

INSPECTION REPORT

PARKSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112961

Headteacher: Mr E F Gabbani

Reporting inspector: Mr David Jones
8197

Dates of inspection: 4th – 9th November 2002

Inspection number: 249171

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Boythorpe Avenue, Boythorpe, Chesterfield Derbyshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jean Horton
Date of previous inspection:	7-8 November 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8197	David Jones	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? Leadership and management
13395	Mrs Joanna Illingworth	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11508	Mr Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English Drama Literacy	
20119	Mr Tony Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics Numeracy	
31255	Mr Derek Williamson	Team inspector	Science	
18638	Mr Chris Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design	
15465	Mr Terry Parish	Team inspector	Design and technology	
15462	Mr Cliff Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography Vocational Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4773	Mr Peter Gilliat	Team inspector	History Religious education Citizenship	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
32208	Mr Derrick Atkin	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
16548	Mr Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Music English as an additional language	

4676	Mrs Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical Education Educational inclusion Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Parkside Community School is a mixed comprehensive school of 518 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years. It is situated on the southern edge of Chesterfield and draws most of its pupils from the Park and Rother wards, where there are high levels of unemployment and social disadvantage acknowledged by central government. Around 35 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Twenty-six per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, including 31 pupils who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Needs. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school are low. Less than two per cent of pupils come from ethnic minorities. Very few pupils have English as an additional language and all are fluent in English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, this is a very good school. Most pupils achieve well and those who entered the school with particularly low standards make very significant progress, both by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. Teaching is good and its consistency is a strength. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning by local companies is excellent. The school leadership is outstanding. Overall, the school gives very good value for money. The commitment of pupils, staff and the community has produced a school reborn.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well and all are well included in the school community.
- The high proportion of good and very good teaching.
- Provision for special educational needs, extra-curricular activities and pupils' social and moral development.
- Provision for monitoring pupils' academic performance, for educational support and guidance, and for supporting their personal development and relationships.
- The contribution of the community to pupils' learning.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff.

What could be improved

- The provision of the statutory curriculum in citizenship, and in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and religious education.
- Teachers' inconsistent use of assessment, marking and homework and their variable use of ICT across subjects.
- Some aspects of accommodation for mathematics, art and design, design and technology, physical education and the library.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 2000. The school was judged to have made significant progress and no longer required special measures as it was providing an acceptable level of education for its pupils. At that time the school was set targets to improve standards of attainment, pupils' progress, aspects of the quality of teaching and the roles of managers. Improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour were also linked to efforts to improve attendance and punctuality.

Overall improvement is very good. The 2002 GCSE results show significant improvement and the progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is now very good. The quality and consistency of teaching have improved and the proportion of good and very good teaching is a major strength. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The leadership and management of the school are now excellent. Attendance is now in line with the national average and unauthorised absence well below. There has been a significant reduction in the incidence of exclusions.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

When pupils enter the school in Year 7, standards overall are very low in comparison with the national average, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The number of higher-attaining pupils is smaller than in most schools, but is increasing.

Standards in the 2002 national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 are well below the national average for all schools but they are well above average when measured against prior attainment and against similar schools. The results of the higher-attaining pupils are very good when compared to their prior attainment levels. They were well above average for English and in the top five per cent of schools nationally for mathematics and science.

The 2002 GCSE results show significant improvement from previous years. The mean points score gained by Year 11 pupils was below the national average. However, it was well above average by comparison with similar schools. This represents very good achievement, as the attainment on entry of these pupils was very low. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or better has more than trebled in one year. Although below the national average, it has improved to well above that for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades at G and above is now well above that of similar schools. The proportion gaining at least one grade G or more is also well above that of similar schools. In relation to the pupils' performances in national tests in 2000, when they were in Year 9, the 2002 GCSE examination results represent good achievement by higher-attaining pupils and very good achievement by middle and lower-attaining pupils. The school exceeded suitably challenging targets in both 2001 and 2002.

Based on work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average in most subjects but they are average in science and design and technology, and well below average in art and design. Achievement in all subjects is good except in art and design, where it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average in information and communication technology (ICT), French, music and physical education; they are below average in other subjects except art and design, where they are well below average. Achievement in all subjects is good with the exception of science and art and design, where it is satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good and there is a tangible atmosphere of friendliness around the school. When out of school, older pupils are very good ambassadors for the school.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work well together, support each other and are generally polite and considerate. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Teachers support pupils well and pupils respond with warmth and respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is just in line with the national average and the percentage of unauthorised absence is well below normal.

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 in all years with over one in four lessons seen graded very good or better. It is good at all levels in English, mathematics and science. Very good teaching was seen in ICT lessons in all years and in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. Major strengths include the subject expertise of the staff and the management of pupils. Less than two per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers are good at meeting the needs of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. The quality and use of assessment, marking and the use of homework, although satisfactory, are variable. Teachers do not make enough use of ICT to support learning in all subjects. Overall, learning is good; most pupils are hard working and want to succeed, although they are not always aware of their levels of attainment in different subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The flexibility of the curriculum meets the needs of pupils well, with the exception in Years 10-11 of design and technology and religious education. Provision for citizenship is limited. The work-related curriculum is good and the range of extra-curricular activities is very good. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning through, for example, the work of adult mentors in the business education partnership, is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; an excellent inclusion philosophy enables them to make good progress. They develop confidence and self-esteem and are happy to come to school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall this is good. The provision for pupils' moral and social education is very good. Provision for their cultural development is good, preparing them well for life in a multi-cultural society. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care of pupils is good overall. The school gives good support to pupils, including personal and educational guidance. The whole-school assessment policy is good but subject teachers do not apply it consistently.

The partnership with parents is good and parents are increasing their support for their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and senior staff set high standards; they have established appropriate priorities for improvement and address them with vigour and determination.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. The governing body is effective and the consistency of the support it has provided through difficult times is commendable. They recognise that the curriculum does not yet meet statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is excellent at monitoring and evaluating its performance and taking effective action.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic use of all the grants and resources available, including those from and for the local community, is excellent. The school takes great care to ensure that spending is appropriate and that best value is secured.

Although staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in design and technology, art and design and mathematics, where limited space and access to modern ICT facilities are impacting adversely on standards. In physical education, indoor facilities are cramped and inadequate outdoor play surfaces are small and in poor condition. The library is an unsatisfactory learning resource.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school helps pupils to make progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems. • Pupils are expected to work hard. • The improvement in behaviour. • Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible and to develop good attitudes. • The leadership and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The balance of homework. • The quality of information on progress. • The school could work more closely with parents.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive comments. However, the team feels that the range of extra-curricular activities available is very good. Although the balance of homework is satisfactory, a more consistent and constructive use could be made of it in all subjects. The quality of information on pupils' progress is satisfactory but the procedures for academic review are excellent and provide a very good opportunity for close working with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, standards are very low. Overall they are in the lowest five percent nationally, and significantly so in terms of literacy and numeracy for boys and girls alike. There are fewer higher-attaining pupils than in most schools, although the numbers of such pupils are rising.
2. By the end of Year 9, pupils progress very well in response to good teaching. Standards in the 2002 national tests were well below those in all schools nationally, but were well above average when measured against prior attainment and standards found in similar schools, with higher-attaining pupils doing exceptionally well in mathematics and science.
3. The 2002 GCSE results show significant improvement on those of previous years. Although the mean points scores of pupils were below the national average, they were well above average by comparison with similar schools. Given the very low attainment levels on entry to the school, this shows very good achievement.
4. The very good improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or better means that the school now compares very favourably with similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade G or above, and the proportion gaining one or more pass at G or above, are well above average. This shows good achievement by higher-attaining pupils and very good achievement by middle and lower-attaining pupils.
5. In the English work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 were below average. This represents good achievement given the pupils' very low standards on entry to the school. The 2002 results improved because more pupils achieved the expected standards in the accuracy and organisation of their writing. About a fifth of the pupils are reaching the higher levels because they effectively and deliberately seek to engage the reader through their choice of vocabulary. However, nearly half of all pupils are below, and in some cases well below, the expected level in writing skills. Standards in Year 11 are below average. Since these pupils' standards were well below average at the end of Year 9, this represents good achievement. It is the result of more consistent teaching, which focuses directly on their learning needs.
6. In work in mathematics seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, but very high in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Because of good teaching, higher-attaining pupils are able to work at the highest levels. In lessons they demonstrate better understanding of number as a result of the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and progress is good. One relative area of weakness lies in the pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics. For example, they are not able to make sensible estimates of the weight and measurements of everyday objects. At the end of Year 11 standards remain below average but are improving because of greater focus on examination work in teaching. The progress of higher-attaining pupils is better than the rest because of the impact of good specialist teaching.
7. The standards of work seen in science in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were average but progress was good in relation to prior attainment. The provision and organisation of practical work is a strong feature of the teaching throughout the school and is helping to raise standards. Higher-attaining pupils achieve very well. In Years 10 and 11 standards are below average but achievement is not so good as in Years 7 to 9. The consistency of challenging teaching combined with high quality explanatory work is helping pupils to overcome their weaknesses.
8. In Years 7 to 9 standards of attainment in design and technology are average but they are below average in geography, history, ICT, French, music, religious education and physical education. In art and design they are well below average. Pupils' achievement, based on progress from their levels on attainment on entry to the school, has been unsatisfactory in art and design, because of

staffing problems, but it is now satisfactory and improving. Achievement is good in other subjects except physical education, where it is satisfactory.

9. In work seen in Years 10 to 11, standards of attainment are below average in design and technology, geography, history and religious education, and well below average in art and design. However, achievement is satisfactory in art and design, and above average in ICT, geography, history, French, music and physical education. Achievement is well above average in design and technology. In the new General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) Part One course in Years 10 and 11, which will be examined for the first time in the summer of 2003, standards of attainment are above average and rising. Achievement for these pupils is very good. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in citizenship; a new course started in all year groups only six weeks before the inspection. No religious education course is offered in Years 10 and 11.
10. The pupils have traditionally entered the school with low standards of literacy although standards in Year 7 are showing an improvement. Current standards throughout the school are below average. Pupils make good progress as a result of good provision for literacy across the subjects. Very good use of Literacy Progress Units is raising standards of critical reading in Year 7 and writing organisation in Year 8; just over half the pupils in Year 9 have reached the expected level in writing. This work has not yet impacted on later years and in Year 11 fewer than half the pupils have reached the expected level in the standards of their writing. Weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and paragraphing undermine the ability of some pupils to do justice to their knowledge and understanding in examinations. Most read fluently and can extract information efficiently to illustrate or support a point. They are developing a good knowledge of literary techniques. When given the opportunity they achieve speaking skills that are broadly average, with many able to adjust their speech to meet the needs of particular situations.
11. As with literacy, pupils have generally entered the school with low standards of numeracy, but provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory and is improving standards. There are good examples of effective use of strategies in science, geography, design and technology and ICT. Numeracy is well implemented through the current national strategy for Years 7 to 9. It is making an impact on standards in the day-to-day teaching in mathematics lessons.
12. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets set for them. This is because of the sensitive and high quality support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. It is also because of a number of intervention programmes, which are designed to raise standards of reading and spelling. Regular monitoring of pupils' progress quickly alerts the special educational needs co-ordinators and learning support assistants to any problems, enabling them to take effective action.
13. Overall, standards of attainment and the achievement of the majority of pupils of all levels of attainment have risen rapidly in a remarkably short time. This is the result of excellent management decisions that have created a more stable environment for learning and significantly improved the quality of teaching. This has developed a culture in which dedicated staff feel involved and recognised for their work. There is now a supportive school community in which pupils are keen to show what they can do.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development make a positive contribution to their learning and progress. Attitudes and behaviour are good and attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is very good, and they have excellent relations with each other and members of staff. In this respect there are no significant differences between pupils of differing attainments or between boys and girls. The school is an orderly community that inspires the loyalty of all its members. Pupils are proud to belong to Parkside and the majority of them do their best to uphold its motto, "attendance, aspiration and achievement".
15. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, show good attitudes to learning. They arrive on time for lessons, settle down quickly and follow instructions.

They listen with care and work calmly and constructively. They respond very positively in lessons where teachers have high expectations and set interesting tasks. Attitudes to learning are very good when the quality of teaching is very good. An example during the inspection was in a geography lesson on ecosystems. The teacher successfully engaged pupils' attention through very good planning and the use of effective methods. She explained the subject well, maintained a brisk pace and made effective use of the system of rewards. As a result pupils were very well motivated and willing to work. They took the lesson seriously because they saw the relevance of what they were doing. They participated well in oral discussions and made very good gains in their knowledge and understanding.

16. The correlation between good teaching and positive attitudes exists right across the school. In all subjects and in all year groups pupils show interest, concentrate well, and work hard in lessons that are well taught. Their response was very good in more than one in three lessons observed during the inspection. Attitudes to learning at home have improved and are now satisfactory. Pupils' homework diaries reflect this and pupils consistently stay in school to use the new community ICT facilities. Parents, grandparents and carers come into school to use these new facilities. Pupils' attitude to writing was also negative and this has had an impact on their progress earlier in their school experience. A significant minority of pupils still dislikes written tasks and is reluctant to do homework that requires them more than a few words of writing. Their books contain examples of work that is unfinished or done perfunctorily, with insufficient attention to detail and good presentation. In English, a minority of older pupils has problems in keeping up with GCSE coursework. The school's efforts to change this culture and give pupils the skills they need has been a major focus in the last two years. All subject areas consistently support the development of vocabulary and have focused on the need to extend writing from description to explanation and beyond.
17. Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of extra-curricular activities and are keen to participate in them. Overall, the level of involvement is good. Pupils attend in large numbers the classes and clubs that are held during the lunch hour and after school. There is good support for academic activities as well as for sports and social clubs. Pupils make good use of homework clubs, ICT facilities and learning resources during the lunch hour. For example, pupils who find reading difficult, and are keen to improve their skills, volunteer to give up one lunch break per week to take part in the Royal Mail reading mentoring scheme. Their involvement has a very positive impact on their progress and has substantially raised their reading ages.
18. Behaviour is good overall. The school is a civilised society in which pupils know right from wrong and aggression and hostility are rare. Its ethos is conducive to good learning and good inclusion. No individuals or groups of pupils suffer from sexism or racism, and bullying is not a feature of life in the school. The rate of exclusion has fallen sharply, reflecting rising standards of behaviour. The school has permanently excluded only one pupil during the last two years.
19. Pupils are orderly and self-disciplined when around the site at break and during the lunch hour. They are friendly and polite and show consideration for others, for example by holding doors open for them. They respect the school's property and handle equipment responsibly. Behaviour in the classroom is also good, thanks to the teachers' skilful management of pupils, and helps to create a good environment for learning. Pupils are able to concentrate and work without interruption or distraction in almost all lessons and it is very rare for unsatisfactory behaviour to impair attainment and progress. Very occasionally they are noisy, reluctant to settle down and show little respect for their teacher, as was the case with Year 10 pupils in a physical education lesson observed during the inspection.
20. The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils co-operate well in lessons and in extra-curricular activities and socialise well with one another at lunchtime. In the classroom, they work successfully in pairs and group tasks and give one another mutual support with tasks that they find difficult, such as researching homework topics using computers. Relations between pupils and members of staff are very warm, friendly and are based on trust. They make a major contribution to academic progress and to spiritual, moral, and social development. Pupils regard members of staff as good role models who deserve respect. They want to do well in order to win their approval. They

therefore work hard in lessons and try to behave responsibly around the school. The quality of relationships also enhances the quality of support and guidance. Pupils believe that teachers will deal sympathetically with their worries and have confidence in their ability to deal effectively with issues such as bullying.

21. Pupils' personal development is very good. They enter the school with very poor social and personal skills but by the time they leave they have developed a sense of community and are able to co-operate constructively with one another. They show a high degree of respect for the feelings and beliefs of other people. Their capacity to exercise responsibility and to use their initiative is good. They get plenty of opportunities to use their ability outside the classroom. For example, they can serve as representatives on the school council, become "buddy readers", and organise major functions such as the school fashion show. They also get the chance to help with events at partner primary school and to take part in fund-raising for charity. The level of pupils' involvement in these activities is high and makes a substantial contribution to the development of sound values. Pupils' responsibility for their own learning is less well developed. They are sometimes over-dependent on their teachers for ideas in lessons and have problems with organising their homework and coursework.
22. Attendance is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, it has been broadly in line with the average for secondary schools. It was slightly below average in the most recent school year, but has risen to 90.7 per cent in the current term. Most pupils come to school regularly and the overall rate of unauthorised absence is low. However, there is a hard core of pupils who have poor attendance. Some are absent for long periods, while others are often away for one day per week. Their irregular attendance seriously limits their learning and progress. Holiday leave in term time is an increasing problem and this also has an adverse impact on standards of attainment. In 2002 the school's results in the Year 9 national tests were adversely affected by absence, with 10 pupils away from school for the English tests.
23. The school has made good progress since the last inspection with regard to pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. It has successfully maintained and built on the improvement in standards that was evident two years ago.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result. Classroom management is very good, based on very good relationships. Teachers know their subjects well and plan interesting lessons that meet pupils' needs and involve them in learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Seven out of every ten lessons seen were judged to be good or better and over one in four of all lessons were of high quality. More often than in the previous inspection, pupils are involved in lessons and more is expected of them. Work is more closely related to their needs. These improvements reflect the effort made by the school to develop teaching and learning to ensure consistent quality. Less than two per cent of teaching seen during the inspection was unsatisfactory and examples of high quality teaching were observed in all subjects. Teaching is particularly effective in design and technology and ICT, although ICT is not used consistently to support learning across the curriculum. This is largely because of difficulties with access that result from weaknesses in the accommodation available.
25. A strong feature of the good teaching is the fact that almost all teachers manage their pupils very well. They reflect the caring philosophy of the school in their classrooms. They get to know the pupils as individuals and establish very good relationships with them. They establish clearly what is expected in classroom behaviour. As a result, most pupils co-operate, are interested and attentive in lessons and learn well. This applies equally to those pupils just starting school as to those in their final year.
26. Pupils in a lower-attaining Year 7 English lesson successfully followed the teacher's rules for answering questions. They listened attentively, were keen to answer and behaved very well. The teacher made excellent use of an interactive whiteboard to present strongly challenging material and all pupils responded well to effective questions. Consequently they made very good progress

in understanding imperative verbs and writing for an audience. A Year 11 drama class learned much about characterisation because the teacher had provided good resources and communicated with the class very well. The already well-established attitudes to work and very good relationships underpinned the good learning taking place.

27. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and in the majority of lessons teachers use a good range of teaching methods. In a very good Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher provided good mental warm-up tasks and supportive questioning that developed pupils' answers and increased their confidence. Teachers conduct well-planned lessons that are effective in meeting the needs of their pupils. In a good Year 10 history lesson, for example, the teacher's knowledgeable and colourful description of working conditions in cotton mills was combined with matching activities and carefully-selected source materials. Practical activities used model looms effectively and helped secure the correct use of historical vocabulary. The sequence of activities was carefully arranged so that pupils ended the lesson with a clear and memorable picture of such work. A Year 9 science lesson on photosynthesis began with a good follow-up activity that linked effectively to previous work and secured previous gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Well-organised practical work gave pupils confidence and they worked well in small groups or pairs, producing good results. The teacher used examples drawn from pupils' experiences to develop their skills.
28. Some teaching is not as effective as it could be. In addition, not all teachers take enough account of the rate of progress of some younger pupils in Years 7 to 9. In a Year 8 history lesson, for example, the teacher failed to use good resources on family life in the 16th century to develop pupils' command of appropriate historical vocabulary. Consequently pupils became lost and some spent time off task. In a Year 9 French lesson the lack of pace and involvement in some parts of the lesson slowed up learning despite some effective individual questioning and oral group pronunciation tasks.
29. Teachers do not use assessment information consistently or opportunities to extend learning through homework. For example, there are weaknesses in both areas in French but strengths in ICT, science and history. In consequence pupils are not always clear about what they should be doing to improve their work.
30. Overall, the teaching of basic skills is good. Teachers are aware of the importance of developing pupils' literacy skills because of the very good work that has been done by the school to improve the teaching of literacy across the curriculum. All teachers make regular efforts to secure pupils' subject vocabulary and to provide supportive structures for their writing. Numeracy skills are consistently revisited and improved, particularly in design and technology, science and physical education.
31. Teachers' use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. Access to appropriate equipment and software is difficult in mathematics, art and design, geography, history and design and technology. The result is that opportunities are missed to provide higher levels of challenge and to make better use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning.
32. Teachers are very well informed about pupils with special educational needs. They take an active role in setting and monitoring targets. A positive feature in most subjects is the good planning to ensure that tasks and resources are frequently adapted to suit the needs of individuals. In subjects where this does not always apply, such as physical education, tasks are sufficiently open-ended to enable pupils to achieve success. In addition, pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress.

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

33. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. For the most part it meets the range of needs of the pupils and has improved in departments such as art and design and music where previously there had been weaknesses. The work-related curriculum is very good and the school's links with the local community have brought very significant benefits to learning and the promotion of pupils' self-esteem. However, there are weaknesses in citizenship and ICT across the curriculum, and in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and religious education.
34. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9. An important priority of the school is to keep the curriculum flexible so that pupils are provided with as much choice as possible. A significant strength of the provision is the inclusion of the National Literacy Strategy units for all pupils in Years 7 and 8. This is central to improving pupils' speaking and writing skills. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills in ICT in the timetabled provision and in some subjects. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Curriculum planning for citizenship is at an early stage and the contributions that subjects make have not been identified in schemes of work.
35. The arrangements for grouping pupils according to their ability in English, mathematics and science are working well and the placing of additional learning support staff in specific subjects ensures that the requirements of pupils with special educational needs are met. The school's overall provision for meeting the needs of higher-attaining pupils is good. Setting by ability in English, mathematics and science has enabled them to make good progress and the recently introduced gifted and talented programme has contributed to improved attitudes to learning. Participation in the local education authority's summer school for gifted and talented pupils in 2002 and an after-school club has enhanced their experiences in modern foreign languages, particularly Spanish, and in food science and ICT. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language do not require specific support, as they are fluent in English.
36. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall in that its flexibility meets the needs of all the pupils very well. There are many positive features of the curriculum. The school has introduced a number of imaginative schemes in Years 10 and 11 resulting in a very flexible and relevant curriculum for its pupils. For example, the school has introduced GNVQ courses in business, health and social care and ICT. This has added breadth to the curriculum and provided greater choice and relevance to learning. Similarly the work-related learning and endeavour programmes help meet the interests and needs of pupils and ensure that an inclusive approach to education, both on and off the school site, is achieved. A significant number of pupils follow alternative courses that are more appropriate to their aptitude and needs. For example, a large number of pupils do not follow a course in French or in design and technology, so that they can focus more on the work-related learning activities. The design and technology course for other pupils, however, is unsatisfactory, as it does not meet the statutory requirements. This is because the school does not have access to computer-aided design and manufacture equipment. The allocation of time for most subjects is broadly average except for religious education, where insufficient time has been allocated to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus and the provision is unsatisfactory.
37. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum and to the full range of extra-curricular activities. The majority of support is provided in the classroom. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and enables them to develop confidence and self-esteem as they work alongside their peers. It is necessary to withdraw pupils from lessons from time to time so that curriculum support can be provided on an individual or small group basis. This is designed to give minimal disruption to the rest of the curriculum. Setting arrangements in English and mathematics enable these pupils to receive specialist help at the right level.
38. Overall provision for literacy is good. Some aspects are very good. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 have literacy lessons. Most follow the Literacy Progress Units that address features of reading and writing. The school supports this provision very well with additional staff, allowing the creation of

small groups. Pupils with special educational needs have lessons using materials more directly focused on their individual needs. At the same time gifted and talented pupils follow a school-based enrichment course. Further support for literacy is provided by the excellent 'buddy' reading partnership with Royal Mail employees and through the W H Smith TXT project that enriches the school's book provision. The support is very well managed.

39. Literacy issues are addressed very well in ICT lessons. The teacher ensures technical vocabulary is thoroughly understood and expects the pupils to use it accurately. She enhances understanding through the use of definitions and glossaries. The assignment work of GNVQ pupils was effectively supported by formats and templates that helped them successfully write reports about the uses of computer systems. High expectations impact well on the accuracy, planning and presentation of the pupils' work in religious education. In history, Year 9 pupils used higher-order reading skills such as skimming and scanning to extract relevant information from material about the American Plains Indians. The extended writing of Year 8 pupils was enhanced via the use of writing frames for an assignment on the poor in Elizabethan times. In design technology the pupils are questioned about the use and meaning of key terms and spelling is corrected. There is a need for more support for the pupils' folder work at GCSE. Science teachers reinforce key words in all lessons and their use is a constant lesson objective. The use of correct descriptive terms was stressed when pupils were constructing a structure using link cards. Classroom assistants effectively support pupils with reading and writing. In geography the teachers' planning for the use of literacy is very good and is effectively followed in lessons, especially through the use of key words. This can also result in very well organised writing such as when Year 11 wrote about social provision in different communities. Lower-attaining pupils require more support for their extended writing.
40. Although the library is well used, its book supply is dated. There are not enough non-fiction books to support the pupils' research skills and needs and there are no ICT research facilities. Provision for ICT across subjects is unsatisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages. Provision is very good for pupils with special educational needs. It is satisfactory in religious education and good in geography.
41. The provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory, having been completely regenerated. During the Spring of 2002 the school council was asked to conduct a wide-ranging review of the topics on offer through their form group representatives. The subject co-ordinator then resourced this using the guidance from the Curriculum and Qualifications Authority (QCA) during the summer term. Citizenship and religious education based modules form a limited part of strong health and social issues package.
42. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is extensive provision for sports and after-school clubs. The involvement of pupils has much improved, particularly of females, as a result of improved staffing provision and a better climate for learning in the school. Improvement in pupils' attitudes to learning has also contributed to the rising levels of participation in the clubs and activities. Many of the additional opportunities have a direct impact on pupils' attainment, either through improved performance in GCSE's or in enhancing literacy skills. For example, adults from Royal Mail and WH Smith regularly visit the school to hear reading, whilst older pupils frequently support younger pupils in developing computer skills. The school provides very good support outside school hours to counter the lack of facilities or support that some pupils receive at home. For example, the daily breakfast club serves food and provides a safe environment from 7.30 am for pupils to socialise or to complete work and many pupils take advantage of these opportunities. The school has very good links with other schools and colleges. It has very good pastoral links with the local primary schools and limited links with Chesterfield College have been put in place. There are few opportunities however, for pupils to engage on college-based courses.
43. The school has excellent links with the local community and this makes a major contribution to pupils' opportunities for learning and for personal development. The partnership that it has with Royal Mail is an outstanding example. Members of staff from Royal Mail regularly come into school to act as "buddy readers" to help pupils with reading difficulties. These pupils make

excellent progress as a result of the support that they receive from their mentors. Well-developed links with the local police enhance the curriculum for personal and social education and citizenship. The school has also established a very strong partnership with local employers, enabling pupils to benefit from a wide range of work experience placement.

44. Links with partner institutions are good overall. There is very good liaison between Parkside and local primary schools over the transfer of pupils after Year 6. Curricular links are also very well developed. The strong partnership that the school has with primary schools helps new pupils to settle down quickly in their new environment and to make good progress in Year 7. There is satisfactory co-operation between the school and Chesterfield College, but curricular links between the two are underdeveloped.
45. The curriculum has continued to be improved in recent years. Although there were no specific observations about the quality of the curriculum in the 2000 report, the school has improved its provision for higher-attaining pupils and further extended and consolidated its partnership with the community. Because provision now meets the needs of pupils more successfully, they participate in lessons with greater commitment and this in turn contributes to their improved self-esteem.

PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL)

46. The provision for pupils' personal development is good. A strong school ethos, characterised by very good relationships and high mutual respect, provides a very supportive context for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The commitment and attitudes of staff and the many other adults involved in the life of the school set a very positive example for pupils. Teachers usually make good use of the opportunities that arise in the classroom to promote pupils' personal development. However, most departments in their planning do not identify ways in which their subject can contribute to this aspect of pupils' education.
47. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Some subjects help to develop spiritual awareness and insights. For example, an English lesson based on the poetry of R S Thomas helped Year 11 pupils reflect on issues of meaning and value, and Year 7 work in religious education on ultimate questions encouraged pupils to think through matters of belief and debate, such as life after death. However, planned provision in most subjects is under-developed and some opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development are missed. Well-presented assembly themes that draw on personal experience and engage pupils' interests make a good contribution to their personal development. The local vicar, who is regularly involved in the life of the school, often contributes to assemblies in partnership with staff. However, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met, as reported at the previous inspection.
48. Moral education is very good. The daily life of the school and teachers' expectations successfully promote very positive values and help pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Ethical issues and moral dilemmas are considered in subjects such as history, geography and English. Work in personal and social education, and in religious education, helps pupils clarify their own moral values and think through some of the choices that they will need to make in life.
49. Social education is also very good. Pupils have good opportunities to develop social and collaborative skills in lessons. They are also given many opportunities to take on responsibilities and show initiative within the school. Pupils regularly take part in the selection of staff and last year participated in designing a new curriculum for the personal and social education course. They manage an annual talent show and organise fund-raising events for charity. The school council gives pupils good opportunities to contribute to decisions about facilities and influence policies. Pupils are involved in mentoring schemes within the school and they also help in local community projects such as Sure Start and the Lifestyle Programme.
50. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of different cultures are good in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. In these areas the connection between cultures and the development of multi-cultural

Britain are consistent features. In English and music, for example, teachers draw on material from a range of cultures. Cultural interests and horizons are successfully extended through pupils' participation in the school's programme of extra-curricular activity. Opportunities to take part in out-of-school sport have increased recently and the annual curriculum enrichment week held in July ensures that all pupils have the chance to extend their experience and broaden their interests.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school takes good care of its pupils overall. It has effective procedures for promoting their attendance, and it monitors their academic progress and personal development very thoroughly. Members of staff use the information from monitoring to provide pupils with good educational and personal guidance. Procedures for assessing and recording academic attainment at whole-school level are good. The significant time and effort used to support the 'Academic Review' process provide detailed targets for all pupils and these are reviewed regularly by subject staff. The ninety per cent plus parental attendance at these events is a measure of how the community is working with the school. The school has a holistic approach to care for pupils, merging pastoral support with academic guidance. This is very successful in raising pupils' aspirations and self-esteem, which improve behaviour and attainment.
52. There are very good arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. The school has pastoral teams consisting of form tutors and heads of year, but in practice all members of staff are involved in care and guidance. They provide pupils with very good support. They know them well and can identify and help those who are experiencing difficulties. Pupils appreciate the fact that staff care about their welfare and are always there to provide support and guidance. The rapport and warmth of feeling between pupils and staff is a strength of the school. It is evident in the way that pupils feel free to talk to the headteacher and members of the senior management team about their concerns. The school also has very good formal procedures for tracking and supporting the personal development of each pupil. The twice-yearly "Academic Review Days" give pupils good opportunities to meet their tutors for one-to-one interviews in which they discuss progress and set targets for improvement. The system ensures very good continuous monitoring and support.
53. There are very good procedures in place for the identification and monitoring of progress of pupils with special educational needs. All teachers understand these. The establishment of an excellent inclusion philosophy ensures that other pupils are very supportive of those who experience difficulties. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils requiring them. At present these do not always reflect the recommendations of pupils' statements. Progress of pupils is monitored against previous targets and they are fully involved in this process. This is by way of a "confidential" red diary containing targets set by the learning support department as well as class teachers. Teachers grade these books for effort in each lesson. Every fortnight they are monitored by the learning support department, working alongside the pupil. A very good range of initiatives has been introduced to improve pupils' reading and spelling. They include direct instruction, the "Toe by Toe" reading programme, "Beat Dyslexia", the Royal Mail Reading Partnership and a "Buddy" system.
54. The school gives very good support to pupils at important times in their lives, such as the transfer from primary to secondary education. Procedures for inducting Year 7 are good and are enhanced by close co-operation between Parkside and its partner primary schools. A well-organised programme of events helps pupils to settle in quickly and enjoy being at their new school. Very good provision for extra-curricular activities enhances personal development in all year groups. A wide range of trips, clubs and extra classes broadens pupils' horizons and raises their aspirations. Work experience helps Year 10 to become more mature and independent. The school provides a good choice of placements and prepares pupils well. They spend two very valuable weeks with local employers learning about the world of work.
55. Strategies for promoting good behaviour are very effective. The ethos of the school plays a key part in this. There is a calm, caring atmosphere combined with a climate of high expectations. Pupils know that members of staff want them to achieve well and have faith in their ability to succeed.

This raises both their self-esteem and their standards of behaviour. The school has very good procedures for celebrating success. The system of rewards gives pupils of all ages and abilities the chance to receive recognition for their achievements. It acts as a very effective incentive to hard work and positive behaviour. Pupils are very keen to earn enough "gold slips" to qualify for reward certificates. In lessons staff expect high standards of behaviour and deal consistently and effectively with breaches of discipline. As a result pupils are clear as to what is required of them and respond positively.

56. There are very good arrangements for promoting good order and for eliminating oppressive behaviour such as fighting and bullying. Pupils are well supervised as they move around the site. Senior staff are conspicuously on duty and intervene politely but firmly if they see a pupil misbehave. The school has effective routines for dealing with more serious breaches of discipline. Good referral procedures ensure that pupils with behaviour problems are identified, monitored and given appropriate support. The school rarely excludes pupils. There have been only 27 fixed period exclusions, and one permanent exclusion in the last two years. These were made for justifiable reasons.
57. The school has good and effective procedures for promoting good attendance. A member of the office staff makes first day contact with family of any pupil who is absent without explanation. This has a positive impact on attendance. Pupils are aware that both the school and their parents will find quickly find out if they attempt to play truant. They also know that teachers record attendance in lessons and cross-check absences against form registers. The system therefore acts as an effective deterrent against internal truancy. Members of staff monitor attendance carefully and refer pupils who are frequently absent without good cause to the education social worker. The support that the school receives from its education social worker has improved recently and is now satisfactory. There are good preventative strategies that seek to eliminate absenteeism.
58. The school has a suitable work-related curriculum for pupils who would otherwise become disaffected and drop out of education altogether. Excellent attendance is celebrated and rewarded, and pupils are regularly reminded that good attendance is essential to good achievement. These measures have raised attendance significantly in the last five years. However, they have had no effect on the incidence of holidays. Parents still take children out of school for family holidays, despite requests not to do so.
59. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. Members of staff are well briefed on the correct procedures for dealing with any major concerns about a pupil's welfare. Health and safety measures have been greatly improved in the last two years and are now satisfactory, as are the new procedures for Internet safety. The school has revised its health and safety policy and established a proper programme of risk assessments. However, the hazardous state of the tennis courts is a matter of concern.
60. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. At whole-school level they are good. The school has extensive data of pupils' attainment. It receives test data from primary schools and conducts additional tests on entry to Year 7. This information is shared with teachers, who, therefore, receive good baseline information on pupils' actual and potential attainment. Pupils are regularly assessed against National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades as they progress up the school. The results are analysed to evaluate the attainment of individuals and groups of pupils and to provide appropriate support.
61. Although there is a good whole-school policy on assessment there are inconsistencies at departmental level, and the weaknesses that were noted in the previous inspection have not been eliminated. The on-going use of assessment and quality of marking is uneven. In some subjects, such as geography, teachers regularly refer to National Curriculum levels and effort grades when marking work. However, in modern foreign languages, day-to-day assessment is not rigorous enough, and pupils in Years 7 to 9 are unclear about the levels at which they are working. Marking of work is limited in art and design and there is no effective target-setting. Marking and formal feedback to pupils also needs to be improved in ICT. Overall, pupils are not adequately involved in

and informed by day-to-day assessment. Therefore they do not have sufficient understanding of their attainment in all subjects of the curriculum.

62. There is good provision at whole-school level for educational guidance. Form tutors are fully involved in support for pupils' learning. They monitor their academic progress across all subjects and during the Academic Review Days. The school also provides very good educational support in the form of homework clubs, revision clubs, extra classes and mentoring schemes. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good use of these facilities to enhance their learning.
63. The school makes good use of assessment data to raise attainment through improvements to the curriculum and lesson planning. The curriculum for the whole school is reviewed every year. Information from assessments is an essential part of this process. It is used very effectively to create a curriculum that meets the needs of all the school's pupils; for example, by developing vocational education that motivates underachievers and engages potentially disaffected individuals. The English department also uses assessment data well in curricular planning. It analyses data carefully and uses the information to place pupils in appropriate sets. In art and design, on the other hand, there is not enough data to enable assessment to influence the development of curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. Parents are appreciative of the school and value the education that it gives their children. The majority strongly approves of its expectations regarding hard work from pupils. They feel very comfortable about approaching members of staff over problems and queries, and they have great confidence in the leadership and management of the school. The majority of parents are satisfied with all aspects of the school's work. However, more than one in seven are unhappy with the amount of homework that their children get, the quality of information on progress and the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors do not support the views of these parents in respect of information on progress and extra-curricular activities. They accept that teachers' use of homework is patchy. It is possible that some parents are unaware of how much is set, as some pupils fail to complete homework tasks.
65. The school has established a good partnership with parents and carers, and this enhances pupils' attainment and progress. It works hard to develop strong, effective home/school links, and is gradually succeeding. Parents are becoming more supportive of their children's learning. They have higher aspirations and are more co-operative over pupils' attendance and punctuality. The school has a policy of encouraging parents to come in to discuss queries and concerns. This starts with induction meetings to welcome parents of new pupils. Excellent community links enhance the home/school partnership. The school is actively involved in several local projects. As a result, parents see it as an organisation that works with them to improve the quality of life in the local community. They feel at ease with members of staff and are happy to come into school to attend academic review days and parents' evenings.
66. The school has made very good efforts to establish effective links with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Relationships are very open and most parents are happy with what the school is trying to achieve. Parents are very committed when it comes to attending annual reviews and open evenings.
67. The quality of information for parents is good. The school prospectus and annual report of the governing body fully comply and with legal requirements. There is a good system for reporting on pupils' progress. Parents greatly value the opportunity to sit in on the half-yearly interviews that their children have with form tutors. The review days are much more popular than standard parents' evenings were. More than nine out of ten parents attend their child's academic review. Written reports on progress give a good summary of pupils' attainment and progress. Subject reports follow a common format and use the same grading systems. As a result they are user friendly and reasonably consistent in quality. They include National Curriculum levels and, in the case of pupils in Year 10, predicted GCSE grades. Their main weakness is the lack of clear targets for improvement. Parents and pupils are given information on areas for development, but in the

majority of reports, only in the most general terms. The amount of day-to-day information is good. The school publishes a calendar of events and produces regular newsletters. Planners are in regular use, giving parents ready access to information about homework. Members of staff send home letters about children's individual achievements. They also contact parents regarding problems with pupils' attendance, work or behaviour.

68. Parents have a positive impact on the work of the school. A few years ago it was saved from closure by parental pressure on the local education authority. Parents are, therefore, keen to see the school succeed. They give very strong backing to the headteacher and senior members of staff, and are supportive over behaviour and attendance, with the exception of the issue of holiday leave. Although there is no longer a parent-teacher association, parents continue to raise money for the school. Their involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. They attend review days and school performances in large numbers and give good support. They also support extra-curricular and enrichment activities by making financial contributions towards the cost and by acting as volunteer supervisors on trips. Parents are beginning to think about higher education for their children but most still have relatively modest aspirations regarding academic attainment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The overall quality of leadership and management at the school is excellent. The vision, energy, commitment and professionalism of the headteacher are outstanding. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and taking effective action are excellent. This has secured good teaching in all areas of the school with over a quarter of all lessons judged very good or better. The impact of this improvement in teaching and learning has allowed the school to exceed significantly its targets for the last two years. The strategic use of all the grants and resources available, including those from and for the local community, is excellent. The effectiveness of the governing body is good and the consistency of the support they have provided through difficult times is commendable. The reflection of the school's aims in the way in which it works is excellent and the school gives very good value for money. The school has recently been asked by the Department for Education and Skills to lead an 'Excellence in Cities' cluster.
70. The headteacher has provided outstanding leadership. He has established a strong culture of evaluation of provision, to identify development needs. Planning and prioritising of key developments are very good, and he and the senior management team promote a clear understanding of those priorities with staff, governors, parents and pupils. All of the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed highly successfully.
71. The governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and their role in shaping its future. However, there are some weaknesses in aspects of the curriculum provision and they acknowledge that statutory curriculum requirements are not yet fully met. The headteacher and governing body have a well-managed policy for tackling deficiencies in areas of the curriculum. They are rightly considering how the school might benefit from specialist school status.
72. One of the strengths of the school is the extended senior management team and the delegation of management responsibilities through this team is excellent. Inter-linked project teams have been very successful in driving forward all aspects of the school's developments and the key issues identified in the last report. The management structure ensures excellent monitoring and evaluation of staff supports improvements in their performance. The quality of middle management amongst heads of subject and heads of year is very good.
73. Two acting special educational needs co-ordinators are providing very good interim leadership and management. They have successfully maintained a whole-school approach to teaching pupils with learning difficulties. Recording of pupils' progress is very good although as yet they do not have mechanisms in place for establishing how well this relates to performance in GCSE examinations. They have very good relationships with a large number of outside agencies and have successfully raised the profile of learning support assistants. The special educational needs governor is very supportive. The school is successfully operating the revised Code of Practice and the departmental

policy reflects this. The headteacher and governors are complying with legal requirements for the statements of pupils with special educational needs. Funding for special educational needs is appropriately deployed. The promotion of racial equality is one of the unspoken highlights of the very strong pupil teacher interaction seen in class and public areas.

74. The school's arrangements for strategic planning are outstanding. Leadership provides excellent educational direction. The whole-school development plan takes a long-term view, with detailed annual plans being mirrored by suitable departmental and team plans. These have enabled the school's challenging targets for improvement to be exceeded. The planning processes are fully costed at each stage. They provide the basis for the excellent systems for the evaluation and monitoring of the school's work, including the direct observation of teachers by senior managers. Formal reviews are conducted at regular intervals, and the results used to identify future planning priorities, as well as to identify best practice in the classroom. The scale of the improvement in provision and the many changes these required in recent years demonstrate a very good commitment on the part of the staff to improve the school. This very positive and supportive culture is a strength that shines through all staff/pupil interactions.
75. The staffing level is satisfactory, as is the match of teachers' qualifications to subjects taught, leading to good learning across the attainment range. However, difficulties of recruitment in English have had an adverse effect on GCSE standards. Teachers also enjoy the support of a very good range of technical and administrative staff. They are valued as a part of the whole staff team and make a considerable contribution. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are very good. They are carefully linked to the school's performance management and continuing professional development strategy. Staff development needs, for teachers and non-teaching staff alike, are identified clearly, matched to development priorities and appropriately funded. Staffing levels to support pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Accommodation for special educational needs is good, providing two large rooms for class, individual and group work. These are well used before school and during lunch breaks for additional tuition. The library is also well used for individual tuition and counselling. Resources are good although the department has recognised that an increase in literacy software is an area for development.
76. Accommodation in the main school is only just satisfactory overall but there are significant weaknesses that are impacting on standards. There are weaknesses in design and technology, art and design and mathematics, where limited space and access to modern ICT facilities are impacting on learning. In physical education indoor facilities are cramped and inadequate and outdoor play surfaces are small and in poor condition. The library is an unsatisfactory learning resource, outdated, cramped and lacking in ICT research facilities.
77. The school's spending on learning resources is slightly higher than in most schools. In the main school, resource provision is satisfactory and improving through the targeted financing of development plan priorities. The number of new computers is only fractionally behind the national average. The maintenance and expansion of ICT provision have been carefully planned and costed. The excellent community links funded by the New Opportunities Fund, accessed with the help of the local offices of the Royal Mail, have provided new community-based computer suite facilities at the school. However, in mathematics, geography and history pupils do not have sufficient access to computers and this limits their learning. The number of books in the library is just satisfactory and the school is benefiting considerably from the support of the local WH Smith. Resources are satisfactory in all other subjects.
78. The strategic use of resources is excellent. Specific grants, for example those for special educational needs or for staff training, are used properly. The school is very good at matching spending to educational priorities. Financial management that has been highly commended by auditors has helped turn a substantial deficit into a balanced budget that has been able to prioritise and support all aspects of the school's development. Governors ensure that a proper balance is struck between providing sufficient suitably qualified staff and the need to provide proper surroundings and learning resources. Spending relative to income is focused on the improvement in teaching and learning. Its effects are seen in the very good achievement that occurs in all sections of the school, the strongest performance in the local authority (LEA) in 2002. There are

excellent arrangements for securing best value, for example in the acquisition of new computers, and in the deployment of learning support staff to maximise the benefits of their time. Purchasing arrangements benefit from the security of LEA-backed schemes and the support of local suppliers. Financial administration is outstanding; in the most recent audit report the school received an A* rating with no significant points for action. The use of new technology is good, both to support administration and learning, as seen by the substantial recent investment in computers and multimedia technology throughout the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In preparing their action plan, the governors and senior managers of the school should bear the following key issues in mind. Where these are marked with (*), elements are already incorporated into the school's current development plan. In order to maintain the very significant progress the school has made in recent years the governing body and the headteacher should:-

- (1) *Address the weaknesses in aspects of the provision of the curriculum in citizenship and in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and religious education, ensuring that statutory requirements are met (*paragraphs 33,36,40,119,127,167*).
- (2) Continue to improve standards of teaching by improving the consistency of teachers' use of ICT and of day-to-day assessment, marking and homework across the school (*paragraphs 29,31,40,61,144*).
- (3) Enter into discussion with the local education authority to enhance the accommodation for mathematics, art and design, design and technology and physical education so that the full curriculum can be taught, including ICT elements, and standards raised further (*paragraphs 76-78,96,114,128,144,163*).

In addition the following minor issues should be included in the governors' action plan:

- i) Improve the library so that it meets pupils' learning needs (*paragraphs 40,77,78*).
- ii) Deal with health and safety in design and technology, where dust extraction from cutting and sanding machines is inadequate (*paragraph 128*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	138
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	93

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	11	27	59	39	2	0	0
Percentage	7.9	19.5	43	28	1.4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	518
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	178

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	135

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	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.7
National comparative data	91

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	48	43	91

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25	28	28
	Girls	20	19	19
	Total	45	47	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	49 (45)	52 (46)	52 (49)
	National	65 (64)	64 (66)	68(66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (5)	31(32)	16 (17)
	National	32 (31)	42 (43)	35 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	25	29	29
	Girls	23	22	21
	Total	48	51	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (46)	56 (45)	55 (45)
	National	65 (65)	67 (68)	54 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (18)	31 (30)	18 (18)
	National	32 (31)	40 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	44	32	76

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	15	41	43
	Girls	15	31	32
	Total	30	72	75
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (12)	95 (98)	98.7 (100)
	National	50 (48)	92 (91))	95 (96)

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

The change in average points score calculation nationally in 2002 has limited the improvement made in this figure.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	30 (27.6)

per pupil	National	39.5 (39)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	27
	National	Na

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	341	23	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	155	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

Financial year	2002/3
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	361

	£
Total income	1,834,519
Total expenditure	1,784,431
Expenditure per pupil	3,526
Balance brought forward from previous year	-26,849

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	20

Balance carried forward to next year	+23,539
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.13
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.17

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	518
Number of questionnaires returned	195

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	48	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	43	2	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	50	7	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	43	12	5	1
The teaching is good.	47	45	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	42	10	5	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	35	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	45	7	1	8
The school is well led and managed.	55	39	3	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	48	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	42	11	3	12

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Twenty-three parents submitted written comments. Almost all were very positive about the school, many unreservedly so. Where criticism was made, it most frequently concerned homework arrangements but accepted that their child had some responsibility for communication difficulties.

Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' evening all parents were extremely positive about their children's attitudes to school and were unanimous that 'the school and the whole community has changed.'

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Improved standards in Year 9 tests
- Strengths in teaching: expectations, pupil management, methods and planning
- Improved curriculum provision
- Good leadership and management especially in evaluation and monitoring
- Strong capacity for further improvement

Areas for improvement

- Complete process of implementing the National Literacy Strategy
- Use of marking, assessment and homework
- Improve GCSE examination results to match standards seen in lessons

79. Teaching and learning are good and standards are improving. Potential for further improvement is very good because the department now has stable specialist staff for the first time since 1999. Despite the previous staffing instability the department focused on improving standards and results through the National Literacy Strategy. This has had some effect in Years 7 to 9 but recent GCSE results suffered. The transformation of teaching and learning envisaged by the strategy has started to take root but the process is not yet complete.

80. Results in the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well below average for all schools. However, they were above average for schools with pupils from a similar background. They were well above average when compared with pupils who started secondary school with similar standards, indicating that overall achievement was very good. The proportion gaining the higher Level 6 or better was below the national average but well above average for both schools with pupils from a similar background and with similar standards. Results have improved significantly and consistently over time. In 1999 only 10 per cent achieved Level 5 or higher; in 2002 the figure was 50 per cent. Results in 2002 were more than one level higher than in 1999 – a dramatic improvement, reflecting more focused teaching and effective use of materials such as the ‘booster’ pack to raise the standards of all pupils.

81. In the 2001 GCSE examination results the proportion gaining grade C or higher was very low and lower than the well below average figure in 2000. It was well below the average for schools with similar pupils. The average grade was below the national average by about one and half grades. Girls’ results were better than boys’ results. Nevertheless, results were broadly as expected given the same pupils’ very low standards in their earlier end of Year 9 national tests. In 2002 there was a small increase in the proportion gaining C or higher. In the 2001 English literature examination the proportion gaining C or higher was also very low. Pupils did significantly worse than in most of their other subjects. There was a notable improvement in 2002. Although results were still well below the usual average there was more than a threefold increase in the proportion gaining C or higher.

82. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are below average. This represents good achievement given the pupils’ well below average standards on entry to the school. This improvement on the 2002 results is because more pupils achieved the expected standards in the accuracy and organisation of their writing. About a fifth of the pupils are reaching the higher Level 6 because they effectively and deliberately seek to engage the reader though their choice of vocabulary. However, nearly half of all pupils are below, and in some cases well below, the expected level in writing skills. Their work contains too many errors, particularly in the use of punctuation, paragraphing and well-expressed, standard English. Those whose writing is well below average make frequent errors. Further improving the quality of writing will make the most

significant impact on raising standards since standards of reading are broadly average. Pupils of a wide range of attainments responded with sensitivity, deductive understanding and insight to the themes in 'Dulce et Decorum Est'. Knowledge of literary techniques is also strong as a lower middle set showed when commenting on the devices used by Owen. Another group used and commented on quotations effectively when comparing poems written by Blake and Hughes. Most pupils are fluent readers who use good expression. Only a small proportion have difficulty with fluency and word recognition. Standards of speaking and listening are average with about a third above average. When discussing the concept of a hero many pupils, especially boys, were confident and fluent when speculating about the ideas presented to them.

83. Standards in Year 11 are below average. This is good achievement in relation to the same pupils' well below average results at the end of their Year 9. Current standards represent a significant improvement on GCSE results in 2000 and 2001. This group of pupils, however, has suffered a lack of continuity in staffing and some must make up lost ground in relation to course work and handling examination questions successfully. Their improving standards result from the consistent teaching they now receive, which focuses directly on their learning needs.
84. About 40 per cent are working at grade C or higher. A small proportion of pupils are working at grade B or higher. Their writing is highly accurate and they include detailed and specific evidence to support their arguments when writing about texts such as 'Romeo and Juliet'. Pupils working at the C grade level organise their work effectively and write with a sound accuracy. Their writing and vocabulary lack the range and crispness of the higher attaining pupils. Their written response to reading tends to be too general. Yet when talking about a text they show the capacity to be precise and insightful about the impact of a writer's choice of words, pointing out how R S Thomas' use of 'fondled' conveys the farmer's love of the earth. Transferring these detailed insights into their written responses will have a significant impact on their reading assessments. There is a large group of middle attaining pupils, some of whom have the potential to achieve grade C but currently lack the expected consistency in written accuracy and organisation. One group approached the required standard when following closely the model presented by the teacher but they are not transferring these skills to their own unaided work consistently. A minority is working at well below average standards in writing. These pupils make too many errors in spelling and punctuation and their use of paragraphing is inconsistent. Yet their response to reading in discussion was close to the average. They identified, with the teacher's prompting, how Thomas' language conveyed a sense of pride and care for the land. Overall standards of speaking and listening are average. Many pupils explain their thinking with clarity, making lengthy and well-structured contributions to class discussion.
85. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. They make good progress. Their teachers have high expectations and ensure they are included in all aspects of the department's work. In Years 7 to 8 good use of specialist teachers of special needs and support staff ensure these pupils receive teaching that specifically addresses their reading and writing needs. The proportion who go on to take GCSE in English is above average and in literature well above average. Pupils in Year 10 are already achieving very well because of well-focused and supportive teaching that has helped them produce extremely well-organised and knowledgeable assignments on 'Romeo and Juliet'.
86. Teaching and learning are good overall. There are real strengths in the teachers' expectations and in the management of the pupils. Lesson planning is also good and improving as a result of the better curriculum arrangements caused by the impact of the National Strategy. There is also a strong link between learning aims, the tasks pupils do and the learning needs of the pupils. Consequently, pupils work hard in lessons, behave well, are frequently challenged, and are motivated and interested by the subject matter and activities. The teachers have a good specialist knowledge of the skills the pupils need to improve and this resulted in Year 11 pupils writing well-structured comparisons about poetry in preparation for their examination. The wide range of methods used also motivates pupils. Pupils in all years responded well to pair, group and drama activities but at the same time were responsive to the teachers' probing questioning. An important development is the impact of the Literacy Progress Units for most pupils in Years 7 and 8. These materials are impacting well on Year 7 pupils' reading skills: in one outstanding lesson middle-

attaining pupils showed above average skills in skimming and scanning and in speculating about a text. High expectations about the quality of behaviour and work, clear learning aims, excellent control and a fast pace were the hallmarks of this excellent lesson.

87. There are still areas that this recently-formed team needs to develop. Some features of the Literacy Strategy are not consistently embedded: learning aims are not always clarified or referred back to during lessons; some starter activities take too long; closing whole-class sessions are not effective. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not doing enough extended writing either in class or at home. There are inconsistencies in marking.
88. The subject is well led and managed. Responsibilities are well deployed through the department and effectively carried out. There is an open and positive attitude to evaluation and monitoring; use of the local education authority's Key Stage 3 literacy consultant has resulted in very good monitoring that in turn has identified new and appropriate development targets. The use of assessment to support curriculum organisation, development and enrichment is good. The provision for higher-attaining and gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 and 8 is very effective and exciting. Not enough use is made of other features of assessment to support learning. There are not enough formal assessment tasks in Years 7 to 9; pupils do not receive enough guidance about their National Curriculum and GCSE targets in terms of levels, grades and learning, although some very good practice was seen in a Year 9 speaking and listening lesson.

Drama

89. In 2001 seven pupils sat GCSE drama with four gaining a grade C or higher. This number is too small to compare to the national average. In 2002 a much higher entry resulted in 81 per cent achieving C or higher – above the usual average for the subject. School data show that these pupils did better in drama than in their other subjects. Standards seen in the inspection were above average and confirmed very good achievement given the pupils' well below average standards in their end of Year 9 national tests. They showed an assured comfort in the use and discussion of conventions such as dramatic monologue and freeze frame. They enjoyed the challenge of the work, developing a dramatic improvisation based on 'Oedipus Rex'. The teaching was good in these lessons but was outstanding in a third lesson with lower-attaining Year 9 pupils. Very high expectations and excellent subject knowledge motivated the pupils to achieve extremely well in creating mood and atmosphere through their body sculptures based on the theme of drink/driving. They were challenged and enthused, their mood one of excited anticipation when the teacher used lighting and sound to enhance the impact of their work. The pupils' personal development also benefits significantly from drama. As well as working on themes that broaden their awareness of social and cultural issues they enhance their skills of team work, problem-solving and task completion. The subject is led by an enthusiastic and highly-skilled teacher.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Results in national tests and examinations in Years 9 and 11.
- Significant improvements in the standards of teaching.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Good management, particularly of the numeracy strategy in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave well.
- Good use of assessment data, academic reviews and mental mathematics strategies.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT and practical equipment.
- The inconsistent quality of teaching of non-specialist staff.
- The quality of marking is unsatisfactory or poor in some books.
- Cramped accommodation and lack of equipment inhibit practical learning.

90. Results in the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well below average for all schools. However, they were above average for schools with pupils from a similar background. They were very high when compared with pupils who started secondary school with similar standards, indicating that overall achievement was very good. The proportion gaining the higher Level 6 or better was below the national average but well above for both schools with pupils from a similar background and those with similar standards. Results have improved significantly and consistently overtime. Performance in mathematics is higher than in English and science.
91. In the 2002 GCSE examination results the proportion gaining grade C or higher was below the national average. There was little variation between the results of girls and boys. These results, however, were above expectations given pupils' prior attainment at the start of Year 10. Progress is therefore good, with over half of the pupils achieving higher than their predicted grades.
92. Work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 is below average, but higher-attaining pupils are working at standards up to Level 7 and beyond. Pupils demonstrate better understanding of number as a result of the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Their mental and oral skills are well developed through introductory numbers and a programme of mental/oral tests to sharpen their mental skills.
93. Pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are less developed. Though there is some good work done in this area, non-specialists in the department do not have the same knowledge and skills in the delivery of this aspect and learning is least effective in their lessons. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the activity chosen was too difficult for most pupils and they struggled to solve the given problem. Lower-attaining pupils have especially weak estimation skills. They are not able to judge approximate weights, capacities and lengths of everyday objects and hence are not able to see when answers are sensible or silly when working on measuring problems. The limited space available in the department makes such practical mathematics difficult and is therefore impacting upon standards of attainment.
94. In work seen in Year 11, standards are below average, although they are satisfactory in number, shape and space and data-handling. Pupils also demonstrate a good grasp of number, shape and measures and handling data. They are able to draw a variety of graphs and draw conclusions. Pupils show confidence and competence with number, and are able to use fractions, decimals and percentages when solving problems. Their work on using and applying mathematics is better, since all pupils have to do this work as part of their GCSE coursework. Higher-attaining pupils develop sound algebra skills and can solve volume and area problems using formulae.
95. There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons, to enhance the teaching and learning in mathematics, because of the lack of space in teaching rooms. As with the difficulties in practical mathematics there is a negative impact upon standards of attainment.
96. The progress of pupils is good overall, particularly given their low starting point on entry to the school. It is particularly good in better lessons where teachers plan to meet their individual needs, higher-attaining pupils are challenged and extended and lower-attaining pupils are well supported. In some lessons, progress is only satisfactory. Progress is hampered by inconsistencies in teaching, such as inappropriate choice of work which is too difficult, poor marking which does not identify where pupils need help or having difficulty or spending too long on introductions to a topic. Progress is generally better in the higher sets, where teaching is consistently good or better and pupils are taught by specialist teachers.

97. Teaching and learning are good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The best teaching includes good planning which caters for the range of attainment in the class, extending high attainers and supporting lower-attaining pupils. Good management ensures pupils keep on task and waste little time. Effective support ensures that they are clear about the task given, are helped when they have problems and are supported in understanding concepts. These teachers use appropriate technical language accurately and in context and ask pupils to explain their thinking. This helps them to learn to use this language themselves and deepens their understanding. Careful marking praises and encourages pupils, raising their self-esteem. At the same time it guides them where they make mistakes and shows them ways to improve both their mathematics and their presentation. Good use of mental and oral activities sharpens their mental skills and helps them to develop mathematical language, knowledge and skills. Lower-attaining pupils are praised for their successes, raising their confidence and motivating them to make further efforts and attain more success.
98. In a minority of lessons teaching is less effective because planning is less detailed, sometimes incorrect methods are used, marking does not focus on ways to improve and unsatisfactory and poor presentation escapes comment. Some books are not marked at all, some have graffiti in them and careless and untidy work escapes comment.
99. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Teachers are beginning to make good use of programmes that help pupils to catch up on areas of weakness. Good use is made of learning support assistants who provide effective guidance to pupils who find some of the work difficult. However, insufficient use is made of short-term targets to give pupils success. In many books, marking does not address poor presentation. There is insufficient emphasis on the subject specific language.
100. Assessment is well used to measure attainment and progress and set targets effectively for academic reviews with parents and pupils. However, assessment is used less consistently to find out what pupils know, understand and can do, in order to guide lesson planning. For example in one lesson, at the end of a mental arithmetic test, no note was made of weak areas so that these could be addressed in a future lesson. This weakness is compounded by the variations in the quality of marking noted earlier.
101. Leadership and management of the department are good. There are significant improvements in provision in mathematics since the last report. Documentation is thorough and appropriate and supports teaching and learning. Many elements of the numeracy strategy for Years 7 to 9 are well established and in consequence standards of attainment and teaching have both improved significantly. Good and often very good progress is seen in the higher-attaining sets. However, lower-attaining sets are taught by non-specialist or temporary teachers and though their progress is satisfactory overall, inconsistencies in the quality of marking and teaching methods employed are inhibiting the quality of learning. There are insufficient and sometimes missed opportunities for pupils to use computers in lessons to enhance and extend their learning. A lack of practical equipment prevents pupils from developing a good understanding of weights and measures.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The provision and organisation of practical work is a strong feature of the teaching.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils and pupils are good and support good achievement and behaviour.
- The support for teaching staff from the learning support assistant leads to lower-attaining pupils making good progress.
- The support for the teaching staff from the laboratory technician is good.

Areas for improvement

- The systematic and constructive marking of pupils' work
- The recording of practical work.
- A programme of good scientific observation and description needs to be developed.
- Spiritual and cultural education in science.

102. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are well below the national average, but well above average when compared to similar schools. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are well below the national average, but average when compared to similar schools. Pupils' attainment upon entry to the school is significantly below the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 in the national tests in Year 9 was close to the national average for the years 2000 and 2001, but below the national average for Level 6. The boys' attainment was higher than that of the girls. Eight per cent of pupils in Year 11 achieved grades A* to C in 2001, 19 per cent in 2002. During this time the average points score in science rose from 2.7 to 3.3. Although this is below the average points score when compared to other subjects in the school, and below the national average points score, it shows significant progress. During this period 98.5 per cent of pupils in Year 11 achieved grades A* to G, which is slightly above the national average. Teacher assessments in Year 9 and Year 11 were reflected accurately in the test and examination results. The trend in the average total point score per pupil was above the national trend both at Year 9 and Year 11.
103. The work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 was average compared to national standards. However, good progress is made in Years 7 to 9 in relation to pupils' prior attainment. This was confirmed by evidence from observation during lessons, discussion with pupils and the scrutiny of pupils' work. The provision and organisation of practical work is a strong feature of the teaching throughout the school. In Year 7, lower-attaining pupils could identify when a chemical change took place, they were also able to recognise the lack of chemical change when chemicals did not react. Another similar group of Year 7 pupils could identify and match structure to function when studying the microscope. A group of higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 were able to determine when and where photosynthesis took place, given plants from different environments. Some practical results required interpretation by the teacher, but the majority of the class made accurate deductions. A group of lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 studied the characteristics of five different types of potato. As well a size, shape, colour, and leaf scars, one group successfully carried out a simple test to determine the toughness of the potato skins.
104. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 demonstrate independence in collecting, handling and assembling apparatus. They work together co-operatively, they observe safety factors and their behaviour in the laboratory is good. Following successful practical work, however, there is little follow-up in terms of written records. Pupils' class books do not reflect the quality of their laboratory investigations. There is no emphasis on the quality of recording observations and as a result, there is little descriptive work related to the observations carried out.
105. Through the work of the learning support assistant (LSA) children with special educational needs make good progress. In lessons observed for Year 7, some 15 out of 22 pupils were on the SEN register. In Year 9 a wide variety of techniques was employed to ensure pupils were able to follow the lesson to the very best of their ability. The techniques included individual targets, reading, writing and practical help (including encouragement). A feature of the lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 is the use of key words. They are written on the whiteboard at the beginning of each lesson and included as one of the learning objectives. These key words form a strand of the department's literacy strategy. There were no examples of developing skills in numeracy or use of ICT.
106. Compared to national standards, the work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 11 was below average. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and does not match the progress made in the earlier years. This was confirmed by evidence from observation, discussion with pupils and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Practical work was a strong feature in all of the lessons observed in Years 10 and 11. Following the demonstration of a 'thermit' reaction, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 demonstrated their knowledge of chemical equations, conservation of mass, and

exothermic reactions. A small number of the group were able to make calculations using molecular weights. Most used the periodic table to record chemical symbols and atomic mass numbers. A higher-attaining group in Year 10 measured the speed of reaction between two chemicals and was able to illustrate their results on a graph using the line of best fit. The teacher used the lesson to reinforce basic skills in numeracy. During this lesson pupils worked with enthusiasm over a period of 50 minutes, achieving average standards. In another Year 10 lesson lower-attaining pupils measured frequency. Using a slinky spring, they calculated peaks of waves per second. The LSA made an excellent contribution to the lesson, helping to reinforce pupils' basic numeracy skills.

107. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils arrive to lessons on time and are co-operative in the laboratory. Attendance is good. Relationships are good, and contribute to the good standards of behaviour. All of the lessons observed had an appropriate practical emphasis. Pupils worked in small groups with a degree of independence, gaining positive experience in a practical way. The needs of all pupils across the attainment range were met through a series of setted lessons, where learning content was related to ability. SEN pupils received good support. Pupils' written work is not emphasised enough and practical work is not recorded. Learning in the laboratory is not followed up with suitable explanations and conclusions. Marking does not always reinforce learning and it ranges from excellent to non-existent. Where marking has not taken place, pupils are unaware of the quality of their work.
108. Leadership and management are good. There is a pleasant working relationship within a department that is committed to the education of its pupils. The constant and continual support of the staff in their teaching roles contributes to pupils' social and moral development. Laboratory facilities and resources are good. The emphasis on practical work and the quality of support for the teaching staff provided by the laboratory technician are strengths of the department. Assessment policies and a tracking system to support pupils' progress are working well in Years 7 to 9. However, the department's marking policy is not effective and numeracy and ICT policies are not fully implemented. During the inspection there was little evidence of teachers giving attention to cultural and spiritual education to enhance pupils' learning.
109. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement in pupils' attainment and progress in all year groups. During the inspection there was no evidence of the poor behaviour previously reported. The school has introduced a policy of social inclusion. This is reflected in pupils' co-operative behaviour within the laboratories and the pleasant day to day relationships with each other and with their teachers.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is now good; the teacher has high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Leadership for art and design is good, concentrating on raising interest and attainment.

Areas for improvement

- The pupils' commitment to art and design, especially in Years 10 and 11, is not what it could be.
- The resources for art and design are unsatisfactory.

110. The standards attained by pupils in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below the national average. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, standards were well below the national average. However, this is not considered a valid comparison since only six girls and nine boys were entered for the examination. All the girls gained a grade in the A* to C range, but only one of the boys. The results over the previous two years have been similar and it is clear that attainment has been, at best, average.

111. In work seen during the inspection attainment at the end of Year 9 is well below average. There are no data on the pupils' attainment when they began in Year 7. Based on other data and the performance of pupils in the current Year 7, achievement would appear to be satisfactory overall. The range of pupils' skills is very limited, which means they have difficulty in expressing ideas and feelings effectively through a range of media. Their ability to sustain a study of a particular artist or collect visual notes is poor. It is also hampered by their limited language skills and lack of concentration. Few pupils are able to evaluate critically and improve their work as it develops. There is a similar picture in the Year 10 and 11 groups. A concentration of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs depresses the overall standard more than is usual in GCSE classes. In the best work seen, usually that of girls, pupils show they can explore a range of ideas and themes in different media such as block printing, watercolour or drawing. Although these are sometimes presented well, final pieces lack depth and excitement.
112. Until the beginning of this term there had been no permanent art teacher for several years. The impact of a new appointment in the department has been to improve teaching and learning, which were good in nearly all lessons observed. The teacher takes care to involve all pupils in learning and developing the basic skills and attitudes needed for working in the art room. In a good Year 7 lesson, the teacher moved the pupils on from a successful drawing exercise to realise their designs in three dimensions. Through careful planning and clear explanations the teacher works hard to ensure that the pupils remain focused on the lesson tasks. Pupils are beginning to gain self-confidence. In a good Year 11 lesson, the teacher showed examples of work from pupils at another school to illustrate how to plan and develop studies for the mock examination. This was a revelation to them and inspired the pupils to explore the themes more thoroughly. Pupils with special learning needs were also encouraged to change their approach to the task. Pupils at all levels are still resistant to the idea that homework should form an important part of their development. The teacher is handling this sensitively. Pupils are now particularly keen to use their Internet research skills to learn about artists such as Klimt or Van Gogh.
113. The learning environment plays an important part in the pupils' developing attitudes to art and design. Because of previous neglect the teacher has needed to enhance this considerably with displays of the work of pupils and other artists from her own collection. This has proved to be of considerable interest and a source of inspiration to pupils. These displays are gradually being replaced with the pupils' own work. A dramatic exhibition of Year 7 drawing and painting from life is now on show in the school entrance. Resources for art, however, remain unsatisfactory and restrict the range of work that the pupils can do. There is a lack of books and other source material; access to ICT is very difficult and the pottery and photography rooms remain out of commission.
114. There were no issues raised at the last inspection. Although improvement overall has been unsatisfactory because of staffing problems, it is clear that there has been good improvement this year, in both the learning taking place and the pupils' attitudes. With the good leadership now being provided by the new head of department and the support of the senior managers, there is good potential for further improvement.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The new personal and social education course provides a good base for developing the citizenship curriculum.
- Pupils have very good opportunities for developing the skills of participation and responsible action.

Areas for improvement

- Information is needed about how different subjects contribute to citizenship.
- The planning and co-ordination of a curriculum that promotes knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens.
- Assessment and recording of pupils' progress to identify areas where achievement could be improved.

115. The school is at an early stage of implementing the new citizenship curriculum. A new personal and social education course, which is taught for one period a week to all classes, has been successfully developed over the last year. At the moment the course mainly covers personal, health and careers education topics, and only briefly touches on wider citizenship issues. There was, therefore, insufficient evidence during the inspection to make judgements about standards in the subject at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11.
116. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the personal and social education course is very good. In two Year 9 lessons on the effects of alcohol, for example, very challenging teaching helped pupils analyse information thoughtfully to justify their opinions. Pupils responded very well to the teaching and were fully involved in the lessons. The school is planning to develop the personal and social education course so that, with additional contributions from other subjects, the full programme of study for citizenship can be covered. The teaching and learning currently taking place in the personal and social education course provide a good basis for developing pupils' knowledge and skills.
117. The school provides pupils with very good opportunities for developing the skills of participation and responsible action. The arrangements for the school council enable pupils to contribute to decisions about facilities and to influence school policies. It is effective in involving all pupils through elections and regular communication between the council and each class in the school. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in the work of the school through taking part in the selection of staff and helping to design the new personal and social education course. Pupils take action to support others through mentoring schemes within the school and through local projects in the community, such as Sure Start and the Lifestyle Programme.
118. The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject is being well managed. Although current curricular provision is unsatisfactory, the school improvement plan accurately identifies what needs to be done; in particular, finding out how different subjects contribute to citizenship at the moment, and then developing a whole-school curriculum that explicitly promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. Ways of assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievement in citizenship will also need to be developed. However, the school's personal and social education course, together with the opportunities that pupils already have to develop their skills of participation and responsible action, provide a good basis for developing the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to achieve very well.
- The good standards of practical work in resistant materials in Years 10 and 11.
- The excellent links made in food technology to the science curriculum.
- The excellent behaviour and very good attitudes of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- ICT needs to be used better in all years to help both teaching and learning.
- The use of computer-assisted designing and manufacturing (CAD/CAM).
- Standards in graphics, work folders and portfolios need to rise in all years.
- The curriculum needs broadening in Years 10 and 11 and more pupils should take GCSE.

119. The standard of work in Years 7 to 9 is average. This broadly agrees with teachers' assessments made at the end of Year 9. However, there is a discrepancy between the standards of making things out of materials, such as wood or food, and the standards of pupils' designs and written work. Pupils' making is above average whilst pupils' other work is below average. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
120. GCSE results in 2001 were very good compared to the results in most other subjects in the school; pupils did better in design and technology than they did in their other subjects. Comparison of the school's results with national results cannot be accurate, as only half of the pupils in Year 11 took design and technology GCSE, whereas in most schools, most pupils do. A little over a third of pupils who did take GCSE attained a C grade; this is below the half of pupils nationally who attain grades between A* and C. All pupils taking GCSE did get at least a G grade, which is a little better than the national picture. In 2002, well under half of Year 11 took GCSE design and technology. Results were better than in 2001. The proportion of A*-C grades was similar but grades included three B grades and one A grade. Results in the GCSE in resistant materials were much better than in food.
121. Limited evidence indicates the standard of current work in Year 11 is below average overall. Work in resistant materials ranges from below average to well above average, work in food ranges from average to well below average. These differences and ranges are no reflection on teaching but reflect differences in the prior attainment of pupils in classes. Pupils are much better at making than they are writing ideas down and sketching designs. It is weaknesses in this portfolio work that let them down at GCSE and reduce their grades. Small group sizes and few girls taking GCSE in 2001 mean it is difficult to establish if there is any significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Girls do well in GCSE resistant materials. Some girls are doing particularly well in Year 10; they work hard, learn quickly and make good products. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
122. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour in lessons is excellent. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, ask sensible questions, follow instructions and help each other out. They make real physical and mental efforts to do well; they are really interested in their work and are pleased to be able to talk about it. A Year 7 boy explained how he had cut and shaped the fibreboard body of his money box, ensured a piece of acrylic plastic would fit the front of it, and drilled and countersunk holes to take screws to hold it tight.
123. Very good lessons in food technology, in Year 9, were concerned with how cake mixes could be encouraged to rise through different techniques, some physical like sieving, and some chemical, like baking powder. Pupils not only learnt how to prepare ingredients, mix them and cook a successful cake, they also gained much knowledge about the expansion of air and steam, and the chemical reactions taking place with baking powder and with bicarbonate of soda. They can successfully explain how bubbles of carbon dioxide are formed and understand exactly why bicarbonate of soda produces a strange taste, as the mechanism was very clearly explained by the knowledgeable teacher. Such links between technology and science meant that pupils were intellectually challenged and learnt the better for it. A satisfactory Year 8 lesson in graphics had good features; pupils were managed well, and the work that was planned for completed. However, there was a lack of challenge for pupils potentially better than others in using computers; for example, to create borders and manipulate font sizes and types. The computer equipment is relatively new and the teacher is not fully informed about work in ICT going on elsewhere in the school, or what ICT experiences pupils have from home. Another Year 8 class enjoyed making an

electronic steady hand game; they helped each other solder small components and could identify some. Their skills in soldering and cropping wires need further honing and the teacher needs to pay attention to this.

124. An excellent Year 10 resistant materials lesson gave opportunities for pupils to show independent thought and come forward with modifications to their product, a copper cup forming part of a laminated wood candle holder. The skills and techniques that will have to be taught and learnt to enable them to carry their ideas through, will be very challenging and create something to be admired. A Year 10 girl, confident in the use of a gas blowtorch, instructed a friend how to safely ignite it and use it to heat copper to red heat. She did not take over and do the job but made sure her friend could do it herself; it was an excellent example of peer support. Teachers foster very good attitudes to work by ensuring an interesting range of activities is well planned before lessons begin and by having high expectations of work and behaviour; food technology lesson planning sheets are exemplary. Year 11 pupils are also enthusiastic about their very good ideas for toys, destined for a local toy library. These often have complex movements and are finished to high standards. The making skills implicit in many are above average.
125. Pupils' literacy is supported through teachers' correct use of technical language and insistence on its use. Numeracy is helped through a variety of measuring requirements needed when making things, some analysis of food types and costs using a computer program, and the use of graphs to display the results of food-related questionnaires.
126. As design and technology is generally well taught and pupils achieve very well by the time they leave school, it is unfortunate that more do not take it through to GCSE. The curriculum is narrow in Years 10 and 11. The school should consider offering a third subject such as graphics or textiles. No food technology is being taught in Year 10 this year. In consequence, pupils have also lost the opportunity to take a basic food hygiene course, a nationally recognised qualification and essential for people working with food. A few Year 9 pupils lose time in lessons as they attend another course off site one lesson each week; this hinders their learning.
127. The department is well led and managed. Teaching is monitored well. Pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed and their progress linked to National Curriculum levels or examination board criteria. Pupils know how well they are doing on a day-to-day basis; teachers talk to them, give advice, and provide opportunities to catch up out of lessons. Excellent use is made of technicians to support pupils in lessons and very good use made of learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs; teachers are better able to focus on teaching and consequently pupils learn better. There are no computers in the workshop areas and only a few computers adjacent to the food technology room, not connected to the school network. This limits opportunity and achievement. The department has insufficiently developed graphics work, electronic modelling, control systems, data analysis, and research through the use of ICT. Dust extraction from cutting and sanding machines is inadequate and dust poses a health hazard to regular users such as teachers and technicians.
128. The last inspection did not inspect design and technology but there is some evidence of improving results. The ability of the department to improve further is constrained without further investment in resources and staff.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in the subject because of the very good support they receive in lessons.
- Good teaching is leading to the raising of standards.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject are improving pupils' enthusiasm and interest in learning.

Areas for improvement

- The standards that are expected of pupils in book work.
- The reliability of the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9.

129. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were well below average but represent an improvement on the results in recent years. The attainment of boys and girls was broadly similar and pupils did as well in geography as they did in the other subjects that they studied.
130. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are below average. This represents very good achievement given the low standards of entry to the school. Most pupils have a basic level of map skills and understand the concept of scale, but the working out of distances on a map is a difficulty for many. On the other hand they know about compass directions and use appropriate terms to describe the position of one place from another. Many pupils draw graphs to show information but accuracy is often reduced because they do not take enough care in plotting and presenting information. Knowledge of places is satisfactory. They can use the atlas to find continents and countries but many average and lower-attaining pupils are unsure about using latitude and longitude to locate places. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, many identified Brazil and knew about the major features there, but others found difficulty in observing and using map information to provide facts about the country. Pupils use a range of terms in the appropriate context such as 'imports' and 'exports'. In Year 9, for example, they know about the different development of countries and share thoughts on moral issues such as the use of cheap labour in poor countries to meet the fashion demands of wealthy countries. Many pupils express ideas well in discussion, but written explanations lack detail and grammatical accuracy.
131. The standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are below average. This represents good achievement given their standards at the end of Year 9. Pupils have a satisfactory level of knowledge of topics. In a study of weather systems in Year 10 for example, many know terms 'warm fronts' and 'cold fronts' and describe the weather features associated with them. Higher-attaining pupils understand why particular weather features results from physical changes in the atmosphere with the passage of a depression and their written explanations are good because they can express themselves well. Many pupils, however, find difficulty in reading weather charts and written explanation are generalised and weakly expressed. The standards achieved in GCSE coursework are variable. High and average-attaining pupils do well because they have good research skills; they organise work well and take care in presentation. The work is improved because they make good use of ICT to research and present findings. Other pupils, however, attain lower standards because they do not show a range of geographical skills in the work or explain their findings enough.
132. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. The teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of topics and plan their lessons carefully to provide interest and relevance to pupils' learning. They regularly consolidate work covered earlier and this improves pupils' self confidence about what they can do. As a result their understanding of topics improves. The methods that teachers use to promote learning are very good because pupils are actively engaged in learning. In a Year 9 lesson about international trade in the fashion industry, for example, pupils worked co-operatively to categorise statements about the industry. They concentrated well and then engaged in lively debate about the conclusions reached. As a result they significantly improved their knowledge and understanding about the organisation of the industry. Pupils are well informed about how well they are doing because teachers write detailed comment about the quality of the work and how to improve, but do not give enough attention to the correction and support to weaknesses in grammatical accuracy. Consequently many do not give enough attention to punctuating their work and to spell words correctly. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in lessons because teachers are well informed about their difficulties and plan time to support them in lessons. On some occasions, however, their writing needs are not appropriately met and achievement is lower than expected. In lessons where learning is very good teachers make high demands on pupils' effort and depth in study of topics, but occasionally the tasks do not set appropriate challenge and pupils do not achieve high enough in the lesson.

133. Teaching and learning are good in Year 10 and Year 11 and this leads to pupils achieving well in the GCSE course. Teachers have good understanding of the examination requirements and give very good support to help pupils to improve their attainment. The careful planning of lessons combined with emphasis on developing pupils' examination skills is leading to rising GCSE standards. The aims of lessons are clear and learning activities are well selected to engage and challenge pupils to develop understanding of topics. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils' understanding about the links in the ecological system was improved because the teacher involved them in a simulation exercise that enabled them to relate their experience to how the components of life systems inter-relate in the environment. They were then able to write detailed accounts about what they had learned. Teachers place emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem through praise and encouragement for effort and achievement. This leads to improving attitudes to the subject, the raising of self-confidence and higher achievement. Occasionally progress in lessons is slow because many pupils do not participate in discussion; they are passively involved in learning and teaching strategies are not adopted to engage them more actively in learning. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their writing skills, but lower-attaining pupils do not always achieve their potential in the absence of writing support.
134. Leadership and management are very good. The recently-appointed head of department has made substantial progress in raising standards and establishing a very positive ethos for learning. The subject improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for development and very good procedures are in place to monitor and review the work of the department. The schemes of work have been revised and provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. These inform teachers well except for the explicit provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and for citizenship. Staffing is good and resources are sufficient for needs. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is good but assessment of pupils' National Curriculum levels is not secure. There was no subject report at the last inspection in 2000 but pupils' GCSE attainment has improved and progress for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is now good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning.
- Good attention to promoting literacy skills helps to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE level are too low.
- Lesson planning is not always thorough enough to ensure maximum progress by pupils.
- Information from assessment is not used sufficiently to help pupils improve their work.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to use ICT or to visit places of historical interest to enhance their work in history

135. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 in teacher assessed work in 2002 were below average. However, results over the last three years indicate an improving trend in pupils' attainment in history at the end of Year 9. GCSE results at the higher grades have been well below national averages in recent years and pupils do less well in history than they do in other subjects.
136. Levels of attainment in work seen during the inspection are below average at the end of Year 9. Pupils often demonstrate a sound understanding of historical topics in class, as in a Year 9 lesson on the role of the medicine man in work on the native peoples of North America. Pupils find written work difficult and need considerable help when writing about historical events and changes. However, higher-attaining pupils are able to select and organise information to support an argument, for example in some Year 8 work on the reasons for poverty in Elizabethan England. Overall, the standards being attained in Year 9 show good achievement from the very low starting points in Year 7. Pupils make good progress in understanding historical topics and developing

relevant skills, especially in their use of historical sources. No pupils are taking a history course in Year 11. Pupils' attainment in work seen during the inspection is below average in the small history group in Year 10. However, they are building successfully on the progress made in the first three years and their achievement thus far in the GCSE course is good.

137. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 10 and pupils learn well as a result. Their attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory. They usually behave well and work hard in lessons, although most pupils do not demonstrate great enthusiasm for the subject, which is partly reflected in the low take-up for history in Years 10 and 11 in recent years. In the best lessons expectations of what pupils can achieve are high and work is well structured and taken at a brisk pace. In two Year 7 lessons on the Romans, for example, pupils made particularly good progress because in one lesson very skilled questioning successfully extended pupils' historical thinking and in the other lesson carefully organised tasks helped pupils appreciate the story of Romulus and Remus. Where teaching has shortcomings, objectives for the lesson are not specific enough to give sufficient direction to the work. This slows down the rate of pupils' learning. Teachers usually manage pupils well, which ensures good behaviour and helps pupils make good progress in lessons. Effective methods are used to improve literacy levels, such as highlighting key words and giving pupils help over structuring their writing. Work is regularly marked but pupils are not given enough positive guidance on how to develop their historical skills.
138. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing assessment procedures, although pupils are given insufficient information as to how they can improve their work. The history curriculum is well planned but does not always have enough detail to give adequate support to non-specialist staff. At the moment pupils only have limited opportunities to use ICT in history and to visit places of historical interest. The department recognises that development in these two areas would enhance pupils' work and interest in the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 but in Years 10 and 11 standards and take-up for the subject remain low.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and often excellent.
- The pupils' achievement is very good. The standards reached by pupils by the time they leave school have improved since the last inspection.
- The teachers take every opportunity to develop the pupils' literacy skills
- The opportunity to gain national qualifications ICT in years 10 and 11 are good. The proportion of pupils gaining these qualifications is above average.
- Access to computers for pupils outside normal school hours is very good and forms a vital part of the curriculum and homework.

Areas for improvement

- Not all subject departments make effective use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
- The pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not always understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

139. The pupils' attainment in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was below average. However, the trend over the last few years has been one of overall improvement. In the GCSE and GNVQ ICT examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002, the overall percentage of pupils gaining a grade in the A* to C range was well below average. However, the percentage of pupils gaining a pass grade A* to G was above average. This represents good achievement since nearly all pupils were entered for this examination. It also represents a big improvement since 2001 when results were very low.

140. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average. This represents good achievement since pupils come into the school with well below average knowledge and skills. They are particularly hampered by low literacy and numeracy skills. Compared with similar schools the pupils' achievement is very good. They can produce word-processed documents and presentations, which combine pictures, text and simple animations. Higher-attaining pupils can create documents that have a clear sense of audience. Many pupils are able to log on to the Internet and explore the World Wide Web, but there is a high percentage of pupils whose strategies for searching, selecting and using information are limited. All but a few of the higher-attaining pupils have an insufficient understanding in the use of computer simulations, for example in financial forecasting. None of the pupils questioned was able to say how they would use a computer to control equipment or a robot.
141. By the end of Year 11 attainment is average overall, representing good achievement. The GCSE and GNVQ courses are very demanding and require a great deal of commitment and maturity. Pupils have extended their knowledge of databases and use this to design a system for controlling financial transactions. Higher-attaining pupils are able to extract information from reports on the Internet to produce attractive leaflets explaining health and safety at work or the salient aspects of the data protection act.
142. Teaching is very good overall and is responsible for the very good learning that is raising standards from the well below average levels on entry to the school. Teachers use the 'interactive whiteboards' extremely effectively to inspire and challenge pupils. In an excellent Year 9 lesson these very well-prepared resources were enhanced as pupils came up to the board and added what they knew to the display. Pupils made very good progress as they learned about spreadsheets and at the same time extended their skills in literacy and numeracy. Teachers encourage pupils to be independent in their learning. This was illustrated by an excellent Year 11 lesson in which the teacher had prepared pupils to work in teams to make a presentation on the internal workings of a computer. Not only did they elect a leader and then allocate tasks, but also photographed the relevant parts of a computer and combined these with research done on-line, to produce original work. The on-line resources, for the examination classes in particular, are very well designed and very well used by pupils and teachers. Lessons are never less than good but there are some areas that need to be developed. Whilst teachers check and mark work regularly for Years 7 to 9, pupils are not always made aware of the 'level' and what they can do to improve. Tasks are sometimes too challenging for the lower-attaining pupils or those with special needs. Nevertheless, these pupils make good progress because they are well supported and encouraged. Teachers have given them the confidence to explore and to ask questions when they do not understand.
143. Learning is enhanced by the pupils' very good attitudes and good behaviour. Pupils can be trusted to work with limited supervision, or under the supervision of older pupils in break time or after school. These opportunities are extremely popular and used regularly by pupils taking exam courses and by pupils doing their homework in different subjects such as art, history, English or geography. Curriculum coverage is good overall. Pupils study ICT with a specialist teacher for at least one period a week throughout the school. The departments' provision for improving the pupils' skills in reading, listening and writing is excellent. This is having a big impact on the pupils' ability to cope with the demands of the examination courses. In Years 10 and 11 pupils put ICT skills to good use in other vocational courses. The school has some areas of weakness, for instance in design and technology, mathematics and music, where ICT is not used sufficiently to promote learning. This is, in part due to pressure on the available ICT rooms. However, only the ICT department makes good use of the school's powerful 'Intranet' facilities. There are insufficient planned links between the work pupils do in ICT lessons and work in other subjects.
144. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Achievement has improved and the use of ICT for homework has increased. The new curriculum manager for ICT provides very good leadership and direction by evaluating and improving teaching methods and developing the curriculum. Pupils' work is assessed well and the measures recently introduced are beginning to involve pupils more in analysing their own work and setting targets for improvement. Plans for

developing the curriculum and assessment and for extending the computer network mean the school has good potential for further improvements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Rising standards of work in all years.
- The effective management of pupils, with high expectations of pupil behaviour.
- The good teaching which enables pupils to learn well.
- The increasing enjoyment and growing confidence of pupils in language learning.
- Energetic leadership which is revitalising the department.

Areas for improvement

- The methods of assessing pupils' work.
- The monitoring and marking of homework.
- Target-setting.
- Provision for ICT.
- Schemes of work and policy statements.

145. Pupils' results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 are well below the national average. However, these results are a significant improvement on the corresponding figures for 2001. GCSE results are of little relevance as the entry was so small in 2000 and 2001.
146. Standards of work seen are below average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. This represents good achievement in relation to attainment on entry and prior attainment respectively. The broad setting policy is beginning to bear fruit and is enabling all pupils, particularly the middle and higher-attaining pupils, to achieve higher National Curriculum levels. There is a good focus on grammar to develop pupils' literacy skills. Many pupils in Year 7 were able to pick out differences in gender and number and attach them correctly to the members of the 'Addams' family tree while Year 8 pupils were beginning to understand how the use of ' le/la/les' could affect the form of the preceding preposition. The use of numeracy is more limited and no examples of pupils using ICT were observed. In Year 9 the higher-attaining pupils are beginning to use past tense forms confidently in written work, for example in describing a holiday visit. They use a range of time expressions and opinions to add depth and variety to their work. Middle-attaining pupils can write short paragraphs, but find it harder to manipulate vocabulary and structures in conversation. Lower-attaining pupils cover the same work but the majority have little understanding of how to use the structures accurately, their spellings and pronunciation are approximate, and tasks are often left incomplete. Pupils with special educational needs receive helpful worksheet prompts and are skilfully handled by the learning support assistants, who know them well.
147. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well because they have opted for the subject, they appreciate the clearly structured lessons and the teacher emphasises the relevance of what they are learning for examinations. The smaller classes allow the teacher more time for helping pupils individually. Most of them can use vocabulary effectively in role-plays at Foundation level, for example to enquire about accommodation in hotels and camp-sites.
148. Teaching is good and, as a consequence, the quality of learning is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They are responsive to the firm but sympathetic discipline and play their part in ensuring that their classrooms are tidy and welcoming. The confidence that they will be able to work without disruption helps their concentration. They show interest in their work and in particular enjoy the more entertaining aspects as when, for example Year 8 pupils were required to register by calling out different parts of the body in French. Most pupils are willing to contribute orally in lessons and the ready encouragement given by the teachers helps them maintain their efforts. Two girls stayed behind voluntarily at the end of the final lesson of the day to ensure their practice of a role-play was complete.

149. In the most successful lessons a combination of effective lesson planning and well-chosen methods with a number of sequenced activities, each containing increasing degrees of difficulty, keep pupils on task and help them progress. Teachers endeavour to ensure pupils understand at every point in an activity. For example, in a Year 8 lesson the teacher practised vocabulary thoroughly, then challenged the pupils to complete words through a gap-filling exercise, anagrams and word puzzles. Most pupils successfully completed this task. Teachers manage pupils well, often placing the onus on them to take the next step, for example by saying “You have finished your work, what should you be doing next?” They involve pupils actively in lessons by a mixture of choral and individual repetition and questioning. While they are writing teachers circulate to help them with their work. These techniques ensure pupils remain attentive and help them learn. In the satisfactory lessons the pace was less brisk and pupils were not quite so fully engaged in learning.
150. In Years 7 to 9 homework is sometimes not recorded in pupils’ diaries. Marking is often cursory and ungraded with only occasional guidance on how work can be improved. Day-to-day assessment is not full or rigorous enough and pupils are often unclear what levels they are working to. This is less of an issue in Years 10 and 11 as pupils are more mature and conscientious with regard to homework. The lack of a target-setting policy impacts disproportionately on the less independent, lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9, although it is recognised by the department that this is an issue for future development. These factors prevent the pupils capitalising fully on the progress made in lessons.
151. Leadership and management are good and this is instrumental in raising standards. The head of department is energetic and purposeful. She is establishing a climate where effective learning can now take place and is engendering amongst pupils a growing confidence and enjoyment in languages. This is shown, for example, in the growing popularity of French as a GCSE subject and the increased pupil support for the expanding extra-curricular programme. School and departmental priorities are closely matched and entirely appropriate to promote the healthy development of the subject. The schemes of work operate effectively in practice due to the close liaison between the teachers but their written version is rudimentary and many policy statements are out-of-date. The lack of computers in the department, and of a reading programme for Years 7 to 9, have an adverse effect on pupil achievement.
152. No issues were identified at the last inspection and there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about improvement.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The subject leader’s enthusiasm and very good management of lessons results in motivated pupils who enjoy learning.
- The good quality of teaching results in lessons where pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- The increasingly good provision of extra-curricular activities and performance opportunities has a positive impact on standards of music-making.
- The effective use of resources helps to bring learning alive, improving pupils’ practical understanding of music.

Areas for improvement

- The cramped accommodation restricts what can be achieved.
- The meagreness of resources, including computers, limits opportunities for active learning.
- The lack of marking of pupils' written work hampers the consolidation of their literacy skills.

153. Judgements are based on scrutiny of examination and test data, observation of a cross-section of lessons, attendance at extra-curricular practices, and discussions with teachers and pupils. This shows that pupils, whose standards are well below average in music in Year 7, are a little below average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11. Pupils, therefore, achieve well in both key stages. This is because the thoroughgoing reforms put in place by the head of department are beginning to bear fruit. Although no pupils were entered in the 2002 GCSE, and the three who were entered the year before attained below average grades, there are now large GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11 and these pupils are doing much better. The department promotes an inclusive atmosphere; there is little difference between the standards of boys and girls and those with special educational needs or who are higher attainers. All achieve well as a result of lessons that engage pupils across the attainment range. The few pupils who receive instrumental lessons make good progress. Those who participate in the increasingly good range of extra-curricular opportunities make very good musical progress and contribute well to performances, both inside and outside the school.
154. By Year 9, pupils successfully compose using basic musical forms such as ostinato and repetition. In one Year 9 class pupils were busy learning about waltzes and successfully identified examples of these on the demonstration tunes on electronic keyboards by counting the number of beats in a bar. They perform with growing confidence in small groups and higher-attaining pupils play independent parts with some assurance. Whilst pupils enjoy practical work, and have made good progress from Year 7 to Year 9, the quality of their written work is below average. This often contains spelling and grammatical mistakes. Pupils, who provide accurate one word or short phrase answers, do not write at length with confidence. This is the same when they discuss music; pupils remember isolated facts about music, but have problems linking these into longer coherent statements. Only higher-attaining pupils write or speak fluently when describing music. This hampers their ability to think in concepts and is a reason that pupils do not achieve the national average. Various instrumental groups contribute successfully to community social and fundraising events, such as the talent shows and the Christmas Carol Service. Pupils have also performed in the town and put on an enjoyable performance of Fiddler on the Roof. These activities help the pupils to develop good social awareness and a sense of community.
155. In Year 11 pupils perform confidently and use a suitable range of musical structures in their compositions. In one lesson, for instance, pupils were writing catchy disco-style melodic riffs above a chord backing. They successfully used their knowledge of chord structures to work out their riffs without having to use an instrument. Other pupils busily rehearsed solo and group vocal and instrumental numbers. All were fully absorbed in their practical work and making good strides in their musical understanding. Whilst pupils make good progress in practical music making, they have more difficulty expressing themselves using a fluent musical vocabulary. This is because some pupils are over-dependent on the teacher for ideas. All pupils enjoy lessons and are eager to join in the regular performances and shows. The lack of computer hardware and software limits pupils' progress in this area, particularly in the use of composition software to smooth the more time consuming tasks associated with using conventional musical notation.
156. The quality of teaching is good overall and some aspects are very good. As a result, the quality of learning is also good. The teachers' infectious enthusiasm and very capable management of pupils stimulate positive attitudes to learning; pupils enjoy what they do and behave well. The teacher gets all pupils actively involved in music-making so that they learn successfully through doing. They also have regular opportunities to discuss music they have heard and write reflectively about this, although pupils are less skilled at this. The teacher is serious about helping pupils to grow in musical confidence and this communicates itself to pupils who respond appreciatively. The sense of fun in lessons never gets out of hand, so there is an enjoyable, but orderly, learning atmosphere in which pupils progress well. Whilst homework is marked straight away, some written work in

manuscript books is not marked. This means that regular spelling and grammatical mistakes are not corrected and this hampers the consolidation of pupils' literacy skills. The work of visiting instrumental teachers is crucial to the improving standards of the department. Many instrumental teachers only started recently. Their impact is significant as they are helping the school to develop a secure musical tradition. In one session, a skilled teacher successfully coaxed two youngsters through their first flute lesson. The well-organised session was fun and, by the end, both beginners were eager to go away and practice what they had learnt.

157. The management and leadership of the department are very good and this is having a most positive impact; pupils respond enthusiastically to the clear expectations and want to be involved in musical initiatives. The accommodation is cramped, although teachers make imaginative use of what space they have. In some lessons, pupils spill out into the surrounding corridors and drama space. When this happens, it supports successful learning, although use of adjacent spaces is not always possible. Some resources, particularly computers, are in short supply, and this limits pupils' achievements. No issues were identified in the last inspection, because the report focused on the core subjects, although standards in recent times have improved conspicuously as a result of the energetic hard work of the subject leader.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The improvement in GCSE results.
- Good class management.
- All pupils are well provided for and included in physical education activities.
- Subject leadership and the departmental team approach.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and impacting on the enhancement of standards.
- There is only one small grass playing area.
- Despite being a relatively pleasant area, the gym is too small.
- Hard playing areas are dangerous.

158. Standards in physical education are satisfactory. Standards are below average when pupils come into the school and teachers have to work hard to develop the right attitudes to a subject that has the potential for being hazardous. The improved grades at GCSE, where the first A grade was recorded this year, indicate good achievement. Out of 25 pupils who took the test almost 50 per cent attained grades A* to C. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Tasks are sometimes organised with their particular needs in mind but in most cases they are sufficiently open-ended for all pupils to achieve success.
159. In gymnastics pupils in Year 7 can produce a sequence of movement where they balance on a variety of body parts and work at different levels. Most handle apparatus well, due to good teaching and appropriate supervision. Where pupils show an understanding of the use of body tension, the overall quality of movement is good. Basic skills are not always used sufficiently well to enable pupils to create a good sequence from start to finish. In netball some pupils are still unable to use the correct footwork by Year 9. Throwing and catching skills are underdeveloped and many pupils are reluctant to take their feet off the ground to jump for a high ball.
160. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to demonstrate good control in basketball. They can perform a variety of passes, execute set shots accurately and use zone defence effectively. However, when there is an element of competition most pupils have difficulty keeping their composure and skills tend to deteriorate. Good hand/eye co-ordination enables pupils to attempt a wide variety of shots in badminton although they find low shots more difficult to return than high ones. They are comfortable playing on the forehand and the backhand. Movement around the court is beginning to develop well although pupils do not always communicate well enough with each other when they

both go for the same shot. Well-developed soccer skills enable pupils to play with control. Attacking and defending skills show that they can run well off the ball and make accurate through passes and clearances. Pupils studying for GCSE show a clear understanding of how the air that they breathe travels to the lungs. When organising a GCSE practical activity, girls demonstrate great confidence in their own coaching ability.

161. Teaching and learning are good overall. Good management of pupils leads to good control of lessons, which become enjoyable as well as challenging. The majority of pupils respond well to challenging activities, particularly when they work with a partner or in a small group. A minority of inappropriate behaviour from a few pupils occasionally restricts the progress that other pupils are able to make. Older pupils who use the local leisure centre are good ambassadors for their school, conducting themselves in a quiet and efficient way. Subject knowledge is very secure and good planning is a strong feature of the department. Basic skills are well taught and good ongoing assessment clearly informs pupils how well they are doing and where they might improve.
162. There is good leadership of the department and teachers work well as a team. A very good programme of extra-curricular sporting activities complements what is already on offer during school time. The department makes good provision for all pupils, whatever their aptitude for physical activity. Accommodation is, however, unsatisfactory. There is only one small grass playing area that becomes unusable after prolonged wet weather. Despite being a relatively pleasant area the gym is too small. Hard playing areas are dangerous. There is a lot of glass on the playing surface and the level of the area drops about 18 inches half way down its length with nothing to prevent people from inadvertently going over the edge. At present there is no surround netting. Having recognised the difficulties this brings, the school has plans in hand for new netting to be erected. The absence of a proper risk assessment is a cause for concern.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**. The department has made good progress to provide a suitable course in Years 7 to 9, but no provision exists in Years 10 and 11. Whilst there have been some significant improvements, there is still much to be done.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning.
- Pupils' positive attitudes promote good levels of interest in the subject.
- Thorough planning of work ensures that pupils make good progress in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not receive their statutory entitlement to the subject in Years 10 and 11.
- Information from assessment is not yet used sufficiently to help pupils improve their work.

163. In recent years there has been no GCSE work in religious education. Although some religious education topics are planned for in the citizenship course in Years 10 and 11, these are not yet in place. There is, therefore, insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards in the subject at the end of Year 11.
164. Attainment in work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 is below the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the Christian, Hindu and Jewish traditions, but they have difficulty in relating what they learn about religion to their own experience. However, in their work on the Hindu religion, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 are beginning to appreciate what it means to belong to a faith community. Pupils' oral skills are better than their written skills, especially when they are given opportunities to provide thoughtful answers to challenging questioning. Written work tends to be brief and lacks detail because pupils have difficulty in explaining and expressing their views and ideas. Overall, standards in Year 9 show good achievement from the very low starting points in Year 7. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious traditions develops, and the planning, accuracy and presentation of their written work improves.

165. The overall quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well as a result. Pupils' attitudes to learning in religious education and their behaviour in lessons are generally good. Positive attitudes help to promote good levels of interest in the subject; pupils want to succeed and do well. In one Year 8 lesson on the Exodus story learning was very good because of keen interest and close involvement in the work as pupils responded very well to high quality teaching. Teachers' understanding of the subject is usually good, which enables them to respond effectively to pupils' questions and so extend their learning. Lessons are planned very thoroughly and the consistent sharing of clear and specific learning objectives ensures that pupils make good progress in lessons. High but well-matched expectations mean that pupils are appropriately challenged and taken forward in their learning, as in a Year 7 lesson on ultimate questions. Teachers use a good range of methods which successfully engages pupils' interests, such as well judged video material on a Hindu wedding in Year 9 or an absorbing card sequencing exercise on the Exodus story in Year 8. Teachers manage pupils well so that they get the most out of lessons. Books are marked regularly but pupils are not given enough advice as to how they might improve. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT for learning, especially when doing homework, but overall its use is at a fairly early stage.
166. The subject is well led and managed in Years 7 to 9. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection at this level, but the lack of adequate provision in Years 10 and 11 means that overall improvement is unsatisfactory. The subject was at a low ebb in the school but has now been re-established in Years 7 to 9. A good scheme of work is in place and assessment procedures have been developed, although information from assessment is not yet used sufficiently to help pupils improve their work. The school's provision for RE in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements because the Agreed Syllabus programmes of study are not being implemented. The school has plans to address this issue.