consolidate that learning. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are generally good.

- 117 Lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to improve their understanding. In the best lessons there is a collaborative approach to the learning that encourages students to become curious and ask questions. Good introductions to lessons help pupils make links with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. The needs of pupils of different abilities are well met. Teachers work well with pupils who have special educational needs and are aware, through individual education plans, of the help they need to improve. These pupils make good progress because the teachers provide extra support for their learning. Teachers support literacy well, carefully introducing new words, and they provide effective frameworks to help pupils' writing. Good attention is paid to ensuring health and safety during lessons.
- 118 The effective and challenging, but supportive, relationships between the teacher and the pupils, coupled with on-going individual feedback and support, ensure that all pupils make good progress. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. In a Year 10 food technology lesson they were keen to share their success when preparing different types of bread. The display of pupils' work in classrooms and in open areas around the department is good. This contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas. Homework contributes significantly to pupils' learning. On-going marking and assessment of pupils is thorough and helps ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- 119 Leadership and management in design and technology are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need for more detailed assessment of attainment and progress. In particular, the department recognizes the need for a sharper focus to be given to the moderation of pupils' work and for assessment to be against National Curriculum levels for the subject. The department's aims and values are reflected in its work. Good delegation of responsibilities within the department helps ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. The department has recently won a prize in a national Design Technology competition, reflecting the very good standards achieved and the high expectations of teachers.
- 120 The self-review process in the department is not sufficiently rigorous. Nor do senior members of staff adequately review this process. Although it focuses on teaching, learning and standards, self-review merely provides a commentary without identifying particular strengths or areas for improvement. Because there is no line management of the department by a senior manager, the head of department is not sufficiently accountable for subject performance. Thus, the process has very little impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning or on raising standards. The number of rooms available is adequate, but the quality of accommodation needs improving. The department's long-term plan for future development is unsatisfactory. It lacks both detail and rigour and does not provide a clear outline of the steps necessary for further improvement in the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Well prepared teachers plan carefully and structure lessons to meet clearly stated learning objectives.
- Bright classrooms stimulate pupils' interest in the subject.
- Less able pupils make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Evaluation of the quality of teaching.
- The range of opportunities for extended writing in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' use of information and communication technology within their courses.

- 121 Pupils enter Year 7 with attainment that is broadly average. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 9 teacher assessments of standards show that they remain at the national average. By the end of Year 9, standards achieved by less able pupils show that they have made significant improvement, especially in their communication and presentational skills.
- 122 The arrangements for pupils to choose their subjects for further study at the end of Year 9 are such that only a small number of more able pupils opt to study geography. Although pupils generally make good progress, results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average for both boys and girls. Results have, however, been improving since 1999 because of good teaching which helps those pupils who choose the subject to enjoy their geography.
- 123 Pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers encourage pupils to use enquiry methods. They use key questions to guide pupils to a clearer understanding of the connections between man's activities and the world environment. Teachers seek to use a wide range of different activities within their lessons. This helps make learning more interesting and results in pupils looking forward to their lessons and working hard at the activities provided.
- 124 By the end of Year 9, achievement in geography is satisfactory and pupils of all abilities confidently use geographical terms to describe what they have learned. They use neat and accurate maps and diagrams to show where places are, understand how various geographical processes can shape the landscape and explain how people live.
- 125 By Year 11, pupils develop a clear understanding of the causes and results of major events. While they can recognise and define specialist words, they rarely use them in their discussions. Many have difficulty in writing at sufficient length and detail and are over dependant on lesson handouts and teacher support. While all pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 make at least satisfactory progress, those of low ability make good progress, especially in their studies of the local community.
- 126 The teaching of geography is good. The shared planning and discussions about effective teaching methods, especially for lessons in Years 7 to 9, result in interesting lessons which pupils enjoy and in which pupils learn well. Teachers make learning more effective by stating clearly at the start of lessons what is expected from the pupils. They use practical activities and extra materials that help the pupils to understand important points and they end lessons with activities that check what pupils have learned and understood.

- 127 The practical work that is woven into lessons keeps pupils' interest high. The different approaches encourage the active involvement of both boys and girls. Pupils enter lessons expecting to work from the start, settle quickly and work hard for the full lesson. The department is still developing different ways of teaching. It is about to pilot a 'Teaching for Learning' programme that will develop a wider selection of practical work. Pupils respect their teachers and recognise their hard work and very good geographical knowledge. Consequently, they listen carefully, ask questions confidently and accept the good advice they are given.
- 128 The marking of pupils' work is usually undertaken regularly. Teachers' comments recognise and encourage the effort pupils make, but do not identify clearly enough how pupils can improve their geographical skills. General targets are set for whole groups, but there is no identification of goals for individual pupils. Because of this, pupils are not clear about what they need to do to get better at geography. Pupils do not yet understand the new mark system that grades both the level of success and the amount of effort.
- 129 The head of department provides very good support for newly appointed teachers. The monitoring of teaching and marking takes place, but does not yet lead to any systematic analysis of strengths and areas for improvement. Rooms used for teaching geography are bright, with good quality displays of pupil s' work. Clearly labelled diagrams and pictures use specialist vocabulary and there are many cuttings from newspapers and magazines that draw attention to world issues. In this way, pupils are encouraged to understand and use the subject's special vocabulary and to recognise how the study of geography relates to events world-wide. Learning resources for GCSE are satisfactory. The textbooks used in Years 7, 8 and 9 provide an interesting and modern learning resource. In some books, the mix of words, photographs and diagrams is particularly well suited to less confident readers.
- 130 Teachers prepare good quality additional materials activities. One worksheet, providing a selection of newspaper photos and comments about China, stimulated very lively and mature discussion on population control issues. In another Year 11 lesson, the use of role-play resulted in pupils coming to understand issues relating to population 'push and pull' factors in a way that was both memorable and great fun. Most pupils are responsive and sensible and this allows teachers to introduce practical tasks without losing pace or focus. In Years 10 and 11 there is a heavy emphasis on factual content and an over-use of handouts which limits the amount and quality of writing that pupils do. This is recognised by the department as an area for improvement.
- 131 The use of information and communication technology continues to be inadequate. Pupils too rarely use computers while supported by geography teachers. The department has a satisfactory selection of video-material to support teaching.
- 132 This is an improving department. It is developing self-evaluation approaches that are making the quality of teaching and learning better. Opportunities for teachers to work with each other in classrooms are, however, limited. Resources, with the exception of the availability of computers, are generally satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. Standards at GCSE are improving. The improvement made by less able pupils and those with special educational needs is very good, but could be even better with more classroom support staff.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' learning, which is promoted by their positive attitudes to work and their good relationship with their teachers.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they are well supported by teachers in the department.
- The adoption of new schemes of work in Year 7 is producing good teaching and learning.
- Resources have improved and there are now more outside visits to enhance learning.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in GCSE examinations, especially of boys.
- Assessment procedures, so that the progress of pupils in all years is more rigorously monitored and targets set for improvement.
- Levels of challenge for more able pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- The more systematic use of computers to enrich lessons and develop history skills.
- Evaluation of teaching and learning through more regular classroom observation to develop and share good practice.

133 Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are close to the national average. This broadly matches the teachers' assessments for 2001 and 2002 for the proportion of pupils attaining National Curriculum Level 5. However, these assessments were not rigorous enough to be accurate at the higher levels, a matter that needs addressing. Boys perform as well as girls. Pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the school is satisfactory as they begin Year 7 with skills and understanding in history that are broadly average. Pupils have sound factual recall and satisfactory skills of enquiry and note-making. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 7 are making good progress in developing these skills because they are well supported by the teachers. For instance, they successfully met the challenge of deciding who had the strongest claim to the English throne in 1066 because the materials their teachers planned for them matched their ability. Their learning would be even better if there were more learning support assistants in the classroom to help pupils, especially when their numbers are large. More able pupils develop satisfactory skills of writing at length using a range of evidence, though not in a variety of forms, such as letters or newspaper reports. These skills are insufficiently developed in pupils of other abilities. More demanding, analytical skills of evaluation and interpretation of evidence are undeveloped when pupils are not being challenged by rigorous tasks or questioning.

134 Results in GCSE history fluctuate from year to year. In 2001 they were close to the national average and all pupils entered attained a grade. Pupils did better in history than in many of their other subjects, with girls doing particularly well. This was a marked improvement on the previous year. However, results in 2002 were once again well below average. This reflects significant variation, from year to year, in the prior attainment of pupils who follow a history course in Years 10 and 11.

135 Standards of work in Year 11 are close to the national average. This is better than the GCSE results for 2002 as the cohort is more able and motivated. The pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and events. Nearly all pupils develop skills of selecting and recording evidence and make appropriate links between events. However, less able pupils and those with special educational needs find this difficult without the support materials given by the teacher. Gifted and talented and more able pupils confidently select relevant evidence from a variety of

sources, as when, in Year 11, they recognised various causes of the Plague. They also write well descriptively. This was demonstrated when pupils described the advances in Egyptian medicine effectively. However, skills of writing at length, critically and analytically with strong evidence to support, are less well developed.

- 136 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are best in Year 7, where new schemes of work successfully encourage the development of enquiry and literacy skills and greater pupil participation. For instance, pupils worked effectively in pairs sorting cards on different reasons for William's success at the battle of Hastings, with the most able evaluating them accurately. The teacher then guided their written response with a carefully prepared writing frame to develop skills of writing paragraphs. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the best lessons they use it well to teach at a good pace and with a variety of activities which involve pupils in stimulating enquiry work and problem solving. Working in this way represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Year 9 pupils studying the Luddites were fully engaged in using a variety of sources to stretch their thinking about the range of reasons for them breaking machines. However, more able pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not always sufficiently challenged as teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what they can achieve. Regular monitoring of progress at the end of lessons is not yet common practice, often because of poor lesson timing. Marking is done frequently, but not rigorously enough to explain to pupils the weaknesses in their history skills or to set clear targets for them to improve. As pupils in Years 7 to 9 are unaware of their National Curriculum levels and are not set individual targets relating to these, their progress can neither be measured by the teachers nor seen by the pupils. Many Year 11 pupils are unaware of their current progress and predicted grades. This is constraining their motivation and their understanding of their learning.
- 137 Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons as a result of the teaching they receive. Pupils acquire knowledge and learn the important new skills of enquiry, communications and organisation. Progress is helped by the pupils' interest in the work and their good behaviour, seen in nearly all lessons. It is encouraged by the teachers' good relationships with them and their good management of pupils, which keep them on task well. A loss of concentration occasionally occurs when the lessons lack pace or activities are not sufficiently stimulating. Literacy skills are extended by the use of glossaries and writing frames, but further development is required. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning because they are supported with materials produced by the department.
- 138 The department is satisfactorily led by an enthusiastic head of department. He has made an important contribution to the satisfactory level of improvements since the last inspection. There is a stronger emphasis in the learning on developing enquiry and literacy skills, emphasised in the revised but incomplete schemes of work. An improved programme of outside visits is used well as a resource to stimulate interest. Book resources for pupils in all years have been improved. The department is strongly committed to improvement and is well placed to move forward with all teachers working well together. However, some issues still have to be tackled, partly because there has been inadequate direction and guidance from senior managers. Assessment procedures are still unsatisfactory. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are too infrequently assessed. The outcomes of assessment are not used adequately to guide either pupils on how to improve or teachers on how to modify their teaching. Target setting is not yet in place. The progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not monitored rigorously enough. The use of computers is not yet written into lesson plans and is not systematically happening in all classes to enrich the subject and provide pupils with their entitlement in history. The evaluation of teaching and

learning to promote and share good practice, through more regular evaluative classroom observation, is underdeveloped.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- The match of staff to the needs of the ICT curriculum.
- The good level of technician support in the ICT department.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' knowledge of their performance and how to improve.
- The match of work to pupils' needs.
- Curriculum and development planning.

139 Pupils come into the school from a number of primary schools with a broad range of information and communication technology skills. They make satisfactory progress during the first three years they are in school and by the time they reach the end of Year 9, their knowledge and understanding are close to the national average. Standards were satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and remain so. However, such comparison should take account of the continually developing technology and the increasing complexity of the subject. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well below the national average. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Courses offered at the end of Year 11 have changed since the last inspection and, therefore, direct comparison is not appropriate. However, the trend over time is one of some improvement.

140 The standard of work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 is average. By Year 9, pupils are confident users of the full range of software, though their experience of the use of computers for work on control is very limited. The department is aware of this and new software is being introduced to improve this area of study. Pupils in all years are able to access Internet sites, but less so than in schools elsewhere. Most pupils still have to develop a view of computers as a tool to be used when required.

141 The satisfactory learning that takes place in information and communication technology lessons is not built on and reinforced in other subjects. The majority of subject areas do not use the technology available to support learning, although most make reference to information and communication technology in their planning. Within the ICT department the planned programmes require review in order to deal with a number of weaknesses and to prepare for the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in information and communication technology.

142 Standards are average in Years 10 and 11. All pupils are given the opportunity to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are beginning to become discerning users of ICT. They recognise the need to plan the structure of records and methods of data capture when working on databases. They are made aware that responsibilities come with information and communication technology skills. Unfortunately, not all pupils fully accept their responsibilities and this has resulted in limited use of the World Wide Web. Some pupils taking the full course have lessons after school and are able to use email to send documents home. More able pupils take care with presentations and layout, making effective

use of screen dumps to illustrate user guides. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs struggle with analysis and evaluation. Their work lacks the necessary depth to achieve the higher grades.

- 143 The teaching of ICT is satisfactory. There are occasions when a lack of clarity in learning objectives means that unchallenging and inappropriate work is set. The lack of projectors and interactive whiteboards restricts the amount of teacher-led demonstrations. Teachers have a good knowledge of examination requirements, which in turn helps pupils to achieve well in their coursework. While the majority of pupils are aware of the criteria by which their work is to be examined, they do not know their predicted grade. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils have no knowledge of National Curriculum levels and, therefore, do not know the level they are working at or what is necessary to improve their performance. Occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory. Here, classroom and pupil management is poor, work is not matched to the needs of pupils and behaviour management strategies are limited.
- 144 The management of the provision for ICT lessons is satisfactory and this has ensured satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. However, responsibility for cross-curricular ICT is not clearly defined in the job description related to the head of department. There is no line management structure in place to ensure effective strategic developmental planning which would ensure the effective application of ICT skills in other subjects. Staff within the department are suitably qualified and committed to helping pupils succeed. The department and the school benefit from a good level of technician support. Equipment levels are adequate. Accommodation is in a poor state of repair and the furniture does not enable pupils to achieve the correct posture when working at the computers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, with very good teachers' subject knowledge, so pupils learn well.
- The modern languages curriculum is well adapted to pupils' abilities and needs.
- GCSE results in French and German are improving.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results, which are lower than those gained in most other school subjects.
- Boys' attainment is well below that of girls in both languages.
- The use of information and communication technology in teaching.

- 145 The most recent teachers' assessment of pupils at the end of Year 9 shows pupils gaining levels close to the national average. Inspection evidence suggests that the attainment of pupils currently in the first three years in school broadly matches these assessments.
- 146 Pupils enter the school with little or no knowledge of French or German. They all study one language from Year 7 and linguistically able pupils also study the second in Years 8 and 9. Pupils understand lessons taught mainly in French or German. Less able pupils, including some with special educational needs, are helped to stay included with occasional explanations in English. Most pupils speak briefly but clearly, asking and giving information about themselves and their daily lives. They use number for times, dates and for simple calculations. Pupils write new vocabulary

and phrases, such as labels for maps of Europe, progressing in Years 8 and 9 to simple dialogues, descriptions and letters. Many pupils can use the perfect tense to describe recent activities. In both French and German they express opinions about school and hobbies, giving reasons for their preferences. Able linguists studying a second language have less time but attain similar average standards. Talented pupils write expressive poetry and detailed book reviews, a minority using computers to produce their work.

- 147 From a low base, GCSE results in French and German have improved in recent years while remaining below the national average. A largely female entry gained higher than average results in French in 2001, but results were well below average in 2002. Over the last three years, GCSE results in German have risen from below to above average, although the low attainment of boys depressed the A* to C grades in 2001. GCSE results for German in 2002 were average, with girls' results significantly better than those of boys.
- 148 In Years 10 and 11 most pupils speak at length, practising for situations encountered abroad and preparing statements about their personal interests. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated and achieve well. Listening skills are usually good, so pupils understand longer conversations recorded by native speakers. Where teachers speak too much English, these listening skills develop less fully. Pupils read authentic texts, using dictionaries or inferring meaning using their own knowledge. They write at length about work experience, holiday pursuits and family life. All pupils have a grasp of familiar, predictable language and some master the grammar and idioms needed to express their ideas more fully.
- 149 Teaching is never less than satisfactory and, overall, it is good. Teachers are fluent speakers, matching their language to pupils' abilities and giving them good models to copy. In most lessons expectations are high, especially of younger pupils and more able pupils in Years 10 and 11. In some classes for less able pupils the language content is slight, although sufficient for pupils to gain the lower GCSE grades. Teachers plan lessons well, often including a warm-up, conclusion and a separate grammar section contributing to pupils' literacy. Teachers state the aims of their lessons clearly and use these aims to help review pupils' progress at the end of lessons. Skills are usually well balanced, although reading and speaking are less well developed than listening and writing. Teachers manage pupils well, mostly by engaging them in stimulating, enjoyable tasks. Pupils enjoy the games, competitions and humorous routines that teachers organise in class. Most sustain concentration in demanding writing exercises. Exercise books and displays contain good writing and illustration showing the care that pupils take in class or at home. Teachers assess pupils' work continuously, eliciting short answers, setting tests or monitoring paired conversations or written work. They assess GCSE coursework carefully, negotiating targets with pupils that encourage them to achieve their best. Teachers use homework well to preface lessons or extend the work done in class.
- 150 The department is well led and managed and now enjoys a good team spirit which has helped generate a corresponding rise in pupils' attainment and enthusiasm. Recently appointed teachers have brought new ideas and energy, so standards have risen after some turbulence and inconsistency since the last inspection. Teachers work hard to create a supportive environment in drab buildings. New schemes of work, the adoption of the GCSE coursework option and fresh, attractive textbooks have made teaching and learning more relevant, giving more pupils, particularly boys, a chance of success. Regular meetings have generated sound policies corresponding to the school's aims. The department's improvement plan is short and superficial, falling short of teachers' aspirations to raise standards. Teachers keep

up with national developments by training and are developing a more consistent style through watching one another work. Monitoring and evaluation by the senior staff and governors are less adequate, however. The use of computers for obtaining or making authentic resources and for the presentation of pupils' work is underdeveloped and a matter of urgent priority.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards of performing by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are high.
- Teaching is consistently good for all pupils.
- Very good lesson planning links to detailed tracking and monitoring of pupil progress.
- There is a wealth and range of high quality musical activities, both within the school and the community.
- Music makes a very good contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for Improvement

- Pupils' awareness of their progress in relation to national standards.
- The quality of classroom stereo sound and recording facilities.

151 The assessments done by teachers of pupils' work at the age of 14 indicate that attainment for both boys and girls is significantly above national expectations. However, these figures are not mirrored by work seen in class during the inspection and are acknowledged by the department to be too generous. In lessons and from recordings, pupils' attainment is average with a few pupils attaining above expected standards. The standards achieved by pupils who study music for GCSE examinations have remained constant for the last three years. Results in 2002 were at the national average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades has increased. Many pupils achieve grades which are higher than might be expected on the basis of their prior attainment, but are in line with department predictions.

152 The more able pupils in Years 7 to 9 demonstrate very good ensemble skills, are able to play tuned instruments fluently and understand music notation. For others, the lack of correct technique means that their playing is often hesitant and they are unable to recall previous work and relate printed music to keyboards. Pupils' results are monitored regularly so that individual progress is tracked. Achievement for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented are similarly monitored. Pupils make good progress by the age of 14 and this standard is maintained for those who study music in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in both Years 10 and 11 demonstrate performing skills higher than their compositional ones. Most compositions are simple melodic pieces with chordal accompaniments. However, some pupils are able to compose in a variety of musical styles, using more complex rhythmic and harmonic patterns.

153 Teaching is good, with the best teaching seen in Years 10 and 11. During an excellent lesson, Year 10 pupils explored and researched different dance styles and then presented their findings to their peers. They provided information about the music, its composer and included an analysis of the main harmonic, rhythmic and textural aspects of the piece. Other pupils then sought clarity and further information that extended everyone's knowledge and understanding of musical form and style.

Progress in this lesson was very rapid and learning was outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use personal musical interests to illustrate lessons, especially giving pupils a clear understanding of music from other cultures. For instance, recent very successful workshops have introduced pupils to classical Indian music and jazz.

- 154 Teachers have high expectations and, despite the rather congested and cramped conditions in music rooms, management of pupils is very good. There are clear procedures ensuring that pupils behave sensibly and work conscientiously in small groups away from the main teaching room. Occasionally, hurried endings of lessons limit the benefit of teaching on learning, as there isn't time to review the lesson. Homework is linked closely to work done during lessons. Pupils evaluate their practical work regularly, both orally and in written form, from Year 7 onwards. Guidance is given so that musical points and language are used in answers. This means that by Year 11 pupils are able to compare and contrast pieces of music and use musical influences in their coursework. The department is unable to fulfil the curriculum requirements relating to information and communication technology. New equipment is due to be installed shortly, but, at present, pupils do not have the technical skills expected for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- 155 Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. They support each other in ensemble work and improve their musical skills and knowledge. Pupils' musical strengths are well known to the staff. However, despite many good procedures, little use is made of National Curriculum levels. Thus pupils are unable to assess their own progress relative to the performance of pupils nationally.
- 156 Leadership and management of the department are very good, with all members of the department, including visiting staff, contributing their individual strengths and professional expertise to specific areas. The department documentation is extremely thorough and informative, building on previous good practice and incorporating new material and developments since the previous inspection. This results in very good improvement. At present, the classroom sound and recording facilities are inadequate to provide clear recordings of class and ensemble work. Since the previous inspection, new ensembles have been formed in response to pupil requests. There are regular school productions and concerts within the local community which pupils participate in with great enthusiasm. Opportunities are constantly sought to give pupils high quality musical experiences at all times.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching throughout the department.
- Very good relationships between teachers and classes.
- Very well prepared lessons which have clear objectives.
- Very good results in GCSE examinations.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of a designated room for teaching examination courses.
- Improved documentation and policy writing.
- Access to information and communication technology.

• Accommodation for teaching physical education.

- 157 By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment in practical activities are mostly good. Boys and girls attain well in games because teaching is good and because lessons have clear aims and objectives. Year 9 girls produce very good standards in gymnastics, particularly in partner work, showing good understanding of the need for quality in their work. Girls' work in gymnastics is generally superior to that of boys. There is not enough evidence of boys being able to control their body weight. Year 7 boys improve well in cricket where they quickly learn and apply new skills.
- 158 By the end of Year 11, standards are good. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were above average, with the proportion of boys and girls obtaining good passes being well above the national average. Similar numbers of boys and girls take the examination and both are achieving equally well. The written work of more able pupils is good. Assignments are adequately completed, well presented and have good standards of spelling and punctuation. There are not, however, many examples of pupils using information and communication technology, either to present or research their work. Most marking is good and contains information to assist pupils improve their work. Some marking of work done by less able pupils is rather lacking in detail and this means that these pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve. Boys' and girls' performances in practical aspects of the subject are generally good. Boys play basketball well, displaying understanding both of tactics and techniques. Most play the game competently, largely because teachers have high expectations of them.
- 159 Teaching is good overall and is occasionally very good. Lesson notes are detailed and contain very clear objectives, which are indicated to pupils. Teachers have good relationships with classes. Lessons always have pace and purpose and most have a very pleasant and productive working atmosphere. All of these factors help pupils to be motivated and to learn successfully. Boys' and girls' attitudes are very good and they behave well in all lessons. They are enthusiastic and enjoy the subject, with very few missing lessons without good reason. Many attend the good extra-curricular sessions provided by the department, who give generously of their time. Pupils who are gifted and talented in physical education and sport are identified. A number of boys and girls achieve well at district and county level particularly in cricket, netball and soccer.
- 160 Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Many aspects are good, but some remain to be improved. There is a strong corporate spirit. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Adjustments have been made to the curriculum to include health-related exercise. While lesson planning is generally very good, some required departmental policies are missing. Assessment needs refining and adjusting so that pupils of all ages have a better understanding of how well they are achieving. Target setting is under-developed so pupils and teachers are not sufficiently clear about what each individual is trying to achieve.
- 161 Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Staff accommodation is small, cramped and lacks showering facilities. There is no designated classroom for examination courses. Access to ICT is not easy and there is no networked computer in the department. The outside playing areas are in dangerous condition. Most major indoor accommodation is in poor condition.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good levels of achievement by pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- The achievement of pupils on the GCSE course, who achieve well and do better in religious education than in their other subjects.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The need for the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to meet statutory requirements for all pupils.
- Marking of the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9, which currently does not give them enough help.
- The opportunity for pupils to use computers.
- Assessment procedures, which are inadequate.
- Accommodation, which is unsatisfactory.

162 Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with varying standards and experiences in religious education. They achieve well and by Year 9 they are working at the standard expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Good teaching ensures that they learn well and they show satisfactory knowledge of Christianity and other world faiths. They are not given enough opportunity to apply what they learn to their own lives. Pupils' good attitudes contribute to their success. Their behaviour is good and they are willing to answer questions and take part in discussions.

163 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who follow the GCSE course continue to achieve well. Only small numbers are involved so it is not possible to make valid comparisons with national statistics. However, over the last three years those entered have gained results that are better than predicted and better than their results in other subjects. The present Year 11 achieved above average results in the first module of their GCSE course and this standard is underlined by the good quality of work in their folders. They show good knowledge of morality and philosophy and many evaluate ideas well, for example on the attitudes of various faiths to social problems. They benefit from the helpful comments that teachers write on their work.

164 The great majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11, however, follow a background course for which they are allocated less than half the recommended time. Consequently, in spite of good teaching and learning in lessons, their standard is below the national average. They follow a scheme of work which many of them find interesting, dealing as it does with social issues which they see as relevant to everyday life. As a result, they make good progress in individual lessons. For example, Year 10 pupils were fully involved in a lesson on prejudice. The teacher made good use of an imaginative game that simulated the effects of discrimination and thus learning was very good. However, shortage of time means that pupils do not cover enough ground and their achievement is unsatisfactory.

165 Teaching and learning are good throughout all years. Teachers are subject specialists, which helps ensure that their lesson objectives extend beyond the basic transmission of knowledge. Thus, the department makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons are thoroughly planned and pupils are kept motivated by being given a variety of activities. This was

seen, for instance, in a Year 8 lesson on Paul's missionary journeys. Pupils listened to the teacher, answered questions orally, read aloud from a textbook and completed a written task which involved measuring distances on a map. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils. In a Year 8 lesson on religious approaches to the environment the teacher seriously challenged the intellectual curiosity of high attaining pupils. Teachers similarly provide suitable work for less able pupils and those with special educational needs. A Year 7 class made good progress in a lesson on Guru Nanak because a video was provided which matched their abilities and the teacher provided a framework that gave them the right amount of help with their written task. Because of this kind of help, pupils with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other pupils.

- 166 Most pupils come to lessons with good attitudes to learning and teachers successfully manage the behaviour of the few that do not so that learning is not disrupted. However, the marking of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 does not show them how to improve the religious content of their work, concentrating more on literacy. Pupils are not given the opportunity to use computers either for presentation of their work or to do research.
- 167 The head of department provides satisfactory leadership but is handicapped by the lack of guidance and support from senior management. For example, the contents of the department's self-review and its development plan are not discussed and evaluated. Assessment procedures are inadequate and pupils do not know how to improve as assessment levels are not used and pupils do not have meaningful targets.
- 168 Progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved and resources are now satisfactory. However, the department still has no computers; the teaching rooms are still separated and one is in poor condition, affecting standards. Above all, the curriculum still does not meet statutory requirements because most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not given enough time to follow a course in religious education that would meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.