

INSPECTION REPORT

HENRY CORT SCHOOL

Hillson Drive, Fareham

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116466

Headteacher: Mrs Jenny Bulled

Reporting inspector: David Potter
1027

Dates of inspection: 30th September – 3rd October 2002

Inspection number: 249187

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hillson Drive
Fareham
Hampshire

Postcode: PO15 6PH

Telephone number: 01329 843127

Fax number: 01329 846755

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Maureen Sygrove

Date of previous inspection: 28th April – 2nd May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1027	David Potter	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9880	Anthony Comer	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4738	David Berrisford	Team inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed (resources and finance)?
19135	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2447	Faysal Mikdadi	Team inspector	English	
27585	Ken Hounslow	Team inspector	Science	
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information & Communication Technology (ICT)	
8185	Peter Kendall	Team inspector	Art & Design	
3555	Caroline Emery	Team inspector	Design & Technology (D&T)	
17732	Dave Martin	Team inspector	Geography	
4727	Jeff Hale	Team inspector	History	
7808	John Blanchard	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
1950	Brian Ley	Team inspector	Music	
3534	Ann Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical Education (PE)	
24339	Joyce Mackley	Team inspector	Religious Education (RE)	

19096	Brian Bartlett	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs (SEN)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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The inspection contractor was:

Quality Assurance Consultants
The Hucclecote Centre
Churchdown Lane
Hucclecote
Gloucester
GL3 3QN

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London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school was inspected by 16 inspectors, led by David Potter. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	1020	slightly larger than average
Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)	1%	below the national average (7.8%)
Pupils entitled to free school meals	10.8%	below the national average (15.3%)
Pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	26%	close to the national average (19.5%)

This mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 – 16 serves part of Fareham and outlying villages, in the urban corridor between Southampton and Portsmouth. The school is popular and continues to expand, although parents have an extensive choice of schools in the area; there are now 1020 pupils on roll. The area has a mix of advantaged and disadvantaged communities, and is average overall. Pupil mobility is low. Pupils' attainment on entry has been slightly below average; it has risen in recent years and is now average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Standards are above average and rising in the first three years, and are generally above average at GCSE. Teaching and learning are good. The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- pupils' results in tests and examinations have generally been above the national average and the average of pupils in similar schools;
- pupils achieve well: they make good progress including in English and mathematics;
- teaching and learning are good throughout the school, especially for older pupils;
- pupils behave well in lessons and around the site; behaviour has improved considerably since the time of the last inspection;
- provision for pupils' personal development is good, including through the very good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and the excellent care and welfare provided;
- as a result, pupils show respect for each other, work well together and have very good attitudes to work and to the school;
- very good links with the community, including partner schools/colleges and parents, and the very rich extra-curricular programme;
- leadership by the headteacher, senior managers and the governing body, which has been consistently clear-sighted and ambitious over many years. The governing body understands and supports the school very well;
- management: the school runs very smoothly, including financially, and is exceptionally well-maintained;
- the learning environment - accommodation, resources and display are very good and promote pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- The provision and quality of teaching in those sessions in which pupils are withdrawn for additional help in literacy and numeracy.
- the better use of assessment data to help:
 - pupils understand how to improve their work

- o managers evaluate patterns of strength and weakness, and plan for further improvement

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in April/May 1997 has been good. The strengths have been maintained and the teaching, described as good in the last report, has improved through a significant increase in the proportion which is good and very good. The key issues raised in the last inspection have largely been met; behaviour, criticised in 1997, is now very good. Standards achieved by younger pupils have risen faster than the national average; those at GCSE, although they have improved, have done so slightly more slowly and erratically.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Results are above the national average and above those of similar schools. Girls achieve better results than boys, but the gap is narrower than the national average gap. Results have improved steadily in recent years, except for one less-able year group.

In the national tests at age 14, attainment has remained above the national average since the time of the last inspection, rising at a rate slightly faster than the national trend. A well-above average proportion of pupils achieved the standards expected nationally in all recent years. The work seen in the inspection shows that pupils are achieving at least satisfactory standards in all subjects, and good standards in several, including English and mathematics.

The school enters a high proportion of pupils for GCSE examinations, and very few leave without qualifications. Average points scores have been consistently above the national average, and the proportion of pupils achieving higher (A* - C) grades has fluctuated around the average. The trend in results is upwards, but at a rate slightly below the national. Results in 2002 show a sharp drop; this year group was on average the least able of any intake for ten years, and achieved lower results when it took the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2000. Results have fallen below the targets set in the last two years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and ready to learn and take advantage of the wide range of opportunities provided by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is much improved since the last inspection and contributes well to pupils' good learning.
Personal development and	Very good. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to show initiative,

relationships	take responsibility and form constructive relationships.
Attendance	Good: attendance is above the national average.

These aspects have improved significantly since the last inspection because of the clear actions taken by managers and staff to improve the school's ethos and working environment; they are now strengths of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good, with a high proportion which is very 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 almost all subjects and for all age groups. It is of slightly higher quality in Years 10 and 11, where over three-quarters is good, very good or excellent. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is generally very good, but the use of non-specialists to teach pupils with SEN slows those pupils' progress. Teachers plan very well and have high expectations. Literacy and numeracy are generally well taught. The good teaching results in good learning across the school: pupils try hard and show interest in their work. Inconsistency in assessment from one subject to another means that pupils do not always understand how well they doing and how to improve; this is, however, done well in English, IT and modern languages.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided for pupils of all ages, with good work-related, including careers, education and very good PSHE and extra-curricular provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Support for individual pupils by learning support assistants (LSAs) is good. Provision for pupils withdrawn for additional literacy and numeracy support is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with EAL	Good for the one pupil who is at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, with very good provision for social and moral development. There is strong and successful emphasis on co-operation, on pupils taking responsibility for their learning and on codes of behaviour. Spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory, as is cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall, with excellent care and welfare, and very good systems for promoting good behaviour and for support and guidance to individual pupils.

The school works well in partnership with parents and goes to considerable lengths to involve and inform them. The excellent care and welfare provision, the very good PSHE programme and provision for social and moral development, and the rich extra-curricular programme all contribute significantly to pupils' respect for each other, their ability to work well together and their very good attitudes to work and to the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good with much which is very good. The headteacher and her senior colleagues have given very good direction and leadership to the school over a long period and brought about very good long-term improvement. This is a very well-managed school with first-class systems and procedures.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors carry out their statutory functions very well, know the school well and are very supportive of it. They are fully involved in planning for improvement. Through the self-evaluation system, they are beginning to hold the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Systems for the monitoring of teaching and pupils' performance are good, as are those to set and review the development plan. The action taken in departments, and the consequent impact of the monitoring systems on practice, are inconsistent and sometimes weak.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are deployed well, and the budget is managed prudently so as to ensure smooth running and to focus on the school's well-chosen priorities.

Most aspects of leadership and management are good and some are very good. Both senior managers and governors apply the principles of best value to spending decisions. The management and monitoring of departmental spending are particularly good.

The school is fully staffed with well-qualified specialists, and teaching has improved through a period of rapid staff turnover because of good leadership, recruitment and induction. Learning resources and accommodation are very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children, irrespective of ability, are attaining well and making good progress • the school generally has high expectations of work, behaviour and attitudes to others • the teaching is good • the school is approachable • behaviour is good: most feel their children can learn uninterrupted by others • it is a well-managed and improving school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework - some parents believe there is too much, others that there is too little especially in the first three years • the speed and reliability of response to their questions or complaints • communication with them about the progress their child is making

Inspectors are in full agreement with parents' positive views of the school. Homework is good, generally sufficient in quantity and set in accordance with the timetable. The school makes great efforts to communicate with parents and is planning still further improvements. Although a few parents feel that the school has not responded adequately to their concerns, this is not the norm.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entry to the school, pupils in recent years have been of slightly-below-average ability (as shown in tests taken shortly after they arrive at Henry Cort) and attainment (in the national tests taken at the end of primary school), with literacy below their other scores. The most recent intakes are of average ability, and literacy results have improved. Since results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) are above the national average, and above the average of similar schools, Henry Cort School adds value: pupils achieve well. Girls attain better results than boys, but the gap is narrower than the national average gap. Results have improved steadily in recent years, except for the less-able year group which took GCSE in 2002.

2. In the national tests at age 14, attainment has remained above the national average since the time of the last inspection, rising at a rate slightly faster than the national trend. A well-above average proportion of pupils achieved the standards expected nationally in all recent years. The proportion achieving the higher levels is closer to, but still above, the national average.

3. The school enters a high proportion of pupils for GCSE examinations, and very few leave without qualifications. Results have been consistently above the national average for graded (A* - G) results and for average points per pupil (an A* is awarded eight points, an A seven, and so on down to one point for a G grade), and have fluctuated around the average for the proportion achieving higher (A* - C) grades. The trend in results is upwards, but at a rate slightly below the national. Results in 2002 show a sharp drop; this year group was on average the least able of any intake for ten years, and achieved lower results when it took the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2000. However, the pattern is uneven: some subjects such as PE have done well in 2002 while others, such as science, seem to have under-achieved. Although results and national averages are still provisional at the time of the inspection, the school should undertake a close analysis of the 2002 GCSE results, to see what can be learned from them for its improvement plan. Performance at GCSE has fallen below the school's targets in the last two years; this is largely the result of inexperience in setting targets rather than a shortfall in attainment.

4. The work seen in the inspection shows that pupils are achieving at least satisfactory standards in all subjects, and good standards in several (over half of the subjects seen), including English and mathematics. In these two subjects, high-quality subject leadership and consistently good to very good teaching are driving standards still higher. Work in other subjects with new leaders, such as ICT, geography and RE, is also improving quickly.

5. The work of the current Years 7 and 8 is of above-average standard, reflecting the higher ability and prior attainment of those pupils. Pupils achieve well and make good progress: the proportion achieving the highest levels in the national tests at age 14, and the highest grades at GCSE, significantly exceeds the proportion shown as of higher ability on the intake tests. In lessons, pupils learn well and make rapid progress, achieving well in relation to their ability.

6. Pupils' standards in key skills are generally sound and improving. Pupils enter with weaknesses in their numeracy; standards of numeracy within Henry Cort School are above average and rising as a result of the stronger and increasingly coherent approach. Standards of literacy on admission have until recently been below average but have risen to

average for the most recent intakes. The school's well-organised literacy programme is having an effect, especially in English in Years 7 – 9, and standards of literacy here are satisfactory and rising. Pupils read regularly and with pleasure, and respond to their reading with perceptive observations. They are also beginning to develop clear arguments in their writing, to the benefit of other subjects. The effect of the strategy is beginning to spread across subjects and up the age range: the use of key words is good in many subjects, and listening, speaking and writing are improving. Almost all older pupils are fluent users of ICT; in Years 7 – 9, although provision is very good within ICT lessons and there are good levels of co-ordination across the subjects, pupils do not get enough practice in some subjects, such as art, to consolidate their skills. In English, for example, pupils use ICT competently to produce their essays and to e-mail their work for marking, and in business studies pupils use ICT extensively and well.

7. The one pupil who is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is receiving a good support programme and is making good initial progress; she had only been in the school for two weeks at the time of the inspection. In relation to their prior achievement, pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress. Many make good gains in their reading ability, their handwriting and presentation of work, and satisfactory progress in their mathematics; progress is too slow in spelling. Some of the very small number of pupils who enter the school with very low reading ages make limited improvement. The school should monitor the provision and achievement of this group of pupils to determine whether increased support is required. Pupils who are withdrawn for additional literacy and numeracy support do not make sufficient progress because of the way in which that provision is organised and the inconsistency in the quality of their teaching. Many pupils with SEN are entered for up to ten GCSE examinations, and almost all gain graded results in most of them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastically involved with the life of the school and the wider community. They take pride in their surroundings and their achievements. Parents believe that their children like coming to school, are encouraged to work hard and to do their best, and that the school helps them to become mature and responsible.

9. Behaviour is very good. In class, behaviour is generally good and often very good or excellent, particularly where teaching is effective and is focused on the needs of individual pupils. This is particularly so in Years 10 and 11. In lessons with younger pupils, occasionally behaviour is immature and unsatisfactory, when teaching is less challenging and behaviour management strategies less effective. Pupils move around the school in a sensible and polite manner and there is a calm and orderly exit at the end of the school day. They interact well together at break times and respect each other's feelings. The behaviour of most pupils with SEN is very good; in common with all pupils, they show interest in their work and strive hard to be successful.

10. During the inspection there was no evidence of oppressive behaviour. During the past year 45 pupils were excluded for fixed periods - an average figure for schools of this type - and four were excluded permanently, a below-average figure.

11. Relationships between pupils, and between them and adults, are very good. Teachers and support staff work hard at establishing these relationships and at improving pupils' self-esteem. Pupils understand and value the systems of rewards and sanctions well. Pupils take responsibility and show initiative in a wide variety of activities, including their own learning. Prime examples of this are the student council, the active citizenship programme for Year 10 pupils, the listening line, the circle of friends scheme to support new pupils, the

Years 9 and 10 buddy system to help pupils when they join Year 7, the prefect system, the half-termly pupil newsletter, the development of Henry's Net, the school website, and the contribution that all pupils make to their annual reports and in setting targets for improvement.

12. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils make a positive contribution to learning and achievement, both of which have improved significantly since the last inspection.

13. Pupils' attendance is good, being above the national average for schools of this type. Punctuality of a small minority of pupils at the start of the school day is a cause for some concern. The late arrival at lessons by a few pupils slows lesson starts. Pupils who are provided with additional individual support arrive promptly for those sessions and settle to work quickly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching is good across the age range and in almost all subjects. Ninety-five per cent of the teaching observed was at least satisfactory and two-thirds at least good: these are good proportions and an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is of more consistent quality in lessons for older pupils, over three-quarters being good, very good or excellent. Although on average it is good, there is a little more inconsistency in the teaching of younger pupils. Teaching is of consistently good quality, because senior managers have set clear standards and have monitored to ensure that these standards are met, and because relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

15. The good teaching is based on the teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects, as a result of which pupils are taught clearly and with precision - tasks are invariably clear and well set. Teachers use their understanding of their subjects and of the requirements of the examinations to anticipate what pupils might find difficult, and to guide their understanding in those areas. Lessons are very well prepared: they start briskly, have clear purposes and are clearly linked to previous lessons. Teachers drive lessons forward at a good pace and use lively, well-chosen resources, many of them prepared by the teachers themselves. They use questioning skilfully to maintain pace, to receive early warning of misunderstanding and to avert any off-task behaviour. As a result, pupils settle quickly to work and maintain concentration and interest; they work at a good pace and show commitment. Homework is generally sufficient in quantity and quality.

16. The learning environment in classrooms is very good and frequently excellent: classrooms are tidy and well organised, and many have first-class displays that motivate pupils and celebrate their work. Each subject department has turned its area of the school, both classrooms and adjacent corridors, into exciting, attractive environments for learning the subject. The modern languages department, with its television playing French news channels and its use of authentic European material, is a good example - but almost all subjects are equally good. There is no doubt that pupils come to lessons ready to learn as a result of the consistently good teaching and the attractive working environments they enjoy.

17. Most of the small amount of less-than-satisfactory teaching occurs in Years 7 to 9. In these few lessons, teachers focus too much on managing immature behaviour, rather than on helping pupils understand the subject matter.

18. There is a high proportion of very good (and some excellent) teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11. There are examples in most subjects and a particularly high proportion in English and mathematics. In addition to the basic strengths described in paragraph 15, these lessons are characterised by excitement in learning and by very high expectations;

crucially, not only does high quality exposition ensure that pupils know what to do, but also that they understand how to produce work of high quality. Examples of what constitutes excellence are shown to pupils, and marking helps them understand how to improve their work: this is especially well done in English and should be improved in other subjects, so that pupils understand their own learning and know their targets for improvement.

19. In lessons across the subjects, pupils with SEN learn and make satisfactory progress because their needs are well known and because they are generally well taught. In the best lessons, teachers modify the work to meet the needs of the pupils, involve pupils with SEN in their questioning, ensure that they understand and feel part of the lesson, adapt the pace of the learning to match the pupils' attainment, and celebrate the achievements of pupils with SEN. The quality of the contribution from the LSAs is good and often very good, enabling the pupils to take part in the activities and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Examples of such good practice were observed in English, mathematics, music and PE lessons. However, in some lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of the pupils' level of attainment in their planning, and thus pupils are given work that is too difficult for them. In these lessons, insufficient attention is paid to the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary so that the pupils do not understand the concepts being taught. On occasion, rather than helping pupils overcome barriers to learning, LSAs are used to manage bad behaviour.

20. The progress of those who are withdrawn from lessons for additional help with literacy and numeracy is too slow. They are taught by a wide range of teachers who are good practitioners within their specialist subjects, but who are not specialists in SEN: the methods they use and the strategies they give to pupils are often inappropriate. Furthermore, the Learning Support (LS) department does not provide sufficiently detailed practical advice to promote consistency in the way these pupils are to be taught to read and spell. As a result, pupils' learning is restricted and, in elements of these lessons, often unsatisfactory. The strategy of using such a range of teachers is potentially a good one; given training, they would constitute a valuable resource for improving the work of lower-ability pupils across the school. As it stands, however, the strategy impedes the progress of the withdrawn pupils.

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

21. The school provides an appropriate curriculum in terms of quality, range, breadth, balance and relevance, and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in full. The school has achieved a number of awards for its curriculum: the School Curriculum Award (see paragraph 59), the Artsmark and Sportsmark Gold for provision in those areas. In some subjects the curricular provision is particularly good. Physical education is the best example, where provision is very rich and almost all pupils study the subject to GCSE level. The setting arrangements in art and the links between that subject and design and technology mean that the provision is good. All departments provide booster classes for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The provision for PSHE and the recently-introduced work-related curriculum are both strengths. In music, the many visiting teachers provide good experiences for pupils undertaking specialised tuition. From Year 8 almost all the pupils study a second modern foreign language. The governing body is well informed about the school's curriculum, and provides effective oversight through its well-led curriculum committee.

22. There are a few minor issues to be addressed. The timetabling of history, geography and RE means that, during the course of the two-week timetable, some classes receive little teaching in these subjects in one of the weeks. Three geography teachers are taken from their classes on some occasions to deliver the PSHE programme in Years 10 and 11, which diminishes the provision for pupils in geography. However, the school is very well aware of

these issues and the deputy headteacher responsible for this aspect has already provided the governors with a detailed breakdown of the anomalies in the curriculum. A major review of the provision for Years 10 and 11 is also planned.

23. The provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory overall, with some features that are good and others that are unsatisfactory. Pupils with SEN have access to the full range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school. These are further enhanced by the support provided by LSAs, who have a good understanding of the individual needs of the pupils with whom they work, including those with autistic spectrum disorders. The school makes useful additional provision including the 'Bookworks' sessions in which volunteer pupils from Year 9 help Year 7 pupils with their reading. This also makes a very good contribution to the social development of the pupils involved. Individual education plans (IEPs) have been improved. The approach to the setting of targets is good. However, not all subject teachers contribute a target and some targets need to be more measurable or more relevant to the needs of the individual pupil. The inclusion of classroom strategies and 'things to do at home' is also good and provides practical suggestions for supporting pupils in their learning. Whilst subject teachers are aware of which pupils in their classes have SEN, the IEPs should be used more consistently to match the teaching to the needs and abilities of the pupils. The LS department makes only limited use of ICT, and should consider the contribution that computer programs could make to the delivery of individualised teaching in, for example, spelling and numeracy.

24. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons to receive additional teaching in reading, spelling and mathematics. The quality of provision in these sessions is unsatisfactory. Most of the 13 teachers who provide these sessions are not SEN specialists, indeed some are newly qualified teachers. They are given these lessons because they have gaps in their timetables. They receive insufficient training from the LS department, nor are they provided with sufficiently detailed written guidance about how to deliver the different elements of these sessions. In the lessons observed, different teachers taught the three parts differently and not always satisfactorily. Some pupils receive three of these sessions per fortnight, each with a different teacher, and thus there is no continuity in how they are being taught and hence how they learn. In one session the teacher heard the pupil read aloud and helped him tackle unfamiliar words; in a second the same pupil read aloud and then the book was put away with virtually no input from the teacher; in a third the pupil read silently and there was no follow-up regarding what had been read; in a fourth there was no reading. In none of these sessions was there any analysis of the words with which the pupil had difficulty or the strategies that he was using to tackle unfamiliar words. Questioning to confirm or reinforce understanding of what had been read rarely occurred and when it did it was at a very low level.

25. The equality of access and opportunity for pupils is good. The particular strengths are the mixed gender teaching that occurs in PE, the instrumental tuition that is available to all pupils, the development of a teaching and learning programme for the most-able pupils and the work of the inclusion co-ordinators which is being effective in keeping potentially disaffected pupils in school. The school acknowledges and is seeking to address the issues related to the gender imbalance in some of the technology options for older pupils.

26. The school's extra-curricular provision is very good and is much valued by the pupils. There is a very extensive range of opportunities on offer from early in the morning to late at night. The provision for sports is outstanding and there is a good range of musical opportunities including choirs, orchestra, concerts and recitals. There are many other opportunities provided including fieldwork, visits, poetry days and several after-school clubs organised by subjects. The school monitors the uptake by pupils carefully, enabling useful discussion in mentoring sessions.

27. Provision for PSHE is very good. It is treated as a discreet subject and has a specialist head of department, a designated team of teachers and very good accommodation. Personal, Social and Health Education is well supported by the leadership team, ensuring that appropriate professional development is available and that the time allocation is appropriate. The subject is well resourced and has created comprehensive schemes of work that provide a wide range of learning opportunities including sex education and attention to drug misuse. All of this means that there is a consistent, whole-school approach to PSHE and that progression and continuity in pupils' learning are secure. There is a high level of involvement from outside agencies including health and emergency services and the school has been awarded the National Healthy School Standard. Teachers of PSHE have a range of assessment and evaluation strategies, including regular homework, which support learning and inform future practice. Planning for citizenship has occurred and it is being provided in a co-ordinated way through PSHE and other subjects. A commitment to active citizenship is evident in the opportunities offered to the pupils.

28. The work-related curriculum, now in its second year, is a very successful development. Pupils who would benefit from this provision are identified in Year 9 by the pastoral heads and the SEN co-ordinator. The course offers National Vocational Qualifications in hairdressing, catering, motor vehicle studies and business administration as well as work experience in Year 10 and work placement in Year 11. The pupils speak highly of the course and the school is monitoring its effectiveness carefully. There is already evidence that this provision is having a positive effect upon the attendance, attitudes and achievements of the pupils involved.

29. Good-quality careers education and guidance are provided through the PSHE programme. The school benefits from the input of a specialist careers adviser. Work experience, organised by Project Trident, is provided for all pupils in Year 10. The school prepares the pupils very well for this including a Year 9 module that leads to the award of a health and safety certificate.

30. Links between the school and its partner institutions are very good. The school organises an induction programme for pupils in Year 6. The SEN co-ordinator liaises with colleagues in the primary schools and the music and PE departments also have good links with that sector. The school works closely with the local colleges of further education both in respect of the work-related curriculum and in helping pupils prepare for education post-16.

31. The provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Religious Education has introduced reflective activities, which have the potential to be disseminated throughout the school. Collective worship is dignified and reverential with pupils encouraged to take part and conduct themselves appropriately. The power of music is used to good effect in some RE lessons and assemblies as a means of promoting a quiet, reflective atmosphere. A high level of awareness is provided in English lessons through discussions about and reflections upon literature. However, in other areas including art and music opportunities for spiritual development are under-developed because they are not made sufficiently explicit either to the pupils or in the schemes of work. As was the case at the time of the last inspection the school does not comply with the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship.

32. Opportunities for the development of pupils' sense of morality are very good and clearly evident in both the curriculum and ethos of the school. There is a strong emphasis upon codes of behaviour and high expectations of pupils. Co-operation and respect for the needs of others and the school environment are very apparent in lessons and in the day-to-day life of the school. In PE there is a particular emphasis upon the importance of individuals taking

responsibility for personal organisation and decision making. In history and through environmental education in geography pupils respond to moral issues in thoughtful ways. Moral issues related to the use of IT and the Internet are explored, as are business ethics in business studies. The student council, its various sub-committees and the Year 10 community service programme also make considerable contributions to pupils' moral development.

33. The social development of pupils is very good. There is a very strong sense of community in the school with common, inclusive values that are reflected in the pupils' behaviour, displays and documentation. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities emphasises the school's commitment to a positive, co-operative ethos and encourages links with the wider community. The student council provides valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in the democratic process and to develop skills in citizenship. The comprehensive PSHE programme and its status as a specialised subject show the importance that the school places on this aspect of the pupils' development. This high-quality provision is further enhanced by the circle of friends and the buddy systems. The mentoring provision and the use of personal logbooks provide good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils' personal, especially their social, development is promoted strongly by the curriculum - the PSHE and work-related programmes and the very strong pastoral system.

34. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The exchange visits organised by the modern foreign languages department are good opportunities for pupils to widen their cultural horizons. Pupils can participate in a variety of cultural activities including drama productions and theatre visits. However, there are opportunities for cultural development which are not exploited sufficiently well. Attention to the explicit planning of opportunities for cultural and multi-cultural development within subjects and across the school as a whole is required to raise further the awareness of this aspect amongst both teachers and pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are excellent, with a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school works with a variety of outside agencies, further underpinning the effective care of pupils.

36. The support and guidance which pupils receive, both formal and informal, are good. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions and problems. The school's response to any issue, with a very small number of exceptions, is prompt and effective. The teaching and non-teaching staff know the pupils well and respond to their needs. Pupils with SEN, and those for whom English is an additional language, receive satisfactory support. The school is justly proud of its 'healthy schools' accreditation and the success of the breakfast club that was a part of that initiative.

37. The procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' personal development are good. There is a very effective pastoral system that includes careful monitoring and recording of data, effective lines of communication between pastoral managers, tutors and subject teachers, school 'inclusion co-ordinators' and external counselling provided by the youth service. Particularly effective elements of this system include tutor mentoring, the 'listening line' and the 'cause for concern' procedures.

38. The school policies and procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are effective. The school's code of conduct and the pupils' respect for it are central to its success. The school is being successful in reducing the rate of pupil exclusions by providing

alternative work-related curriculum opportunities, through the services of 'inclusion co-ordinators' and through a programme of mentoring, amongst other measures.

39. Policies and procedures for promoting health and safety are also very good, including teachers promoting health and safety practices in the classroom and during school activities. Governors and site management staff are fully involved in this process. The development of a school travel plan is evidence of the school's positive approach.

40. Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance are good. The school has carried out a review of its procedures and plans to introduce an electronic attendance system to enable it to monitor lesson-by-lesson attendance. There is also an 'attendance line' for parents to notify the school of reasons for absence, and a system of awards for pupils who improve their attendance rates and who achieve 100 per cent attendance.

41. The school uses assessment data, including that received from primary schools and its own screening procedures, to identify pupils with SEN. Both lesson observations and the content of the work programmes indicate that the LS department may need to introduce some more specific assessment procedures to pinpoint with greater precision the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils. The department has also begun to record assessment data to track pupils' attainment; it now needs to become more analytical in its use of this information to determine the effectiveness of the provision made for pupils with different needs. The school has reviewed its SEN policy in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice and meets the needs of pupils as defined in their statements of SEN. Those statements are reviewed annually and include appropriate levels of involvement by the careers service in the Transition Plans. Links with external agencies, including the local authority and educational psychologists, are good and meet the needs of the school. Good provision is made for pupils with particular difficulties; LSAs know their pupils well, offer high-quality, sensitive support and are responsive to individual needs. The school organises special arrangements well to help pupils with SEN demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in tests and examinations. The liaison between the LS department and the pastoral and inclusion teams is strong. This means that pupils at risk of becoming disaffected with school receive good support to enable them to continue in full-time education.

42. Academic support and guidance for students are satisfactory. The school has potentially very effective systems and structures for pupil tracking and mentoring, based on a comprehensive database of prior attainment and attitudinal information. Data are readily available for all subject areas and for tutors, and is a key component of departmental self-reviews. Most staff are becoming more confident in using and interpreting the available data, but there is an inconsistency in the use of prior attainment data by subject leaders. Where departments are using assessment data well, teachers are using it to plan work, differentiate effectively and set targets for improvement for their pupils, accompanied by clear advice on how to achieve them. In English and modern foreign languages, for example, pupils are generally aware of their present level of work and of their potential at the end of each course. They are also aware of strategies that they might use in order to achieve their targets. Conversely, in a number of other subject areas, data are not being used effectively to support progress: some teachers of Year 10 pupils, for example are not using the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 sufficiently to inform their planning and setting of targets for improvement.

43. All pupils have access to a personal mentoring programme throughout their time at the school. Adequate timetable provision for the mentoring process has been made for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and will be extended to Years 10 and 11 in subsequent years. It is intended that targets for tracking academic attainment and behaviour will be set with the pupils at each

meeting, and reviewed at the next; this can be difficult in large classes. Both staff and pupils value the mentoring process and feel that it is reducing the potential barriers to learning that some pupils experience. During the mentoring process however, some tutors are placing insufficient emphasis on providing pupils with strategies designed to improve their learning and on monitoring progress towards the achievement of their academic targets. Pupils and teachers of Year 7 pupils benefit from a very thorough review programme, which makes effective use of the pupils' prior attainment data and which involves both subject and pastoral staff, together with pupils and their parents, in an intensive series of meetings. Pupils' progress is then tracked and monitored through regular meetings between pastoral, academic staff, pupils and parents. This is an excellent initiative. Pastoral managers monitor the programme effectively, and promptly address any pupil issues identified. However, the validity of the prior attainment data as a means for monitoring progress diminishes as the year progresses when it becomes increasingly out-of-date. Consideration should therefore be given to developing a strategy for collating on-going assessment data from departments that can be used to monitor pupil progress and to provide an early warning of potential underachievement.

44. The school has a clear marking and assessment policy, which is generally followed by most teachers. Where marking is effective, written comments on pupils' work are helpful, supportive and provide pupils with a good analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. In many subjects, marking also provides pupils with sufficient information on how they may make progress. Where marking is less effective comments are brief and not supportive. Reports to parents explain precisely what pupils can do and include self-evaluative comments from the pupils. Reporting of potential attainment levels in relation to external examinations is generalised and is mainly defined in broad grade bands. No specific reference is made to the wealth of prior attainment data that has been collated. In most subjects, reports to parents could be further improved through a subject commentary that details steps that the pupils need to take in order to boost their attainment levels.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school's partnership with parents is good. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire or who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting have positive views of what the school provides and achieves. A significant minority of these parents disagree that the school works closely with them and disagree that they are well informed about how their children are getting on. The involvement of parents of pupils with SEN is good. They attend and contribute to annual reviews. Parents are generally supportive of the school. They are enabled to contribute to the education of their children through the inclusion of the 'To Do At Home' section in the pupil's IEP. Given the increased involvement of parents required by the current SEN Code of Practice, the school should monitor and evaluate this aspect of its work to ascertain where the provision could be enhanced yet further.

46. The inspection evidence supports the positive views of parents, but does not support the criticisms made by some of them.

47. There is much very effective communication between the school and parents, with information provided through newsletters, notice boards, parents' meetings and annual reports. There is also a comprehensive school website, due to be re-launched in December. Pupils' personal logbooks provide an effective means of two-way communication between the school and the majority of parents. The provision of homework and the marking of pupils' work have improved since the last inspection and have a significant impact on learning for the majority of pupils. Pupils' annual reports provide a careful analysis of what pupils know, understand and can do, as well as focusing on areas for future development. They give

parents an accurate picture of pupils' academic progress and personal development, but sometimes lack strategies for improvement in individual subject areas. In some subjects, postcards are sent home celebrating pupils' good work. The content and presentation of the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are examples of the high quality information that the school provides.

48. The school makes appropriate efforts to encourage parental involvement in the life of the school and the impact that their involvement has is satisfactory. The majority of parents support the home school agreement and attendance at parents' evenings and 'awards assemblies' is good. The 'Friends/Parent Teacher Association' is supportive and raises additional funds for the school. Parent governors are enthusiastic and committed to the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The headteacher and her senior colleagues have given very good direction and leadership to the school over a sustained period and have brought about very good long-term improvement, including good levels of improvement since the last inspection. Over the 13 years she has been in post, the headteacher has managed the doubling in size of the school, the expansion of its ability range into a full-range comprehensive school, and the transition from a building site to a well-housed, high-quality learning environment. Governors, headteacher and senior staff have a clear and consistent vision for a school in which all pupils learn, are cared for and achieve success, and one which lies at the heart of its community. They are increasingly successful in fulfilling this vision: standards are above average and rising (paragraph 1 - 7), teaching and learning are good (14 - 20), care and welfare are very good (35 - 44) as are community links (59 - 62). As an example of the determination and impact of school leaders, behaviour around the site was criticised in the 1997 inspection of the school. Although the school disagreed with the inspection team about the scale of this issue, they took it seriously, and wrote and implemented an ambitious action plan involving parents, the student council and staff training. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the site, and their attitudes to the school are very good.

50. This is a very well-managed school with first-class systems and procedures, from those which ensure smooth day-to-day running, to thorough systems for setting priorities and evaluating progress. The school is well organised for improvement: the fortnightly timetabled meetings between the deputy heads and each department head, each with its clear agenda running through the year, is a powerful statement of the need for accountability and a strong lever for improvement. Likewise, the very thorough procedure for setting and reviewing the school development plan (SDP) ensures that all staff understand the school's priorities and why they are as they are, and where their own contribution fits into the picture.

51. School leaders are challenging, setting high expectations and promoting a spirit of self-evaluation. They have implemented a very thorough departmental review procedure, a policy and strategy for the monitoring of teaching, and a robust school development planning and review model. The action taken by middle managers in response to these processes is currently inconsistent, reducing their impact to date. Some department and year heads mirror the whole-school analysis and planning approach at 'local' level, and there are several examples of strong leadership, for example in Year 7 and in English, mathematics and PE. Others stop short at analysis, and a very few still take a superficial approach. The rapid recent turnover in heads of departments contributes to the current inconsistency, but also provides the promise of becoming a strong middle management team in the short term.

52. The leadership of SEN has several strengths and has made significant improvements since the last inspection, such as more effective deployment of LSAs, improvements in the

quality and use of IEPs, and good organisation related to pupils with statements of SEN, including the arrangements for annual reviews. There are also some significant weaknesses. The key area for improvement for the LS department lies in its work with those pupils who are withdrawn for additional literacy and numeracy support; raising the standards achieved by these pupils is currently hampered by:

- the lack of a clear, agreed approach to teaching reading and especially spelling;
- inadequate use of the data from the assessment of pupils' progress to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision and identify areas for improvement;
- insufficient formal monitoring of teaching of pupils with SEN to identify the reasons for the effectiveness of the provision, and again to identify areas for improvement.

Developing these three strands into an action plan for the LS department will focus its efforts on standards of achievement and on the quality of teaching, and will link its work more closely to the school's improvement plan.

53. The governing body provides very good support for the school. Governors carry out their statutory functions very well, know the school well and are very supportive of it. The organisation of the work of the governing body is very good; the committees and teams of link governors to subject departments work very well, and report effectively to the full governing body. The strategic planning group of governors ensures that committees work effectively together. The governor handbook is a piece of very good practice, enabling new governors to pick up reins quickly, ensuring common practices across the sub-groups, and ensuring links with key staff groups and events such as in-service days. Governors are fully involved in planning for improvement, and play a useful part in setting and reviewing the SDP. Through the self-evaluation system, they are beginning to hold the school to account, and they challenge the school effectively and helpfully in a number of areas, such as exclusions.

54. Both governors and staff operate the principles of best value very well. Good financial management and planning over a number of years, by the governors, headteacher and senior managers, have enabled the school consistently to meet the priorities of the SDP and to ensure that the annual budget operates on a sound, cost-effective basis. Senior managers and governors ensure that the budgetary cycle is closely aligned to the school development planning cycle, and that this in turn takes into account needs identified through the systematic review of school and subject departmental plans. The self-reviews undertaken by subject departments are, however, inconsistent in their analysis and use of data, and in their stress on the levers for raising standards. Senior managers should review the impact of this programme, and ensure that the best practice, such as in PE and English, is mirrored across the school.

55. The budget is very carefully controlled and well targeted. The school auditors confirm that the school has very good budgetary control systems and that they are effectively overseen by the school administration manager. Minor recommendations contained in the auditors' report have been acted upon.

56. This is a very well-resourced school. All subjects have appropriately-qualified specialist teachers. The school has improved the quality of teaching and learning since the time of the last inspection, despite a rapid turnover and expansion of the teaching staff. This is because the school has recruited well, and has supported its new teachers through a very good, comprehensive induction programme, valued by the teachers concerned. A good team of experienced LSAs supports pupils with identified learning needs. The administration and site management teams are excellent: both are very effective and hard-working, and make very positive contributions to the purposeful and caring ethos of the school, and to its good order and smooth running. The professional development needs of staff are identified through a well-established performance management (PM) process, and through the SDP; good links between PM and the SDP ensure that adequate resources are made available for staff

training. The award to the school of Investors in People (IIP) accreditation testifies to the quality of the professional development and performance management systems.

57. As a result of an extensive building programme, the school now has very good and well-maintained accommodation, presenting a very pleasant learning and living environment. All subjects are taught in specialist, suited accommodation and this has enabled teachers to create stimulating work areas and classrooms for their pupils. The current timetable requires some lessons in geography to be taught outside specialist classrooms, and these classes and their teachers have more than one teaching room for their lessons. In the context of the high-quality facilities for other subjects, this limitation shows up as a weakness. The quality and quantity of learning resources throughout the school are very good. Pupils have access to extensive ICT facilities and to a very well-resourced library/resource centre which is used well by both teachers and pupils.

58. Taking into account the above-average results achieved; the good attendance and very good attitudes of the pupils; the good teaching, learning and provision of learning opportunities; the improvement since the last inspection; and the good leadership and management, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To raise standards still further, the school should:

- define clearly the strategies to be used to teach literacy and numeracy in the sessions in which pupils are withdrawn for additional help; and train, co-ordinate and monitor the teachers and LSAs who will lead those sessions (see especially paragraphs 7, 20, 24 and 52).
- use the assessment data collected about pupils' work and progress more consistently to help:
 - ❑ pupils understand how to improve their work
 - ❑ managers evaluate patterns of strength and weakness in the school, and plan for its further improvement.

(see especially paragraphs 18, 42 – 44, 51)

COMMUNITY LINKS

59. The partnership between the school and its community is very good, and has a strong influence on the ethos of the school. This has been recognised by the school gaining the School Curriculum Award. Pupils have a high regard for the school and its environment. They perceive out-of-hours learning as a natural extension of the school as shown by the high levels of participation in activities, before and after school and at the weekend. All this makes a strong contribution to pupils' motivation, learning and personal development.

60. For a number of years the school has been a focus for local community education through the provision of adult education work and as a local sports centre. There are now well-advanced plans to extend and develop this role and to focus on raising aspirations and involvement on a wider scale. These plans see the school responding strongly to national initiatives from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and local initiatives for specialist school status. Governors and senior managers have a very clear sense of direction for these developments. A new community manager has been appointed this term with a clear brief to extend the work beyond the 'traditional' community school programme. With this in mind the initial funding has been used to appoint staff including an outreach worker to develop family learning from the early years. A business and development plan is currently being written. The school already has a good deal of involvement with the local community and many pupils and adults use the school after hours and at the weekend. Data from the school shows heavy use of the sports facilities by local clubs. Pupils are welcome at these sessions and they provide good continuity into adult participation as well as well-defined routes to higher-level participation by more-talented pupils. There is already a good range of vocational and non-vocational courses and these will be extended to encourage parents to attend alongside their children, for example in IT classes. Out-of-hours learning is being developed further through a breakfast club and extension of the existing summer schools.

61. Very good use of the community is made to foster pupils' personal development. A long-standing and very well-organised programme of community service is a feature of work in Year 10. All pupils work for ten weeks in local schools, community centres and residential homes, and their contribution and progress is reported to parents through pupils' annual reports. There are some good examples of the community enriching the curriculum. For example, in design and technology, pupils take part in a mileage challenge competition run by a national petroleum company and in geography a significant piece of fieldwork is based in the local area. In mathematics an innovative video conferencing programme 'people to people' links more able pupils with other academic institutions and helps to raise their aspirations.

62. The notion of community within the school is very evident in its aims and these are being realised through planning for improvement within the school. In the every day life of the school there is a drive to give pupils greater responsibility. The student council is taken seriously by pupils and does have influence. A start has been made to foster links with overseas communities through video conferencing with a school in India and email contact with a local yachtswoman on an extended voyage. Visits to Europe through the languages department are well supported.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

166

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

43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	27	79	45	7	1	0
Percentage	4	16	48	27	4	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

1020

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

110

Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

10

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

104

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

12

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

38

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

45

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

School data

6.2

Unauthorised absence

%

School data

1.6

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	80	110	190

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	61	65
	Girls	98	83	83
	Total	163	144	148
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (59)	76 (69)	78 (59)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (11)	44 (38)	28 (22)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	59	65
	Girls	67	80	83
	Total	113	139	148
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (59)	73 (68)	78 (59)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (24)	40 (35)	28 (23)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	89	91	180

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	46	81	84
	Girls	50	88	91
	Total	96	169	175
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (43)	94 (93)	97 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.3 (41.9)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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	0	-
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	965	66	4
White – Irish	0		
White – any other White background	8		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African	5		
Mixed – White and Asian	0		
Mixed – any other mixed background	0		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0		
Black or Black British – African	0		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	1	
Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	5		
No ethnic group recorded	0		

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	499

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	22.7
Key Stage 4	19.3

Financial year	2001 - 02
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	£
Total income	2813264
Total expenditure	2808747
Expenditure per pupil	2806
Balance brought forward from previous year	8478
Balance carried forward to next year	12995

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1020
Number of questionnaires returned	590

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	56	7	4	3
My child is making good progress in school.	32	56	5	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	50	9	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	58	10	5	6
The teaching is good.	24	62	5	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	50	21	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	48	7	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	19	52	19	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	32	52	7	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	57	6	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	48	3	1	8

Other issues raised by parents

The views of the 15 parents who attended the meeting, the 590 who responded to the questionnaire, and the 28 who sent letters to the registered inspector, are very positive about the quality of education and care given to their sons and daughters. Parents believe that their children are achieving well and making good progress, that they are well taught, and that the school continues to improve. They are particularly positive about the way their children are encouraged and expected to work hard and achieve their best.

A significant minority of parents is unhappy about how the school works with them and about the information they receive about their children's progress. Several parents criticised the speed and reliability of response to their questions and complaints. Although several parents comments about

homework, those comments were mixed, some saying there is too much homework, some that there is too little.

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

ENGLISH

63. Provision in English is **good**. This is a department in which excellent leadership and the high proportion of very good and excellent teaching are causing rapid improvement.

Strengths

- Results in the national tests at age 14 are well above the national average.
- There is a lot of good, very good and excellent teaching, providing good individual support.
- The teachers focus on helping pupils acquire language skills.
- The leadership is excellent and has succeeded in setting and reaching clear targets.
- The learning environment is attractive and enhances the pupils' desire to do well.

Area for improvement

- GCSE results do not reflect the pupils' full potential as seen in their results in the national tests at age 14.

64. In 2001, the standards attained in the national tests at age 14 were well above the national average and that of similar schools. The trend over three years has been faster than the national trend. Results improved further in the summer of 2002, representing very good progress for this group of pupils, including those with SEN, almost all of whom gain graded results.

65. In the GCSE English language examination in 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C was close to the national average, but in literature it was below average. Although in 2002 these results dipped, the pupils did as well as could be expected on the basis of their earlier attainment; their results in their tests at age 14 in 2000 were similarly low. This dip in the examination result was reflected across other subjects in the school. In both English and English literature, the difference in the attainment of girls and boys is less marked than it is nationally, as a result of strategies introduced to help boys improve their performance as, for example, the boy-girl seating in every lesson, the introduction of boy-friendly readers and sharing, with the pupils, gender-specific responses to literature.

66. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards were above average in Years 7 - 9, and average in Years 10 and 11, for two reasons. Firstly, the department has had a drive to improve all aspects of its provision for younger pupils; strategies used have included booster sessions, analysis of prior attainment and using the results in setting priorities, having a specific focus on analysing test performance and producing plans to coach pupils in relevant areas. Secondly, the department has made the implementation of the literacy strategy a priority. The result has been pupils who read regularly and with apparent pleasure, who understand what they need to do and who respond to their reading with perceptive observations. They are also beginning to develop clear arguments in their writing. Younger pupils, therefore, make good progress. The teachers have begun to transfer these successful strategies to older pupils, for whom the following have been introduced: team teaching in Years 10 and 11, scrutiny of examination responses paper by paper and extracting individual and generic weaknesses to address in the curriculum plans, booster classes, study skills sessions in Year 10, a focus on borderline pupils and the introduction of a new GCSE syllabus. These strategies are beginning to produce results in the pupils' work as, for example, seen in Year 10, where a detailed analysis of creative writing produced

some hauntingly atmospheric grade A* pieces. Older pupils currently make satisfactory progress.

67. Teaching is always at least sound, and usually good or better. Twenty per cent of lessons seen were outstanding. Teachers know individual pupils very well and provide good individual support to all. One pupil for whom English is an additional language receives effective support through an individual programme of study produced by English teachers, and makes good progress as a result. Teachers' enthusiasm is often infectious, as seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils reading Sachar's *Holes* were keen, enthusiastic and had much to say about the text. Teachers of younger pupils have a strong focus on literacy skills, reflected in their drive to encourage the correct use of English, the use of exemplars as good writing models and in their marking and assessment, where language skills are consistently highlighted. Lessons for older pupils are well planned, allowing them to build on previous learning. Pupils are encouraged to build up subject-specific vocabulary and to use it in literary criticism, as seen in a Year 11 lesson, where pupils responded sensitively to an Armitage poem.

68. The pupils' response to their teachers is always at least satisfactory and often significantly better. They arrive at lessons on time and are well prepared. When the teacher speaks they listen attentively, except a small minority of boys who occasionally lose their concentration, as noted in some Year 10 lessons. Pupils treat each other with respect, which allows them to take part in successful pair work and to respond to their teachers' enthusiasm for their subject. Pupils use ICT competently to produce their essays as well as to e-mail their work for marking. Pupils also respond well to opportunities to work independently.

69. Departmental leadership is excellent. It is committed to continued improvement, focusing on teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. Monitoring of teaching is rigorous and its outcomes are used to plan the curriculum and to update schemes of work. Pupils are effectively monitored and clear targets for improvements set. The department is using its rich data to enhance its provision through targeted booster classes, through introducing strategies to improve teaching and through targeting individual pupils in need of specific support. There is a shared commitment to the success of all pupils. Good English literature provision makes a positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for enhancing pupils' cultural development include outings to the theatre, poetry days, drama productions and other cultural events. The learning environment is attractive and teachers make very good use of outstanding accommodation.

70. Of the eleven points raised in the last inspection, ten have been successfully acted upon. The library is now used extensively with borrowing exceeding the local schools' average. The cross-curricular literacy policy has been implemented, with progress in Years 7 – 9 improving steadily as a result. Assessment, monitoring and setting targets are now normal departmental practice.

71. Drama and English share some staff and both subject teachers work closely together. Drama provision is also good. GCSE examination results in drama were well above average in 2001 and remained high in 2002. Drama lessons seen were invariably good or better. Teachers' enthusiasm infects pupils who work well and enthusiastically. In one Year 11 drama lesson, pupils collaborated, rehearsed and produced a short piece in a hauntingly moving way. In the previous inspection, drama GCSE results were described as being well below the national average. They are now well above it.

Literacy

72. Teachers of English have made good progress in implementing the literacy strategy through its work on the progress units in Year 7, the whole-school analysis of the results in tests at the end of primary school setting its literacy priorities, very good liaison with partner primary schools including the transfer of each pupil's literacy exercise book with targets set, which provide the basis of planning the curriculum. Opportunities for enhancing literacy skills are good in mathematics, art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and RE.

MATHEMATICS

73. Provision in mathematics is **very good**. There is a very high proportion of good and very good teaching, as a result of which pupils develop their mathematical understanding and skills, concentrate very well in lessons and make good progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

Strengths

- Steady improvement in attainment, which is slightly above the national average in the national tests at age 14.
- The quality of teaching, which is good overall, with some very good teaching; management of pupils and relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Attitudes to learning mathematics and behaviour are very good.
- The quality of the accommodation is excellent and is enhanced by very good display.
- The use of ICT; the project using video conferencing is generating some exciting ideas about mathematics.
- The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced effectively, and lots of the ideas in the strategy have been incorporated into lessons.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is very good. A very strong team is being developed, with excellent support for the two newly-qualified teachers, which has enabled them to settle very quickly and efficiently.
- The leadership of mathematics is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The school homework timetables do not allow enough sessions per week for mathematics, especially for older pupils.
- In some classes, pupils do not show enough working in their written answers.

74. Results in the national tests at age 14 are above national averages. In 2001, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was above the national average and the percentage reaching Level 6 or above was in line with it. Overall results over the last four years have always been above the national figures, and standards are increasing at a slightly faster rate than nationally. Boys performed slightly better than girls over the last four years. Results are in line with those of similar schools. Teacher assessments are very close to the test results, showing good assessment procedures; this is an improvement from the last report.

75. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels just below the national average, and thus make good progress to the age of fourteen. They are very attentive in mathematics lessons, and follow their teachers' instructions diligently; thus learning is good and pupils are very keen to make progress. Pupils develop ideas about factors well. Teachers use practical ideas well to illustrate how algebraic terms can be collected together. Pupils understand well how to break complex shapes into basic rectangles and triangles so that areas can be

calculated, measure angles accurately and recognise alternate, vertically opposite and corresponding angles. The constructions associated with bisecting angles and lines are completed accurately. They use the language of probability with confidence, showing a good appreciation of the probability scale. Less-able pupils in Year 9 understand estimation and how to round numbers.

76. Results at GCSE are significantly above the national averages for both all (A* - G) and higher (A* - C) grades. In 2001, all pupils gained a graded result. These results represent an improvement since the last report, when results were in line with national averages. These commendable results are due to the very high quality of teaching in the department where high expectations of pupils' performances are the norm. Provisional results in 2002 were significantly lower than in the previous year, as in most subjects in the school. The department coped very well during last year, when they were short of one member of the teaching staff. Progress is satisfactory from the tests at the end of Year 9 to GCSE: the provisional 2002 GCSE results were slightly better than the school's predictions, based on an analysis of attainment in the tests at age 14 as taken by the same pupils.

77. Higher-ability pupils in Year 11 analyse information connected with the equations of straight lines and draw good conclusions. Their understanding of the sine and cosine rules and the conditions required to use them is good. Middle-ability pupils understand the difference between the equations of straight-line graphs and quadratics. They learn how to draw cubic graphs by building tables of values. In a very good lesson, pupils calculated the sums of three consecutive numbers, but struggled with the extension work using algebraic values. Pupils in Year 10 easily complete basic work on the three types of averages; they also show a good understanding of the weaknesses of using a particular average to draw significant conclusions. Pupils with SEN make good progress because teachers are aware of their needs and set work which is appropriate to their abilities. In one lower-ability class, the pupils investigated the sum of three consecutive numbers. They were keen to try to explain why certain types of answers arose.

78. Teaching is good - at least satisfactory in all lessons observed, and good or very good in 90 per cent. The mathematics teachers are hard working, highly committed, and exceptionally caring of pupils' welfare; they maintain very high levels of discipline in their classrooms, and organise lessons in which all pupils can achieve high standards. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the mathematical needs of pupils are very good. Their teaching of basic skills is well planned and the warm-up sessions at the beginning of lessons stimulate pupils' learning. In some lessons, more time and stress should be given to the plenary session, where conclusions are drawn about what the pupils have learnt during the lesson. Teachers set demanding standards which pupils are expected to meet. There is a very high expectation that homework will be completed on time, and this brings a very good response from pupils. A real drive is seen in almost all lessons to push pupils' learning forward at a fast pace. In a very few lessons, teachers' expectations are not quite high enough, and the work presented does not fully stretch pupils. Teachers interrupt tasks at appropriate times to develop new ideas. Control of pupils is excellent, and delicate and caring guidance is seen. Teachers take basic steps at a very appropriate pace for their groups and check on understanding regularly.

79. The use of new technologies in the teaching is very good. The department has a high-quality suite of modern computers, which is used sensibly by the pupils. In a very good lesson, the teacher explained clearly, with the aid of a laptop computer and projector, the objectives of the lesson and demonstrated how the computer can be used to help in problem solving; the pupils then moved sensibly to use the machines. Great mutual respect is shown, and praise is freely given. The pace of lessons is generally high, with time constraints for tasks being given by teachers. Pupils of all abilities present work well in their

books, but more stress could be placed on showing all their working. Marking is good, with some useful comments.

80. Because of the high quality of teaching, pupils concentrate on their work, are enthusiastic and make good progress. Their attitudes in mathematics are very positive indeed and they learn well in lessons. Lessons start promptly, with pupils making good efforts to arrive on time; as soon as they enter the classroom they organise themselves for work under the careful guidance of the teacher. They show excellent attitudes to study, and are mature in their approach to learning and solving problems. Pupils follow the directions from the teacher quickly and politely, and there is no disruption to other pupils' learning. The very high codes of behaviour that the teachers insist upon are followed by the pupils, who respond very positively. Pupils are extremely polite, and listen to and value other pupils' comments. This is an improvement on the satisfactory attitudes and behaviour mentioned in the last report. Learning Support Assistants help pupils, but the continuity of provision is unsatisfactory. Pupils would be better served if LSAs were permanently attached to the mathematics department.

81. The curriculum in mathematics is good. The subject handbook contains detailed curriculum plans and guidance on procedures. A GCSE course in statistics is offered, taught outside the formal timetabled time, and numbers of pupils who opt for this extra qualification are increasing. The department takes part in the Mathematics Millennium Project, run in conjunction with Cambridge University, which gives pupils the opportunity to work with eminent mathematicians. Groups of pupils join with pupils from other schools to listen to a lecture from a university professor. At the end of four weeks, pupils present their findings over a video link to other schools; their mathematical understanding is extended.

82. The head of department gives excellent leadership in the philosophy, educational priorities, standards of discipline, relationships with pupils and strategic planning of mathematics. She has tremendous drive, her administration is very efficient and she is very clear about educational priorities. Monitoring and evaluation take place and the teaching is improving under her guidance. She continually seeks personal improvement in her role and is creating a very strong team, which is very successful and develops many new ideas under her leadership. The department coped very well with staff shortages during the last academic year, and has calmly incorporated several new teachers, including two newly qualified teachers, this term. She is fully supported by talented teachers, and there is a very strong, shared commitment to the improvement of mathematics standards in the school for the benefit of all pupils. This is a very strong subject and the pupils are very well served.

Numeracy

83. A numeracy policy is in place across the school, and works well in the mathematics department, led by the head of mathematics. The mathematics team has significantly adjusted the mathematics curriculum for younger pupils in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. Good practice in improving basic number skills is seen at the beginning of mathematics lessons. Basic number skills are well stressed, and calculators are used only when appropriate. Games, new equipment and computers are used to enhance pupils' learning. In one lesson, a form of the television numeracy game on "Countdown" was used at the end of the lesson so that pupils could use their numerical skills. This even included the correct music!

84. Following a request from the mathematics department, the school was declared a phase 1 school in September 2001 for the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. In-service training has been given to all members of the mathematics team. Discussion has taken place across the school and, following an audit of the numeracy elements that are

used in other subjects, the head of department has run whole-school in-service training. Further workshops are planned and will be presented by the mathematics teachers.

85. Some good examples of numeracy in action were seen across the school, and are beginning to be developed into a coherent programme. Higher-ability pupils in science show good use of number and complete graphs with confidence. A significant number of pupils have difficulties with calculations which means that they cannot reach the highest grades. In geography, there are plenty of good examples of the use of statistical information; an enquiry into traffic problems in GCSE coursework involves graphing, presentation and interpretation. In design and technology, accurate measurement is seen and numeracy is used in pupils' coursework. Large calculators are stuck to the walls for the use of pupils. During an ICT lesson, pupils calculated the cost of a trip based on entry and travel costs, for which they used the on-screen calculator. Pupils record results in Physical Education, including heart rate monitoring using percentages. Tabular information and charts are prepared. In art and design, there is reference in the schemes of work to the uses of proportion, ratio and rotation of shapes. The school numeracy policy has not yet made a significant difference in the Learning Support department, but pupils were observed identifying lines of symmetry in polygons.

86. Pupils' standards in numeracy are above average and rising as a result of the stronger and increasingly coherent approach.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning, most of which are good or very good.
- Very good accommodation and resources and outstanding displays of pupils' work, which allow pupils to study science in nearly perfect conditions.
- Good team spirit, which successfully supports new staff.
- Accurate assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 - 9, which enable the teachers to match the work closely to the needs of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Marking and reporting procedures, which do not make clear to pupils and their parents what the pupils can and cannot do, and what they must do to improve.
- The curriculum for older lower-attaining pupils, which currently does not meet their needs.
- Technician time, which is insufficient and not significantly improved since the last inspection.

87. Standards achieved in the national tests in science for pupils aged 14 in 2001 were in line with the national average and that of similar schools. This year there was a significant fall in results at Level 5 and above and a significant improvement at the higher levels: standards are likely to be around the national average when comparative information is available. Results in science are below those in mathematics and well below those in English. Over the three years to 2001, average point scores have fluctuated around the national average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils achieve results in line with expectations based on their performance in the national tests at the end of primary school.

88. Standards at GCSE have increased steadily so that by 2001 they were above the national average and that of similar schools. In 2002, there was a very significant drop in results so that they are likely to be well below the national average when comparative data are available. In 2001 pupils achieved GCSE results around what might be expected based on their attainment at the end of Year 9 but, in 2002, results were well below those that might be expected whilst those for English and mathematics were in line with expectations.

89. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress, particularly when the teacher and support assistant work well together. It is important that this becomes a common practice with all teachers. On one occasion a support assistant spent a lot of time trying to control the behaviour of a small group of pupils, which prevented her from supporting the learning needs of other pupils. Most teachers use the technical language of the subject well and improve the pupils' literacy skills by the use of key words. Pupils' standards in ICT are unsatisfactory because they do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers and data logging equipment. Standards in ICT would improve if the ratio of sensors to computers was more even, which would enable pupils to obtain data directly from their experiments.

90. Teaching is generally good, and very good in about 20 per cent of lessons. In spite of many staff changes, this good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. The hard-working team of teachers can be justly proud of the work they do to improve pupils' learning. Next, they must try to find ways to improve pupils' long term learning so that the good work in the classroom can be translated into better results. The teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is slightly better than that of younger pupils. The reason for this is that teachers manage the older pupils better. Teachers' very good scientific knowledge and understanding is the foundation for their good practice. They generally have good relationships with their pupils and, as a result, pupils settle quickly to work. Pupils learn well because teachers are confident to use a wide range of resources and methods to make their lessons interesting. Teachers organise the pupils well in the classroom so that most have every opportunity to learn. For every lesson, teachers set clear objectives; this helps pupils to focus on key points and thus aids their learning. As at the time of the last inspection, teachers do not provide sufficiently for the needs of pupils of different ability in the same group. This is crucial for Year 7 pupils where there is such a wide range of ability in the teaching groups. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, although the quality of marking is variable, particularly in respect of the use of scientifically supportive comments. The reports to parents are unsatisfactory because they do not identify sufficiently what pupils can and cannot do in science. Teachers do not give high enough priority to the level/grade pupils are working at when they share test data with them. Pupils require more precise targets and information to tell them what they must do to improve.

91. Pupils learn well. Pupils in Year 7 made satisfactory progress when taking a series of distance measurements using a range of instruments. In this lesson the teacher set clear time targets for the completion of each set of measurements so that the work was completed. However he failed to direct the pupils about how to take measurements scientifically, and consequently his request for pupils to evaluate their work was unrealistic. When finding out how the shape of an object alters the speed of travel through a fluid, Year 8 pupils learnt well. The teacher had planned the lesson carefully and gave the pupils the opportunity to improve their understanding of fair testing. In a lesson about convection, the highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 learnt very well how heat is transferred evenly. The teacher allowed pupils to investigate convection experimentally and then encouraged them to think carefully through her perceptive questioning technique. Learning was unsatisfactory in a lesson with a low-attaining group of pupils in Year 9, because the teacher failed to control their disruptive behaviour and consequently too little work was covered. Highest-attaining pupils learnt well about the role of hormones in the human body. In this lesson the teacher made sure that pupils had a good set of notes through the selective use of methods and

resources.

92. The best teaching is carefully matched to the ability of the pupils. For example, the lowest-attaining pupils in Year 11 learnt well about how tyre tread patterns alter friction. By the careful selection of a newspaper article about motor racing, the teacher immediately captured the pupils' interest. A key feature of this lesson was the mutual respect between teacher and pupils, some of whom were potentially difficult. Teachers of science are inconsistent in the accuracy with which they match work to the needs of the pupils.

93. The quality of pupils' written work indicates that their attitudes are good. In nearly 40 per cent of lessons the attitudes and behaviour of pupils was excellent. Pupils work very well together, carrying out experiments and moving responsibly around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment. They follow their teachers' instructions to wear safety glasses and consequently work safely. Pupils generally have respect for others, which they demonstrate by putting up their hands to answer questions. They have very good relationships with their teachers and each other. When talking to each other and their teacher they are courteous and polite.

94. The current GCSE course is not the most suitable for the lower-attaining pupils. One of the reasons for their low attainment is that they have low levels of recall and understanding of their previous work, and only modest levels of literacy and numeracy. These pupils would therefore benefit from a course which tests them more frequently, rather than the present course, in which they are tested only by a final examination at the end of Year 11.

95. The technician team is efficient and supportive and makes an important contribution to the work of the subject. However, the amount of technician time is insufficient and shows little improvement from the last inspection. The department will be in a better position to deliver the ICT requirements of the science curriculum if additional computers and software licences are purchased. The department gives due attention to health and safety. Some written risk assessments for experiments exist; these should be extended throughout the schemes of work and should vary with the particular group of pupils carrying out the work.

96. The head of department provides sound leadership, helping create the very strong team spirit that exists in the department. This is a dedicated team of teachers who take pride in their working environment: the quality of the displays of pupils' work is exceptional. The head of department has led a satisfactory improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Still outstanding are the problems associated with marking and the amount of technician support. The department faces a considerable challenge to raise standards at GCSE, mainly by introducing a course better suited to the needs of pupils of moderate and lower ability. Good teaching in very good accommodation together with very supportive pupils will raise standards once a better curriculum is in place.

ART AND DESIGN

97. The quality of provision in art and design is **good**. Almost all aspects of the subject have improved steadily over recent years, with rising attainment, consistently good teaching and good facilities, enabling pupils to enjoy challenging, creative work.

Strengths

- A steady improvement in attainment at all levels.
- Teaching, which is most often good and occasionally excellent.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour - the result of the expert subject guidance they receive.
- Attention to literacy, enabling pupils to evaluate and discuss ideas about art using specialist vocabulary with confidence.
- Recent improvements in art provision, including a new scheme of work.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures do not reflect National Curriculum levels accurately.
- Access to ICT is insufficient to enable pupils to use it to generate and manipulate images.

98. GCSE results in art have risen until, in 2001 examination, they were in line with the national average. In common with most other subjects, results dipped in 2002, although for many pupils, art was their best grade, indicating that the subject continues to add value.

99. Attainment by Year 9 is above expectations for the ages of the pupils. Attainment for about half of Year 11 pupils meets expectations for the GCSE course, while for the other half attainment exceeds expectations, promising good performances in the 2003 examination.

100. Strengths of younger pupils' attainment include drawing from observation and practical skills. For example, pupils in Year 7 learn to use line and tone to make accurate drawings with many fine examples produced, while pupils in Year 8 use colour and brush control effectively to explore impressionist landscape painting. Pupils' knowledge about other artists is generally good, and they use specialist vocabulary to express ideas about art, for example in a Year 9 discussion on the theme of 'Graffiti – is it art?'. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN and the most able, achieve well because art teachers know their pupils and provide plenty of attention matched to their individual needs.

101. Drawing continues to be a strength in Years 10 and 11, and underpins much of the quality of image making. Pupils investigate and experiment to develop their own creative, expressive individual responses to the projects set, with many examples of complex imagery supported by extended visual research - for example the ceramic zodiac signs with melted glass colour fill by pupils in Year 11. Another strength is the textiles course, in which pupils develop high-level skills, exploiting the powerful visual qualities of textile media and processes. Examples here are the beautifully-coloured and -textured responses to a Titchfield Abbey visit by pupils in Year 10, and Year 11 pupils' experiments with pulled thread designs.

102. Weaknesses of attainment across the age range are printmaking and computer-generated visual work. There are insufficient opportunities to give these skills a chance to develop, although some promising print work has been done in Year 8, and some Year 9 computer work has been done using the CorelDraw program.

103. Teaching and learning are good across the age range, with some very good and excellent, especially for older pupils. The teaching team works very hard to provide a good art experience for pupils. Great care has gone into the preparation of a new scheme of work. Lessons are well planned and organised so that pupils use time productively. Lesson aims are clearly described and practical processes demonstrated and discussed so that pupils understand what to do and how to do it. Teachers choose good examples to illustrate ideas and provide plenty of whole-group and individual guidance and expert subject leadership, giving pupils the confidence they need to try new ideas and techniques and improve their skills and ideas. In the best lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm and expertise are transmitted to pupils who respond by being inspired to do well. Pupils in all years respond positively to the teaching they receive. They come to art lessons with high expectations, and are not disappointed. They enjoy the challenge of individual creativity, mastering new techniques and exploring ideas. Behaviour in art lessons is almost always good or very good. Pupils respect the art studios and equipment and many choose to work in the studios during lunchtimes and after school.

104. Setting and timetable arrangements for art are good, especially in Year 9, where a special effort is made to keep groups small so that more ambitious work can be done in preparation for the demands of GCSE courses. The subject is well led and managed and many improvements have been successfully implemented since the time of the last inspection. For example, in addition to the new scheme of work there have been improvements in marking pupils' work so that it provides information on how their work can be improved. A new assessment and tracking system has been established, although some refining still needs to be done to ensure that it accurately identifies National Curriculum levels of attainment for younger pupils, which are currently inflated. The art studios are stimulating places with plenty of high-quality display, making them good places for creative, expressive work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are good.
- The department is well led, and its committed teachers and technical staff work very well together as a team.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils as a result of which there is a good learning atmosphere and pupils enjoy the subject.
- Teaching is good; lessons are planned and organised well, and good homework helps pupils to work independently.
- Teachers give good individual support to pupils, helping them improve their work.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment of pupils' work in Years 7, 8 and 9 does not sufficiently support their progress.
- Higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged and therefore do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils' use of technical and evaluative language is underdeveloped, limiting the quality of their written work.
- The use of ICT is inconsistent across the material areas.

105. The standards achieved by pupils aged 14 in 2001 were well above the national average. The work seen during the inspection in Year 9 confirms that standards are above average. Standards seen in Years 7 and 8 are not as high, because pupils' skills and knowledge are not built steadily across the modules taught during these two years. The teachers are aware of this and of the need to develop further the planning of assessment procedures to ensure effective progression from Year 7 to Year 9.

106. Pupils in Years 7 – 9 are gaining a very good foundation in a range of practical skills, and are confident and competent when using a variety of tools and small and large equipment. They develop a good knowledge of materials in relation to functions and properties, and are able to identify the correct material or components for making a given product. For example, in a Year 8 electronic products lesson, pupils were able to identify the power flow of a complete circuit and the function of light emitting device. Pupils show a growing awareness of the design process and, by the end of Year 9, many work effectively from a design brief, develop a specification and model and make quality products. The use of computers is developing with some examples of pupils word processing their work and using graphics to improve their folder work. In Year 9 pupils are starting to use computer-aided design.

107. GCSE results in 2001 were just above national averages. Standards of attainment have been improving steadily and this continued in the 2002 results. Pupils' achievement in lessons is good with the application of skills, knowledge and understanding gained in Years 7 and 8 and particularly in Year 9 being further developed in Years 10 and 11. This helps pupils to develop ideas and to research their projects effectively. Pupils use a range of graphic skills well, including isometric and perspective drawing. The use of computer-aided design and manufacturing is developing. Pupils use computers effectively to improve their folder work and their designing skills in graphic and electronic products, but they are less well used in food, textiles and resistant materials. Pupils use of technical and evaluative language is underdeveloped, limiting the quality of their written work.

108. Teaching and learning are both good, with hardworking and committed teachers and technical support staff sharing their good knowledge and expertise with pupils. This enables them to learn effectively and develop a depth of understanding of design and technology, so that they achieve well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, producing responsive and positive attitudes in lessons. The planning and organisation of lessons are good resulting in effective learning even when accommodation is cramped. Teachers give good individual support to pupils so that most make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and therefore do not achieve as well as they should. Homework is given regularly, helping pupils to recall knowledge and understanding and to work independently.

109. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The newly-appointed head of department already has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the department. These are reflected in the inspection findings and in the good levels of improvement since the last inspection. There is a strong team approach to the work of the department with all departmental staff committed to improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of much of the teaching.
- The department is well led, and the teachers share a commitment to improve work in the subject.
- The quality of the learning environment in the specialist geography teaching rooms.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment at GCSE is too low.
- Pupils' skills of geographical enquiry lag behind their other skills.
- Some teaching is less than satisfactory and limits achievement.

110. The pupils' performance at GCSE over the past three years has consistently been below the national average, but the numbers opting for geography are increasing, and their results are on a slow trend of improvement. In 2001, results were below the national average for grades A* to C but average for the complete range of grades A* to G. In common with most other subjects, provisional results in geography in the 2002 examination are lower.

111. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work in the current Years 10 and 11 confirm that the standards these pupils are reaching are higher, and much closer to expectations. The majority of pupils, including those with SEN, are achieving well over the two years of the GCSE course. Pupils develop an increasing understanding of geographical ideas and show an increasing grasp of geographical terminology. The key weaknesses in the pupils' work at GCSE are the lack of depth in their case study knowledge, resulting in insufficient detail in their geographical explanations, and a weakness in their enquiry skills, particularly at the start of the course. These weaknesses are recognised by their teachers who are working hard to help pupils to develop good sets of notes and are already addressing the issue of enquiry skills lower down the school, as well as at GCSE. One very positive recent development is the quality of the Year 11 pupils' work on the newly-devised coursework enquiry into traffic problems in Fareham.

112. The standards of work achieved by the pupils in the current Year 9 are in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement for the majority of pupils, including those with SEN. Pupils are developing good skills in handling data and in taking information from geographical sources such as atlases and maps. They demonstrate an increasing familiarity with appropriate geographical vocabulary, such as precipitation, and are developing their ability to communicate their geographical understanding when answering questions such as why it rains and when describing the three different types of rainfall in the British Isles. Across Years 7 to 9, pupils show an increasing ability to describe geographical patterns and processes. The relative weaknesses for all, and especially for higher-attaining pupils, lie in their difficulties in explaining those patterns and processes. The quality of the pupils' work in their notebooks is generally good, but there are some teaching groups where this is not the case. There are currently insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to develop their fieldwork skills.

113. Overall, teaching and learning in geography are good. Strong features of the most effective teaching are the good relationships between teachers and pupils, the teachers' very good classroom management and their enthusiasm. Pupils respond to their teachers by

behaving well and working very hard. Pupils are keen to offer their ideas, and precise teacher questioning forces them to refine their thinking. The most successful lessons are well planned to draw pupils actively into their learning and to challenge them. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils found out for themselves about the two case study locations of Kobe in Japan and Quindio in Colombia. The teacher had provided the pupils with a very good stepped series of tasks, challenged them to find the answers for themselves and gave help without giving the answers. Pupils responded by working very hard and with obvious enjoyment. One relative weakness within teaching is the lack of challenge for higher attainers in some teaching groups. In the small number of lessons in which teaching was less than satisfactory, teacher exposition failed to engage pupil interest or to help them to understand their work. When, as a result, pupil behaviour deteriorated, it was not effectively corrected and pupils made insufficient progress in their learning.

114. The leadership and management of geography being provided by the new head of geography are good and the teachers are committed to teaching good geography. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in some areas, but the issue of unsatisfactory achievement linked to poor behaviour has not been resolved. There have been a number of positive initiatives made by teachers to help improve pupils' attainment at GCSE, such as the provision of more appropriate resources, well-designed coursework and extra support sessions for pupils. The new schemes of work for Year 7 and for part of the GCSE course give good guidance to all those teaching geography on a range of teaching and learning activities, including opportunities for the use of ICT; similar schemes now need to be completed for Years 8 and 9 and for the rest of GCSE. Resources remain weak for younger pupils but funds are available to improve them. The specialist accommodation for geography is very good but one in five lessons has to be taught in other rooms, creating problems in the management of resources.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**. The curriculum, teaching and leadership are all good.

Strengths

- Teaching, which is frequently adventurous, ambitious and perceptive across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, which are good.
- The extensive opportunities for fieldwork and the use of information technology for individual research.
- Leadership, which is enthusiastic and committed.

Areas for improvement

- Essay writing, and the linking together of ideas and arguments in writing.
- The quality and consistency of marking and the use of pupil targets, levels and grade criteria.
- The use of evaluation to determine the impact of teaching and the department's development initiatives, and thus improvement priorities for the subject.

115. Standards in history are satisfactory and the teachers ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential. In 2001, GCSE results were very close to the national average; contrary to the school trend, the (provisional) results were maintained in 2002. History has generally matched the national rise in standards over the past three years and evidence of younger pupils' progress and ability seen in the course of the inspection indicates that the challenging GCSE improvement targets the subject has set itself for 2003 will be met. Currently, however, too few pupils gain the very highest grades/levels at GCSE and at the end of Year 9.

116. In the last inspection, standards were judged to be average across the school, and to be in line with those seen elsewhere across the school, with boys doing better than girls. The gender gap in standards has now largely been closed. Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and pupils are well motivated. Consequently, their levels of subject knowledge are uniformly good across the full age range, evidence both that standards are rising and that teaching is effective. Pupils are clearly interested in the topics they cover in history. They listen well and read aloud without hesitation or shyness, and offer contributions involving genuine insight. Their use of source material is good. Younger pupils understand the importance of articulating and defending opinions aloud and of basing their conclusions on fact and evidence. Asked to explain why the Civil War was 'a defining moment in English history', for example, one pupil suggested this was because it involved '*a transfer of power from the monarchy to Parliament*'. Equally, older, more-able pupils readily use the Internet to research historical topics; they relish the opportunities offered by this medium and confidently construct newspaper articles depicting the period they are studying. Where pupils have difficulty, however, is in composing structured and balanced essays, and it is in developing this skill for examination purposes that the greatest challenge to the teachers lies, since many pupils cannot confidently link and develop their ideas in writing without support.

117. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, and most is at least good; there are frequent examples of very good teaching. In this respect, the subject has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and is invariably used very well to bring precision and challenge to lessons, thus enabling pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, to learn and make progress. All teaching is enthusiastic and it is this quality that enables staff to build positive relationships with pupils across the school. Pupils respect and like their teachers and respond well to their direction. Teaching is mostly pacy, bringing purpose and challenge to lessons, yet offering pupils opportunities to reflect and to work independently and collaboratively; some teachers, however, succeed in striking this balance more effectively than others. Nonetheless, the teachers make good use of a wide range of teaching approaches including role-play, some excellent fieldwork opportunities and the 'hands-on' exploration of evidence. In one very good lesson on Hitler's rise to power, the teacher encouraged pupils to explore the Internet to locate material on German history and to use this to create 'contemporary newspaper accounts' of the 'Beer Hall Putsch'. The imagination, self-confidence and self-discipline pupils brought to this activity were a splendid reflection of the aims of the department reflected in this unit of work.

118. Reports to parents are informative and there is good use of homework. There is, however, inconsistency in the quality and frequency of marking and in the use of levels or grades across the department, and teaching needs to continue to develop pupils' literacy skills. There is good use of focussed assessment tasks to monitor pupils' progress and to review the appropriateness of pupils' sets.

119. Leadership and management in history are good. Teachers of history have a clear sense of purpose and share a commitment to ensure that pupils achieve their potential. They respond to the enthusiastic and infectious leadership of the head of history, and make every effort to bring insight and intelligence to their work. This is a thoughtful department that looks constantly to make a difference and is always open to new ideas. Financial and day-to-day management are efficient, resource levels and accommodation are generally good and well maintained and history has a secure place in the curriculum. The support offered to all, and particularly to new, staff is excellent. Teaching is regularly monitored, but the teachers do not yet evaluate the impact of their work sufficiently or base the choice of development priorities on a sufficiently precise audit of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

120. Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**. Examination results are well above the national average and teaching is most frequently good.

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and in the Key Skills tests are well above the national average.
- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a certificated ICT course.
- Teaching is good, and sensitive to the needs of individual pupils.
- The school provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities in ICT, including computer clubs, which meet the interests and aptitudes of all pupils.
- Leadership is good, and the department has the services of an excellent technician.

Areas for improvement

- The pace of learning is impeded when pupils have to share computers.

121. The standards achieved by pupils in ICT throughout the school are good. Levels attained at the end of Year 9 last year were well above the national average, as were pupils' results in Key Skills tests in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with SEN are interested in their work and achieve well.

122. All pupils can log on confidently and load appropriate software. All older pupils follow ICT Key Skills courses that cater for all ability levels. Many of the older pupils acquire advanced skills in ICT - for example, some Year 11 pupils are redesigning the school's intranet web site, while others are writing macros in their Level 3 Key Skills course.

123. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and most is good or very good. Pupils are set work which builds the confidence in less-able pupils while providing extended opportunities for those who are more able. The teachers' good knowledge of ICT enables them to use technical terms with confidence. Excellent examples of PowerPoint presentations and Excel spreadsheets are used to enhance teachers' demonstrations. This makes expectations clear to pupils, allowing them to achieve standards that exceed the national average. Some ICT work in Years 7 – 9 is assessed through its use in other subjects, ensuring that ICT is learned in meaningful contexts. The ICT co-ordinator collates the grades and monitors how effectively pupils learn ICT across the curriculum.

124. Lessons are very well planned with a good range of activities. However, the pace of some lessons is hampered where there is insufficient numbers of computers in the main computer suites to ensure that all pupils are able to work independently.

125. Opportunities for learning are enhanced by the excellent range of software and hardware available. 'Henry's Net' is an excellent example of a school intranet service. It is designed and built by the pupils and is frequently used. Pupils may use supervised ICT areas within the library/resource centre and in the ICT department to continue their coursework or increase their ICT skills. Homework is used effectively to reinforce and extend what is learned in class. There are excellent examples of pupils' work on display around the school.

126. Parents are well informed of their children's progress. Reports to parents refer to National Curriculum levels where appropriate and give helpful advice on how pupils should improve their work. Homework and effort are graded and there is a clear indication of the examination and assessment timetable.

127. Teachers have established very good relationships with pupils. This has enabled pupils to interact positively within lessons, remain highly motivated and learn effectively. Teachers ensure that work is completed and marked. In the best examples, marking is extensive and helps pupils to make progress in their work.

128. ICT is well managed and co-ordinated across the school. Both the ICT co-ordinator and the head of ICT are new in post, but with a good system already in place they are both in a position to continue the good work that has already been done. The school also benefits from the services of an excellent ICT technician. As a result, the school has excellent ICT facilities that are reliable and well maintained.

129. The ICT co-ordinator meets regularly with nominated ICT leaders from each subject to plan and develop and co-ordinate cross-curricular strategies. In-service training has been very effective in raising the levels of ICT competence amongst many of the staff.

130. Since the last inspection, the school has improved standards to well-above-expected levels by ages 14 and 16. The quality of the ICT programme is maintained at a high level with good teaching and a well-planned curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in modern languages is **good** and **very good** in French, the main foreign language taught.

Strengths

- Standards are high in French throughout the school, including at GCSE.
- Pupils learn and achieve well in French, making rapid progress at all stages.
- Teaching is good across the department, especially so in French.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The quality of the learning environment and of resources for learning, both of which are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment and teaching in German, which are less consistent than in French.

131. Attainment in French is very good. In 2001 the average GCSE point score was significantly above the national average, and there were particularly good results in the higher grades, a very high entry rate, and especially commendable attainment by boys. French was the highest-performing subject in the school, as it has been for several years. Provisional 2002 GCSE results show French maintaining its high standards, though not by so great a margin as in 2001. Teacher assessments at age 14 also reflect above-average attainment.

132. Attainment in German is satisfactory. In 2001 most of the relatively few pupils who were entered attained C, D, E in GCSE. The average point score was 4.0 compared with the national average of 4.5. However, more pupils entered in 2002, and those unverified GCSE results show improvement on previous years, exceeding the department's own predictions. German GCSE attainment does not fully reflect or build on the indications, in teacher assessments, of above-average performance at age 14.

133. Hardly any pupils have experience of French when they arrive at the school, and by the time they leave their achievement is very good. Pupils with SEN do well, some of them exceptionally well, and high attainers too excel. Most pupils recall vocabulary they have recently met. Many can link together several phrases and speak in sentences. All listen well to the teacher, and most concentrate hard when listening to audiotape. Most pupils can find the information required in texts they are given. Pupils write at length and with commendable accuracy because they are well supported with good examples and prompts.

134. Achievement in German is satisfactory. It lags behind achievement in French, partly because it does not begin until Year 8 and has less time given to it, but partly also because of some weak teaching. When they are well taught, the pupils speak, listen, read and write reasonably well, and make satisfactory progress.

135. The following comments apply equally to both French and German. Too few pupils make active use of their exercise books, posters on the walls, and other helpful cues, to inform their speaking. Many pupils express themselves in an undertone and take little initiative in speaking up. In none of the lessons observed did pupils of their own accord use the target language to say "I don't know" or "More slowly please" when they had difficulties. Pupils were rarely observed listening to one another during whole-class teacher-led question-and-answer sessions. But when they are asked to, many pupils show they can read aloud effectively. They present their writing well and make positive use of the good marking they receive. ICT is well used to draft writing and to research on the Internet.

136. Teaching in French is good. It is never less than satisfactory and sometimes very good. In German teaching is satisfactory overall, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. The following positive features were observed in French and German lessons and account for pupils' good progress:

- brief, brisk bursts of whole-class question-and-answer;
- choral repetition enhancing memorisation of vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency;
- taking a positive interest in what the pupils communicate, thereby confirming the genuineness of personal relationships and authenticity of classroom activities;
- encouragement for the pupils to reflect on ways of supporting or improving their learning;
- planning which ensures three or four of the language modes (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are actively practised during a lesson;
- praise for what precisely has been done well, and pleasure in the pupils' achievement;
- linking classwork to trips abroad and using language in real or imagined situations;
- homework reinforcing or extending lessons;
- teaching which focuses on areas of learning that have been identified as necessary if pupils are to hit their targets.

137. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in French are very good. In German they are satisfactory overall, but sometimes less than respectful. Weaknesses are accounted for by teaching that has failed to establish routines of careful listening and concentration. Evidence drawn from self-evaluative questionnaires completed by Year 11 pupils show that many appreciate their good teaching and the contribution made by the foreign language assistants. Pupils who go on exchange visits enjoy their time abroad and act as good ambassadors for the school.

138. The leadership and management of modern foreign languages are good. The head of department's own vital enthusiasm and strong commitment mirror and invigorate his colleagues' energy and devotion. Very effective schemes of work are being improved all the time through conscientious experiment. The subject is very well equipped. Every pupil has a textbook; audio-visual machines and technology are well used. Good accommodation is

well maintained; classroom and corridor walls carry attractive and stimulating material. A splendid collection of books has been bought for the library and classrooms. Assessment records are kept for each pupil, helping with the setting of realistic yet challenging targets. All of this promotes the teachers' high expectations. Even higher standards can be reached through the development of:

- ways of following up the pupils' setting of targets
- a portfolio of assessed work, illustrating levels and grades, and recording outcomes from colleagues' standardisation meetings
- more focused monitoring to give individual teachers targeted feedback, reinforcing departmental priorities and personal performance management.

MUSIC

139. Provision in music is **satisfactory**. This is a soundly-led department which has improved since the last inspection and which now needs to raise standards further by raising expectations and by assessing pupils' attainment and progress more effectively.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching across the department, which is contributing to the raising of standards, especially in Years 10 and 11 and in instrumental work.
- The significant increase in the number of pupils entering GCSE examinations.
- The instrumental teaching programme, which promotes high standards in music for a growing number of pupils through a range of traditional and multicultural experiences.
- Accommodation and resources in general, which provide an environment very conducive to learning in music.

Areas for improvement

- Expectations of pupils in Years 7 – 9 are not high enough, especially of the more musically-able pupils.
- The department's assessment policy is not yet fully and consistently implemented.
- Music technology, especially in Years 10 and 11, does not yet make full use of ICT.

140. In Years 7 - 9, standards in music are in line with those expected from pupils of a similar age. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 suggest that pupils are working at levels well above the national average: teachers need help in benchmarking their assessments more accurately. In Years 10 and 11, standards are also in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age and from similar schools. GCSE results for 2001 indicate that over 90 per cent of the small group of pupils who took the examination achieved higher-grade passes, well above the national average and the results achieved by these pupils in other subjects. Provisional GCSE results for 2002 are lower than those for 2001, in common with most other subjects. Standards in instrumental lessons are good, and satisfactory standards are achieved in extra-curricular activities.

141. In Years 7 - 9, pupils' background musical knowledge is secure. Standards of singing are satisfactory, as exemplified in a Year 8 class, in which pupils learnt a song quickly, singing accurately in pitch, intonation and rhythm. Performing skills are generally secure, an example being in a Year 9 class who were able to perform a blues style piece, in pairs, using electronic keyboards. Here, most could compose a melody line to given words, and a few were able to improvise within this structure. In Years 10 and 11, where achievement is good, pupils have good background knowledge of musical elements and features. A Year 10 group demonstrated the acquisition of good aural skills, understanding cadences and recognising

them in the context of a piece of music. They discriminated effectively between similar pieces of music played in different styles. In both Years 10 and 11, pupils apply their knowledge and understanding in practical activities that bring together effectively the skills of performing, composing and appraising; in a Year 11 group, however, some lacked imaginative touches in composing, relying more on musical cliché.

142. The achievement of younger pupils, including those with SEN, is satisfactory but the achievement of the more musically-able in lessons is sometimes inhibited because tasks are insufficiently challenging for them. The achievement of older pupils and those receiving instrumental tuition is good.

143. Across the school, pupils display positive attitudes to their work. Relationships between pupils and between them and their teachers are very good and this promotes learning. Most pupils are able to reflect upon what they do and understand its impact on others. A significant number show initiative and take responsibility for their learning.

144. The quality of teaching is good, especially in Years 10 and 11, in which all teaching is good or very good. Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning in the classroom and in instrumental tuition. The characteristics of good teaching are in teachers' subject knowledge and personal performing skills, in short-term planning, in the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed, in the management of pupils and in the use of time and resources. Weaknesses occur in Years 7 – 9 where full account is not taken of the range of ability within the class. The quality of learning is also good, both within lessons and in the instrumental programme. Pupils generally consolidate their knowledge and skills, developing their understanding well. They work creatively and productively, showing an interest in their work and often sustaining high levels of concentration.

145. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. There is a clear vision and direction shared by all music staff. Since the appointment of the current head of department, initiatives have been put in place to address and implement the areas of improvement identified in the last inspection and to improve provision and practice in lessons and, especially, in the instrumental teaching programme. Almost 20 per cent of the school's pupils, a very high proportion, are now learning to play a musical instrument and many more pupils are opting for the GCSE examination course in Years 10 and 11. These are among the strengths of the subject. There are, however, areas for improvement in assessment, in providing more challenge for the more musically-able younger pupils, and in the use of ICT, particularly in the use of computers and associated software throughout the school, especially in examination groups. Using the results of assessment to guide planning is not yet effectively implemented, and in Years 7 - 9, assessment procedures are not fully developed. Throughout the age range, the recording of pupils' work, both in marking and in obtaining evidence of achievement, is not developed sufficiently for pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school's achievement of the Artsmark award for arts subjects, including music, is a tribute to the quality of its work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE in PE, and achieve well.
- Teaching is good and often very good, and creates a very good climate for learning in which all pupils achieve well.
- Relationships are very good and contribute to pupils' very good attitudes and personal development.
- Very good leadership and management of a committed team.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment does not always help pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve.

146. To its credit, the school enters almost all pupils for GCSE - a much higher proportion than in most schools. In 2001 results were above the national average for pass grades, but well below the national average for higher-grade passes. Provisional results for 2002 are better. In 2001, pupils did not do as well in PE as they did in English, mathematics and science (the other subjects taken by almost all pupils), but this was reversed in 2002, when PE results were better than in those three subjects.

147. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. In lessons, the good progress made in Years 7 - 9 is built on as they continue to develop their practical skills. A choice of activities enables them to make a good start in new activities. Scrutiny of work on theoretical aspects such as the principles of training shows that pupils achieve what might be expected. Coursework of higher-attaining pupils shows they can design a training programme for themselves that draws on both theoretical work and aspects of their own performance. Work of lower-attaining pupils shows a sound grasp of basic principles.

148. No work was seen in Year 9 but assessment by teachers shows above-average standards. Work seen in Years 7 and 8 is average but with some above average in both years. The progress made by pupils in lessons is good; even in the few weeks since the beginning of term, pupils have made advances in their learning. In a Year 7 hockey lesson, for example, pupils were already playing small games and applying simple rules and tactics. They demonstrate sound skills in gymnastics and badminton. Pupils prepare conscientiously for activity and have a sound understanding of which activities to select and the effect of exercise on the body. They observe and comment accurately on what they see. This helps them to have a greater understanding of the important points when learning a new skill. Pupils enter the school with average standards but with a wide range of experience in different activities. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

149. Equality of access for all pupils is very good. Pupils with identified learning needs and the one pupil with English as an additional language make good progress in lessons. They benefit from the clear demonstrations of how to perform skills and from very good individual encouragement. More-talented pupils make good progress through the many after-school activities and the close links with local clubs. As yet there are insufficient challenging tasks for these pupils in some lessons.

150. Pupils' very good attitudes to the subject are evident throughout the school. These are shown in high levels of participation and in very good behaviour in lessons and out-of-hours clubs. Pupils speak highly of the wide range of activities open to all. In lessons they listen

carefully and respond with energy and enthusiasm. Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is encouraged through an emphasis on fair play and working in teams.

151. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned. They have a clear structure, from the introduction of what is to be learned, through carefully-designed practices to develop skills, to a review of progress at the end. As a result, pupils know what to do and how to do it. The teacher usually reviews the progress made at the end but pupils could be more actively involved in these evaluations. A strength of lessons is the very good climate for learning brought about by expert management of pupils - light touch but very clear and effective - and by teachers' high expectations of pupils' involvement, behaviour and pace of work. This pace is particularly brisk in lessons in Years 10 and 11 and is necessary because ten weeks of teaching in Year 10 are lost when all pupils follow a community service course. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to comment at just the right moment to move the learning on. A wide range of teaching methods is used to interest and motivate pupils. In a Year 10 theory lesson on improving performance through training, pupils made particularly good progress by sharing information and learning in groups. Relationships in lessons between pupils and with teachers are very good and contribute to the confidence and enjoyment of pupils of all abilities. A good contribution to pupils' skills of literacy is made through the use of questions that probe understanding and require pupils to talk in detail about their work. Teachers make accurate assessment of the standards pupils attain, but these assessments are not used sufficiently in lessons for pupils to know for themselves what to do next in order to improve. A start has been made on developing pupils' ICT skills.

152. Very good leadership and management support the high level of commitment of the staff and the achievement of pupils. There is a clear vision of what PE can offer. Systems and procedures underpin this vision and ensure smooth day-to-day working. Evaluation of the department results in positive action and improvement. The curriculum is excellent, with an outstanding range of out-of-hours activities that are valued and supported by both boys and girls. This is recognised through the Sportsmark Gold Award. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because of the greater proportion of very good teaching, and because of the improving standards in Years 7 to 9.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

153. Provision in RE is **satisfactory**. The department is maintaining good standards and has improved since the last inspection. There are aspects, recognised by the department, which still require development.

Strengths

- Good leadership of a team of specialist teachers.
- Steps to raise attainment for older pupils with the introduction of a GCSE short course.
- Improved assessment processes to support pupils' progress and raise their expectations.

Areas for improvement

- The scheme of work does not yet set out a range of tasks to challenge and meet the needs of different ability groups.
- Planning for Years 7 – 9 does not yet ensure fully that pupils build on earlier learning and develop the skills to explore significance and meaning.
- The department does not yet make full use of ICT.

154. By the age of 16, pupils are achieving at the level expected by the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus for RE, with most pupils gaining the Hampshire Recognition of Achievement Certificate in RE. The numbers gaining distinctions dropped somewhat in 2001. Girls do better than boys. The introduction of a GCSE short course for all in 2002 is already motivating pupils to achieve higher standards in RE. Most pupils in Years 7 - 9 are achieving at the level expected by the local syllabus, but more-able pupils are not doing as well as expected because tasks are not sufficiently demanding. Pupils with SEN achieve well.

155. Pupils' progress and achievement in RE throughout the school are satisfactory. Better progress is made in knowledge and understanding of religions than in pupils' ability to use what they have learned to explain significance and meaning. This is because planned activities put more emphasis on gaining information about religions and less on developing skills to enable pupils to explore deeper questions and understand religious ideas.

156. Teaching is nearly all satisfactory or better, and about half is good. Good teaching uses stimulating activities, well matched to learning intentions and pupils' needs. A Year 10 lower ability group, given a range of images of God and thought-provoking questions, were able to express their own thoughtful views and reflect on some philosophical questions with interest. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs when the teacher expects too little and accepts low achievement. A lesson designing a ceremony to mark the birth of a baby failed to enable pupils to understand the significance of infant baptism for Christians because questions and activities were not sharply focused.

157. Effective new ways of teaching and learning have been introduced to involve pupils more actively but there is inconsistent use of these across the department. The use of assessment has improved. The department is beginning to make good use of structured tasks with clear criteria and some self-assessment by pupils to raise achievement in Years 7 – 9, and to prepare for the GCSE short course. Most pupils understand what is expected of them and know what they need to do to improve. New technology is beginning to be used but is not yet used fully to support learning in RE. In mixed-ability classes, too little attention is sometimes given to the needs of higher- and lower-ability pupils.

158. Most pupils respond positively to RE. In most lessons, they are keen to offer personal insights, take part well in discussion and are confident to raise questions and ideas knowing they will be listened to and their contribution valued. On occasion, when the pace is slow and activities lack structure, pupils are easily distracted. The quality and detail of written work are usually good and homework is completed well. Homework tasks are sometimes not sufficiently structured to enable pupils to show understanding of key religious ideas.

159. The department of three specialist teachers is well led and managed, with the new head of department, in her first year in post, taking effective action to raise standards. The scheme of work is detailed and provides a firm foundation for lesson planning but does not ensure that pupils build on their earlier learning or develop the ability to analyse, interpret and explore deeper questions. The GCSE short course is well planned and was effectively trialled before its introduction. Resources are satisfactory, but the range of textbooks is limited and further development is needed to match different learning needs, and to make more effective use of ICT. The two classrooms, although inadequate for the size of the department, are well used to create an effective learning environment, with the circular arrangement aiding discussion, reflection and participation. Improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good.

160. RE makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, by encouraging them to reflect, share insights and learn from the teaching and practices of world faiths.