

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **HUNTCLIFF COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Kirton in Lindsey, Gainsborough

LEA area: North Lincolnshire

Unique Reference Number: 118087

Headteacher: Mrs S Bond

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe  
1025

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 249199

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:	Redbourne Mere Kirton in Lindsey Nr Gainsborough Lincolnshire
Post code:	DN21 4NN
Telephone number:	(01652) 648276
Fax number:	(01652) 640390
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Rands
Dates of previous inspection:	12 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup> May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Results and pupils' achievements; teaching and learning
9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector		Attendance; partnership with parents
5038	Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language; gifted and talented pupils	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; drama	
20119	Mr A L C Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science	
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art; design and technology	
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency: staffing, accommodation and learning resources
4603	Mr A F Ryan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Citizenship; music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
2628	Mr J Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	
10448	Mr M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd  
7 Hill Street  
Bristol  
BS1 5RW

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This average-sized, mixed comprehensive school educates about 873 pupils, aged 11-16. The school is steadily growing in size. The overall social and economic background of pupils (as measured solely by the low proportion of pupils claiming free school meals) is well above average. Their overall level of attainment on entry to the school at age 11 is a little above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is smaller than usual, whilst that with SEN statements is broadly average. Just three pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage, but none is at an early stage of learning English. The school was last inspected in 1997.

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

This is a sound school that has many strong features. It also has a few weaknesses and can improve further. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 is above average. This rate of progress from Year 7 represents a sound level of achievement by the school and most pupils. In 2002, the school's GCSE results were, on all the usual range of measures, at least above average. The majority of pupils make good progress, but able pupils could often achieve a little more. Teaching is good. Management has been satisfactory; the new headteacher is rightly focused on sharpening up the school's work and raising standards further. The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. On its well below average income and expenditure, the school gives good value for money.

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

- The school makes good provision in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as in design and technology, geography, history and music.
- The standard of mathematics is well above average and most Year 10-11 pupils achieve very well in science.
- Most pupils have very good attitudes to school. The level of attendance is high.
- Teaching is good overall. About one fifth is very good. It is occasionally outstanding.
- Most pupils make good progress in their studies, especially in Years 10-11.
- The school promotes pupils' moral and social development well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well planned, sensitive and effective.

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

- The consistency of implementing, monitoring, auditing and evaluating whole-school policies.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, pupils' attainment and the school's overall performance.
- The overall standard of pupils' literacy.
- The unsatisfactory provision in aspects of art and modern foreign languages.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development.
- The low amount of teaching time requires increasing to at least 25 hours per week.
- The provision of the basic essentials of paper, soap and drying facilities in pupils' toilets.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since its last inspection in 1997. It has made inadequate progress, however, on the key issues for action identified in 1997.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 has risen slightly during this time, but not quite kept pace with the improvement nationally. Their overall level of attainment in GCSE examinations is higher than at the last inspection: in 2002, for instance, 61 per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A\*-C, compared with 51 per cent in 1997. This rate of improvement is broadly in line with the national rise. The school's teaching has improved further. The school's ethos remains pleasant, encouraging and caring. The school has the scope and capacity to improve further.

Although the school has begun to improve some of the major weaknesses identified at the last inspection, the process has been slow and the amount of improvement inadequate. It has, for example:

- begun to formulate a strategic plan for improvement – but it has been too short-term;
- realigned management responsibilities, but further adjustment is necessary;
- ensured that all pupils take religious education (RE), but has until now artificially restricted pupils' GCSE examination entry.

It has not, however, done enough to monitor and evaluate how policies work in practice, to enhance pupils' spiritual development, to make sure that all pupils experience regular collective worship, to remedy the health and safety deficiencies noted, or to use all available information about pupils' education to judge the reasonableness of their attainments and progress – and the school's overall performance.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	E

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

The school's results in the Year 9 national tests in 2002 were close to average in English, above average in science, but well above average in mathematics. The overall results, though above average, were well below the average for schools of a similar kind. Standards have risen a little over the 1997-2002 period, but not quite as fast as the rise nationally. By the end of Year 9, standards in the school are above average in most subjects. They are average overall, however, in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and physical education (PE), below average in art, but well above average in mathematics. Boys and girls do equally well in most subjects, although girls do better than boys in English, geography and music. The majority of pupils make sound progress in their studies between Years 7 and 9.

Results in GCSE were above the national average in 2002 for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C and for average points scored. They were well above average for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-G. Results show a steady rise since 1997, at about the same rate as the national rise. Pupils' overall standard in 2002 in English, mathematics and science was at least in line with that generally achieved in schools of a similar character, but the overall GCSE performance was well below the group average when all subjects are taken into account – an important issue for the school to investigate and tackle effectively. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall standard is above average in most subjects. It

is, however, below average in modern foreign languages, average in art, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), PE and RE, and again well above average in mathematics. Bearing in mind that pupils' overall level of attainment on entry to the school is only a little above average, the majority of pupils make good progress over the whole of their time in school; the highest attainers could, however, often do a little better. The school's targets for examination results are reasonable.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good overall. Most pupils are keen, diligent and cooperative. There are very few graffiti about, but much litter.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	With few exceptions, pupils' standard of behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils are responsible, pleasant, mature and hard-working. They readily take initiative and assume responsibility.
Attendance	Very good overall. Punctuality for school and lessons is good.

Most pupils come to school with positive attitudes and motivation. They move around in a relaxed but sensible and purposeful way. A few pupils are difficult for some teachers, but most comply well with the school's framework of discipline. Relationships at all levels are good. Pupils find the school friendly. Exclusions are rare.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school and in most subjects. It is very good (and occasionally outstanding) in about one in every five lessons. Except for satisfactory teaching in Years 7-9 in English, teaching is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It is satisfactory in Years 10-11 in PE and RE, and throughout the school in modern foreign languages. Its overall quality is higher than at the last inspection. Most homework is set satisfactorily. Literacy is not promoted consistently or thoroughly enough, but the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. The strongest features of teaching are teachers' subject knowledge, good planning and the management of pupils: it is through such brisk, interesting and thorough teaching that pupils make good progress. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by insufficient class control, slowness and not enough rigour. Most pupils, of all abilities, sustain their interest and learn well.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A satisfactory range of courses is offered, meeting all statutory requirements and enriched by a good spread of extracurricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall, concentrating well on pupils' literacy and numeracy. Pupils are well integrated. They feel valued and well supported.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	These aspects are satisfactory overall. As in 1997, pupils' spiritual development is promoted unsatisfactorily. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is strong. Cultural provision is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Provision is sound. Pastoral care is of high quality and appreciated by pupils. They value the buildings being fully open to them at lunchtimes.

The curriculum offered is fairly broad and balanced. It is, however, very light on vocational work, thin on provision for gifted and talented pupils, and well below average for teaching time. Careers education is good. Links with the community are weak. Pupils have wide opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility. The school offers a very caring environment, but some health and safety matters need attention. The assessment of pupils' progress has improved much since 1997, but there is still more work to do on this aspect.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher is rapidly building on the successful aspects of previous management, but working towards coherent and more effective management policies. Middle managers are generally good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive, but do not know enough about the school or take an adequate role in shaping its direction or evaluating its effectiveness.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Much informal monitoring has taken place, but has not given the school a full picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Its management information system is weak.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning, management and administration are satisfactory. Financial governance has recently improved to a satisfactory level.

Senior management is in transition. The new headteacher has made a good start on reshaping the school's priorities and bringing coherence to fragmented policy-making. The tendency of good middle managers to work in some isolation requires refocusing on a whole-school approach to monitoring, evaluation and improvement. Specific national grants are used effectively, but "best value" is not pursued vigorously enough.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school's high expectations of hard work.</li><li>• The good quality of most teaching.</li><li>• The rate of progress that their children make.</li><li>• The school's caring ethos and approachability.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More consistency in setting homework.</li><li>• The closeness of home-school links.</li><li>• The range of extracurricular activities.</li></ul>

Parents well recognise the many positive qualities in the education their children receive here. The good quality of teaching results in most pupils showing commitment to their school work and making good progress. Pastoral care and a concern to support pupils as they grow up are pronounced features of school life. The good range of extracurricular activities offered is similar to that in other schools of this size and type. Most homework was set appropriately during the week of the inspection. A fair range of ways is used to foster home-school contact, but some are not imaginative or thorough enough: more could be done. Overall, however, parents highly (and rightly) appreciate what the school does for their children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The overall standard of pupils' work is above average by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Their overall level of attainment is above average, too, in the national tests in Year 9 as well as in GCSE examinations. Since the last inspection in 1997, pupils' attainment has risen in both the Year 9 tests and GCSE.
2. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, primary school national tests suggest that their overall level of attainment is a little above average in most academic years. The school receives the full spectrum, and a balanced intake, of ability and attainment. Other sets of nationally standardised tests administered by the school indicate that the school's intakes are close to, although a little above, average. They also suggest that pupils' verbal competence on intake is slightly lower than their mathematical and general ability.
3. In the national tests of the core subjects taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the overall standard reached by pupils was above average – average in English, above average in science, but well above average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected basic national standards of Levels 5 or 6, too, was greatest in mathematics and lowest in English. Results in 2000 were broadly similar, but were highest (and well above average) in 1998, 1999 and 2001. Results rose over the 1998-2002 period, but at a rate slightly less than they did nationally.
4. When these 2002 Year 9 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured only by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), however, pupils in this school have performed consistently below the group average in all of the last four years – and were well below this mark in 2002. The school does not have other means of measuring whether this judgement accurately reflects its performance.
5. In these national tests, girls are consistently ahead of boys overall in English by the end of Year 9, although both groups perform similarly close to the national pattern for their respective sexes. In contrast, girls and boys usually do equally well in mathematics, whereas boys usually just edge in front of girls in science. Teachers' assessments of pupils in these three subjects are usually fairly close to the test results pupils achieve.
6. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils in both 2001 and 2002 as above average in design and technology, and well above average in geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages. These assessments are higher in all subjects than the overall standard of work seen during the inspection.
7. In the GCSE examinations of 2002, pupils' level of attainment was above average overall – as, for example, for the proportion of pupils (61 per cent) gaining at least five grades in the range A\*-C and for average points scored. The school's results were well above average for the proportion of pupils (98 per cent) gaining at least five A\*-G grades. The school's GCSE results have shown a steady rise since the last inspection – up, for example, from 51 per cent of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C in 1997 to their present figure, a rise that is broadly in line with the national trend.
8. In the core subjects, pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A\*-C in GCSE in 2002 was well above average in all of English, mathematics and science. Fifty-six per cent of Year 11 pupils gained at least a grade C in all of English, mathematics and science – a well above average proportion. All three subjects have achieved a steady rise in results over the last five years, although the rise has been greatest in English and science.

9. The quality of GCSE grades obtained amongst all subjects taken was above average in 2002 – ranging from just an average share of A\* grades (half of which were in science) to a progressively greater proportion of grades B and C than is the case nationally. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in 2002, however, in English literature, art, design and technology (food, graphics, resistant materials or textiles elements), information studies, French, German, physical education (PE), religious education (RE), drama or business education. In the last two years, pupils have tended to do better in mathematics and science than in most of their other subjects, and to do worse in English, art, design and technology, and French.
10. Girls achieved a much greater proportion of the higher (A\*-C) grades in GCSE than boys in 2002 (as also happened in 2000 and 2001), even though the overall gap between the sexes was smaller than it was nationally in the 1995-1998 period. Although in 2002 girls did much better than boys in English (and slightly better in mathematics and science), the school has not precisely pinpointed the extent and causes of this change of performance between the sexes.
11. When the school's results at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's overall performance is generally well below the group average for average point scores and for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C. In contrast, the proportion gaining at least five grades A\*-G is above average. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance was broadly average in English and mathematics, but above the group average in science. In 2002, the school slightly exceeded its GCSE targets. It has set itself appropriately higher and reasonable targets for the GCSE examinations of 2003.
12. As pupils move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9, the limited statistical evidence available from national tests suggests that most pupils make satisfactory progress. On this evidence, most progress is made by pupils of middling ability and average prior attainment, whilst the highest attainers do not quite make the progress of which they are capable. Although the school is proud of the fact that it now has the best record across its local education authority for "adding value" to pupils' education during Years 7-9, it has itself identified the progress of higher attainers as an issue for closer attention. Pupils' progress over Years 10-11 follows a similar pattern to that of Years 7-9: a range of statistical analyses indicates that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. The evidence of pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils' progress and achievement vary, in different subjects, from unsatisfactory to very good, but are good overall.
13. The school already has in place many ways of setting academic targets for pupils and both tracking and reviewing their progress during their time in school. These processes are appropriately based on the school's internal work and reinforced by external analyses. They provide a satisfactory framework, but require further refinement. In particular, the school does not have a sufficiently extensive or robust model by which to track and review the progress of pupils fully across all subjects and throughout the whole of their secondary education or to assess accurately its overall academic performance and that of individual departments. This is a vital next step to take.
14. Several features help pupils to make good progress, but teaching is the key one. Where teaching is well structured, interesting, thorough, challenging, brisk and firmly in control of classes, pupils invariably learn much – as seen, for example, in about one fifth of the lessons sampled during the inspection that were very good or outstanding. Progress is less than it could be in a minority of classes where there is little depth or rigour to study or discussion and where pupils are allowed to chatter or lose focus.
15. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 was above average overall. It is average in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and PE, below average in art, but well above average in mathematics. By the end of Year 11, the level of work is of also above average in standard in most subjects. It is, however, average in art, geography, ICT, PE and RE, below average in modern foreign languages, and again well above average in mathematics.
16. Pupils with special educational needs (and especially those with statements) make good progress in

most subjects. Their progress is satisfactory throughout the school in science, geography, ICT, modern foreign languages and RE, and in Years 10-11 in history and PE. Most gifted and talented pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and music; in Years 7-9 in RE; and in Years 10-11 in art. They underperform in art in Years 7-9 because of some inadequate teaching. They could also achieve a little more, too, in most subjects – as the overall lowish proportion of A\* grades gained at GCSE also suggests.

17. In English, pupils' overall level of attainment and most aspects of the subject are above average. Most pupils read with a good standard of fluency. They read texts better than is usually found and even those who struggle a little usually have sound ways of working out the meaning of what they read. The standard of written work is above average overall. Its strongest features are the clear planning undertaken for a wide range of written tasks and the standard of both presentation and handwriting. The standard of drafting, notetaking, spelling and punctuation are, however, at a lower, average level. Most pupils are competent in class discussion and have a richer vocabulary than often found. Their ability to sustain an extended debate or argument, however, is average. Pupils usually listen carefully.
18. In other subjects across the school, pupils' standard of literacy is average overall. It could be higher. This is because the standard that pupils reach in linguistic work often depends on the importance that individual teachers give to these aspects rather to a consistent and coordinated approach by whole departments or across the school. Appropriately higher standards in literacy depend on teachers giving a more concerted and focused attention to these matters.
19. The overall standard of reading across all subjects is average. Pupils read well enough to carry out soundly the tasks they are set. They are generally competent in selecting relevant material when researching topics. Although pupils read aloud in class less frequently than often happens in schools, most are accurate readers.
20. Pupils' standard of writing is average overall in content. Most writing is well planned and structured in design and technology, geography, history and music. The standard of drafting work and taking notes is average in most subjects, but not as good as it should be in science and art. The standard of presentation and handwriting varies widely around an average overall standard: these aspects are good in history, but require improvement in science, art and modern foreign languages. Spelling and punctuation are average, but the standard could be higher. The necessary improvement requires all teachers to note and correct – often with the whole class – pupils' common mistakes in sentence structure and spelling.
21. The standard of speaking is above average overall. Most pupils are good speakers and enjoy both informal conversations and expressing a point of view in class. The majority speak clearly and audibly in lessons, but are less confident in making formal presentations, partly because they have few opportunities to do so. Many confidently use appropriate terminology and vocabulary where teachers require pupils to explain their thinking; during the inspection, there were few occasions when pupils took part in thorough, interactive class discussions or were required to synthesise several points of view. Most pupils listen carefully and respectfully.
22. In mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum pupils generally handle numbers and data well. Most are competent in basic skills and techniques. For example, pupils draw and interpret graphs accurately in science, design and technology and in geography. The standard of numeracy is above average in science through the widespread use of equations, formulae and the manipulation of data. Pupils are generally competent in making correct estimations.

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

23. Pupils show very good attitudes towards the school and to the educational opportunities it offers. With very few exceptions, their general standard of behaviour is high: they are responsible and cooperative in both their school work and their relationships. Most pupils show a good capacity to exercise initiative and assume responsibility.

24. Pupils come to school with positive attitudes and motivation. The vast majority are serious and mature in their approach, whether in class or in social and recreational activities. Their generally very good attitudes and good behaviour in lessons allow teaching and learning to proceed without delay or interruption. They move around the buildings in a relaxed and sensible manner, making their way to and from lessons without fuss or disturbance. They generally respond well to supervision, encouragement and discipline, appreciate appropriate rewards and understand the need for sanctions. There is a small group of pupils (some with emotional and behavioural difficulties), however, who do not always find it easy to comply with the school's framework of discipline. The overall impact of these pupils' occasional challenges is small, when set against the predominantly very positive climate of behaviour and relationships.
25. There are only a small number of graffiti visible around the premises and few signs of damage on desks and walls. The number of exclusions (numbering 14 fixed-term and one permanent exclusion over the last full school year) is low for a school of this size. There is, however, much evidence of long-standing litter around the site.
26. Pupils show a clear capacity to reflect on their actions and to weigh up the effects these may have on other people. This is enhanced by the school's positive ethos, in which cooperation and the valuing of others are firmly stressed. Relationships are good at all levels. Pupils relate generally well to one another, to their teachers and to other adults. They show respect for the values and beliefs of other people – as well exemplified in the open-minded attitudes shown in a Year 11 RE lesson, in which the moral and philosophical basis of Buddhism was explored.
27. Pupils show a readiness to take on responsibilities, whether offered by the school or self-directed. A large number of prefects in Year 11 effectively supports staff in the supervision of the school's premises. Eighteen pupils (sixteen of whom are girls) have voluntarily trained as "anti-bullying mentors" and are available both to support younger pupils and to reduce conflict. The year councils contribute to a school-wide council which appropriately consults both with other pupils and with staff and governors. Pupils also respond positively to a good range of charitable activities and contribute many of their own ideas and energy to such projects.

### **Attendance**

28. The attendance of pupils is very good. In the 2001-2002 academic year it was 94.1 per cent, well above the national average of 91.0 per cent. The attendance of all year groups exceeded 92 per cent over the course of the academic year. The level of authorised absence during the same period was below average at 5.5 per cent and the amount of absence without good reason (0.5 per cent) was much better than the national picture. In the last academic year, attendance was even better than the good level of 92.9 per cent recorded around the time of the last inspection.
29. This very good level of attendance is the result of parental support, pupils' commitment, the vigilance shown by the school and the school's external support. Term-time holidays are the major element that prevent the school's attendance level being even higher: 74 pupils in Years 7-8, for example, were absent last year on such holidays. Punctuality for coming to school on time is generally good: just two or three pupils are late for school on a typical day, except when late buses considerably increase the number. Punctuality for lessons is mostly very good, marred only by a few dawdlers and sometimes by pupils being late back from school lunch.

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

30. The quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to (in one case) very poor, but is good overall at all stages across the school and in nearly all subjects. It is at least satisfactory in virtually all lessons – satisfactory in almost two-fifths and good in a further two-fifths. Additionally, teaching is very good (and occasionally outstanding) in nearly one in every five lessons. Six of the 162 lessons inspected had teaching that was inadequate, ranging from unsatisfactory to very poor. Teaching of good quality is evenly spread throughout the school.

31. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. In 1997, 93 per cent of the teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better and one in every 14 lessons was considered to be unsatisfactory. Now just four per cent of teaching falls below a satisfactory level. Very good teaching was seen in under one in every ten lessons, but teaching of this quality is now double what it was in 1997.
32. Most teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subjects. As a result, staff choose very relevant topics for study, generally ask effective, well-targeted questions and make secure connections between the various parts of the courses of study. In the best cases, they pose searching questions that make pupils think hard and require clear, cogent answers. They monitor pupils' classwork carefully and keep lessons moving on at an appropriately brisk pace. This high quality of teaching ensures that pupils make very good progress, remain keen and enthusiastic, display first-rate attitudes and behaviour, and learn their work to a good depth. In a few lessons, in contrast, (particularly, but not only, with non-specialist teachers) opportunities for learning are missed and superficial views are formed.
33. In the well-planned lessons seen, teachers outlined the content and direction of lessons very clearly to pupils, so that they knew precisely what they had to do, and why. The objectives of lessons are often put on the board or an overhead projector. Starter activities are well used in many subjects to establish interest and momentum and to revise previous learning. A suitable variety of carefully timed activities – such as paired or group work – ensures that pupils maintain their interest. Books, materials, worksheets and relevant equipment are readily to hand. Such lessons are rounded off with a brisk plenary session that reinforces the main points of learning and irons out any problems. Most lessons are planned in this way. A minority of lessons, however, are obscurely shaped, unclearly introduced, poorly timed and inconclusively ended. A not uncommon weakness is to plan insufficiently for the needs of the most able pupils, and sometimes for those with special educational needs.
34. The majority of teachers have at least reasonably high expectations of pupils. In the best lessons, teachers are skilful at setting interesting, initial tasks that require pupils to think carefully and give thoughtful answers. They then ensure that first ideas are explored further, that alternatives are considered and that conclusions are based on a careful synthesis of relevant facts and opinions. In a significant minority of lessons, however, pupils are not required to exercise their mental or creative faculties enough. For example, there is not enough in the lesson to inspire and challenge, first answers are accepted immediately and uncritically or pupils are told what opinions to hold. Occasionally, higher-attaining pupils finish their work quickly and are not given suitable additional material to extend them further.
35. The challenging approach to teaching and learning was, however, seen especially in several outstanding lessons. In an excellent Year 9 RE lesson, for instance, pupils experienced considerable intellectual, personal and emotional challenge as they developed a deep insight into the four noble truths of Buddhism. In a Year 11 music lesson, the gifted teacher used an aria from Handel's *Rinaldo* to enthuse and encourage pupils to tackle examination questions with confidence, sensitivity and considerable understanding. In an outstanding Year 8 lesson in design and technology, the teacher revised binary codes very effectively with pupils, so that they thoroughly understood the need for logical planning and went on to make very good progress in thinking, checking ideas against plans and discussing how to sequence a robot's movements. Because of the outstanding teaching they received, pupils in these classes learned an immense amount in a short period of time – and enjoyed it.
36. Most teachers use a good range of effective teaching methods. The strongest features are the quality of most teachers' explanations. Many teachers use stimulating starter activities that attract and retain pupils' interest. In some subjects – such as in design and technology and geography – teachers ensure that topics are explored through paired or group discussion and subsequently consolidated through whole-class debate and analysis. In the best cases, teachers ensure that maximum pace is sustained by a careful blending and change of activities, that significant ideas are carefully shaped and recorded on a whiteboard or in pupils' notes, and that a short but penetrating class review rounds off lessons. "Brainstorming" is occasionally used effectively – as, for example, in a Year 7 history lesson

where the teacher garnered pupils' knowledge of the story of Robin Hood to clarify their perceptions and arouse their interest.

37. Opportunities for deep learning are, however, missed in a significant minority of lessons. Sometimes this is because teachers talk too much and pupils remain passive: too much of this and pupils begin to switch off, become over-dependent on their teachers' views or lose interest. More often, teachers neither pose searching enough questions nor expect pupils to synthesise an answer from different viewpoints. At other times teachers neither record a relevant note of pupils' ideas nor (a common weakness) require pupils to construct their own notes. Not tying the main strands of the lesson together at the end is another common omission.
38. The teaching of basic literacy is unsatisfactory. The strengths of literacy teaching lie in the attention that some individual teachers give to these aspects. Sometimes (as in history) key words and phrases are prominently displayed and routinely used, but far too often such prompts are missing. Too infrequently do pupils have their attention drawn to common mistakes in spelling or punctuation. In contrast, numeracy is satisfactorily promoted – well in mathematics and science and satisfactorily in design and technology, and geography. The school's major weakness lies in the lack of a coordinated approach to these aspects across the school: staff have received appropriate training, but there is no longer either a literacy or a numeracy coordinator to guide and audit the effectiveness of the school's approach. This leads to a patchiness that requires urgent remedy.
39. The management of pupils' learning and behaviour is good (and often very good). In nearly all cases teachers form warm, supportive and encouraging relationships with pupils and establish a climate of mutual respect. Thoughtful praise is widely used. As a consequence, most pupils come into class quietly, start lessons promptly and concentrate on their work without unnecessary interruption or distraction, maintaining a good pace in their studies. In a small minority of lessons where the teacher has inadequate control, pupils (particularly boys in large classes in the lower bands) are prone to social chatter or messing about.
40. Time and equipment are generally used well. In several lessons seen, very skilful teachers extracted the maximum learning in pupils by tightly timed activities of great value: pupils thoroughly enjoyed working at an appropriately fast pace. Support staff are generally used well to help and support pupils, to prompt ideas and to clarify problems. The assessment of pupils' classwork is carried out satisfactorily overall – sometimes with great perception and well-targeted intervention, whilst at other times insufficient comment is made about, for instance, poorly presented work. Marking is generally satisfactory, but a significant minority lacks constructive criticism or guidance as to how to improve work. Homework is generally set reasonably and appropriately, helping pupils to consolidate what they have learned or to prepare for their next lesson.
41. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is very good overall in history in Years 10-11 and in RE in Years 7-9. It is satisfactory in Years 7-9 in English, in Years 10-11 in PE and RE, and throughout the school in modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory (and sometimes worse) in art in Years 7-9. Most pupils achieve good progress in their studies. In addition to the fact that most pupils are keen to learn and to do well, the main reason for progress in their studies is the quality of teaching they receive.

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

42. Overall, the school's curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities that mostly meets the needs of all pupils. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. It is enriched with a good range of extracurricular activities and with effective support and guidance for pupils' future employment or further education. The implementation of strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy is unsatisfactory, whereas that for numeracy is, in the main, satisfactory. The links that are maintained with the community are weak.



43. In Years 7-9, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are taught. Pupils also study personal, social and health education (PSHCE), which includes citizenship, and receive education about sex, relationships and the harmful effects of drug misuse. All pupils study French and higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 also have the opportunity to study German. Those pupils who study additional German, however, are unable to study drama or specialist ICT, and the time for them to study PE is reduced. These restrictions were reported at the time of the last inspection and insufficient progress has been made in correcting them.
44. In Years 10-11, a satisfactory range of subjects is offered. Pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science (the opportunity to study single, double or separate science subjects is offered) as well as design and technology, a modern foreign language, ICT, PE, RE and lifeskills (which includes PSHCE and careers). In addition, pupils choose from a range of nine GCSE subjects that include drama and PE. No vocational courses are offered except for a GCSE in applied ICT. The school is planning to introduce two additional applied GCSE courses in leisure and tourism and in engineering in September. The provision for those pupils for whom the full range of GCSE courses is not deemed suitable is very limited. They may opt to study the Youth Award scheme, but few subjects offer an alternative accreditation to GCSE and very few of these pupils have the opportunity to study work-related programmes.
45. The school has no systematic whole-school strategy to raise standards of literacy as part of the National Literacy Strategy. Although staff training has taken place, there is no detailed policy and no recent audit has been completed of the present provision. The overall standard of literacy remains too low, because the initiative is not firmly embedded into the curriculum: the good work in a minority of subjects is not sufficiently monitored or coordinated across the school to provide a coherent and effective approach.
46. The school has a similar strategy to raise standards of numeracy in all subject departments as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. The introduction of the strategy in mathematics is successful. Whole-school staff training has taken place, but work to introduce the initiative across all subjects of the curriculum is at an early stage of development.
47. The school's planned teaching time of 23 hours 40 minutes per week is well below the minimum of 25 hours per week recommended by the Department for Education and Skills. The time allocated to science, drama and ICT in Years 7-9 is insufficient and limits the depth and range of what can be taught in these subjects. The reduced time allocated in Year 9 to geography, history and PE (for those pupils studying German) restricts the depth of study a little. The length of most lessons is 70 minutes: this is too long for most pupils to maintain the highest level of concentration, particularly in subjects like mathematics in Years 7 and 8 when all the lessons are timetabled to take place during the last two periods of the day.
48. The governors review the curriculum each year, but the range of groups who are consulted is narrow. The curriculum policy is outdated and does not present a coherent, shared vision for the future. Forward-planning has, however, recently been strengthened as part of the preparation of the bid to become a specialist school. Departmental schemes of work are generally of good quality.
49. All pupils have the opportunity, within the limitations in Year 9 noted above, to study the full range of subjects offered. Pupils are taught in classes organised by prior attainment ("banded") when they enter the school. This arrangement is not accurately tuned to individual pupils' aptitudes and attainment in different subjects, thereby impeding teachers in fully meeting the needs of all pupils. The charging policy for pupils taking a GCSE examination in RE has resulted in few pupils entering the examination. This restrictive policy about entry to the GCSE short-course examination in RE has now stopped and will in the future will be on the same basis as that for all other GCSE subjects.
50. A good range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Residential visits are arranged to places as diverse as London, North Yorkshire, France and Italy, and there are day visits to local

theatres and museums. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a popular choir and orchestra and in three musical and/or dramatic productions each year. A wide range of inter-school and inter-house sporting activities is arranged. There is a strong rugby team and a number of pupils have gained representation at county level in different sports. Most subjects make sound provision for study support to help with coursework and revision. A reading club to support lower-attaining pupils meets each lunchtime.

51. Provision for careers education and guidance is of good quality. Careers education is coordinated effectively, but monitoring the effectiveness of the courses is weak. The programme is suitably enhanced by trips to a local careers convention and universities, and regular visits to the school by representatives of local colleges of further education who provide advice and information. The school's careers officer provides impartial, well-considered guidance. This is focused appropriately on those in greatest need, but there are good opportunities for other pupils to receive support.
52. A modest careers library provides careers information for pupils. Two appropriate computer programs are available throughout the school for pupils to access careers information on the computer network. All pupils in Year 10 participate for one week in a well-organised programme of work experience. Whilst on a placement, pupils complete a logbook and receive a visit from a member of staff.
53. Links with the community are not strong enough. Liaison with local primary schools is largely limited to arrangements for the transition of pupils from primary to secondary education. Curricular links with contributory primary schools are ineffective. Close relationships are maintained with further education colleges, which regularly visit the school to support pupils in their choice of future education. The school regularly hosts the training of a small group of student teachers.
54. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. The new coordinator has built well on the grounding set by predecessors. She has set about filling some gaps, revising existing policies and improving the quality of provision, especially for pupils at the School Action Plus stage or for those with statements. Administrative and management arrangements are sound. The new code of practice is being implemented soundly.
55. The coordinator carefully concentrates on programmes to enhance pupils' basic literacy, spelling and numeracy. In addition, local authority assistance is bought in for 1.5 days each week to provide specialist input for pupils with "dyslexia". These programmes are of good quality. Pupils enjoy them, respond positively to them and make good progress. Nine learning support assistants (LSAs) liaise well with teachers and work effectively with pupils. Links with pastoral staff and subject teachers are broadly satisfactory, but require further strengthening. Links with external agencies are strong. "Inclusion" is a strong feature of the school: pupils with special educational needs feel valued and well supported.
56. The work of the school's system for behaviour management through its Behaviour Support Unit (BSU) has some satisfactory features, but requires improvement. The unit's accommodation is unsuitable, being cramped and unpleasant for both pupils and staff for more than a very short stay. Despite clear criteria for admission and monitoring, there are too many "repeat offenders". The unit, too, requires the direct charge of a qualified teacher. The present arrangements are not satisfactory for the longer term.
57. There is no overall policy for the school's work with gifted and talented pupils. Only gradually is a consensus emerging that greater vigour and insight are required. There is some limited activity in a few subjects to support these pupils, but the school has no criteria for identifying these pupils or coordinating provision for them. This represents a significant oversight, given the limited number of A\* grades obtained by pupils in GCSE examinations.
58. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. Its provision for pupils' spiritual development is, however, unsatisfactory – as it was at the last

inspection in 1997. Pupils are given some insight into different religious beliefs within their RE lessons. In Years 7-9, for example, they have very good opportunities for reflection. The RE department organises a good range of visits to places of worship and religious study – as, for example, to Lincoln Cathedral and the Bradford Interfaith Centre. Pupils are also taken to see productions of Shakespearean plays. The school has links with its local parish church.

59. The RE department has insufficient involvement, however, in promoting spirituality across the curriculum and in the general life of the school, although pupils do have occasional opportunities to experience beauty of balance and form in, for example, art and music. Although assemblies often include a prayer written by pupils themselves and moments of reflection, these occasions lack a sufficient atmosphere of reverence. Tutorial groups do not contribute an element of worship and therefore the school does not meet the legal requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils – an omission existing also at the time of the last inspection.
60. Moral education, in contrast, is promoted well. Pupils have contributed to the school's statement of values that is displayed in classrooms and other areas. In the weekly assemblies, as well as in RE and PSHCE, firm moral messages are given to pupils. These are reinforced by the courtesy and respect of staff. Pupils who misbehave are firmly, but quietly, dealt with. School prefects serve as good role models, and older pupils who have had training in counselling and anti-bullying support play an important part in diffusing potentially aggressive incidents. The school has a clear behaviour policy and a well-understood system of sanctions, but effectively relies on its main approach of fostering good behaviour. This is reinforced well by good communications with parents through pupils' journals.
61. Pupils study and reflect soundly on moral issues in lessons. The newly introduced emphasis on the teaching of citizenship has helped teachers to identify opportunities for pupils to think about rights and responsibilities and the need for rules and laws. Pupils learn, for instance, the value of fair play and teamwork in PE. In history they study civil rights in the USA, fascism in Germany and the issues of crime and punishment in Britain in the middle ages.
62. The school's provision for pupils' social development is good. The school is an orderly community that allows pupils to socialise freely, especially at lunchtimes. There is a good range of extracurricular activities that enables pupils to form a wide range of friendships. These include girls' and boys' football, rugby and badminton. Musical activities include swing band, orchestra and choir, and there is a small range of "subject clubs" – as, for example, in art, calligraphy and reading. Pupils also have valuable social experiences through educational visits, particularly a visit to London that entails staying in a hotel and a longer residential visit to a Yorkshire outdoor centre for pupils in Year 7.
63. Pupils' social development is significantly enhanced by the school's open-door policy. Pupils are encouraged to use classrooms and other spaces at mid-morning breaks and at lunchtimes. They value this privilege and show a good sense of responsibility in caring for the buildings and equipment. The attractive site includes pleasant outdoor areas where pupils can socialise in good weather. The school pays insufficient attention, however, to the accumulation of external litter and dirt or to the arrangements for pupils to take their lunch promptly.
64. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to exercise responsibility – as, for instance, through being representatives on year councils or the whole-school council, or by being a form captain, prefect or senior prefect. Pupils help as librarians and set out equipment in lessons. The drama club is organised by pupils themselves. Pupils develop social competence through paired or grouped work in some lessons, especially in design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, music and PE. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to engage in raising funds for charity: pupils themselves choose the charities, organise the activities and raise substantial sums of money for good causes.

65. Pupils' cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. In RE, for example, pupils study a range of faiths and traditions from different cultures. In art and in design and technology, pupils study designs and forms from a wide range of cultures: these include European classical sources as well as influences from central Africa, Egypt, India and Indonesia. The music department runs an orchestra, swing band, choir and Samba band. Educational visits, too, contribute well to pupils' cultural development. These range from visits to the Manchester Jewish museum, the Imperial War Museum and the national film centre in Bradford to a ski trip to Italy or the USA and a watersports visit to France.

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

66. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are sound overall. The school offers a secure, caring environment for its pupils. Staff are firmly committed to a high quality of care and pupils appreciate this commitment to their welfare. Procedures and systems to safeguard pupils are generally of sound quality. Child protection measures are firmly in place and staff are sensitive to the need for vigilance with regard to pupils' safety and welfare. The school's pastoral system is well established and respected by both pupils and staff. Year heads and form tutors constitute effective teams, to whom pupils readily turn when they need support or guidance. In addition, form groups are attached to one of seven Houses that constitute a focus for social and sporting affiliations.
67. Despite this positive picture, there are some elements of school life that represent potential hazards. Whilst a comprehensive health and safety policy for the school has been adopted and initiated, certain risks require action:
- some doors open outwards into corridors and circulation areas, posing risks to passers-by (nothing has been done to rectify this problem, despite the alert in the 1997 inspection report);
  - toilets are inadequately serviced with soap, paper and drying facilities;
  - the staff-pupil ratio adopted for swimming lessons is worse than the 1:20 level recommended in safety protocols;
  - in workshop areas there are no yellow warning lines to separate pupils from active equipment;
  - in several teaching areas, entangled electrical cables hinder pupils in their work.
68. The school has adopted an "open school" policy, whereby during poor weather pupils may use form bases as social areas at breaktime and lunchtime. This is a humane and welcome policy that is much appreciated by pupils. In some circumstances, however, it poses a risk to pupils. Where such practical areas as laboratories and workshops also serve as form bases, pupils have immediate access to equipment and materials that could prove hazardous: no regular system of staff supervision of such areas was seen during the inspection.
69. The school has adopted good measures to ensure that pupils' attendance and behaviour are positively promoted. Policies in these areas are strong and generally well observed. Available evidence indicates that bullying amongst pupils is rare and that pupils have firm trust in staff to eliminate such behaviour, should it occur. The non-teaching staff who supervise pupils over the school site during the seventy-minute lunch break do not have ready enough access to senior staff in the event of difficulties: they do not, for example, have any electronic communication equipment and none has a first-aid qualification.
70. The school's support and guidance for pupils are generally sound and often of good quality. Pupils who have personal or social difficulties receive ready support from staff and may be referred for specialist counselling by external agencies. Form tutors are closely involved with setting and reviewing targets for each pupil within their care; this system is well understood and effectively in place. Tutors do not, however, have access to detailed records of pupils' cumulative academic or social progress, so limiting the effectiveness of interventions and the accurate monitoring of policies in this area.

71. The quality of assessing pupils' attainment and progress is variable, but satisfactory overall. In many subjects, staff keep regular track of progress and maintain sound records. Marking is, on the whole, of sound quality. The quality of annual reports sent to parents is satisfactory: most subject commentaries give a clear account, for example, of the National Curriculum levels that pupils have attained and provide relevant accompanying text to support their judgements.
72. There is, however, no common system by which the progress of individuals and groups can be tracked and monitored accurately across all year groups. This prevents senior management from having ready access to reliable information that can give a clear and comprehensive picture of all pupils' attainment and progress. The allocation of pupils into teaching groups, as at the start of Year 7, does not fully take into account all measures of pupils' potential (or age) in addition to their current levels of attainment. There is evidence that this leads to the placement of pupils in groups that do not fully match their needs.
73. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. The coordinator has reviewed assessment procedures for these pupils and introduced appropriate, new materials that promise to improve assessment arrangements further – as already evident in finer diagnostic work in mathematics. Individual Education Plans (IEPs), with parents involved in the process, have been reviewed: they are of broadly satisfactory quality, but remain general in character rather than subject specific. Files and records are well maintained and incorporate necessary information.

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

74. The school's links with parents are sound overall, but have aspects that require improvement. Only a small proportion of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire or attended the parental meeting, but most of this small minority were highly satisfied with what the school does for their children. They were particularly pleased with the school's high expectations, its teaching quality and their children's progress. They overwhelmingly felt that their children enjoyed school and that it was easy for them to approach the school about any problems or concerns. The 14 parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents spoke very favourably about nearly all aspects of the school.
75. In contrast, a small but significant proportion of parents (around one in five of questionnaire respondents) expressed dissatisfaction with three aspects of the school's work. They believe that the provision of homework is not consistently regulated, resulting in unhelpful peaks and troughs; that the school's extracurricular provision is not as wide as it could be; and that, in general, the school could work more closely with parents. The evidence of the inspection, including pupils' planners, suggests that the setting of homework is generally sound in both volume and suitability. The extent of the school's extracurricular activities is good overall (just satisfactory at lunchtime), although publicity to parents about precisely what is on offer is not clear enough. The only dissatisfactions of those parents who attended the parental meeting were with the range of information provided at the transition from primary education (a reasonable concern) and the ease of seeing all teachers at Consultation Evenings. The school's new senior management already has plans to enhance the quality and extent of its ways of communicating with parents.
76. The range of information provided by the school for parents, as one means of forging effective links, is satisfactory overall, but has gaps. Newsletters (normally half-termly and with major assistance from a pupil team) are well written and interesting. The governors' *Annual Report* is suitably informative. The school's prospectus is simply laid out, but inadequate: the order of items within it is confusing, too little attention is given to curricular matters, such basic information as the pattern of the school day is omitted and it does not contain a contents page or index. Except for an options booklet for Year 10 courses, parents are not told clearly, in advance, what their children will study in each year that they attend the school. The school does not have a website, but has commissioned one and plans to make increased use of electronic mail for contact with parents. Reports to parents about their children's progress are satisfactory overall.

77. The school establishes a positive starting-point for the involvement of parents in the life of the school through consulting the parents of Year 7 pupils about their early experience of school. Its commitment is strengthened a little by an *Association of Friends of Huntcliff*: this meets termly, but is not widely supported or especially active. Its home-school agreement policy is clearly framed. A Year 7 induction pack provides useful, additional information, but its scope is narrow. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are sound. The school has a brief *Home-School Liaison Policy*, but does not have an overarching statement of practice that draws together the range of ways by which it effectively promotes close parental communication and cooperation. The enhancement of parental links does not feature in the school's current *Development Plan*.

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

78. The school has a good set of core values that are supported by 12 sound objectives. In addition, it has consulted widely amongst pupils and staff to produce a set of six "community aims" that are prominently displayed around the school. These emphasise respectful relationships and equality of access for all. The daily work and life of the school clearly and positively reflect these aims.
79. With the recent appointment of a new headteacher, the school is at a point of transition. It has in the past experienced a period of stability and success that is widely recognised in its community. Senior management, together with the governing body, now appreciate that the school needs to adopt a more self-critical stance, so that it can assess, to a greater depth, how far current performance reflects the potential of all pupils. Under the guidance of the new headteacher, suitable consideration is being given to the most appropriate direction the school should take, in order to match its curriculum and organisation more closely to the needs of its pupils.
80. The new headteacher has made a good start. She has rapidly involved herself in the school's programmes and has been accessible to all who need to consult her. She has set about the key task of informing herself in detail about the school's current performance, so as to have a firm baseline for onward development. She has placed at the centre of her concerns the need to continue to improve teaching and learning at all levels. She is rightly keen to adapt the school's provision so as to match the educational challenges of a new millennium and to make more effective links with the community and local enterprise. Her initial energy and commitment have been widely received with warmth and optimism, both within and outside the school.
81. Over the past few years a relaxed and often informal system of management has produced many positive results. Overall, the school operates effectively, pupils enjoy their work, and key tasks and targets have been achieved. There are, however, areas in which the lack of systematic structures leaves gaps in the school's capacity to respond to present and future demands. Such gaps are seen in such everyday practical matters as occasional failures to communicate significant actions or information to key personnel. They also exist in more strategic areas – such as the absence of school-wide coordinators for literacy and numeracy, the lack of an overall plan to evaluate the school's performance over time, and the absence of a robust system to track pupils' academic progress reliably throughout the school. In these and related areas, many of the key issues for action identified at the last inspection six years ago have not been adequately addressed.
82. The new headteacher has, however, already given a strong impetus to the establishment of more secure systems that will allow senior management and governors to set in train a process of school improvement. The task in the next few years will be to sustain the momentum of this process and implement it effectively.
83. The quality and effectiveness of the leaders of subjects and pastoral areas range from very good to satisfactory, but are good overall. Middle managers show a strong capacity to assume responsibility and take initiatives, when they are given the opportunity. Most lead their teams effectively. As a group, however, they do not contribute their full potential, because their individual efforts have not been coherently harnessed and focused enough on key cross-school tasks that require a longer-term planning perspective and commitment.

84. The governing body is supportive of the school and committed to its success. It has not, however, taken a prominent part in shaping the direction of the school and does not have adequate systems to monitor and evaluate the school's overall performance and effectiveness. As a consequence, governors have a generalised feel for the school's work, but not a sharp focus on its precise strengths and weaknesses.
85. The requisite system for the performance management of teachers is satisfactorily in place. The new headteacher has given early priority to the vital task of evaluating the quality of teaching and learning by senior leaders undertaking systematic classroom observation and consultation.
86. In the period since the last inspection report, school development has been based on single-year plans. The establishment of a "strategic plan", which was one of the last report's key issues for action has not taken place. The current annual plan has success criteria set against its objectives, but its goals have not been appropriately costed, phased or prioritised. Coincidentally, the school's decision to bid for specialist school status has required the writing of such a strategic plan. A key task for the school's leadership is to ensure that such systematic and structured approaches become a natural part of the school's management system rather than a special effort undertaken for external purposes.
87. The school's income and expenditure are well below average national levels. There is a small deficit in the budget, which means that the school has no funds for contingencies or for large capital spending. Financial planning and management are now satisfactory and support adequately the school's educational priorities. At the time of the last inspection it was reported that the school had no long-term financial plans. This is no longer the case and the school is planning appropriately for its financial future. Financial administration is satisfactory and the new headteacher is implementing measures that promise to make it more efficient and effective.
88. The governors are not sufficiently well informed about the school's finances. Although they receive information from the school's office manager four times a year, until very recently she did not attend the meetings of the finance committee or the governors. As a result, the governors were unable to discuss and question effectively issues concerning finance and spending. The headteacher is now ensuring that the office manager is more closely involved with financial planning and the governors. Until very recently, minutes were not kept regularly or adequately of the governors' finance committee meetings. This weakness was identified at the external audit of 2001, but no action had been taken.
89. The specific grants and funds which the school receives are used effectively – as, for example, those for staff training and professional development, which have proved to be of benefit to the staff taking part. The school's use of new technologies is limited: it does not, for example, have a website, although one has recently been commissioned.
90. When purchasing services, the school does not evaluate best value carefully enough. There is wastage in heating, as a result of the many exterior doors that are frequently left open or which do not shut properly. The swimming pool is at present used very little, even by the school itself. There is, however, some benefit to the school in the reciprocal arrangement by which the school uses local army sports facilities in return for the army using the pool, if it wishes to do so.
91. The cost of teaching staff is a broadly average proportion of a low budget. The school does, however, spend an above average proportion of its budget on supply staff, as a result of the long-term absence of some staff. The overall amount of time that teachers spend in class is below average. Most subject teachers, however, spend an average amount of time in teaching classes.
92. The provision of teaching staff is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, art, history, music and RE, however, non-specialist teachers, some of whom are supply staff, lack the full expertise to enable pupils to learn well. The provision of teachers for pupils with statements of special educational needs is satisfactory. There are, however, insufficient support assistants in class for pupils who

have special educational needs, but do not have statements. This was also identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection. There is not enough technical support for teachers in science, food or textiles. There are insufficient administrative and clerical staff, although the school has firm plans for an additional post. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are satisfactory. The support for teachers new to teaching is good. The school provides good teacher training, in partnership with a local training institution.

93. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall for almost all subjects. There is, however, not enough accommodation for ICT to meet the demands for ICT across the school. The rooms used for teaching modern foreign languages are spread across the school's site and two of them are too small for teachers to move around the class easily. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is too small and the quality of accommodation in the behaviour support unit is very poor.
94. Parts of the school site are attractive. The enclosed quadrangle and memorial garden are pleasant areas. There is, however, much long-standing litter around the exterior, and inadequate mats at doorways allow much mud to be brought into the school. The toilet facilities for pupils are poor: during the inspection, both boys' and girls' toilets lacked soap, and most boys' toilets also lacked paper towels and toilet paper. This unacceptable situation was raised as a concern by both pupils and parents.
95. The proportion of the budget spent on learning resources is well below average. The overall provision of learning resources is satisfactory, but there are some shortages. There are insufficient textbooks for Years 7-9 in science and history. There are not enough books for Years 10-11 in science, modern foreign languages, PE and RE. As a result, pupils often have to share books. A shortage of books in RE was also identified at the time of the last inspection. There are shortages of audio-visual and other equipment in mathematics (which lacks equipment for weighing and measuring), in science (where there are insufficient probes and sensors) and in one of the ICT rooms (which has no multi-media equipment).
96. The number of computers in the school is broadly average. The two ICT rooms are heavily used for specialist ICT lessons, so that other subjects find it difficult to book the use of these rooms. Most departments have a small amount of ICT equipment in their departmental areas, but there is none in PE. The recent acquisition of an interactive whiteboard for a history room promises to provide very good ICT facilities in that subject.
97. The library is limited for independent learning. It is a large room with considerable potential that has not been fully exploited. There are too few books, both fiction and non-fiction, and many are old. There are no newspapers or periodicals available. The ICT provision in the library is, however, good: the 12 computers, with Internet access, are popular with, and used heavily by, pupils. The library is open and staffed all day. Pupils use it well at lunchtimes to read for pleasure and for homework and general research.

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

98. To improve and build upon the good quality of education that pupils receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:
  - (a) strengthen the quality of the school's governance and management by:
    - ensuring that governors are fully involved in all strategic issues – and particularly the systems of monitoring and evaluating performance – that affect the school;
    - senior and middle managers establishing agreed policies for all aspects of the school's work and coherently monitoring and evaluating the impact of those policies;
    - addressing effectively the weaknesses in teaching in a minority of lessons;



- establishing a comprehensive management information system of all the school's key activities and using the information collected to guide future planning effectively;
- ensuring that key information is always effectively recorded and shared appropriately; and
- reviewing regularly the progress being made on improving these matters, partly in order to ensure that the school's unsatisfactory response to the key issues of the 1997 inspection is not repeated.

(paragraphs 14 21 32-34 37 39 45 48 57 72 79 81 83 84 86 88 90 94)

- (b) formulate a clearer strategy for monitoring and evaluating the attainment and progress of pupils throughout Years 7-11 and for coherently evaluating the performance of subject departments and the whole school by:

- establishing a robust model, incorporating an appropriate range of criteria and data, by which to judge regularly and accurately the standards being achieved;
- providing all subject and pastoral managers with the same data that accurately identifies pupils' rate of progress and offers finely tuned guidance for future targets;
- improving the accuracy of the initial apportionment of pupils to attainment bands in Year 7; and
- using the progress data collated to underpin a clear plan of action to increase the proportion of the highest (A\*) grades achieved by pupils at the school and, more generally, to support the needs of the school's gifted and talented pupils.

(paragraphs 4 6 10 12 13 16 34 49 57 70 72 81 and in some subject sections)

- (c) pay greater attention to enhancing the overall standard of pupils' literacy by:

- implementing the agreed literacy policy effectively through coordinating the school's patchy approach to all aspects of pupils' literacy – and particularly to matters of grammar, spelling, punctuation, note-taking, work presentation and the display of specialist vocabulary; and
- auditing carefully the resultant practice on these matters across all subjects.

(paragraphs 18-20 38 42 45 81)

- (d) improve the unsatisfactory overall provision made in art and modern foreign languages.

(paragraphs 15 16 41 and in the two subject sections)

- (e) improve the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development (a weakness also identified in 1997) by:

- formulating a policy to guide all departments and the running of assemblies in fostering this aspect of pupils' development;
- providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; and then
- reviewing thoroughly how effectively spirituality is promoted throughout the school.

(paragraphs 58-59)

- (f) increase the length of the teaching week to at least the minimum 25 hours recommended nationally by the Department for Education and Skills.

(paragraph 47)

- (g) ensure that pupils' toilets are properly serviced with paper, soap and drying facilities and that their condition is regularly monitored.

(paragraphs 67-94)

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 25-40 42-44 46-48 51 53 56 63 69 76-77 89 and 92-97.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	162
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	93

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	4	27	65	60	3	2	1
Percentage	3	17	40	37	2	1	1

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. The total of percentages does not equal 100 because of "rounding".

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	873
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	32

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	118

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.5	School data	0.5
National comparative data	7.8	National comparative data	1.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the 2001-2002 academic year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	90	88	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	68	67
	Girls	81	73	73
	Total	141	141	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (82)	79 (84)	79 (81)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (33)	56 (58)	35 (41)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	66	65
	Girls	79	73	74
	Total	150	139	139
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (78)	79 (84)	79 (85)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (40)	57 (60)	35 (43)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	81	86	167

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	41	80	81
	Girls	61	83	84
	Total	102	163	165
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (64)	97 (98)	99 (99)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.*

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.1 (43.3)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

*Figures in brackets refer to 2001.*

**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	830	12	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	27	2	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.0

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	326

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.9
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	22.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2,083,043
Total expenditure	2,090,385
Expenditure per pupil	2,436
Balance brought forward from previous year	802
Balance carried forward to next year	-7,342

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	873
Number of questionnaires returned	89

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	45	5	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	47	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	64	8	0	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	53	14	6	2
The teaching is good.	27	64	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	50	11	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	44	0	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	30	4	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	62	13	6	0
The school is well led and managed.	32	53	6	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	46	10	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	51	11	7	13

### Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on 18 of the questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points mentioned were:

- the school's high local reputation for academic work and pastoral care.

Amongst the concerns expressed in questionnaires were:

- inconsistency in the setting of homework;
- the difficulty of meeting all teachers at parents' evenings.



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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths:

- The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE English language.
- Pupils' progress in Years 10-11.
- The leadership and management of the department.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The attainment of boys.
- The overall rate of progress of pupils in Years 7-9.

99. Over the period 1998-2002, the proportion of pupils reaching at least the benchmark of Level 5 in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was well above average. The proportion reaching Level 6, however, over the same period steadily declined to be in line with the national average in 2002. When compared with the attainment of pupils in schools with a similar socio-economic background, pupils' performance in this school was well below average in 2002. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys.
100. In GCSE English language in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C was well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools, a position similar to what it was over the period 1998-2001. The attainment of girls was much higher than that of boys. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\*-C for English literature in 2002 was in line with the national average. Pupils tended to do a little less well in both language and literature in 2002 than in most of their other subjects. The English language results are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection.
101. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard in English is above the national average. The majority of pupils read fluently and with expression, using appropriate strategies to correct any mistakes they make when reading aloud. The comprehension skills of most pupils enable them to interpret literature meaningfully, although a minority of pupils who are less confident require more prompts to guide their answers. Pupils' overall standard of writing is above average. The effective use of such planning tools as spidergrams and mind-mapping helps pupils to organise their ideas. Written work is well structured and usually based on a sound knowledge of grammar and punctuation. Pupils listen well. They generally speak clearly and audibly when taking part in discussions.
102. Pupils in a Year 7 class acquired good alphabetical understanding by deciding whether a word would be found in the beginning, middle or end of a dictionary. They then went on to put words in alphabetic sequence by using the second, third and fourth letters of each word. In a Year 8 class, pupils deepened their understanding of *Treasure Island* by R L Stevenson by listing the main points of the chapter they had just read before going on to incorporate them into their drafts of play scripts. Key literacy skills were practised well by pupils in a Year 9 class at the beginning of a lesson, as they identified main and subordinate clauses. They then went on to use the understanding they had gained by analysing and making notes on the characters of Olivia and Viola in Act 1, Scene 5 of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.
103. Most pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in Years 7-9; pupils with special educational needs make good progress owing to the high quality assistance they receive. The implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy in lesson planning – and particularly such elements as word- and sentence-level activities and the use of lesson objectives – helps to increase pupils' progress. Pupils in a Year 8 class, for example, explained the subject of a sentence and deepened their

understanding by suggesting alternatives for the subject of a number of sentences. Sometimes insufficient attention is given to discussion in lower-ability classes, so impeding pupils' understanding of key concepts and producing slower progress.

104. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is above average. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The progress of the highest attainers is good, because they are encouraged to search for deeper insights into literature and to tackle more demanding aspects of language use, such as the use of imagery.
105. Pupils in a Year 10 class, for example, consolidated their understanding of how persuasive texts can be created by recalling such devices as rhetorical questions, anecdotes and contrasting pairs. Their knowledge was extended by their use of as many persuasive techniques as possible on the theme that school uniform was a bad idea. A Year 11 class created a mind-map of features that pupils considered reflected the culture of England, including traditions such as food (fish and chips), money (the English pound) and religion (Church of England). In another Year 11 class, just days after the Challenger space disaster, pupils discussed faith in God and considered how it is revealed in the poems, *Upon my son Samuel* by Ann Brodstreet (1657) and *Light shining out of darkness* by William Cowper. They then went on to consider the religious significance of lines such as "God moves in a mysterious way" and "Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take".
106. Pupils overall standard of writing is above average by the end of Year 11. Most pupils plan their GCSE assignments carefully and use appropriate references from literature to support their points of view. Higher-attaining pupils plan, organise and create well-structured assignments that develop points of view logically and undertake thoughtful textual analysis when, for example, considering the meeting between Hamlet and the ghost of his father. The overall standard of pupils' use of Standard English is good. Their quality of speaking and listening is generally good: high-attaining pupils readily use appropriate terminology to identify linguistic elements and literary usage. In contrast, formally spoken presentations are of an average standard, largely because opportunities for extended discussion are infrequent.
107. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. A small minority of pupils persistently talk or are disruptive, although most teachers reduce the impact of these pupils on others by managing behaviour effectively. Pupils' interest and enthusiasm are usually good, particularly when there is much discussion and other forms of interactive teaching.
108. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and good overall. Specialist teachers regularly use their subject knowledge to enrich the learning opportunities of pupils. The majority of lessons are carefully planned and regularly include stimulating starter activities and plenary sessions, particularly in Years 7-9. Text-marking is used effectively in Years 10-11 to help pupils to record significant information about such aspects as language, imagery and authors' intentions. In most lessons, pupils are praised appropriately for their success in learning.
109. The leadership and management of the department are good overall. The head of department, strongly supported by a very competent second in department, has a clear understanding of departmental priorities. An excellent departmental handbook informs all staff, including those who are temporary, of the day-to-day workings of the department. Staff work closely together to share ideas, develop resources and generally enhance their own professional development. The department has good specialist teachers and attracts teachers in training. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
110. Very good organisational systems ensure the effective day-to-day running of the department. Schemes of work have recently been revised to incorporate effective use of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy; further work is planned to ensure that aspects of citizenship and of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education within English are incorporated into these schemes. The department has informal links with the drama department, but recognises that these require strengthening.

111. Despite excellent guidance, the marking of pupils' work is sometimes inconsistent. The regular monitoring and standardising of pupils' work ensure that there is a high level of assessment consistency throughout Years 7-11. The experience of the head of department as a marker at Key Stage 3 and GCSE is a considerable asset to the assessment work of the department. Data to track pupils' attainment from entry to the school through to GCSE is carefully assembled, enabling the department to identify underachievement and provide appropriate support. A recognition of the underachievement of boys led the department to initiate some single-sex teaching for boys and girls in 2000. Although no use of ICT was seen during the inspection, other evidence indicates that the department regularly uses ICT to enhance pupils' learning in the subject.
112. Media studies is offered as a GCSE subject. Teaching within the subject is good. Pupils within a Year 10 class studying soap operas, for example, acquired a good understanding of stereotyping by logging on to a website to select three characters and then classifying the stereotypes.
113. Extracurricular activities include a readers' club, National Poetry Day, a poetry workshop with Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage for Years 10 and 11, and workshops for gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 and 9, working with a member of staff from Hull University.
114. Reading in subjects other than English is average overall. In geography, history and music it is good: in these subjects pupils have regular opportunities to read. The quality of writing is average overall, but above average in geography and history. In geography, the use of appropriate writing frames helps pupils to organise their writing logically. In history, high attainers write capably at length, whilst the regular use of mind-mapping techniques helps all pupils to plan their writing. In modern foreign languages, pupils do not always copy accurately. In PE there is an overuse of worksheets that limits pupils' opportunities for sustained writing.
115. Pupils' speaking and listening are good overall. Pupils generally speak with clarity, expression and audibility. Most pupils listen carefully. Their use of appropriate technical language is good in most subjects, but extended discussion is infrequent.

## **Drama**

116. The subject is taught throughout the school. In Year 9, the opportunity to teach an additional foreign language has meant that one group of pupils does not have a drama lesson each week. At the end of Year 11, pupils are entered for GCSE drama. In 2002, 87 per cent of the pupils who were entered for the examination gained grades in the range A\*-C; four pupils gained grade A.
117. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are uniformly positive. The quality of teaching is good. The subject is well managed and coordinated. Schemes of work are largely up to date. The assessment of pupils' work for GCSE is rigorously undertaken. There is now clear line management of the subject, an improvement since the time of the last inspection. There are, however, no formal links with the English department.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching.
- The attainment and progress of pupils in the subject.
- Good assessment of pupils' standards and progress.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

### Areas for improvement:

- The inadequate use of ICT in the subject.
- Weak marking in a significant proportion of books.
- Departmental accommodation, storage and resources.

118. In the national tests taken by the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 5 or the higher Level 6 is well above the national average. Teachers' assessments are similar to these external test results. Performance has, however, declined slightly, when compared with the national trend. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. This school's performance is below that of similar schools (as measured solely by the proportions of pupils taking free school meals). It is, however, in line with that of other schools within the same attainment band on entry in Year 7.
119. Results in GCSE are well above average and have risen steadily in line with the national trend. The department's performance is in line with that of similar schools. Girls did a little better than boys in 2002. Pupils tend to do better in this subject than in most of their other subjects. The department's detailed assessment information clearly indicates that most pupils achieve well in mathematics.
120. In work seen during the inspection, standards were well above national averages by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. High standards were seen in work on number, shape and space and in data-handling. By the age of 14, most pupils have very good mathematical skills, partly as a result of the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Their mental skills are sharpened through, for example, a short mental activity at the beginning of lessons. Their competence in using and applying mathematics is good, but not as good as other aspects of the subject. Some lower-attaining pupils are weak at estimating the answers to problems: they find it difficult, for example, to judge approximate weights, capacities and lengths of everyday objects in class.
121. By the age of 16, pupils demonstrate a good grasp of number, shape, measures and graphical skills. They show competence in number, using fractions, decimals and percentages confidently when solving problems. Their work on using and applying mathematics is better than earlier in the school, since all pupils have to do this work as part of their GCSE coursework. Higher-attaining pupils generally show a good capability in algebra when working on problems to solve equations.
122. The progress and achievement of pupils are good overall. They are particularly good in lessons where teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils in class. In general, higher-attaining pupils are challenged and extended appropriately and lower attainers are well supported. Pupils' progress is only satisfactory in a few lessons: these lessons are mostly taken by temporary or non-specialist staff who do not know the pupils well and find some of them difficult to manage. Progress is consistently better in classes taken by the permanent, specialist staff.
123. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. Insufficient use is, however, made of assessment to find what these pupils know and understand as a basis for lesson planning and the setting of short-term targets to motivate them. Individual Education Plans are not well used to identify needs and adapt work in lessons. The 70 minute lessons are too long, with the result that many of these pupils struggle to maintain concentration. Gifted and talented pupils make good (and

often very good) progress. In lessons, work is often specifically planned to extend their knowledge and understanding and teachers' careful questioning challenges their thinking.

124. There is insufficient use of computers to enhance teaching and learning in lessons. During the inspection, for instance, no pupils were observed using computers. The department has insufficient computers and software packages, whilst access to other school computers is limited. This aspect has been identified in the department's development plan as a weakness.
125. Teaching is good overall and was at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen. Most lessons are well (and quite frequently very well) taught. In the best lessons, teachers plan successfully to cater for the full range of attainment, extending high-attaining pupils and supporting low attainers. Good class management ensures that pupils are kept on task and waste little time. Well-targeted support ensures that pupils are clear about the tasks they are given and are helped when they have problems. Clear explanations and questioning ensure that they fully understand their work. Teachers use appropriate technical language accurately and in context: they ask pupils to explain their thinking, encouraging the use of mathematical language to deepen their understanding.
126. Good use of mental and oral activities with 11 to 14 year olds sharpens their mental skills and helps them to develop mathematical language, knowledge and understanding. Low-attaining pupils are appropriately praised for their successes, so raising their confidence and self-esteem and motivating them to make further effort. In weaker teaching, planning is less detailed, marking is weak and pupils are less well managed: as a result, many of these pupils make only satisfactory progress.
127. In a significant proportion of books, marking is barely adequate and at times unsatisfactory. Some books have sections of work left unmarked, and careless, untidy work escapes comment: missed pages, missed units, misspelling and incorrect methods are not picked up and addressed.
128. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and pupils make good progress. The recently devised national "catch-up" programmes are well used. Good use is made of learning support assistants: they provide effective support and guidance to pupils who find some of the work difficult. In many books, however, there are few comments about poor presentation and ways to improve. There is insufficient emphasis on the use of subject-specific language with these pupils and assessment is not well used to guide lesson planning.
129. The leadership and management of the department are good. There have been significant improvements in provision in the subject since the last inspection. Documentation is thorough and appropriate. Effective monitoring has resulted in a generally high quality of teaching. Many elements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy are well established with younger pupils, and standards are higher in mathematics than in most other subjects. With the exception of the marking element, the department uses assessment and the resultant data well. It is used carefully, for instance, for tracking the attainment and progress of individual pupils.
130. Accommodation is adequate, but poorly maintained. Rooms are shabby and blinds broken or absent, so that on some days the sun shines directly on the whiteboard or into faces. Noisy heating has to be switched off while the teacher is talking. Some rooms are uncomfortably cold at the beginning of the week. Resources are inadequate – particularly computers and practical equipment. As a result, pupils do not use computers enough or have access to practical equipment that would aid their understanding of, for example, weights and measures. The "setting" of 11 and 12 year-old pupils is not done specifically for mathematics: this results in an extended range of ability within groups and makes teaching more difficult.
131. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory overall. Mathematics develops these skills well with pupils in Years 7-9 as a result of the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy: all lessons follow the recommended format of a mental or oral starter activity to sharpen pupils' mental skills, a focused main activity and a concluding session that effectively ties the lesson together and clears

up any problems. Pupils' numeracy skills are not well consolidated in subjects other than mathematics and science. Good examples of strategies for the development of numeracy skills are sometimes, however, seen in geography (where pupils use and interpret graphs accurately) and in design and technology, where pupils weigh and measure accurately.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths:

- The good results attained in GCSE examinations.
- The leadership and management of the department.
- Implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy for science.

### Areas for improvement:

- Increasing the range of teaching and learning styles.
- Pupils' literacy, including the presentation of written work, especially in Years 7-9.
- Sharing attainment grades with pupils, so that they can understand their work better.

132. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their overall attainment in the subject is above the national average. Over the last six years, pupils' overall attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 has also been above the national average. Boys and girls do equally well. Overall, tests results by the end of Year 9 are above the national average for all schools, but usually well below the typical pattern for schools in areas of similar socio-economic circumstances.
133. Most pupils in Years 10-11 follow the typical national pattern of taking GCSE double-award science. One class in Year 10 and Year 11, however, takes the separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics at GCSE and two small classes take GCSE single-award science. This arrangement allows individual pupils the maximum choice to satisfy their interests and talents in the subject. The 2001 and 2002 GCSE results were well above national averages. In a typical year around 40 pupils gain the highest A\* or A grades at GCSE in one, two or three sciences. When compared with schools serving similar socio-economic areas, the GCSE examinations results are above the group average. This is a commendable all-round achievement. Over the last few years, pupils have performed better in science than in most of their other GCSE subjects. Girls tend to achieve slightly better GCSE results than boys, but boys' results are much higher than the national pattern for boys.
134. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is above average, with most pupils making satisfactory progress from their start in Year 7. In a Year 9 class on growth in humans, for example, pupils distinguished soundly between the environmental and genetic influences that affect the onset of puberty in respect of size, growth rate and other features. Most pupils in the lowest sets acquire basic scientific skills and use appropriate vocabulary when conversing with teachers, but are generally weak at explaining in writing what they have understood. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. Those, however, who are assigned to the lowest teaching sets in Years 7-9 have very diverse needs and, even with a learning support assistant present, often make slow progress during practical sessions.
135. Too many pupils in Years 7-9 are too easily satisfied with diagrams of a poor standard. These pupils' books contain, for example, tables that are badly constructed and with wavy instead of the straight lines that the use of a ruler would have produced. Too many pupils in middle- and lower-attaining classes come without writing implements. This unnecessarily low standard partly exists because pupils in Years 7-9 are seldom instructed to present their work in a systematic way or given, for example, frameworks to structure their writing and appropriate layouts for tables and diagrams.
136. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment is above the national average. Pupils generally make very good progress in Years 10-11, because they are prepared to work hard, are thoroughly taught and

receive strong encouragement from their teachers. The most able pupils usually achieve high grades in GCSE examinations. In the majority of lessons, however, pupils have little opportunity to explore their views and understanding on scientific issues. There is therefore still room for many (include high attainers) to acquire even greater depth of knowledge and understanding through more demanding questioning and debate with their teachers and classmates. In the lower-attaining sets, teachers engage pupils' interests well: as a result, many more pupils than is usual in comprehensive schools achieve C or D grades.

137. Few opportunities were observed where pupils were able to try out ideas and predictions for practical investigations. Pupils in a top Year 10 class, however, checking their hypotheses on the effect of the shape of a container on the cooling of a liquid, produced a wealth of valuable ideas. In contrast, the drafting of written work is rarely practised and scientific arguments are insufficiently developed in both written work and class discussion. As a consequence, these aspects of pupils' work are only just satisfactory. The spelling of both scientific and common words is frequently inaccurate.
138. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy practical work and readily acquire new skills. They handle equipment safely and correctly. The number of topics where capability in numeracy is required is more than normally seen. Many pupils manipulate data well (as, for instance, in equations, formulae and graphs). In a physics lesson a top set of pupils worked accurately with the concept of radioactivity half-life and correctly manipulated the data involved. The work of pupils in middle sets, however, often lacks attention to detail and accuracy when plotting data.
139. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Most pupils in the top sets are enthusiastic, conscientious and hard-working. In many classes pupils participate actively, putting their hands up to questions and disappointed when they are not asked for their response. Pupils generally form good relationships with one another and their teachers. The lowest sets in Years 7-9, in contrast, pose a challenge to experienced teachers, whilst less experienced teachers often have some difficulty in controlling them satisfactorily. In lessons where teachers incorporate examples from daily life, pupils show a lot of interest – as occurred in a Year 11 lesson on sound, where the range of audible frequencies was linked to disco music and the age of the listener.
140. The quality of teaching ranges from good to satisfactory and is good overall. No wholly unsatisfactory teaching was observed and two in every three lessons were well taught. Teachers have secure knowledge and in-depth understanding of the topics being covered. The best lessons incorporate detailed planning, the sharing of lesson objectives with pupils, carefully timed sequences of activities, a suitable variety of exposition, practical investigations, penetrating question-and-answer sessions and a work summary on the board.
141. The marking of exercise books varies widely, but is satisfactory overall. Where marking is thorough, comments are constructive, often lengthy and helpfully suggest ways how work may be improved. The marking of books by some staff, however, is superficial. A greater consistency in approach is required across the department.
142. Staff have assembled a useful bank of short exercises to begin lessons and engage the attention of pupils. Group exercises are particularly successful. One, based around living species, enabled pupils to correlate the number of eggs and young produced with the care shown to offspring by their parents. In another lesson on energy, a teacher used a quiz-show format to consolidate information acquired over a period of time. These types of exercises were well matched to the ability levels of each class. In many lessons, however, teachers' questioning seldom progresses beyond the level of recalling the facts and information covered a few minutes earlier. Few teachers reinforce pupils' literacy by encouraging them, for example, to read aloud sections of text or by writing key words on the board. The use of homework is sound overall. Revision classes are popular with pupils prior to GCSE modular examinations. Teachers are competent in the use of ICT, although in no lesson observed during the inspection were the Internet, data-logging or control systems used.
143. An experienced and committed head of department leads a team of conscientious teachers well.

There is a good system for supporting teachers new to the department. The national Key Stage 3 Strategy for science is being implemented systematically and effectively. The departmental schemes of work are good. A large bank of useful stimulus and information sheets has been prepared and is used extensively by teachers, although these are not always fastened securely into pupils' books. The department's system for analysing pupils' attainments and achievements has many sound features, but this range of data is not shared with pupils.

144. The school has recently experienced difficulty in attracting and retaining science teachers; a supply teacher is presently filling a long-term gap. Practical work is effectively supported by one full-time and one part-time technician, but the total amount of technical help available is inadequate for the large amount of practical work undertaken in the department. There is effective use of textbooks in class, but more up-to-date texts are necessary to match current syllabus requirements. The department has a good stock of data-logging equipment, but a limited range of probes and sensors. Some multiple sets of science and audio-visual equipment are now outmoded, in need of repair or becoming unreliable.
145. The department has developed a useful, well-stocked environmental area to recognise the service to the school of a science teacher who recently died. Pupils are encouraged to enter competitions and take part in events organised by local universities. Excursions are arranged to museums such as Magna. Displays in some laboratories make the learning environment not only visually appealing but also useful for revision.
146. The department has made good overall progress since the last inspection, particularly on the good standards attained in GCSE examinations. The school has, however, failed to act adequately on the health and safety issues raised in the 1997 inspection report: doors still open outwards into corridors and pupils have open access to science rooms for use as form bases (and sometimes to preparation rooms). Both represent major risks. Overall, however, provision in the subject is good – satisfactory in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10-11.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and learning in Year 11.
- Achievement by pupils in Years 10-11.

### Areas for improvement:

- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7-9.
- The achievement of pupils in Years 7-9.
- The consistent application of assessment procedures to improve pupils' learning.

147. The overall standard of work is below average by the end of Year 9 and average by the end of Year 11. Pupils' level of achievement, taking into account their slightly below average overall standard of work on entry to the school, is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9, but good in Years 10-11.
148. The recent staffing problems in the department have made teachers' formal assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 unreliable. From the evidence of the inspection, most pupils produce a standard of drawing that is lower than that expected nationally for their age. Few pupils attain typical or higher standards. The evidence of sketchbooks, drawings, paintings and written work indicates that pupils' overall attainment is below average by the end of Year 9.
149. The GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C and average for grades A\*-G. Pupils' level of performance was much lower in 2001.



In 2002, pupils tended to achieve less well in this subject than they did in most of their other subjects, a feature that has existed for at least the last three years.

150. By the end of Year 9, as a result of recent good work by the acting head of department, pupils know common technical terms, can name the artists they have studied and have appropriate opportunities to draw, paint and study design. Their best achievement is in printmaking. Progress for all pupils is unsatisfactory, however, because of the slow pace to lessons, the poor behaviour of some pupils, the low expectations of some teaching and the lack of understanding by pupils of what constitutes good quality work. Pupils' reading aloud or group discussions about work are below average, because they have few opportunities in the subject to practise these skills.
151. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 9 were given tasks that were too difficult: many could not cope, for example, with copying a distorted image from an Escher picture. As a result of the teacher's over-prescriptive approach and refusal to listen to pupils' legitimate concerns, most pupils made little progress: most reluctantly complied, but some showed resistance to the task set. In a Year 8 class, the introductory task took up half the lesson and no provision was made for the needs of potentially higher-attaining pupils. As a result of the poor behaviour of a significant number of pupils, progress was very slow in both the theoretical and practical parts of the lesson.
152. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work is in line with the national average. The emphasis on observational drawing of real objects, as well as the sharing of clear objectives with pupils and the discussion of what makes good quality art, leads to good achievement. Fewer boys than normal take the subject. Higher-attaining boys are, however, articulate. They not only show commitment to their work and understand their goals, but also assess their own and others' achievements thoughtfully.
153. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour vary from very good to very poor, depending on the respect that pupils have for their teacher. Year 7 pupils generally lack self-control and only good teaching ensures that they stay on task. Year 11 pupils, on the other hand, prove very mature in their evaluation of one another's work and their recognition of the need for self-motivation.
154. Teaching ranges from very good to very poor. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and unsatisfactory overall. The strengths of the department are in the recent changes brought about by the acting head of department. These include the mentoring of Year 11 pupils, the provision of good schemes of work and a good assessment booklet for pupils in Years 7-9. Implementation of these policies is, unfortunately, not consistent in practice. Some teachers have low expectations and on occasions poor management skills.
155. Assessment data is used well in Years 10-11 to set targets for the future, but the department fails to maximise assessment opportunities in Years 7-9. Work in sketchbooks is not always dated – a missed opportunity for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development includes the study of western and non-western artists, but is more effective in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9. Pupils' opportunities for moral and social development are limited in Years 7-9, particularly by the lack of group work.
156. No use of computers was seen during the inspection. Pupils do use them for research, when answering homework assignments. Those pupils without computers at home value the opportunity to use the school's facilities at morning breaks and lunchtimes.
157. The subject leader is on long-term absence and the other member of staff is on maternity leave. Supply or temporary teachers currently serve the department. As a result of the staffing problems faced since the previous inspection, progress has been unsatisfactory in addressing the issues raised. Standards are now lower by the end of Year 9 and teaching has more weaknesses.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths:

- Pupils' responsibilities around the school.
- The charity work undertaken by pupils.

### Areas for improvement:

- Monitoring the coverage of work across all subjects.
- The assessment and recording of pupils' practical, oral and written work.

158. Taking into account the fact that the provision of citizenship as a subject is at an early stage, available evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils by the end of Years 9 and 11 is average. Pupils have the potential, however, to reach higher standards than at present in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and in the skills of enquiry and communication.
159. The quality of learning and progress in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall. Pupils clarify and extend their knowledge of such aspects as the use and misuse of drugs, learn the rules that are necessary to make orderly communities and begin to study aspects of crime and punishment. They also learn about rights and responsibilities, especially as applied to children. Pupils in Year 7 evaluate their own personal and social development since entering the school and identify suitable targets for the rest of the year.
160. Learning and progress are also of a satisfactory standard in Years 10-11. At this stage, pupils learn about the legal system (including court procedure) and the roles of solicitors and magistrates. They also consider issues to do with immigration and asylum seekers.
161. Pupils in all year groups are involved in aspects of running the school. They have contributed to the school's stated values that are displayed prominently in classrooms and elsewhere. They gain an understanding of democratic representation through the activities of year councils and the school council. Form representatives carry out their duties well. Most pupils feel that their views are properly conveyed to the council by their representatives and that they receive good feedback from the meetings. Older pupils have increasing opportunities to experience responsibility by becoming prefects. They also train and serve as peer counsellors, anti-bullying prefects and bus monitors.
162. A strength of the school's provision lies in the trust that is invested in pupils – as, for example, in their use of classrooms and other spaces at morning breaks and lunchtimes. Pupils respect this trust. They show a good level of initiative and responsibility, particularly in their very substantial fund-raising activities and in the choice of charities they wish to support. Pupils also experience a variety of community functions: for example, they meet police officers and representatives of Victim Support as well as officers from the prison service. They have good links with the local council and represent their school on the Youth Forum.
163. Teaching ranges from good to (occasionally) poor, but is satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned effectively and good use is made of commercial materials and Internet information – as, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on the use and misuse of drugs. Some lessons are designed to enable pupils to undertake research and to make their own decisions on issues. This was evident in a lesson within PE, for instance, where pupils designed a game, after discussing the need for rules and laws.
164. Literacy is taught satisfactorily overall, although in some lessons little or no attention is given to basic errors in spelling or punctuation. The subject lends itself well to pupils' developing skill in discussion and argument, but the opportunities for pupils to air their own views effectively are too rarely taken. Pupils with special educational needs are usually fully involved in lessons. Overall,

lessons are well designed, although some teachers do not ensure that pupils are fully engaged for the whole duration of lessons. Teachers sometimes misjudge the timing of lessons, not leaving enough time to summarise what pupils should have learnt.

165. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They are genuinely interested in the topics they study and take part with enthusiasm in paired, grouped and whole-class activities. They take some responsibility for their own learning, when encouraged to do so. Behaviour is good in most lessons. In two lessons in Years 7 and 8, however, pupils constantly talked and sometimes shouted over the teacher's presentation, to the extent that very little learning and progress occurred.
166. Citizenship is coordinated informally at present. Whilst much work has gone into writing a handbook and schemes of work, the subject requires careful monitoring in order to locate exactly where units and aspects of work are covered, both within PSHCE lessons themselves and in other subjects. Some effective teaching of citizenship is done within subject departments, particularly in English, design and technology, history, ICT and RE. In PE, teachers have produced specific units of work for citizenship.
167. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work according to written criteria. The school does not as yet formally assess pupils' skills in participation and responsible action. Ways of evaluating pupils' long-term progress remain to be devised.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the department.
- Pupils' achievement, particularly in systems and control and in textiles.
- The use of ICT for computer-aided design and manufacture.

### Areas for improvement:

- Literacy and presentation – in particular, handwriting, spelling and sentence construction.
- Better use of classroom assessment to guide pupils' learning.
- Provision consistently made for gifted and talented pupils.

168. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard of work is average. In recent years teachers' formal assessments have indicated that more pupils reach the national benchmark of Level 5 than the proportion that do so nationally. Attainment at the higher Level 6 is average.
169. In GCSE in 2002, pupils gained an average proportion of grades A\*-C and A\*-G. Both boys and girls achieved lower grades, however, than those they obtained in most of their other school subjects. Results have fluctuated over the past three years, with the best results obtained in 2001. The standard of work observed in lessons and an analysis of pupils' work-folders indicate that standards are now above average in practical work. The standard of literacy and presentation varies widely and lowers the overall quality that pupils achieve. The element where pupils have the best understanding and ICT application is in systems and control. Pupils have their highest level of skill in textiles, wood construction and manufacture, and their best quality of design in textiles.
170. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are well supported, although higher-attaining girls in textiles do not work independently enough of the teacher; their teacher is not trained in this area of design and technology and insufficiently develops all pupils' potential. Opportunities are missed for all pupils to improve their literacy and standard of presentation. The design work (as, for example, with hats) undertaken previously with the specialist teacher shows that pupils have good understanding of their tasks and confidence in using sewing machines. In another Year 9 group, taken by a specialist supply teacher, lower attainers and pupils with identified behavioural problems made good progress

in understanding disassembly and its importance for both the designer and manufacturer. This achievement was made possible because of the resources provided and the good teamwork of the teacher and learning support assistant.

171. The best progress seen was in a Year 8 lesson, where higher-attaining pupils particularly benefited from the open-ended tasks set for them. They applied their previous knowledge of binary codes to programme a toy for use with a young child. These pupils worked sensibly in groups, discussing ideas and planning their approach carefully. They worked largely independently, using computers to resolve problems and provide possible solutions to the task set. In contrast, in a Year 7 group in food technology, the large size of the class and the high proportion of pupils with special behavioural and linguistic problems slowed progress; the high proportion of adults ensured that safe working practices could be maintained, but, on those occasions when the teacher is alone with this class, practical work is not viable.
172. By Year 11, pupils make good progress and achieve well in their chosen area of study. Emphasis on craftsmanship and the use of good quality materials have raised pupils' motivation in resistant materials. The planning sheets used by pupils also raise their awareness of the need to plan, reflect and consider criteria for success and the achievement of high quality products. In systems and control, those pupils who show particular strengths in using computers benefit from the challenging, new software. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs are given more time by their teachers and consequently achieve well. The problems tackled by gifted and talented pupils are often appropriately complex – as, for example, the design of a system to control three operations connected with a garden fountain.
173. Throughout the department, pupils' progress in using ICT is good. The centralised computers are used regularly by pupils from all year groups. They are particularly well used for computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), such as when engraving a circuit. In Year 10 graphics work, pupils use ICT well to evaluate the various software packages available to them. They then choose a net, before producing a design to be incorporated in packaging for fruit-flavoured tea bags. Occasionally, gifted and talented pupils are held back by the limited challenge and resources available. All pupils in Years 7-9 are well supported by the good workbooks provided, but many do not complete them in a suitably careful way.
174. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Relationships are generally positive. Boys and girls work well together. The exceptions to this good picture were in a Year 7 food and a Year 9 textile lesson, where a significant minority of pupils with unsatisfactory attitudes slowed the progress of all.
175. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, generally good and occasionally very good or outstanding. Teachers work best in their specialist areas. They know their pupils well. Work is well planned and expectations are usually high. The exceptions are where teachers' expectations are not high enough (as happened in a Year 9 textiles and a Year 10 graphics class) or where a large group size and accommodation constraints limit activities (as in Year 7 food studies). Homework is set regularly and appropriately. Marking is generally helpful, although too little attention is drawn to weaknesses in spelling and handwriting.
176. All teaching follows a three-part plan of an introduction, activities and a conclusion. Objectives are clearly identified and shared with pupils, but on no occasion were pupils invited to identify how they would judge their success before they undertook practical activities or at the end of the lesson whether they felt they had achieved what they set out to do. This is an important opportunity that was regularly missed. The subject leader has recognised the need to involve professional help from outside the school in moderating teachers' internal assessments at the end of Year 9.
177. Key technical words are identified and often displayed in class, but little thought is given to the provision of specific words to underpin evaluation exercises or to raise pupils' awareness of the need to use different sentence structures for different tasks. During the inspection, no dictionaries

were used and no guidelines were provided for writing on plain paper. Too often pupils are allowed to write in pink or red ink, often illegibly. The lack of insistence on the most suitable format for GCSE coursework prevents some pupils from achieving the best results.

178. The quality of leadership and management are good overall. The subject leader has monitored teaching and learning and raised staff's awareness of the importance of using the assessment of pupils' work to help them to improve their learning. He has also mentored teachers and been rewarded by improvements in practice, resulting in higher standards at GCSE. Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection: standards are much improved at GCSE, teaching and learning are better and computers are well used. Statutory requirements are met. The department uses its part-time technician for work with resistant materials, but not for food and textiles. There is no policy for gifted and talented pupils, and no alternative accreditation for those pupils in Years 10-11 for whom a vocational course would be appropriate. Several minor health and safety issues, raised during the inspection, require attention.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths:

- Good teaching throughout the school.
- Teachers manage pupils skilfully and use their good knowledge to plan well.
- The leadership of the subject provides a clear sense of direction.

### Areas for improvement:

- The overall standard achieved by boys.
- Greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils.
- The work of the department is not monitored effectively.

179. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the national average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2002 at the end of Year 9, their results suggested that the overall standard was well above that expected nationally. Girls achieve significantly higher standards than boys, as they complete work more thoroughly and in greater depth. During the inspection, the overall standard of work seen was above average.
180. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is average. Results in the GCSE examination have improved steadily since 2000 and in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average. Girls achieved results slightly above the national average for girls, but the overall standard achieved by boys was below both the national average for boys and (significantly so) that achieved by girls. Taking into account the high proportion of lower-attaining boys who study the subject, these results represent generally satisfactory progress throughout the course.
181. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good knowledge of the main features of different environments. In Year 8, they have a good understanding, for example, of how plants in an equatorial forest adapt to the climate, the lives of the people who live there and the effects of farming in the area. In Year 9, pupils clearly know why people choose to live in particular places and that the population of countries at different stages of development may change, but have difficulty in explaining why these changes occur. All pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of geographical terms, but only higher-attaining pupils use them effectively.
182. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a sound knowledge of how landscapes are shaped – as, for instance, owing to the effects of earthquakes or the work of water and ice. They clearly understand the various types of farming found in different parts of the world as well as the social, economic and environmental effects of changes in agriculture, such as the growth of large-scale commercial farms in Brazil. Pupils generally have a sound knowledge of the topics they study – such as the

movement of people from Mexico to the USA as an example of migration. Lower-attaining pupils have difficulty retaining knowledge and giving reasons for the changes they describe.

183. Pupils generally have good geographical skills. They analyse photographs very well, interpret information from a range of such resource material as maps and textbooks efficiently, and use computers for research effectively. Pupils have good map-reading skills, but their use of atlases is weak. Written work is generally accurate, but the quality of written answers of middle- and lower-attaining boys in Years 10-11 often lacks the depth and detail required for GCSE work. Skills in numeracy are good: pupils draw graphs such as climate graphs and population pyramids accurately and analyse them correctly to draw well-founded conclusions.
184. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school in gaining knowledge and understanding. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, as work is generally matched closely to their needs. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, such pupils gained a good basic knowledge of how a river erodes, transports and deposits material, because the teacher clearly illustrated the topic with a practical demonstration that used sand and water. Higher-attaining pupils make broadly satisfactory progress, but teachers have few strategies (such as rigorous questioning and specifically designed materials) to extend their knowledge and develop sufficient depth of understanding.
185. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and some is very good. A feature of all lessons is a lively "starter" activity, which gains pupils' interest and immediately establishes a good working atmosphere. Lessons are always prepared and organised thoroughly, so that they start promptly and are conducted at an appropriately rapid pace. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to plan a series of very well structured activities that maintain pupils' attention, deepen their knowledge and reinforce their understanding. When (as often) pupils are asked to work in pairs or groups, they cooperate well with one another, because the tasks provided are well organised, purposeful and appropriately challenging.
186. Teachers know their pupils well, have a firm but friendly relationship with them and are quick to intervene skilfully. As a result, pupils are well behaved and maintain concentration on their work. Teachers transmit an enthusiasm for the subject, so that pupils are well motivated, listen carefully and work hard. Marking is up to date and includes positive comments, but rarely informs pupils what they need to do to improve further. In Years 10-11, teachers ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected in the GCSE examination, so that they know clearly what they need to do to reach the required standard. Homework is set regularly and is worthwhile. Lessons often conclude with a review of the lesson, but this is rarely structured sufficiently to enable the teacher to assess effectively the progress that pupils have made.
187. The department is well led and managed, with a clear sense of direction. Changes made – such as the improved structure of lessons – have been successfully implemented. From a careful analysis of examination results, a clear strategy for improvement has been introduced that focuses particularly on the achievement of boys: this includes modifications to the curriculum, additional support for GCSE coursework and revision, and improving examination techniques. The scheme of work is well written and fully complies with national requirements. During Years 7-9 the programme of fieldwork is limited to Year 7 and does not adequately support GCSE coursework in Years 10-11. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills in ICT, because the department is unable to obtain easy access to computers.
188. The system of assessment is good and clearly indicates the progress made by pupils, but is not fully exploited to help pupils to improve. The work of the department is not monitored sufficiently in a way that can provide a solid basis for planning for the future. Accommodation is adequate, but the partition between the two adjacent rooms is not soundproofed and the working noise from one classroom to another is disturbing. As a result of the reduced time allocated for the subject in Year 9, there is not enough time to ensure study in sufficient depth. The department responded well to the previous inspection report and has the capacity to succeed in raising standards further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths:

- The good quality of teaching.
- Pupils' good attitudes to the subject and to learning.
- The very good overall leadership and management of the department.

### Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient challenge for the highest-attaining pupils in some lessons.
- No formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching or sharing of best practice.

189. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is broadly in line with that expected nationally. Most pupils begin Year 7 with a level of attainment that is close to average. In 2001 and 2002, teachers assessed their pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as above the national average. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was average, although a significant minority was above average.
190. Most pupils make good progress in learning about the past, in understanding why events have happened and in developing the capacity to use and evaluate historical sources. The progress of some higher-attaining pupils is not as good as it should be, because non-specialist teachers lack the subject-specific expertise to deepen sufficiently pupils' understanding and historical skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, although most attain below average standards.
191. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination was above the national average in 2002. It was well above average in 2000 and 2001. The results in 2002 broadly reflected the prior attainment of the pupils. In 2002, the proportion who gained an A or A\* grade was below the national average. The attainment of boys in 2002 was well above boys' national average. Overall, these results represent good progress from the standard at the end of Year 9. This is the result of effective teaching and the commitment of pupils to their work. These standards are a considerable improvement on those reported at the last inspection.
192. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have good knowledge and understanding about the past. They usually recall well the work done in previous lessons. A lower-attaining set in Year 9, for example, remembered successfully some of the terms imposed on Germany at the end of World War 1. This meant that the teacher could quickly move on to new work about the rise of Hitler. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 7, however, did not have such good recall in their work on the Domesday survey.
193. The majority of pupils in Years 7-9 use historical sources competently to build up a picture of past events. They make valid deductions and support them with appropriate evidence. Most pupils successfully assess the reliability and usefulness of sources – as, for example, in their work evaluating a film about life in the trenches in World War 1. Lower attainers use sources satisfactorily for information. High-attaining pupils understand and explain different attitudes held by people in the past – as, for instance, in their work on German and British attitudes to the Treaty of Versailles.
194. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. They are confident in their use of historical sources. High-attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, used two cartoons from the 1880s to describe well the attitudes towards policing at that time. Pupils in Year 10 used extracts from a programme about race riots in the USA in the 1960s successfully to explain some of the reasons behind the riots. The higher attainers made good links between the

different causes. The highest attainers understand the need for historians to work from a range of sources.

195. The majority of pupils throughout the school have a very positive approach to their work, show interest and enthusiasm and are good learners. The standard of behaviour is very good overall. An ethos of hard work permeates the whole department.
196. The quality of teaching in Years 7-9 is good overall. It is very good in Years 10-11. As a result, most pupils learn well and make good progress. Teachers know their subject well and communicate effectively, so that most pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. Lessons are very well planned and aims are made clear to pupils at the start of lessons. Work is marked regularly and most teachers add comments which help pupils to improve their work. The work of pupils in Years 7-9 is now regularly assessed to National Curriculum levels, an improvement since the last inspection.
197. Teachers usually set work that is appropriate for the capabilities of the pupils. In some lessons taught by non-specialist teachers, however, the work does not provide sufficient depth or challenge for the highest attainers. This was especially so for a top set in Year 9, whose work on the League of Nations and its failure was too superficial. It contrasted with much more demanding work with a slightly lower set taught by a specialist teacher. The work set for the lowest attainers in Years 7-9 is, however, suitable and helps them to make good progress.
198. Teachers make their expectations of good behaviour very clear and create an effective working atmosphere that leads to good learning. In the best lessons, a short but imaginative starter activity ensures that pupils are actively involved from the very beginning. Pupils working on the key features of fascism, for example, were asked to write down as many features as they could from a worksheet in the time it took for a short piece of music to finish. It created a buzz of activity and the pupils were keen to succeed. The teacher made very effective use of an interactive whiteboard to display images and to make text attractive and stimulating. Most lessons are led by teachers; unusually, no group work and relatively little paired work was seen during the inspection. Pupils had few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
199. The leadership and management of the subject are very good overall. The head of department is involved in work on strategies to improve teaching and learning both in school and with outside bodies, and the benefits of his work are clear in many classes. He is committed to improving standards: the improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection reflects this work. The recent changes made to the curriculum in Years 7-9 and at GCSE have provided good continuity from Year 7 to Year 11 and have created a stimulating series of topics for pupils in Years 7-9. The lack of a formal system for monitoring the teaching in the department is a weakness, as is the lack of challenge for the highest attainers in some lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Teachers' high expectations, subject knowledge and relationships with pupils.
- A commitment to the progressive improvement of the subject.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The accuracy of assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in Years 7-9.
- The improvement of short-term planning to enable pupils to progress better.
- The use and impact of ICT across all subjects.
- Means for the coordinator to promote systematic development of the subject.



200. Pupils' overall attainment on entry is average. Pupils make good progress overall between Years 7 and 9, achieving well in relation to their ability. Consequently, their level of attainment in ICT is slightly above the national average overall by the end of Year 9. In 2002, teachers' assessments indicated that the proportion of Year 9 pupils reaching the national expectation of at least Level 5 (93 per cent) was well above average, with 13 per cent reaching Level 6. The school realises, however, that these assessments were over-optimistic.
201. In Year 10, a minority of pupils now follow a recently introduced vocational GCSE course in applied ICT. The attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is average, because their previous experiences of ICT have been insufficient to ensure that most work beyond the normally expected level for 16 year olds. Pupils' results in GCSE ICT in 2002 were at a lower level than their performance in most other subjects within the school and significantly below national figures.
202. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are confident in the use of ICT applications, including word processing, presentation software and spreadsheets. By this stage, almost all pupils use word processing, data-handling and presentation tools with growing confidence, skill and accuracy. In Year 7, for example, pupils quickly learn how to use the network and passwords and how to access their work files. They employ relevant ICT vocabulary in their lessons and use the Internet as a resource for images. They use word processing and presentation software to plan, create and develop sophisticated, animated multimedia presentations about themselves for their peers; some adapt the content of these to suit another audience, such as younger pupils or their parents. They learn to construct simple spreadsheets.
203. Pupils in Year 8 use the main software programs in more advanced contexts. They model with spreadsheets, for example, the costs and quantities of ingredients necessary to bake a number of biscuits for a given cost. In Year 9 they learn more advanced features of presentation software and begin to debate issues of copyright and plagiarism, when using materials from the Internet in their work.
204. Pupils' work in Years 10 and 11, of an average standard overall, is increasingly applied to the uses of ICT in the business environment. Many pupils produce work to a good standard as they learn how to construct and run powerful relational-database queries and reports. As part of their GCSE ICT coursework, for example, they learn about business communication procedures in a fictitious holiday company, holding "mock" company meetings and taking minutes with skill and professionalism. They learn, too, about potential faults in supermarket bar-coding systems and understand why error-trapping procedures are built into software systems.
205. Overall, most pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress owing to teachers' effective, sensitive support. Higher-attaining pupils make fair progress overall by moving more quickly than others onto more challenging and complex uses of ICT. They are not, however, given sufficient opportunity to work at the highest levels of attainment in ICT, because the planned activities in some mixed-ability classes are not demanding enough for them: they require, for instance, the chance to design complex multimedia presentations and information systems, and to use more challenging computer-controlled devices.
206. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils are enthusiastic to begin work and show keen interest and motivation. Most participate well in discussions, through which they learn when and why to use different features of software to complete a task; some less able pupils, in contrast, say little about how they might improve their work. Most demonstrate persistence in drafting and producing improved versions of their work, taking responsibility for their own progress and for maintaining their work files on the network. Pupils generally respond well to teachers' questioning.
207. The quality of specialist teaching is good overall throughout the school and much of it is very good. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and make much use of suitable praise to encourage pupils and to help them to increase their understanding. Where teaching is good,

lessons have a clear structure, high expectations, an appropriate pace and a calm, productive atmosphere. Teachers intervene constructively and sensitively to help pupils to progress and become more accurate. Homework tasks are set appropriately. Teachers' specialist knowledge is very good and their management of pupils' learning is usually good. Most plenary sessions are used well to synthesise and reinforce what has been taught, so consolidating pupils' learning.

208. Some aspects of planning, however, need improvement. In some lessons pupils make poor progress, because they have not been set clear, short-term targets. The result is that some lower-attaining pupils do not fully achieve what teachers' planning indicates they should. Lessons are satisfactorily documented, with clear objectives and usually with well-timed sequences of activities. In a few cases, however, lessons are either not well paced or do not draw pupils together at important stages of the activity to check understanding, make key teaching points and set timed targets for the completion of tasks.
209. The department consists of several non-specialist staff, led by an experienced specialist teacher who has been in post for less than two years. The coordinator is overextended in his role: in addition to the day-to-day management of the department, he is responsible for coordinating ICT across the curriculum and for maintaining the school's network. In consequence, there has been insufficient progress in some aspects of work – particularly the implementation of procedures for assessment and for monitoring standards and provision.
210. Departmental schemes of work are currently being updated to reflect the new national requirements for ICT in Years 7-9. The department's documentation is largely confined to printed copies of these work-scheme units. In view of the non-specialist background of most staff, it requires a wider range of information on such matters as the skills and knowledge to be developed, assessment procedures, resources and links to whole-school policies. Although pupils' Internet access is securely filtered and well monitored by teachers in practice, departmental documentation does not give sufficient guidance on policies and procedures for the acceptable use of the Internet. The department does not have sufficiently robust systems for monitoring and evaluating pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils in Years 7-9 are insufficiently aware of national ICT criteria and their achievement in relation to these.
211. The school has made satisfactory progress overall in ICT since the last inspection. Curricular provision has been improved: some pupils now either follow a GCSE course in ICT or business education, or receive key skills accreditation in ICT. The ICT curriculum now meets statutory requirements. Teaching time for ICT has increased, but timetabling problems still remain: for example, pupils in Year 9 who take a second modern foreign language do not receive their full entitlement to ICT teaching. The school now has a broadband network with access to the Internet and just exceeds the nationally expected ratio of one computer to every seven pupils. A significant proportion of these systems are, however, becoming obsolete, with no firm programme for replacement. Pupils have no e-mail access. One of the two ICT teaching rooms does not fully meet health and safety requirements: it requires adequate furnishing and equipment, and secure, safe arrangements for providing power to computers. A technician gives good support to the subject, responding efficiently to technical problems and supervising pupils' lunchtime access to computers. Over the last two years almost all staff have completed a *New Opportunities Fund* ICT-training programme, although the impact of this has yet to be evaluated.
212. The school does not have an effective system for auditing, monitoring and evaluating the contribution of all subjects to the development of pupils' ICT capability. As a consequence, the use of ICT by subject departments remains inconsistent and uncoordinated. Staff in English are very proficient and enthusiastic about using ICT, but have very few opportunities to do so in their teaching. A limited use of Logo software in mathematics enhances pupils' learning. The science department is beginning to explore the use of data-logging software. In design and technology, the department's dedicated suite of computers is used very well to develop pupils' knowledge of computer control, graphic design and computer-aided design and manufacture. Limited but effective use is made of ICT in geography. The interactive whiteboard is well used in history. In

music, pupils use ICT soundly to learn about musical notation and to word-process coursework. No use of ICT was observed during the inspection in lessons in English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, PE or RE. The very limited availability of the one bookable ICT room (plus the library) restricts cross-curricular use of ICT.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths:

- The department's implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- The achievement of many pupils in GCSE German in 2002.
- Many pupils' attitudes and relationships.

### Areas for improvement:

- The standard of French in Years 10-11, especially for high-attaining pupils.
- The accuracy and presentation of pupils' written work.
- The use of assessment to track pupils' progress.

213. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-C in the full-course GCSE examination in French in 2002 was significantly below the national average. The difference in the overall level of performance between boys and girls is small. Fewer boys than in 2001 were entered for the examination. The proportion of boys attaining a grade in the range A\*-C was close to that achieved nationally by boys and showed a slight improvement on 2001. The proportion of girls attaining a grade in this range was, however, significantly below the national average for girls. Boys' results have remained relatively constant over the last four years, but girls' results show a clear downward trend. The school has no definitive data to account for this trend, but the writing component of the examination had been identified as pupils' weakest skill overall. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-G was close to the national average. Pupils achieved better in nearly every other subject than in French. No pupil attained the highest A\* grade in either French or German. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-C in the full-course GCSE examination in 2002 in German was (for a small class) significantly above the national average.
214. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 suggested that pupils' overall level of attainment was well above average. Evidence from Years 9 and 10 during the inspection does not support this. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 9 is broadly average. Their understanding of the foreign language that teachers use in many lessons is sound. They respond appropriately to tasks set in the foreign language and most extract information successfully from conversations that they hear on cassette – as when Year 7 pupils identified correctly the names of animals. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 played lotto and ticked off the household tasks on their sheet, as the teacher named them in French.
215. In Years 7-9 most pupils are not confident speakers and are dependent in many cases on prompts rather than on memory. Pronunciation is usually satisfactory, but at times words are anglicised or pupils do not make themselves heard around the class. In contrast, higher-attaining pupils in a German lesson in Year 9 participated well in a shopping role-play with a partner, using prompt sheets, and pupils in a Year 7 French class both asked and answered questions about pets, speaking from memory. Few pupils, however, use the foreign language to ask for help.
216. Pupils write at an average level overall. In Year 7, for instance, pupils write short sentences satisfactorily about their families and in Year 8 write about their likes and dislikes. Middle-attaining pupils write simply about their daily routines, whilst higher-attaining pupils use the perfect tense with reasonable accuracy. Higher-attainers in Year 9 write short paragraphs to describe past and future events. Pupils complete many exercises to consolidate the different constructions, but these individual sentences are not then extended into paragraphs that relate to pupils' own experiences or

preferences. Pupils' writing and copying are frequently not accurate, especially in the use of accents. Very few pupils respond positively to teachers' marking by completing corrections to improve the accuracy of their work.

217. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 11 is below average. Their understanding of the foreign language is generally sound. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10, for example, used the perfect tense confidently to say what they had visited in response to pictures on an overhead projector. They were not sufficiently confident, however, to present their paired work to the class. Average pupils in Year 10 used prompts to ask the way to places and to give directions, whilst pupils in Year 11 gave short replies describing character to questions on flash cards about famous people. In their written work, higher-attaining pupils generally use different tenses accurately and employ relevant vocabulary. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils are, in varying degrees, less accurate with grammatical structures.
218. One small group of pupils studies German in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11, their overall level of attainment is average and their progress is satisfactory. In the Year 11 German class, for example, pupils asked one another questions about past holidays, using a prompt sheet, but were not confident speakers.
219. The department takes an active part in strengthening pupils' literacy, with a focus on key verbs and using a starter activity in every lesson in Years 7-9. A class of Year 8 pupils, for instance, produced good spider-diagrams to illustrate the use of different activities with *on pourrait*. Numeracy is used well in dates, birthdays and in some starter activities – as, for example, with numbers as coded letters that related appropriately to the possessive adjective and to members of the family.
220. The achievement and rate of progress of most pupils are satisfactory in Years 7-9. Over time, pupils acquire the necessary vocabulary and relevant constructions to help them with their topics. For example, pupils in Year 8 learn reflexive verbs to be able to talk and write sentences about daily routines. Pupils' achievement in French in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into classes and largely progress at a satisfactory rate. The learning assistant in a Year 9 lesson gave good support to two statemented pupils.
221. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in many lessons are good. Pupils generally respond positively to starter activities and set to work at once. They listen attentively to cassettes in listening activities. They work cooperatively with each other in pairs and work well independently. Occasionally, however, their concentration wanes towards the end of the 70-minute lessons. A minority of lower-attaining pupils in two Year 10 lessons did not always respond appropriately to the tasks set. In a Year 11 lesson, many pupils lacked the desire to improve in a re-test at the end of the lesson. The standard of presentation of many pupils' written work is not high enough.
222. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school, but only three of the 18 lessons seen were better than satisfactory. Teachers have a solid knowledge of their subject and use the foreign languages well in many lessons, particularly when they give commands and set tasks. The planning of lessons is consistent across the department, so that all pupils experience the same format. In most lessons, but particularly in Years 7-9, pupils complete a starter activity that makes them think about their previous work and helps them to settle down. Teachers share objectives with pupils in every lesson, so that pupils are aware of what has to be learned.
223. Teachers use a variety of methods to help pupils acquire and consolidate vocabulary and constructions – the overhead projector, reciting in chorus and using props: the production of the teacher's multicoloured bathing costume in a Year 8 lesson, for example, was very successful! Many lessons have a good visual element. Worksheets are used well to complement textbooks. Relationships are good. Lessons usually end with an evaluation of what has been learned, but this is often not sufficiently intensive or challenging and does not include enough pupils in the class. Homework is set regularly and the task is usually already written on the board at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular, but lacks rigour: there are few comments to

tell pupils how to improve their work. Pupils have target levels and grades, but assessment is not used effectively to track pupils' progress. Key words and pupils' work are displayed well, but not all teaching takes place in specialist rooms.

224. Statutory requirements for the teaching of the National Curriculum are met. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall. The implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy, introduced by the head of department in his wider role as coordinator for seven other schools, has been received enthusiastically by teachers. Pupils do not have the benefit of regular contact with a foreign language assistant, although one teacher is a native speaker. The introduction of German in Year 9 has produced only small numbers taking the subject in Years 10 and 11. Departmental accommodation is fragmented and two rooms are cramped, making it difficult for teachers to circulate to assess pupils' work. There are insufficient textbooks in Years 10 and 11. The high standards of attainment and progress reported at the previous inspection have not been maintained, so that improvement since then has been unsatisfactory.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths:

- The good level of GCSE success.
- The quality of teaching in Years 10-11.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work.
- The range of extracurricular activities.

### Areas for improvement:

- The general appearance and tidiness of the department.
- The provision of complete music lessons for all pupils with special educational needs.

225. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, their overall attainment is above the national average in performance, composition and listening. Teachers' formal assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 indicated that the proportion of pupils achieving at least the national benchmark of Level 5 were 97 per cent and 77 per cent respectively. These results need, however, to be treated with caution, since there are no national norms available for the subject. Girls tend to reach a higher standard than boys.
226. By the end of Year 9, pupils perform and compose to a good standard, using electronic, orchestral and percussion instruments. They gain good familiarity with the keyboard. Many higher-attaining pupils know the names of the notes and do not have to rely on letter names being added to the keyboard. Most pupils read and improvise acceptable phrases in, for example, the blues style and invent short melodic pieces based on an Indian raga. Pupils attain a good level of understanding and practical use of the technical language of music, together with a fair knowledge of the main historical periods. They also acquire a good working knowledge of the instruments and forms (such as sitar, tabla, raga and tal) used in Indian classical music.
227. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the national average. In the 2001 and 2002 GCSE examinations, taken together, 18 out of 20 pupils gained grades in the range A\*-C. Four pupils gained A\* grades.
228. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standard of performance, composition and listening was above the national average by the end of Year 11. The standard of listening and musical analysis is higher than that often seen in similar schools. Most pupils play orchestral instruments, piano or guitar and sing. The skills and musical understanding they gain from instrumental study serve well to underpin their ability to hear and recognise intervals, chord changes and cadences. In one lesson, for instance, they listened to an example from a Handel opera: given a "skeleton" score,

they analysed melodic and harmonic progressions, identified the style of the aria and placed the opera in its historical and stylistic context.

229. The quality of learning in Years 7-9 is good overall. Pupils enter the school with an overall educational attainment that is a little above average. Within that, however, there is a very wide range of levels of musical experience, skills and understanding. Many pupils are quick learners: through well-structured lessons they learn about the “building blocks” of music that they then use effectively in performances and compositions. In one lesson, for instance, pupils in Year 7 worked in groups to invent and perform a rhythmic cycle with percussion instruments. Pupils in Year 8 acquire good facility on electronic keyboards, which they use in a positive, focused way – as, for example, to play a blues sequence with clear elements of melodic improvisation in an appropriate style.
230. Almost all pupils are interested in their lessons. They take a serious interest in all aspects of music-making and also in the technical language, rudiments and the historical and cultural background of the music they play. Pupils in Year 7, for example, learned a piece that used instruments of the Samba band, so helping to extend their knowledge of Brazilian traditions. Pupils with special educational needs are mostly well involved in class musical activities and, overall, make good progress. In one class, however, too many pupils regularly miss a large part of their lesson, because they are withdrawn for special teaching. The absence of a rotational system for such help reduces all pupils’ entitlement to the music curriculum. Musically talented pupils also make good progress overall, sometimes taking leading parts in group work and ensembles. These pupils are mostly well challenged by the graded examinations they take in their individual instrumental studies.
231. In Years 10-11 almost all pupils learn very well and make good progress. The requirements of the GCSE course help to motivate them to reach high standards in performing, composing and musical understanding. In one lesson, for instance, pupils in Year 10 studied examples of Baroque and 1960s’ popular music, in order to learn about musical form. As a result, they identified cadences and key changes by ear.
232. Pupils’ attitudes are good overall and especially so in Years 10-11, where they quickly adopt a mature approach to the subject. Many pupils in Years 7-9 can be left to get on with work without direct supervision from their teacher.
233. Teaching ranges from excellent to satisfactory, but is good overall. In the best lessons, teachers use their personal musical expertise well – as, for example, by demonstrating percussion techniques or by singing examples of the pieces being studied. The teaching of literacy is good. Proper emphasis is given to the identification, spelling and practical use of musical terms. Where background reading and writing are necessary, appropriate attention is given to ensure that usage is correct.
234. Teachers always prepare lessons in detail and carefully time the sections of lessons. In most lessons, pupils are managed effectively. Where particular groups of pupils show challenging behaviour, teachers keep lessons moving and avoid confrontations, where possible. Individual attention is given to pupils with special educational needs, in order to clarify their tasks or to make reasonable allowances for slower progress. The day-to-day assessment of pupils’ work is good. Often, lessons have an in-built exercise for peer assessment, in which pupils use clear written criteria to assign a standard to pieces of work. This good practice enables teachers to record these levels for later use in evaluating pupils’ overall attainment and progress.
235. The department is well led and organised. Instrumental lessons are effectively timetabled and pupils attend these lessons diligently. All pupils have access to ICT, although the department needs additional computers within its teaching spaces, in order to create workstations for advanced composition and notation. Whilst the accommodation serves present needs well, some spaces are not well designed or decorated: electrical cables and leads require securing and additional power points are needed in order to avoid the use of extension boards.

236. Extracurricular groups include orchestra, swing band, choir and Samba band, all of which perform to a good standard overall. Pupils perform at venues in the local community from time to time. The department is involved in producing a regular musical that involves a substantial number of pupils and staff. Participation in these activities contributes very well to the personal and social development of pupils. Around 60 pupils receive instrumental lessons from a team of visiting teachers, who make a good contribution to the musical education of these pupils and to the work of the department as a whole. The department has shown good improvement since the previous inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- GCSE results are above average and continue to improve.
- The good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The wide range of extracurricular activities.

### Areas for improvement:

- The systematic monitoring of teaching, learning and curricular coverage.
- The assessment of the standard of pupils' work.
- Aspects of accommodation.
- The level of supervision of swimming.

237. The standard achieved by pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2002 continued the improvement made over the past four years. All pupils gained at least a grade G. More boys take the examination than girls, although the number of girls on the current GCSE course has increased. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments of pupils' work suggest that the overall standard is well above average, but this judgement is higher than the overall standard observed in lessons.

238. By the end of Year 9, although standards vary between the activities taught, the overall level of work is average. In rugby, pupils in Year 7 have a sound knowledge of the technique of tackling and the importance of safety. In Year 8 they pass and receive the ball accurately and understand when to screen a ball from an opponent to set up a maul. In Year 8, pupils know the importance of signalling to receive a pass in netball. They outwit an opponent by dodging and some pupils use the feint to create space for a pass. In Year 9, many pupils lack control in dribbling in basketball and are not sufficiently aware of the rules to play the game well, although they understand the need to screen the ball from an opponent when dribbling.

239. In swimming, the overall standard is below average. Many pupils in Year 7 enter the school unable to swim. They subsequently demonstrate good progress in the front crawl and understand the need to bend the forearm in their stroke on entering the water. Most pupils in the Year 7 lesson seen required floats for support.

240. By the end of Year 11, standards are average in soccer and below average in basketball. Pupils know and understand the tactics of defence in soccer and the need to pressurise players in possession of the ball. They play the game to a good standard and know the rules. Some pupils demonstrate a high level of skill and control in dribbling the ball and their shooting is accurate. In basketball, some pupils have had little experience of the game and, although the overall standard is below that normally expected, they make good progress. They know the rules of the game, but lack control in dribbling and do not fully understand the technique of shooting – not making use of the backboard, for instance, when shooting.

241. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of written work indicate that the overall standard of work on the GCSE course is average. In a theory lesson, pupils in Year 10 knew the difference between

arteries and veins, but could not recall that arteries carry oxygenated blood. Their knowledge of the circulation of the blood varies. Year 11 pupils know the range of large muscle groups, but are unable to recall readily the different types of muscle. When required to label diagrams, some pupils did not know the difference between the hamstrings and the quadriceps. Pupils' standard of extended writing is below average, because pupils have little opportunity to practise the skill, since they use a high proportion of worksheets. The presentation of work is average. Homework is set regularly.

242. Most pupils are enthusiastic and keen to work hard in lessons. They listen well to instructions and their attitudes in lessons are good. Behaviour is generally good and often very good. Some boys (particularly in Year 11), however, have an immature attitude to their work and lack concentration. There are few non-participants in lessons, especially in the lower school, but there are no arrangements to involve such pupils in lessons, with the result that they are often inactive – a feature that is noticeable in Year 11.
243. The quality of teaching is good, as it was in the previous inspection. Lessons are generally well planned, with clear learning objectives shared with pupils. The pace of lessons is brisk. Teachers possess good subject knowledge of the activities taught, but are less secure in their knowledge of National Curriculum requirements. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons; they make good progress in Years 7-9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10-11. There are no planned arrangements to cater for the full ability range, with the result that the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged in some lessons. Marking on the GCSE course is regular, but does not include comments to help pupils to improve. Teachers form good relationships with their pupils and manage them well.
244. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and the school has achieved the Sportsmark Award for its commitment to the subject. There is, however, no curricular plan to ensure coverage of the national programmes of study in the activities taught and the schemes of work require updating to reflect the recommendations of Curriculum 2000. In Year 9, pupils who study a second language receive less PE time than other Year 9 pupils, a situation that has not improved since the previous inspection.
245. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall, but require improvement. Most assessment procedures are satisfactory, but those made at the end of Year 9 are not based on consistent criteria and are too generous. The school is not aware of what range of PE has been covered in its contributory feeder schools. There is no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in the department, a weakness that requires addressing.
246. Some improvement has taken place in accommodation since the previous inspection, but it remains inadequate. There is only one indoor space and a swimming pool, the latter having minimal use during the week. Not all teachers possess a qualification to teach swimming and some classes exceed the maximum safety recommendation of one adult to 20 pupils in the pool: large classes still exist and have not improved since the previous inspection. The pool's surrounds are slippery when wet. The accommodation for the teaching of GCSE theory lessons is unsuitable. A part-time, non-specialist teacher teaches only a limited range of activities, so placing additional pressure on other staff and facilities. There is no computer in the department and no evidence of any ICT being taught. There are no textbooks in the department to support the examination course, whilst those in the main library are of poor quality.
247. The department has a strong link with a local rugby club and provides a good range of extracurricular activities. School teams are successful in a number of sports, notably rugby, swimming and badminton. A high number of pupils have gained representation at county level in a range of sports, largely as a result of the high commitment of teachers to these activities.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- Very good teaching and learning in Years 7-9.
- The curriculum is very broad, balanced and relevant.
- Good departmental leadership and management.
- The department's commitment to improvement and its capacity for further success.

### Areas for improvement:

- A higher priority given to the subject at overall school level.
- Use of the GCSE short course for external accreditation in Year 11.
- Increasing pupils' knowledge of how well they are learning.

248. The school provides the "short" GCSE course as its statutory curricular offering in Years 10 and 11, but also offers the full GCSE course as an option. Results for the full course have varied, but have generally been around average in recent years. Numbers on this course have, however, been small, so that no clear trend emerges in the results. Results for the short course have usually been very poor, but in 2002 the results of those entered were above average; this success has, however, to be set against the fact that the school has not entered the vast majority of pupils for the examination. Most pupils in the past have followed the course, but not taken the examination, because the school refused to pay for GCSE entry, so discriminating unreasonably against the subject and its pupils. The new headteacher has now stopped this discriminatory policy has now changed.
249. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. In Years 7-9, pupils make good progress. Those with special educational needs, those of average attainment and those who are gifted and talented all achieve well. Pupils show more skill and insight than usual in their capacity to reflect upon, and respond to, religious beliefs and values. They make clear gains in knowledge and understanding of the religions they study. They also know how to relate religious teaching and practice to their own experience of life. Attitudes and behaviour, personal development and relationships are all very good.
250. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is broadly average. Pupils reach an average GCSE standard in their work, but pupils' attitudes and behaviour are not as good as earlier on in the school, so that progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory rather than good. The eager involvement and sustained concentration of pupils in Year 9 and earlier years have gone. A minority of troublesome pupils now have a detrimental effect and other pupils are much less enthusiastic about learning than earlier. Not all that has been gained is lost, but pupils achieve less. They continue to learn about religions, particularly about Christianity and Judaism. They know how to evaluate issues and to give reasons for their own and others' points of view. They learn about themselves from their study of religion, but without showing the previous high level of skills and insight. Attitudes and behaviour together with personal development and relationships are generally, but not always, satisfactory. The contrast between these pupils and those in Years 7-9 is strong.
251. The same contrast is evident in teaching and learning. These aspects are very good in Years 7-9. Here teachers use methods that enable pupils to engage their thoughts and feelings in the deepest aspects of human existence. By learning to reflect on religious beliefs and human experience, pupils deepen their awareness and develop their thinking skills substantially. In their study of Buddhism, for example, pupils experience the positive effects of simple techniques of observation and meditation.
252. Teachers manage and motivate pupils very well, so that they sustain concentration for an hour or more on questions such as "What is reality?" and "What is truth?". Pupils listen attentively and

teachers continually put to them hard questions that make them think. Teachers ask pupils to express their response in their own words, orally or in writing. Such confidence and authority comes from teachers' very secure knowledge of religion and their very clear understanding of the purpose and methods of religious education. Teachers plan lessons very well and this ensures very good productivity and pace in pupils' learning.

253. The one area in need of substantial improvement, of which teachers are aware and which they have begun to address, is the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment during lessons nor do they make accurate use of assessment so as to understand fully what pupils have already achieved and what they need to do next in order to move on. Such an improvement is needed to allow more precision in the setting of tasks for individual pupils and to enable pupils to improve their own learning.
254. In Years 10-11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers show the same skills as in earlier years, but the amount of learning is lower. Pupils do not show the same commitment, attention and sustained concentration. Progress is slower, but sufficient to justify using the GCSE short-course examination to motivate both teachers and pupils and to reward their efforts.
255. What pupils learn is broad, balanced and relevant to their lives. In Years 7-9, the subject makes a very significant contribution to pupils' personal development. In the spiritual and moral aspects, pupils gain insight into religious beliefs and values and learn how to reflect on their own experience of life. They develop spiritual awareness and learn clearly the principles that distinguish right from wrong. In the social and cultural aspects, pupils learn about the role of religion in society and how to relate positively to others. They learn to appreciate both their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of others. In Years 10-11 some of this benefit continues, but has less impact.
256. The leadership and management of the department are good. Documentation, including the handbook and the schemes of work, is good. Classrooms have attractive, relevant visual displays, with good use of specialist vocabulary. The subject has a clear sense of direction. Teachers' shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed in the future are good.
257. At the time of the last inspection the school failed to provide RE to pupils in Years 10 and 11, although it should statutorily have done so. The school now provides the GCSE short course for all pupils, but has until now refused to pay for their entry to the examination. Teachers have raised the standards of pupils' attainment and progress in Years 7-9, but in Years 10-11 the school has not achieved the expected improvement. Overall improvement since the last inspection has therefore been unsatisfactory. The school now has the opportunity to ensure that all pupils work towards success at GCSE, an outcome that promises to motivate pupils and complement the very good contribution that the subject already makes to pupils' learning and personal development in the earlier years.