

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODBROOK VALE HIGH SCHOOL

Loughborough

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120293

Headteacher: Mr Roger Harris

Reporting inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas
3390

Dates of inspection: 28 – 30 April 2003

Inspection number: 249214

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

© Crown copyright 2003

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 14 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Grasmere Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire

Postcode: LE11 2ST

Telephone number: 01509 557560

Fax number: 01509 557562

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Carole Holme

Date of previous inspection: 9 June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3390	Kenneth Thomas	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science	
14704	Jeffrey Cooling	Team inspector	Geography	
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs	
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics Educational inclusion	How well does the school care for its pupils?
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History	

23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Citizenship Music	
3892	Eric Needham	Team inspector	Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Woodbrook Vale High School is an 11-14 mixed comprehensive school. With 370 pupils on roll the school is smaller than most secondary schools. The number of pupils is rising and there are more pupils in Year 7 than in Year 9. There are broadly equal numbers of boys and girls in Years 7 and 9, but more boys than girls in Year 8. National Curriculum test results over the last four years show that standards of attainment on entry in Year 7 have risen slightly. However, although covering the full attainment range, they are below average overall. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is about average, although the proportion with statements is above average. Many of the pupils with the highest level of need have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), moderate learning difficulties, or emotional or behavioural difficulties. About seven per cent of pupils have other than white United Kingdom backgrounds. These pupils have mainly Asian British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is higher than in most schools. Two pupils are in the early stages of learning English. Other than English, the main languages spoken are Gujerati, Panjabi, Arabic and Albanian. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good and improving school. The school provides a very good quality of education because leadership is excellent and management is very good. Responsibilities for social inclusion are taken very seriously and staff work hard to ensure that all pupils can participate in all the school offers. Pupils achieve very well and inspection evidence shows standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above expectations overall. These standards are the outcome of very good teaching and learning, and very good support for pupils' all-round development. Resources are very well managed and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress and achievement at the end of Year 9 is well above expectations
- Teaching is very good, enabling pupils to learn very well
- Excellent leadership and very good management, with strong support from governors, ensure that the school has a distinctive ethos based on a firm commitment to equality of opportunity
- Pupils concentrate very well on their work and their behaviour is good; relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good
- Very good academic and personal support and guidance make a significant contribution to pupils' all-round development
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning opportunities and provides well for pupils' diverse abilities and talents

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment in religious education
- Aspects of the provision for geography, history and citizenship
- The cross-curricular co-ordination of strategies to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
- Planned opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of non-European cultural influences and traditions

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. Since then there has been good improvement. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now much more that is good and very good, and much less that is unsatisfactory. As a result, pupils are making better progress and achievement is higher. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 has improved steadily in line with the national trend. The strengths in the leadership and management of the school have been maintained and the

work of the school is monitored very well. This information is used very effectively to continue to improve standards. The school is increasingly popular with parents and pupil numbers are rising.

Action has been taken on the key issues identified in the last report. The assessment of pupils' subject knowledge, understanding and skills, together with the use of this information for target setting and monitoring pupils' progress, is much improved, particularly in English, mathematics and science, although there is room for further improvement in most other subjects. The information is also being used to provide parents with more detail on their children's progress and attainment. Teachers' subject-specific expertise is being used more effectively and there is a closer matching of learning activities to the attainment levels of pupils in lessons. However, improvement in religious education has been adversely affected by the lack of a subject specialist, and the organisation of the curriculum does not enable the most effective use of teachers' subject knowledge in geography and history. Staffing difficulties have restricted improvement in geography, although more progress has been made since the co-ordination of the subject has been more stable since September 2002. More effective use is made of homework. All statutory requirements are met, except for the one to provide a collective act of worship every day for all pupils.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
End of Key Stage 3 tests	C	B	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

National Curriculum test results show that pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that, although wide ranging, are below average overall. When considered together, the 2002 National Curriculum test results in English, mathematics and science, taken at the end of Year 9, were average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with schools with a similar number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. When standards on entry in 1999 are compared with those obtained in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, achievement in English was above expectations, achievement in mathematics was well above and achievement in science was very high. Girls tend to achieve higher standards than boys in English. There are no consistent differences in standards between boys and girls in mathematics and science. Taken overall, the 2002 results represented a level of progress comparable to that found in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Over the last four years, overall attainment has risen, at a similar rate to the rise in results nationally. The targets for Year 9 in 2002 were achieved and inspection evidence confirms that standards of attainment in all three core subjects are continuing to rise. As a result, the higher targets set for 2003 are also likely to be achieved. Inspection evidence shows that pupils of all attainment levels, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, are achieving well in other subjects. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is above expectations in all subjects other than history, where standards are in line with expectations, and geography and religious education, where they are below.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most pupils are proud of their school and are eager learners. A high proportion of pupils participate in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority of pupils behave very sensibly and the school is orderly. Exclusion is used as a final resort. There were two permanent exclusions in the last school year and the number of fixed term exclusions was average for a school of this size.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils from different backgrounds mix and work well together, generating an atmosphere of good racial harmony. Nearly all pupils show respect for their teachers.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The need for regular attendance is emphasised and the rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9
Quality of teaching	Very good

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good in all year groups. Teaching is very good in English and science and good in mathematics. In most subjects teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to develop pupils' depth of understanding. Only in religious education are teaching and learning adversely affected by a lack of specialist subject knowledge. Because teachers have high expectations most lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils work hard and concentrate well. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught well in most subjects. Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning in almost all subjects. The school meets the needs of pupils at all levels of attainment very well, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Teaching strategies take good account of the needs of gifted and talented pupils in many lessons but this is not consistent in all subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum whilst retaining an integrated and coherent approach to learning. The curriculum builds on good links with the primary schools. There are weaknesses in curriculum provision for the humanities subjects and citizenship education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Individual Education Plans are detailed and implemented well. Pupils make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The very small number of pupils who are in the early stages of English language acquisition are making progress comparable to that of their peers because of the very good support they receive.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is good. The school helps pupils to develop a good sense of right and wrong. Assemblies provide opportunity for reflection but not worship. Not enough is done to introduce pupils to non-European cultural influences and traditions.
How well the school cares	There are very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils'

for its pupils	welfare, and excellent procedures for promoting good behaviour. Pupils are well known by their teachers and their personal and academic needs are well met. Not enough use is made of assessment information to set targets and monitor pupils' progress in humanities subjects.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Very good. The school works hard to maintain effective links with parents and these are very good. Parents have highly positive views of the school and are provided with much useful information. They have many opportunities to meet with staff and discuss their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is supported well by his deputy, members of the senior leadership group and staff with co-ordinating responsibilities. Year heads manage their areas of responsibility very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are clear about their role. With the exception of the provision of a daily act of corporate worship, all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Priorities for development are appropriate. A rigorous process of subject monitoring by the headteacher effectively links performance in subjects with improvement planning and keeps the leadership group and governors well informed about the areas in which action is needed.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school supports its priorities effectively. Resources are used effectively and efficiently. The principles of 'best value' are applied well. The school constantly evaluates its practice and its cost-effectiveness. Apart from religious education, there is a satisfactory match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum. Learning resources and accommodation are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teaching is good and their children are making good progress The school has high expectations of their children and is enabling them to be mature and responsible Their children like school and behaviour is good The school is well led and managed, and they are happy to approach the school with problems The school works closely with parents and they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework

The inspection team agree with the positive points made by parents. Inspectors found that a satisfactory amount of homework is set and mostly used to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6, in the last year of primary education, show that standards on entry to the school have been rising slightly over the past four years. Nevertheless, the 2002 results show that, although standards on entry are wide ranging, they are below average overall. This has been the case for the last four years at least. Standards on entry in science are slightly above those in English and mathematics. Pupils achieve very well through Years 7 to 9 and results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 are improving at the same rate as results nationally. The results of the 2002 tests showed overall standards at the end of Year 9 that were average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools, based on the number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. The majority of pupils attain at least Level 5, the nationally expected level for children of their age, in the English, mathematics and science tests. This has been the pattern for the last four years. In 2002, of 105 pupils entered, 71 per cent attained Level 5 or above in English, 68 per cent in mathematics and 71 per cent in science. These percentages are about the same as those for the country as a whole. Many more than the average percentage of pupils attained Level 6 in mathematics (45 per cent) and science (42 per cent) than in English, where the percentage attaining the higher level (26 per cent) was below the national average. The differences in the results between subjects were partly accounted for by differences in standards on entry and partly by differences in the rates of progress pupils made through Years 7 to 9. When pupils' average point scores in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 1999, in the last year of primary education, are compared with those obtained in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, achievement in English was above expectations, achievement in mathematics was well above and achievement in science was very high. Taken overall, the 2002 results represented high achievement. Targets for Year 9 in 2002 were achieved and the higher targets set for 2003 are also likely to be achieved.
2. Although overall attainment has risen over the four years from 1999 to 2002, at a similar rate to the rise in results nationally, there are differences between the core subjects. Results in science show a sharply rising trend, well above the national trend. Following a dip in 2000, the trend in mathematics has also been upwards although not at the same rate as results in science. After two flat years in 1999 and 2000, following the full implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, results in English rose sharply in 2001, before declining slightly in 2002. Analyses of pupils' results in the English tests showed that the decline in 2002 was largely attributable to underperformance on the writing tasks. In order to tackle this the English department is now engaged in the more explicit teaching of writing skills.
3. In most recent years the performance of girls has been higher than that of boys in English, although the gap has narrowed considerably. There have been no significant differences in performance between boys and girls in mathematics and science. One of the features of the 2002 results overall was a rise in the performance of boys and a decline in the performance of girls, so that for the first time since 1998, boys outperformed girls.
4. The 2002 teacher assessments in other subjects show standards by the end of Year 9 to be well above expectations in modern foreign languages, above expectations in art and design, design and technology, ICT, music and physical education, and close to expectations in history. The assessments show standards to be below expectations in geography. The assessments show that boys are achieving particularly well in most subjects. More boys than girls were assessed as attaining the expected Level 5 in geography and history. This was against the national trend, which shows girls achieving higher standards than boys in both subjects. More boys than girls also achieved Level 5 in physical education, whereas nationally, the performance of boys and girls is about the same. The proportions of boys and girls achieving Level 5 were about the same in modern foreign languages and art and design. In each of these subjects nationally, girls

outperform boys. Only in design and technology, ICT and music were more girls assessed as achieving Level 5 than boys. The assessments in these subjects are consistent with the national figures.

5. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by pupils currently in Year 9 are above expectations in all subjects other than history, where they are in line with expectations, and geography and religious education, where they are below. These standards represent very good achievement and are the outcome of very good teaching and a highly supportive learning environment.
6. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good, both in lessons and over time. They meet the majority of the targets set in their Individual Education Plans, through systematic, well-structured teaching and work that is well matched to their individual needs. In lessons where teachers and teaching assistants work particularly closely together, these pupils often make more rapid progress than others in the class. However, in a few lessons pupils' progress was slowed because the teaching assistants were not clear about their roles and support was less effective. Many pupils with emotional and behavioural learning needs make good progress because of the effectiveness of teachers' classroom management skills and the additional support available in the school generally.
7. Standards of literacy are below average on entry to the school, but improve rapidly so that by the end of Year 7 most pupils are approaching the expected standards in reading and writing. By the end of Year 9, many pupils are confident and articulate speakers and listen attentively to their teachers and to other pupils. There are 24 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The progress and achievement of these pupils is comparable to that of their peers. Two pupils are in the early stages of English language acquisition. Visiting specialists and effective in-school support help them to make good progress.
8. Pupils are gaining considerable benefits from the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, and overall standards of numeracy are above expectations by the end of Year 9. In mathematics, pupils become competent with number calculations and work in whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages with relative confidence. These skills are developed through work in other subjects. In work seen during the inspection aspects of numeracy were seen in a number of subjects. These included the use of tables, graphs and statistical analysis in geography, and linear measurement and the drawing of pie charts in design and technology. Graphical work is widely used in science and pupils are required to understand and apply formulae.
9. Standards in ICT have risen since the last inspection and are above expectations at the end of Year 9. The work done in the separate ICT lessons is well supported in other subjects and most pupils are able to use computers effectively for independent research and to enhance the presentation of their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils show very positive attitudes towards school and their work, and their behaviour is good. They form very good relationships and their personal development is very good. This positive picture is broadly similar to the findings of the previous inspection.
11. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good overall. Most are proud of their school and are in regular attendance. A good indication of the enthusiasm of most pupils for school is the high level of participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides. Most pupils express a very good level of satisfaction with what the school provides. They are positive about the fair way they are treated by staff and the very good relationships amongst pupils. In most lessons, pupils listen very well and show very good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. Pupils respond particularly well when expectations are high, lesson tasks are demanding and they are able to engage in a variety of practical activities. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in design and technology, drama, physical

education, art and design and science lessons. When pupils were asked about the things that they would like to see improved, the main recurring themes were a lack of involvement in some lessons and the behaviour of a very small number of pupils. Inspection evidence generally supports pupils' concerns in these areas.

12. Behaviour is good overall. Throughout the school day, nearly all pupils behave sensibly. In corridors, at break times, lunchtimes and between lessons an orderly atmosphere prevails. Most pupils take good care of property and resources and help to keep the school in an attractive condition. The school takes its responsibilities for social inclusion very seriously and works hard to maintain pupils in full-time education, including admitting and retaining pupils close to permanent exclusion in other schools. Exclusion is used only when absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, the challenging behaviour of some pupils, mostly boys, who are unable to conform to the school's expectations of behaviour eventually leads to exclusion from school. In each of the previous three school years there have been two permanent exclusions. This is about the same as the national average for schools of this size. The number of fixed term exclusions is also broadly average. Exclusions are primarily for physical abuse and repeated defiance. Pupils from different backgrounds mix and work well together, generating an atmosphere of good racial harmony. Incidents of racism are very rare and well handled when reported to staff. Whilst pupils say that there is some bullying, especially in Years 8 and 9, incidents are taken very seriously and dealt with effectively when reported to staff.
13. Relationships and personal development are very good and underpinned by the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which has an emphasis on relationships and attitudes to others. Pupils show that they are able to work comfortably and effectively in pairs and small groups. Pupils relate very well to each other and nearly all pupils show respect for their teachers. They are confident that there is someone they can approach to share concerns and seek guidance. Pupils mention the positive support provided by teachers, especially the form tutors, and the fair way in which they are treated as some of the main reasons they like school. This support also provides pupils, particularly those with special needs, with the confidence to express their own views and ask questions of their teachers. The majority are also confident when speaking to visitors to the school. The majority of pupils show consideration in the way in which they hold doors open so that others can pass through. Pupils are able to participate in decision-making through the School Council, which is made up of an elected pupil from each form group. For example, requests for a wider range of lunchtime food and revised serving arrangements, discussed by the Council, have been implemented. Pupils have shown significant initiative in organising and raising money for a range of charities, and for window curtains for the Year 9 base rooms.
14. The attendance rate is satisfactory overall. At 92.7 per cent, in the previous school year, it is above the national average for pupils aged 11 to 16, but broadly typical of the attendance rate of pupils aged 11 to 14. The level of unauthorised absence, at 0.3 per cent, is below the national average. Most pupils come to school on time and are prompt at the start of lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. Teaching is very good, overall. This judgement is based on the observation of lessons, in which teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent, good or better in 77 per cent and very good or excellent in 45 per cent, together with the extensive scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils about their work. The quality of pupils' learning reflects the very good quality of teaching and this is directly linked to their very good achievement at the end of Year 9. Pupils make very good progress because teachers know them well and succeed in stimulating their interest in their studies. Teachers also help pupils to develop good learning skills and these underpin pupils' progress as they move through the school. Teaching is very much improved since the last inspection when 13 per cent of lessons were found to be unsatisfactory. During this inspection very few unsatisfactory lessons were observed. There was one unsatisfactory lesson in English and one in geography. Teaching was also unsatisfactory in two of the 30-minute morning form

periods. Examples of excellence in teaching were seen in design and technology, physical education and science. The improvement in teaching and learning is due to the very good progress that has been made in the monitoring and development of teaching and learning over recent years. At the time of the last inspection it was noted that in too many lessons teachers lacked the subject-specific expertise to provide the necessary depth of study and that learning activities were not always matched to the needs of pupils. Teachers' subject-specific expertise is now being used more effectively and there is a closer matching of learning activities to the attainment levels of pupils in lessons.

16. Strengths in almost all subjects include teachers' use of their subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding, and very good planning so that pupils learn in a carefully structured way. These features are evident in many English lessons. In a very good Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils made rapid progress in developing their understanding of the plot and central character of 'The Machine Gunners' by Robert Westall because the lesson was well structured to build carefully on pupils' previous learning and skilful questioning both challenged and extended their thinking. Similar teaching strategies in an excellent Year 7 science lesson enabled pupils to consolidate their understanding of lines of magnetic force and to extend their knowledge about the forces of attraction between magnets and magnetic material. In mathematics, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to ensure that pupils build systematically on their existing skills. This was seen, for example, in a very good Year 9 lesson, where pupils sustained intense concentration as they multiplied 3-digit by 2-digit integers and used approximations to check the reasonableness of their answers. In music, good use is made of excellent subject knowledge to challenge and raise the levels of pupils' performance. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson, for example, where pupils' used computers effectively to improve their compositions in response to the guidance of the teacher. However, although teachers of religious education have enough subject knowledge to provide pupils with basic information, many lack the depth of knowledge necessary to set higher levels of challenge.
17. Significant contributions are made to pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education in the best form periods. Most of these lessons are well planned to support pupils' personal development. In a very good Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils made very good progress in understanding the importance of planning to the achievement of personal goals because of the thoughtful way in which the teacher linked the theme for the week (human potential and achievement), target setting and the way in which pupils use their personal planners. Very good progress was also made in a Year 7 lesson where the teacher had planned a series of learning activities to develop the same theme. However, weaknesses in planning contributed to unsatisfactory teaching and learning in one Year 7 and one Year 8 lesson. Not enough use was made of the valuable learning time in these lessons because pupils were mostly occupied in a series of undemanding and disparate activities.
18. The teaching of basic skills is good overall. The English department lays a very good foundation for the development of pupils' literacy skills. Teachers have adopted the Framework for Teaching English and the National Literacy Strategy enthusiastically and are rewriting schemes of work to ensure that all learning objectives are covered. This is reflected in rising standards in Years 7 to 9. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to motivate and inspire pupils. For example, Year 7 pupils' reading skills are enhanced because teachers show interest in the stories pupils are reading voluntarily and provide many opportunities to talk about them. This often happens in the 30-minute morning tutor period. In Year 9 pupils' literacy skills are consolidated and they learn how language choice influences meaning. This was exemplified in a lesson with lower-attaining pupils where they showed a good understanding of how language is used to convey meaning in the play 'Macbeth'. The increase in the range of pupils' vocabularies was demonstrated in the use by higher-attaining pupils of words such as 'deluded', 'demented' and 'invincible' in appropriate contexts. Most subjects make some contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills and some subjects make very good provision to develop pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills. There are opportunities for pupils to plan, draft and rewrite their own work in English, geography, history, design and technology and modern languages. Subject-specific key words are displayed in many classrooms, although little reference was made to them in lessons observed during the inspection. Writing skills are the weakest aspect of pupils' literacy skills and English teachers pay particular attention to the development of these skills in their lesson planning. However,

teachers in several subjects are not yet aware of the importance of correcting pupils' errors, particularly the misspelling of key words. Further development of strategies for raising standards of literacy is impeded by the current lack of a co-ordinator.

19. Through the adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy the mathematics department lays a good foundation for the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Lessons begin with a range of exercises that help to improve the speed and accuracy of pupils' mental calculations. Most teachers are aware of the need to reinforce and develop pupils' numeracy skills in all curriculum subjects. Numeracy is developed through measuring and judging proportion in art and design and design and technology, and through interpreting data in geography and science. However, as with literacy, the lack of a numeracy co-ordinator impedes the systematic development of these skills across the curriculum. The cross-curricular co-ordination of ICT is very effective. Teachers make very good use of ICT to support teaching and learning in all subjects. In English, Year 7 pupils successfully use ICT to draft and improve their poems and produce letters with correct layout. Many pupils do their homework on home computers. As pupils move towards Year 9 they produce substantial pieces of work, using ICT to enhance presentation and accuracy. Science has elements of good practice but this is limited by the lack of integration of computer skills such as data logging into schemes of work. In other subjects teachers make effective use of computers for researching, modelling and sharing information. In music computers are used effectively to help pupils improve the quality of their personal compositions.
20. One of the characteristics of the school is the way in which the headteacher continually challenges staff to raise pupils' achievement and aspirations. The effect of this is seen in the high expectations that teachers communicate clearly to pupils in most lessons. High expectations make a significant contribution to the very good progress pupils make in most science lessons and were particularly evident in the two excellent lessons, one in Year 7 and one in Year 8, observed in the subject. A high level of challenge is also seen in most French lessons, where the extensive use of the foreign language, together with well planned learning activities, promotes pupils' oral confidence. In drama pupils make good progress because of the enthusiasm and sense of enjoyment engendered by the challenging pace of lessons. In a Year 9 lesson pupils became absorbed in a range of role-play exercises because of the teacher's enthusiastic and innovative approach to the lesson.
21. Teachers generally share the learning objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and review them at the end. As a result, most pupils are clear about what they are doing and become fully involved in their learning. This was evident in an excellent Year 8 physical education lesson, where pupils made excellent progress in understanding the technique of middle distance running because of the teacher's clear explanations and guidance. Teachers use a very good range of strategies to enable pupils to learn and develop skills. In an excellent Year 9 food technology lesson, the effective use of a variety of prompts and resources encouraged pupils to work independently and the quality of learning rose as a result. Paired and small-group work is used well in many subjects. In music and drama, pupils work successfully in small groups devising presentations. Small-group work is used effectively in English and religious education to discuss and extend pupils' thinking and to undertake investigations in science. Although teaching strategies take good account of the needs of gifted and talented pupils in many lessons, this is not consistent in all subjects.
22. Classroom management and organisation are good. In most lessons effective classroom management leads to lessons being conducted at a good pace with learning tasks well matched to the needs of pupils. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and work hard to ensure that the learning environments within classrooms are orderly and purposeful. The majority of pupils respond well to the demands of teachers and relationships are good. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are managed very well and very few incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour were seen in lessons during the inspection. Where unsatisfactory behaviour did occur it was generally because learning activities were not sufficiently varied or closely matched to the attainment levels of pupils. In the two unsatisfactory Year 8 lessons, one in English and one in geography, weaknesses in planning and class management contributed to inappropriate pupil behaviour and a lack of progress in the lessons.

23. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and in withdrawal lessons it is very good. Three experienced and well-qualified teachers, all with additional special needs qualifications, work with a team of 13 teaching assistants, some with nursing or autism qualifications, to support pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are fully integrated with the teaching staff and are valued for the support they give in classrooms. The quality of teaching and support is generally very good. Staff know the pupils well and use the Individual Education Plans effectively to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and support is used effectively in most lessons. However, in a few lessons the teaching assistant was not clear about the task required and support was not effectively targeted. There is a need for a further sharing of the very good

practice seen in many subjects to ensure that support for pupils with special educational needs is consistent throughout the school. Pupils with special needs are fully included in lessons and their contributions are valued.

24. The needs of pupils with English as an additional language are well met. Almost all of these pupils speak English fluently and have no language needs that require additional support. The very few who are in the early stages of learning English are making very good progress because of the account that teachers take of their needs in planning lessons.
25. In most subjects teachers mark work regularly and pupils understand the grades they are given. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in mathematics and religious education, where pupils are not given clear enough guidance on what they must do in order to improve the quality of their work. Pupils are taught to evaluate their own learning in several subjects: this is, for example, a good feature of lessons in English and science.
26. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have developed good learning habits. They work very well, record their work carefully and are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. They have a good sense of how they are doing and readily ask if they feel they do not understand. Over the school as a whole learning is very good in response to very good teaching.

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

27. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides very good opportunities for pupils' personal development. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum whilst retaining an integrated and coherent approach to learning in which knowledge, understanding and skills cut across subject boundaries. The curriculum builds on good links with the primary schools. Before pupils arrive at the start of Year 7, the school has a clear picture of what they know, understand and can do in most subjects. The curriculum that pupils follow retains some elements of the primary school curriculum through the centres of interest that underpin it. At the start of the year, subject co-ordinators plan the curriculum together in order to reduce repetition, and to group topics together so that pupils begin to see the links that exist rather than artificial boundaries between subjects. Pupil groupings ensure that all pupils are provided for appropriately, whatever their attainment, ethnicity or gender.
28. This approach to the curriculum is strengthened by the Friday afternoon sessions when pupils are offered a range of activities, several of which are rarely found in the curriculum for 11 to 14 year olds. The core skills course includes seven-week modules on ICT, library and information skills, numeracy, cookery and the opportunity for Year 8 pupils to choose to work alongside adults with learning difficulties. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils host a lunch for senior citizens once each month at which they serve and entertain their guests. In Year 9 pupils are able to undertake Community Action placements in nursery schools, special schools and retirement homes. These activities make significant contributions to the development of pupils as responsible and caring citizens

with good independent learning skills. Through activities such as these the community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning.

29. There is a very good programme of careers education, which begins in Year 7 when pupils begin to build up a personal profile with their tutors. In Year 8 this work is incorporated into the Friday afternoon sessions with pupils considering how to manage lifestyle and money. There is a twelve-week unit of work for Year 9 pupils, which is enhanced by very good resources, including databases, access for those who need it to a personal Connexions advisor, and an informed option choice programme to prepare pupils for the move to the upper schools. The particularly strong links with the upper schools ensure the transition is as smooth as possible. The school has close links with local special schools, an independent grammar school, a further education college and Loughborough University. As a result of these additional links, many pupils gain important insights into future courses and career paths.
30. The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good. A temporary appointment of a literacy co-ordinator for one year gave the development of literacy teaching across the curriculum a good start. Many classrooms display key words, although few references are made to them in lessons. Some use is made of frameworks for writing and most subjects contribute in some way to pupils' development as independent readers and writers. However, these strategies are not currently co-ordinated by one person and so do not form a coherent and consistent approach. Similarly, although many subjects contribute to the development of pupils' numeracy skills, there is at present no numeracy co-ordinator and so no consistent approach to the development of these skills across the curriculum.
31. The school makes very good provision for ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils in every aspect of its life and work. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and teaching assistants perform their roles effectively and respond well to pupils' individual needs. Individual Education Plans are of good quality and identify targets for each pupil. The plans also indicate ways of helping pupils to meet these targets in lessons. As yet the plans do not require subject staff to interpret them in the light of their own skills and resources, nor to add any targets that are subject-specific. They do, however, serve to alert teachers and teaching assistants to the need to give specified support to individual pupils, in order that they may overcome the barriers to their learning. The provision for pupils in wheelchairs is very good and improving with the provision of rising sinks and adaptable tables in the practical areas. Annual and transition reviews of statements are held in accordance with the Code of Practice and the learning support department is able to secure 100 per cent attendance of parents and pupils at those reviews. The many break and lunchtime activities provide good support for vulnerable pupils, the provision of touch-typing being a very good example. This activity extends pupils' achievement opportunities as it can lead to Royal Society of Arts accreditation in keyboard skills. Overall, very good links with the primary schools ensure that there is a smooth entry for pupils with special educational needs into Year 7.
32. The school has continued to build on the strengths of its curricular provision reported at the last inspection, but some areas for improvement remain. The arrangement for teaching geography and history through a series of rotating six-week units does not ensure a continuous learning experience for pupils over the three years. Provision for PSHE is very good overall. Lessons are regular and well targeted to the needs of each year group. Tutor time is generally well used and very well linked to the weekly whole-school assembly theme. Heads of year lead the planning of formal PSHE lessons. As a result, provision is very well linked to the needs of pupils. The school is at an early stage of implementing the requirement to teach citizenship and has chosen to approach it through and across the curriculum rather than as a separate subject. This approach needs careful monitoring to ensure that all aspects are covered, and the school has some way to go before this can be assured. The lack of a register of gifted and talented pupils means that co-ordination of the provision is difficult. While in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, provision is well-planned, this is not consistent across all subject areas.
33. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities further enhances the statutory curriculum. For a small school the number of clubs and other activities offered to pupils is remarkable, as is the

high proportion of pupils who participate. Inter-form sporting activities cater for all pupils who wish to be involved, not just for the most talented. Over a hundred pupils are involved in the weekly dance and drama groups and in the annual musical production, and many of these pupils take advantage of the cultural visit to London. A successful bid for funding last year - repeated for the current year - has enabled the school to bring in adults other than teachers to extend and enrich the provision. This aspect of the school's work was a strength at the time of the last inspection and has been further extended in a very well organised and coherent manner.

34. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The school has no specific policy on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development. Nor has the school held an audit across the subjects of the curriculum. On the other hand, the school is much smaller than most and this allows relationships to be much more personal. The school feels a secure place where pupils are trusted and respond to trust. The leadership promotes sensitive and considerate attitudes towards others. A distinctive example is the book that every pupil has recording the programme of 'Reflecting Together'. Another example, also distinctive of the school, is the weekly 'Personal Diary' entry each pupil shares with the form tutor. Despite these many significant features there are missed opportunities to support pupils' spiritual development. The school has not made arrangements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education does not make a substantial enough contribution to this aspect of pupils' personal development.
35. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has a well-understood code of behaviour and the rights and wrongs of life feature in many lessons. Adults in the school are very good role models and the school's firm emphasis on personal morality helps pupils to reach good standards of behaviour overall and very good achievement. A Year 7 English lesson observed during the inspection provided an excellent example of how teachers provide for the spiritual and moral aspects of pupils' development. Studying a play about the forced emigration of children to the colonies after the Second World War gave pupils the opportunity to respond with accuracy and sympathy to how the children would have felt. In such ways teachers develop pupils' sensitivity to other people's beliefs and feelings. A school policy and occasional audit would enable the very good practice observed in many subjects to be identified and shared in a systematic fashion.
36. Provision for pupils' social development is very good overall. Pupils in all year groups benefit from the well-planned PSHE programme. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and to show initiative. These opportunities feature regularly in lessons and include not only such things as collaborative work in English, drama, music and physical education, but also service on the School Council and community service. The elected School Council provides pupils with good opportunities to engage in the democratic process whilst providing the elected representatives with experience of community leadership and responsibility. Residential and other visits, school productions, sporting competitions and meetings with visitors provide pupils with a wide range of links with business, industry and the wider community. A particularly good feature of pupils' social development is the consideration that is shown towards pupils with physical impairments and the very good quality of relationships that exists between these pupils and their peers.
37. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils learn about their own cultural traditions in studying literature and poetry in English, in art and design and music, and in history through visits to Warwick Castle and Ironbridge, and events such as Civil War Day. There is good emphasis on European culture in modern foreign languages, where the department makes good use of visitors to the area to stage events such as a Swedish breakfast, an Italian lunch and an experience of Chinese calligraphy. Year 7 pupils have the opportunity to spend a week in France, and many pupils have French pen friends. During the Friday afternoon Core Skills sessions, pupils can choose modules such as Provençal cookery, Spanish and German. The school has made good efforts to improve its provision for pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of non-European cultures. They learn about Batik work in design and technology, about Native Americans in history, and about the different lifestyles of the people of Brazil, Japan and Bangladesh in geography. However, as at the previous inspection, there is a lack of planning for this dimension of culture to be taught systematically across the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. As at the previous inspection, arrangements for the care of pupils are very good overall. Procedures to promote and ensure pupils' well being are very good. The school has very good induction arrangements for pupils entering the school in Year 7 with the result that they feel secure and confident in their first year of secondary education. The practice of surveying and tackling Year 7 pupils' concerns on personal safety, settling in, schoolwork and homework with clear follow-up on specific issues is an excellent feature. Pupils are provided with very good support at the time of transfer to the upper schools. They are given good guidance when choosing GCSE options and the transfer arrangements are regarded as a model of good practice by the local education authority. The school takes its responsibilities for child protection and pupils' welfare very seriously and complies with all recommended procedures for child protection.

39. Procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are good. Pupils are given clear guidance on safe procedures for using tools and machinery, for lifting equipment and for handling chemicals. Appropriate controls are placed on pupils' use of ICT with regard to e-mails and the use of the Internet. The governing body gives due consideration to health and safety matters. Fire alarms are tested and fire drills carried out on a regular basis. Safety checks are carried out on all portable electrical equipment. A sufficient number of staff hold first aid certificates and all accidents are properly recorded.
40. Continuity in care is a strong feature of the school pastoral system, which is built on the role of the form tutor. Pupils have extensive contact with their form tutors and this enables tutors to develop a very good knowledge of individual pupils and their particular social and educational needs. Heads of year play important roles in ensuring continuity in care. They are in close contact with their year tutor teams and provide tutors with very good support for their tutorial work. The very good quality of the support and guidance provided for pupils makes a significant contribution to their progress and achievement as they move through the school.
41. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The positive behaviour policy, supported by a system of commendations and certificates, provides a coherent basis for promoting good behaviour. A clear emphasis is placed on the recognition of good behaviour and attitudes. For example, through telephone calls or notes parents are informed when their children have done something well. Pupils and parents value these contacts very highly. There is a clear and escalating series of sanctions, in relation to inappropriate classroom and playground behaviour, which are applied consistently. All staff feel that they are very well supported by the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership group in applying the school behaviour policy. All exclusions are well documented. The school works hard and involves parents as much as possible in order to prevent such behaviour recurring.
42. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and punctuality are good overall. Early identification and response to absence and lateness are key parts of the role of a member of the school administrative staff. The school recognises and rewards good attendance. The form group with the highest attendance in each year is recognised at the weekly 'special mention' assemblies. Full individual attendance is recognised half-termly and annually. The education welfare officer is appropriately involved in any instances of persistent absence. The attendance, punctuality and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs are carefully monitored through the pastoral system and through targets set in their Individual Education Plans.
43. A developing strength of the school is the attention paid to the analysis of test results. An annual cycle of target setting and reporting based on a national data gathering and analysis system, which provides predictions about pupils' performance at the end of Year 9, is well planned and effectively implemented. There are careful procedures for assessing and for monitoring pupils' progress. As pupils move through the school, attainment data collected through teacher assessments add significantly to the amount of information the school holds on pupils' attainment and progress. This information supplements that available through the commercial scheme and enables the school to predict with greater certainty pupils' likely performance at the end of Year 9. Many subject departments are making increasingly effective use of this information to guide curriculum planning and to set targets for improvement, particularly in English, mathematics and science. However, there is room for further improvement in other subjects and particularly in geography, history and religious education. Nevertheless, one of the strengths of the school's use of assessment is the way in which pastoral and curricular teams work closely together to support pupils' progress.
44. There is no school policy for the marking of pupils' work and the quality of marking varies between subjects. Although pupils' work is marked regularly and there are examples of good practice in most subjects, particularly in modern foreign languages, marking does not always provide pupils with clear enough information on the level of their work. However, the end-of-year teacher assessments are based on a pupil's performance and in this respect parents are well informed whether their child is working towards, at, or beyond the expected National Curriculum Level for their age group.

45. Overall, reports to parents are good and the school meets statutory requirements for reporting pupils' assessments at the end of Year 9. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through consultation meetings and interim and annual reports. The quality of these reports is good and they include details of the programmes of study in each subject, together with well-balanced information on academic and personal development, targets for future work and a personal statement written by the pupil. Pupils are also encouraged to offer their own assessments of their achievement and progress.
46. The school has systematic procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. Individual Education Plans are carefully prepared and pupils' progress in relation to the targets specified in them is closely monitored. Detailed records of pupils' progress are maintained by the learning support co-ordinator and all annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are well documented. The learning support co-ordinator also has responsibility for the identification and assessment of the needs of pupils in the process of learning English as an additional language. This is done effectively in collaboration with specialist advice provided by the local education authority.
47. Satisfactory progress has been made in the care the school offers pupils since the last inspection. All of the strengths have been maintained. Assessment procedures are improved, as is the use of this information for target setting and monitoring pupils' progress. However, there is room for further improvement in some subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The partnership with parents has been strengthened since the time of the last inspection and is now very good. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress and achievement. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and comments made at the pre-inspection meeting with parents show that the majority of parents have positive views of the school. Around two-fifths of parents replied to the questionnaire and 14 attended the pre-inspection meeting. Nearly all confirm that their children like school and are making good progress. They consider that the school has high expectations and is helping their children become more mature and responsible. Parents are very positive about the quality of teaching and pupils' attitudes and behaviour. They feel comfortable about approaching school with suggestions, questions or concerns. They also believe that the leadership and management of the school are good. Parents showed very little dissatisfaction with the school through the questionnaire. The question relating to the amount of homework pupils are given was the only item to elicit a significant negative response, and here views were mixed between pupils being given too little or too much homework. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and judge that the arrangements for homework are satisfactory overall.
49. Tutors develop a good knowledge of pupils and their families and this provides a considerable support for pupils' learning. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Regular meetings with parents of these pupils are organised and all are invited to contribute to the setting of targets in the Individual Education Plans of their children. Some issues relating to the provision made for particular pupils with special educational needs were raised with the inspection team, both at the pre-inspection meeting and through written comments added to the questionnaire. The inspection team investigated these cases carefully and concluded that the provision made for these pupils is appropriate. The school provides very good quality information for parents. The school prospectus is clear and provides parents with much useful information on school organisation and administration, together with details of the opportunities the school offers. The governors' annual report to parents is informative and complies with all statutory requirements. Through pupils' planners, reports, newsletters and parents' evenings the school attempts to keep parents informed about school events and their children's achievements and progress. There are regular consultations on pupils' progress at open evenings and parents are contacted at an early stage if their children cause any kind of concern.

50. The level of parents' involvement in their children's learning is good. Most pupils say that parents check that their homework is done. Parents generally respond positively to individual requests to discuss issues, such as behaviour and attendance. Attendance at parents' consultation meetings is good. Parental attendance is high at social and celebration events, such as the annual theatrical performance and concerts. A small group of enthusiastic parents organise the Parent-Staff Association and make a valuable contribution to the school through fundraising, social events and by providing a means of channelling proposals and suggestions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and a clear educational direction for the school. His outstanding commitment, conscientiousness and clear sense of purpose are underpinned by a firm belief that children should be encouraged to see the world as a whole and that learning should not be compartmentalised. This is fundamental to the whole ethos of the school and reflected in the way in which the requirements of the National Curriculum have been successfully met, while holding firm to this basic principle. The school provides pupils with a friendly, supportive and purposeful environment in which concern for the well being of the individual is paramount. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and academic progress and achievement.
52. The headteacher provides a very effective lead in planning for improvement and co-ordinating the work of the school. He is assisted by a very effective senior leadership group. Very good teamwork is a feature among members of the group. Line management responsibilities are clearly defined and each member of the leadership group has responsibility for particular areas of the school's work. Targets for results are agreed and met. This is having a significant effect on standards, which are rising. Meetings are sequenced to review National Curriculum test results in the different subjects, identify development priorities and review progress towards the targets identified in the school strategic plan. The outcome of this process is that progress towards targets is closely monitored and there is coherence in the initiatives taken to raise standards.
53. The school aims to provide clear guidance for policy, practices and procedures. There is a clear commitment to improvement and the raising of standards. Central to the realisation of this commitment are the processes of improvement, planning and self-evaluation. The senior leadership group has a clear understanding of the importance of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in order to raise standards and has provided good leadership in the development of evaluative strategies within the school. Through a carefully structured programme of lesson observations, senior managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas in which improvement is needed.
54. The school has established a comprehensive assessment database and good use is made of this information by the senior leadership group. Detailed analyses of pupils' performance are undertaken and trends in performance are closely scrutinised as part of the review process with subject co-ordinators. There is now a need to ensure that all subject co-ordinators are equally effective in monitoring and evaluating work in their areas and in making use of assessment information to guide planning. While there is evidence of very good practice in some subjects, for example in English and mathematics, there is room for improvement in geography, history and religious education. The school recognises this and has plans to develop these aspects of the work of subject co-ordinators.
55. The overall quality of leadership and management provided by subject co-ordinators is good. Strong leadership in English, design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages, music and physical education is having a significant impact on standards. There are also significant strengths in leadership in mathematics, science and art and design. Pupils derive much benefit from the good quality of provision in these areas. Subject leadership provided by the recently appointed co-ordinators in geography, history and religious education, which form the humanities curriculum, together with citizenship education, is satisfactory, although there are some weaknesses in all four subjects. The weaknesses relate mainly to the schools' arrangements for

the teaching of the subjects, and to staffing difficulties, rather than to weaknesses in the leadership and management offered by the subject co-ordinators. Staffing changes and a lack of continuity in subject leadership have impeded progress in geography since the last inspection. There are eight different teachers for sixteen religious education lessons. These teachers do not meet regularly together and the co-ordinator's role does not include responsibility for monitoring, evaluation and development of teachers of religious education. The learning support co-ordinator provides very good leadership for an experienced team of support teachers and teaching assistants. This makes a significant contribution to the very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

56. With the exception of the provision of a daily act of worship the governing body fulfils its statutory requirements. The governors are knowledgeable and well aware of the scope of their responsibilities. They receive regular reports on results and expenditure, and take part in training events in order that they can perform the role of 'critical friends' most effectively. Relationships with the headteacher and senior staff are very supportive and professional; governors effectively delegate many of their responsibilities to them and contribute to performance management arrangements. These arrangements are firmly in place and well documented. Governors are actively involved with the headteacher and bursar in financial planning. The school has effective procedures to ensure that the principles of 'best value' for money are applied in the use of its resources and all additional funding received by the school is used for the intended purposes. When account is taken of the amount of money coming into the school and its overall effectiveness, the school provides good value for money. The few minor issues raised in the most recent auditors' report have been addressed. Overall, the governing body operates with appropriate effectiveness.
57. The many strengths in leadership and senior management have been maintained since the last inspection. The key issues in the last report were tackled vigorously, soon after the inspection, and good progress has been made with most. The use of assessment information for target setting and monitoring pupils' progress is much improved, although there is room for further improvement in several subjects. Parents are provided with more detailed information on their children's progress and attainment. Teachers' subject-specific expertise is being used more effectively and there is a closer matching of learning activities to the attainment levels of pupils in lessons. However, improvement in religious education has been adversely affected by the lack of a subject specialist and the organisation of the curriculum does not enable the most effective use of teachers' subject knowledge in geography and history. Staffing difficulties have restricted improvement in geography, although more progress has been made from the start of the present school year because the co-ordination of the subject has been more stable. More effective use is made of homework. The school's strong leadership and commitment to helping all pupils to achieve well provides the capacity for further improvement.

Resourcing

58. Generally, the match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory. Where non-specialist teaching occurs, teachers are often qualified by extensive experience of teaching the particular subject. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good. Close attention is paid to the identification of individual teacher development needs and how these can be matched to school development priorities. Staff have benefited from opportunities to improve their skills in ICT, and effective use is made of computers to support teaching and learning in most subjects. Arrangements for the support and professional development of both newly qualified teachers and students undertaking initial teacher training are very good and highly valued by participants, as are the induction arrangements for all new members of staff. Temporary teachers are given good support. The number of specialist teaching and non-teaching staff is sufficient to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The skilled and experienced secretarial and clerical staff provide a welcoming school office and contribute very effectively to the administration and organisation of the school.
59. Overall, resources are good. The ratios for pupils to computers and to books are better than in most schools. The school library is large and very attractive. It contains a good range of books

and computers, and is well used by most subjects. The librarian is enthusiastic and the use of the library has a good impact on learning. Overall, the resources available to the school and their effective deployment have a positive effect upon pupils' learning and the standards achieved. Teachers are helped to cope with paperwork by helpful administrative and learning resources staff.

Accommodation

60. The quality of the accommodation is good. Since the school was first opened as a new building in 1982 the curriculum has changed and the number of pupils on roll has fluctuated. As part of the strategic plan the school has identified opportunities for developing the accommodation, and a number of beneficial improvements and modifications have been completed. Subject areas benefit from well-maintained specialist rooms that provide a focus for their work. Accommodation arrangements for the teaching of religious education are less satisfactory because of the variety of rooms used in different parts of the building. Since the last inspection a number of rooms have been well adapted for the expansion of computer facilities, and currently the school is seeking funding to provide a sports hall. The grounds and buildings are safe, secure and well maintained. Pupils show respect and care for the accommodation and there is good access for pupils with physical disabilities. There is very good liaison with the community in order to extend the use of the accommodation and facilities outside school session times. Good standards of cleanliness and care, provided by the estate manager and cleaning staff, maintain a pleasant functional environment. Security arrangements are very good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In order to raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of Woodbrook Vale High School, with the help of the local education authority, should:

- (1) Raise standards in religious education by ensuring that:
- pupils are given more opportunities to link their study of religion to their own experience of life;
 - all teachers have the necessary depth of subject knowledge to provide the higher levels of challenge and inspiration necessary for pupils to achieve high standards;
 - there are regular meetings of teachers of the subject and opportunities for the subject co-ordinator to monitor and support teaching and learning in a systematic way;
 - assessment information is used by teachers to set attainment targets at the beginning of each year, and that these are shared with pupils and clearly understood by them;
 - there are procedures and timetables for monitoring pupils' progress and attainment, and for making judgements about whether pupils are doing well enough;
 - the subject is provided with a dedicated teaching room where resources can be readily available and displays of pupils' work and other artefacts can be used to create a stimulating learning environment.
- (paragraphs: 5, 43, 54-55, 57, 60, 130-133)*
- (2) Improve provision and raise standards in geography and history by ensuring that:
- assessment information is used by teachers to set attainment targets in terms of National Curriculum levels at the beginning of each year, and that these are shared with pupils and clearly understood by them;
 - there are procedures and timetables for monitoring pupils' progress and attainment, and for making judgements about whether pupils are doing well enough;
 - enough curriculum time is allocated for full coverage of the subjects and that the timetable arrangements promote greater continuity in teaching and learning.
- (paragraphs: 4, 32, 43, 54-55, 57, 96-100, 102-103, 105)*
- (3) With regard to citizenship education, improve provision by ensuring that:
- there are appropriate procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment so that it is possible to monitor and report on pupils' progress;
 - an audit of cross-curricular teaching of the subject is carried out to make certain that there is full coverage of the citizenship syllabus.
- (paragraphs: 32, 45, 54-55, 86-89)*

- (4) Ensure that the school literacy and numeracy strategies are effectively co-ordinated so that they are fully implemented in all subjects.
(paragraphs: 18-19, 30, 70)
- (5) Ensure that all subjects provide more planned opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of non-European cultural influences and traditions.
(paragraph: 37)

In addition to the preceding areas for improvement the following less significant weaknesses need attention:

Weaknesses in lesson planning and classroom management in some lessons (*paragraphs: 17, 22, 66, 121-122*); the use of teaching assistants in some lessons (*paragraph: 23*); subject-specific targets in pupils' Individual Education Plans (*paragraph: 31*); the marking of pupils' work (*paragraphs: 25, 44, 73, 79*); the provision of a daily act of collective worship (*paragraphs: 34, 56*); provision for gifted and talented pupils (*paragraphs: 32, 94*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	31	28	16	4	0	0
Percentage	9	36	32	18	5	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	370
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	58

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	71

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	7.8
---------------------------	-----

National comparative data	1.2
---------------------------	-----

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	61	45	106

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	46	45
	Girls	34	26	30
	Total	74	72	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (65)	68 (72)	71 (71)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (33)	45 (43)	42 (40)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	48	42
	Girls	29	33	28
	Total	70	81	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (67)	77 (81)	67 (74)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (35)	50 (40)	24 (49)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	340	27	2
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	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	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	24.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	369

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.5
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	22
-------------	----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	1,139,567
Total expenditure	1,116,185
Expenditure per pupil	3,016
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,333
Balance carried forward to next year	41,715

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	370
Number of questionnaires returned	146

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	49	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	60	3	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	62	14	2	1
The teaching is good.	41	58	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	38	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	27	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	28	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	44	47	6	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	45	48	2	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	44	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	47	5	1	6

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement
- Leadership and management
- Pupils attitudes and behaviour
- Teaching and learning
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum Levels to give pupils clear information about their attainment
- The use of texts from or about other cultures and traditions
- The co-ordination of the development of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects

62. Results overall in the National Curriculum tests in English in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were average in comparison with all schools and with schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. However, results were above the average gained by schools where pupils had achieved similar standards in the tests taken at the end of Year 6. The results were below those obtained in mathematics and science. The English results show a rising trend over the last four years. However, the results in 2002 were lower than the 2001 results, which were above average. This was partly because of the fact that girls' results were lower than in recent years while boys maintained similar standards to those gained in 2001 when their results showed a significant improvement. Girls achieved slightly better results than boys but the difference between them was very much less than the national difference.
63. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by pupils currently in Year 9 are above average and consistent with the standards achieved in the 2001 tests. This is largely due to the adjustments made to the curriculum after an exhaustive analysis of the returned 2002 test papers revealed an underlying weakness in extended writing. Given that pupils enter the school with below average standards in English, this represents very good achievement.
64. To tackle pupils' below average attainment in English at the start of Year 7, the English department, supported by most other subject areas, makes a determined effort to raise levels of literacy. The objectives of the National Literacy Strategy are thoroughly embedded in new schemes of work, and by the end of Year 7 pupils are rapidly approaching the expected standards in reading and writing. Almost all are competent readers, able to comment on and explain what they have read. Many use the library regularly. Writing skills are good, with most pupils, including lower-attaining pupils and most of those with special educational needs, able to sustain quite substantial pieces of writing. Average and higher-attaining pupils write fluently and with reasonable technical accuracy. Year 9 pupils produce some very good writing, demonstrating confidence with a wide range of techniques that engage and interest the reader. Almost all pupils are able to use a good range of styles and this is reinforced by activities that help pupils to understand the key features of different types of text. Most pupils are confident and articulate speakers and listen attentively to their teachers and to other pupils. They are able to sustain their responses to questions and explain their ideas and opinions. Their range of vocabulary increases and most handle technical terminology with confidence. There are a small number of pupils, mainly refugees from Albania, who are in the early stages of learning English. These pupils are given good support at a local centre until their English is at a level that allows them to access the curriculum. Visiting specialists and in-school support help them to make good progress.
65. Pupils display very good attitudes towards their English work and behaviour in most lessons is very good. This is promoted by teachers' very good subject knowledge and their understanding of

how to engage and interest their pupils. Good concentration is promoted by thorough preparation; at the start of most lessons teachers have already written learning objectives and a lesson plan on the board so that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn and do in the lesson.

66. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers are concerned to give pupils the skills to become independent learners. They encourage pupils to think for themselves, and take every opportunity to contribute to pupils' personal development. For example, in a Year 7 lesson the teacher very effectively led pupils to an understanding of the effects on children and their families of forced child emigration to the colonies after the Second World War. Work is well matched to pupils' needs and interests. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils were encouraged by lively teaching and challenging questioning to consider the differences between dialect, slang and jargon and made very good progress in their understanding of the changing nature of language use. In a Year 9 lesson the teacher had designed an activity to respond to pupils' concerns about the imminent national tests. They were given confidence by the revision of technical terminology and by a task that focused on the importance of interpreting the test questions. There is very good provision for lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs through the highly effective use of learning support assistants and through specially designed materials and tasks that enable pupils to meet with success. However, one unsatisfactory lesson was observed in which work was not matched to pupils' needs. The teacher did not ensure that all pupils were engaged in the learning and consequently a few boys exhibited challenging behaviour, which was allowed to disrupt the learning of other pupils. There was too much teacher talk and the few girls in the class were not given opportunities to contribute to discussion. Effective use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.
67. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The subject co-ordinator leads and monitors the work of a small team very effectively and schemes of work have been revised to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy. The subject's contribution to the teaching of citizenship is being built into long and medium-term planning but has yet to be identified in short-term and lesson plans. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Boys' attainment and the overall quality of teaching have improved. Expectations are high and marking now regularly identifies how pupils can achieve better standards, although opportunities are not always taken to show pupils what level they are working at. Although resources are generally good there is room for greater use of literature from and about other cultures and traditions.

Drama

68. Drama is taught as a separate subject to all pupils. Pupils reach the expected standards because of good, lively and energetic teaching. The one teacher of drama, although just starting on the graduate training programme, already has very good behaviour management techniques and has designed a relevant and balanced curriculum. Pupils learn about drama conventions and techniques and how to work effectively together in creating drama and performing to the class. Although a few boys in Years 7 and 8 have yet to realise that drama is a serious subject and not an opportunity to play, by Year 9 most pupils are able to sustain focus and concentration. In a very good lesson, Year 9 pupils developed short sequences based on the 'Seven Ages of Man' speech from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' and held still images throughout other groups' performances to create a highly effective dramatic presentation. Pupils enjoy their drama, helped by well-established routines, controlled warm-up sessions and good use of assessment to improve their work. Drama makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development. The school productions provide excellent opportunities for talented pupils to display their performance skills.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9
- Very good relationships have a significant impact on pupils' learning
- The effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy
- The match of learning activities to pupils' attainment levels
- Effective team work and the sharing of good practice

Areas for improvement

- The co-ordination of strategies for developing pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects
- Consistency in the marking of pupils' work
- Reviews of learning at the end of some lessons

69. National Curriculum test results show standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 to have been average. In 2002 more pupils achieved the higher Levels 7 and 8 than did so in 2001. This improvement has occurred largely as a result of good teaching and the increase in pupils' numerical confidence. At the expected Level 5 and above, boys outperformed girls by a considerable margin, the reverse of the situation in 2001. However, at the higher Level 6 and above, girls did slightly better than boys. Results are high when compared with those of similar schools. These results represent achievement that is well above expectations when standards on entry to the school are taken into account. The overall achievement of pupils with special educational needs, from minority ethnic backgrounds and the few with English as an additional language is similar to that of their peers. The results in mathematics were higher than those achieved in English but slightly below those in science. Results over the last three years have risen at a faster rate than results nationally.
70. Inspection evidence shows attainment at the end of Year 9 to be above that indicated by the test results. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are gaining considerable benefits from the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has been most effectively introduced in all years. The mental warm-up activities used at the start of lessons are helping to increase pupils' confidence in numerical work. Most pupils are competent with number calculations and work with positive and negative numbers, fractions, decimals and percentages with relative confidence. These skills are enhanced by work in other subjects; for example, in science, specific time is devoted in Year 8 to drawing and interpreting graphs. In design and technology many pupils measure accurately and weigh quantities using the appropriate units. However, because of a lack of co-ordination, these skills are not developed and reinforced in a systematic way across the curriculum.
71. Teaching and learning in mathematics are good overall and often very good. This is similar to the position reported at the time of the last inspection. Teachers work very hard to plan interesting lessons that motivate and stimulate pupils. This is impacting significantly on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used effectively to provide clear explanations and probe pupils' understanding. Teachers have high expectations and place high importance on the presentation of work and numerical accuracy. Where teaching is at its best, lessons start briskly with rapid mental activities that stimulate and involve pupils. These starter activities then lead smoothly into the main activity, which is carefully structured to provide an increasing level of challenge. The skilful mix of probing questions, discussion and a range of tasks ensures that all pupils make equally good progress and achieve well.
72. Lessons are well planned to cater for the different attainment levels of pupils and they are well paced to ensure that learning is consolidated before pupils move on to new work. This supports the progress of pupils with special educational needs. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils with learning difficulties made very good progress in understanding the multiplication of two-digit numbers because of the way in which the lesson was structured and the effective use that was

made of a teaching assistant. Because of this these pupils were able to use different multiplication methods and to explain why they choose a particular method.

73. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and underpinned by the very good relationships that are evident in lessons. There are effective processes for monitoring pupils' performance and assessing achievement. Assessment information is used to set targets and to organise pupil groupings. The information is also used effectively to identify pupils who would benefit from additional small group work in the period leading up to the National Curriculum tests in Year 9. These pupils benefit from very good teaching that builds their confidence and broadens their skills. The three-part lesson has been widely adopted by teachers across the school. However, reviews of learning do not take place at the end of some lessons and so learning is not always fully consolidated or linked to the next lesson. Good use is made of ICT and the teachers make very good use of recently acquired graphical calculators and interactive white boards. Although pupils' work is marked regularly, it does not always provide pupils with clear enough guidance on what they must do in order to improve its quality. Homework is used effectively to extend pupils' learning.
74. The leadership and management of the department are good. The subject co-ordinator provides very clear leadership and educational direction for the subject. The department has fully embraced the requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy and teaching and learning are effectively monitored to promote higher standards. Very good links exist with the upper schools, which enable the department to respond when any weaknesses are identified in pupils' mathematical knowledge. There is a strong team of teachers, who regularly share good practice and review their work. Very good support is provided for newly qualified teachers, who in turn make very good contributions to work in the subject. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and has many outstanding features
- Pupils' achievement
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils

Areas for improvement

- The provision of catch-up materials for lower-attaining pupils on entry to the school
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils

75. In 2002, National Curriculum test results taken at the end of Year 9 were average at the expected Level 5 and above average at the higher Level 6. When compared with similar schools, results were well above average for both Levels 5 and 6. Science results at Level 5 were similar to those for English and mathematics, whilst at Level 6 they were much better than those for English but again similar to mathematics results. Since the last inspection, results have improved significantly. Compared with the attainment of pupils on entry to the school these results represent significantly above average achievement. Inspection evidence suggests that results will improve further in 2003.
76. As a result of very good teaching, most pupils currently in the school are making very good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. Standards have improved throughout the school and are now above national expectations overall. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 understand how the particle model explains how heat can be transferred by convection and conduction, are able to write balanced chemical equations and have a very good understanding of the processes involved in photosynthesis. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. They cannot, for example, write balanced chemical equations but can write word equations for reactions; they know how heat is transferred

but are less secure in using the particle model and, while recognising that plants use photosynthesis to make food, they are less secure in understanding the processes involved. The standards of literacy and numeracy throughout the school are at least satisfactory and often good.

77. Pupils come to lessons with a positive attitude and this affects the standards of work achieved. In lessons they are expected to be attentive, to settle to tasks quickly and to concentrate on their work. Inappropriate behaviour is checked and generally dealt with firmly and sensitively.
78. Teaching and learning are very good overall, with many excellent features. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Pupils learn very well as a result. The principal features of teaching are the use of very good, and sometimes excellent, subject knowledge by teachers, their high expectations of pupils, good well-focused planning and, in many lessons, a range of methods which inspire pupils, maintain interest and engender learning. In a very few lessons, however, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to work independently. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend classwork.
79. Assessment is used very well to monitor pupils' progress, to identify underachievers, adjust teaching and guide curriculum planning. Day-to-day marking, whilst being thorough overall, does not always indicate how pupils can improve, nor does it always provide targets for future work, although there are excellent examples of both. The identification of appropriate learning objectives, coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils, throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Nevertheless, there are indications that the highest-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 could achieve higher standards if they were provided with greater challenge and more opportunities for independent learning, and lower-attaining pupils, on entry to the school, would benefit from the provision of 'catch-up' work. In the majority of lessons pupils work hard and at a very good pace.
80. Leadership and management are good overall, with management being very good. The subject co-ordinator is supported by an adequate number of teachers, who, whilst being non-specialists in science teaching, have been well trained and work very well together as a team. Educational direction is clear and well focused. As a result, there is evidence of new developments, which are likely to lead to further improvement. Development planning is in line with school development planning and is effective and manageable, but planning for long-term development with longer-term targets, costing and focused success criteria has yet to be carried out. Individual teachers keep very good records of pupils' progress and these are used, effectively, to guide future teaching. Monitoring of the quality of teaching by lesson observations takes place and this is used to develop good practice within the department. Resources, in terms of basic equipment, are very good and the department has recently acquired a new suite of computers. The number of rooms in the department is adequate and they are to be refurbished in the near future.
81. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Provided that the current high quality of teaching is maintained and further opportunities are provided for pupils who are gifted and talented in science, coupled with additional 'catch-up' work for lower-attaining pupils when they join the school, the capacity for improvement is very good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning promote high achievement
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour
- Leadership and management of the subject
- The use of assessment for monitoring pupils' progress

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers for digital art
- The development of observational and drawing skills
- The use of sketchbooks

82. Teacher assessments in 2002 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be above national averages. The percentage of boys at the expected Level 5 and above is well above average, whilst the percentage at the higher Level 6 and above is average. Girls generally do not attain quite as well as boys, which is against the national trend, but the percentage at Level 5 and above is, nonetheless, above the national average. These above average standards are confirmed by inspection evidence. The trend in assessment results over the past three years has been strongly upwards for boys at Level 6 and above, but there is a fluctuating picture for girls, which shows an overall downward trend. The department can offer no clear reasons for these differences. Inspection evidence suggests that boys work as hard as the girls in lessons and have been catching up over time, to a point where both boys and girls are broadly in line with national averages at the higher Level 6.
83. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. Pupils enter the school having had a varying experience of art in their primary schools, but with overall levels of attainment that are below expectations for their age. The very good teaching, which places an appropriate emphasis on both the knowledge and understanding of fine art and the practical skills required to work in different media, ensures that the pupils consolidate their learning quickly and effectively, leading to very good achievement as they move through the school. The development of pupils' literacy skills is supported in Year 7 by the reading and writing requirements for mask making, prior to their practical work. A significant minority of pupils find this a frustrating and difficult task and there is a need for more simplification of texts and for different ways of presenting information to those pupils. Not enough use is made of sketchbooks and by Year 8 drawing is a weakness in the personal studies that pupils undertake. By the end of Year 9, the standard of research for personal studies of artists is high. Pupils choose across a very wide range of significant artists and they use both reference books and the Internet to research the background of the artists and the movement each represents. All personal studies are presented very well and higher-attaining pupils show by their practical response that they have learned much about the artists. Lower-attaining pupils lack the observational and practical creative skills to produce more than a token understanding of the artist they have studied. From a well-planned and informative introduction to print making, Year 9 pupils learn to explore the surface of their card blocks and produce very effective intaglio prints based on an abstraction of their still life drawings. Higher-attaining pupils show imagination and skill in building cubist images from their drawings and transferring these to colourful intaglio prints, which they then develop as relief images, using tissue, string and other scrap material.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, a strength of which is the independence given to pupils in pursuing their own ideas for personal studies. This leads to a bank of individual learning that covers a very wide cultural range and gives a very good foundation for class learning. However, the benefits of pupils' personal research are not fully utilised in the practical development of skills in lessons. Teaching is confident, relaxed and very well informed, and is characterised by very good relationships that ensure a pleasant, purposeful and productive environment for learning. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend classroom learning.
85. The subject is very well managed and teaching and learning are effectively monitored. The subject benefits from the support of a valued technician, who ensures the smooth flow of ceramic work through the department, as well as giving support in the day-to-day running of the department. The

department makes an effective contribution to the attractive presentation of the school, although more of the pupils' work could be displayed in public areas, especially since display space in the art rooms has been limited by internal alterations. Not enough use is made of computers for digital art, although there are plans to add graphics tablets and digital art software to the department's high quality computer resources. The department has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved as a result of improved teaching and learning and an enriched curriculum. The use of homework has significantly improved.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The commitment of the subject co-ordinator
- The contributions of many subjects to the teaching of citizenship
- The schemes of work for discrete citizenship lessons

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress
- Ensuring that there is full coverage of the citizenship curriculum
- Continuity of teaching and learning in designated citizenship lessons

86. The school is in the early stages of introducing the citizenship curriculum. Preparation for good citizenship is a theme that permeates much of the life of the school and several subjects make valuable contributions to the development of pupils' understanding of the topic. Aspects of citizenship are also taught as separate parts of the PSHE programme. However, although much good work is being done, the school has yet to conduct an audit of the various aspects of the citizenship curriculum being covered in the different subjects and so it is not possible to state with any certainty that the syllabus is, as yet, being fully taught. Similarly, there are no co-ordinated procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in the subject and so it is not possible to report the progress pupils are making in the subject.
87. Inspection evidence shows that a large majority of pupils display positive attitudes to the subject. This is supported by the very good work seen in pupils' progress books and the innovative displays relating to citizenship that decorate classrooms and the school corridors. In subject lessons where elements of citizenship are covered and in some tutor periods, pupils show a willingness to participate and quickly appreciate the relevance of the aspect to their own outlook on life. Through a variety of projects that involve extended writing the subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Very good contributions to the development of citizenship are made through many of the topics covered in the daily 30-minute tutor periods. In one Year 8 period, for example, pupils discussed how local authorities raise and spend money in order to provide essential services. In a Year 7 period pupils looked to the future and the personal qualities needed for success in different careers. In a Year 9 period a short paragraph about the positive attitudes of a cancer victim led pupils to reflect positively on individual strengths and the will to overcome life's challenges.
88. The quality of teaching and learning in subjects and in the tutor periods is good overall. Only two instances of unsatisfactory teaching and learning were observed. Both were in tutor periods and caused by weaknesses in planning. Generally, lessons are well planned with the citizenship aspect being taught through a range of activities that enable pupils to acquire an understanding of what it means to become a good citizen. In design and technology, pupils develop a good understanding of the relationship between diet and healthy lifestyle and are provided with a good introduction to consumer rights. Pupils also have many opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as elections to the School Council and through consultations on school policies and plans. Pupils' views were sought, for example, on the candidates for the post of headteacher, which becomes vacant with the retirement of the present head at the end of the school year. Pupils gain an understanding of the parliamentary process through mock parliamentary debates, and an understanding of the workings of the judicial system through mock trials.
89. Recent changes have meant that the leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is very committed to her role and shows a grasp of weaknesses, and the commitment to remedy them. This commitment is supported by senior management. In the short time the co-ordinator has had responsibility for the subject she has produced several sets of resources for use in the separate citizenship lessons. These have provided worthwhile learning

material for pupils and have resulted in very informative displays about the parliamentary system and School Council elections. However, there is a need for more systematic monitoring of the daily tutor period to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Owing to the nature of the school timetable it is not possible for lessons dedicated to citizenship to be scheduled on a regular basis. Nevertheless, given adequate support and the introduction of appropriate strategies for assessment and ensuring full coverage of the syllabus, the subject has the capacity to become a real strength of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Improving standards in designing and making
- The enthusiasm of the subject team
- The improved accommodation
- Community involvement to promote innovative design and technology

Areas for improvement

- Closer collaboration with primary schools to build on pupils' experiences
- The use of assessment information to raise standards through more precise target setting
- The further delegation of responsibilities to the teaching team

90. The 2002 teacher assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 to be above national expectations. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement. Over the past three years there has been an improvement in standards, with girls' performance being slightly better than boys', in line with national trends. However, standards do not match national averages at the higher National Curriculum Levels.
91. Inspection evidence shows standards attained by pupils presently in Years 7 to 9 to be improving and above national expectations. This indicates very good achievement on the part of all pupils regardless of gender or ethnic background. There is no clear picture of pupils' design and technology capability when they enter the school. In consequence, the school uses the test results from the core subjects as a starting point. This system does not capitalise on pupils' previous design and technology skills.
92. During Years 7 to 9 pupils develop a good range of flexible skills that they use independently when cutting, shaping, joining or mixing a range of materials, ingredients and components. Their improving skills when handling and selecting tools, including ICT, enhance the quality of their finished products. Pupils prefer making to designing, and to compensate for this the department emphasises the teaching of design. Higher attainers produce very good design profiles. However, some pupils lack accuracy in their orthographic and isometric drawing and this reduces the quality of their design. In a Year 7 textiles lesson, pupils made very good use of a wide range of book resources to extend their thinking. They simplified illustrations to help them identify possible images they could add to their designs for 'juggling balls'. Pupils' enthusiasm to complete this project came from the knowledge that they would learn to juggle when the products were completed. Excellent wall displays of pupils' previous work, using clear labelling and technical terms, set the standard expected. Other relevant design briefs engage pupils' interest, for example the design of a personal organiser. Exploration of modern materials such as Neoprene and thermoplastic material in a Year 9 lesson captivated pupils' interest, as they produced covers for their personal organisers. Very good investigation of industrial practice, such as batch production, enabled pupils in a Year 9 food technology lesson to learn about modern materials in food manufacturing, for example the chemical composition of ingredients in 'Pot Noodles'. Topical research and practical preparation of fresh ingredients supported pupils' knowledge of nutrition and foods from other cultures. Health and safety and risk assessment are part of the daily routines in the design and technology rooms.

93. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good because the pupils are totally involved in their learning. In the few instances when pupils exhibited challenging behaviour teachers made very good use of the school's systems to ensure that there was minimum disruption to teaching and learning. Very good use of pupils' Individual Education Plans and the very good use of teaching assistants ensure that the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is comparable to that of their peers.
94. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers' enthusiasm for designing is contagious and pupils are inspired to produce high quality products. Effective planning, including shared practice through the local education authority (LOQUS) group, ensures that modules of work match the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, and pupils' needs. Technology teachers capitalise on school activities to consolidate designing and making. For example, textiles, art and numeracy skills were used well to produce a template and complete the design of 'fairy wings' for the most recent school production. The effective use of teaching assistants, together with teachers' thorough knowledge of pupils' learning needs, ensures almost all pupils meet their potential. Because of the effectiveness of the support provided in some lessons, pupils with statements of special educational needs were seen to exceed their peers in the areas of tool handling and construction. However, not enough opportunities are provided to stretch gifted and talented pupils. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place. However, the use of assessment information is at an early stage of development and teachers are now working on integrating assessment procedures so that standards can be raised through more precise target setting.
95. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, even though the subject co-ordinator does not teach the subject. The co-ordinator takes care to ensure that teachers meet regularly and are well informed. As a result, there is very good teamwork and a strong commitment to improvement. However, there is scope for the further delegation of responsibilities to members of the teaching team. The recent refurbishment of the accommodation and high quality resources has made a considerable contribution to the raising of standards. A dedicated technical support team ensures that tools and equipment are well maintained and readily available. Issues raised in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully and the subject has the capacity for further improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils
- The shared commitment to improve standards
- Pupils' oral skills at the end of Year 9

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment
- The timetable arrangements for the teaching of the subject
- Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress and attainment

96. The 2002 teacher assessments show standards at the end of Year 9 to be below the national average and below the standard achieved in most other subjects at the school. More boys than girls were assessed as attaining the expected Level 5. The proportion of girls achieving Level 5 was well below the national average for girls. The attainment of boys has improved over the last three years and in 2002 was in line with the achievement of boys nationally. The performance of girls in 2002 showed a marked decline from the previous two years and a reversal of the improving trend.

97. Inspection evidence shows the standards attained by pupils are, overall, below national expectations in Year 7 where geographical knowledge and skills are underdeveloped. For example, in a Year 7 class studying settlements, many of the pupils found difficulty in understanding a simple cross-section block diagram used to identify the reasons for choosing a settlement site. Most pupils make satisfactory progress so that by the end of Year 9 attainment is closer to the national expectation, but still below. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support and make good progress.
98. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally positive and relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good. Occasionally in lessons when the teaching fails to stimulate the pupils' interest or the activities restrict pupils' involvement, levels of concentration decline and learning is less effective. In a Year 8 lesson on the weather, while the overall behaviour of the class was satisfactory, a small number of boys made limited progress because of poor listening skills at key points in the lesson.
99. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teaching is shared by a number of staff, with the work well supported by the geography co-ordinator. In the most successful lessons, clear learning objectives lead to well-structured activities and a range of resources is used to cater for the wide spread of attainment in the mixed ability form groups. Effective use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. In a Year 7 lesson that introduced the concept of settlement functions the well-directed oral work, the lively interaction between the teacher and the pupils and the variety of written materials led to very good learning and behaviour. Because of the structure of the timetable it was not possible to observe any Year 9 geography lessons during the inspection. Discussion with a small cross-section of Year 9 pupils and close scrutiny of samples of work verified their growing confidence and understanding. In a focused discussion with a group of Year 9 pupils about earthquakes and volcanoes, with reference to Japan, a good grasp of physical processes and their impact on human activity was demonstrated. In one Year 8 lesson teaching was unsatisfactory because the content of the lesson was inadequately planned and the resources and lesson activities did not match the wide range of pupils' learning needs. While pupils' work is regularly marked and homework is set, assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory. Pupils are unaware of the National Curriculum Level they are working at, and assessment tasks need more careful moderation to ensure accuracy and validity. Not enough use is made of good information about pupils' performance that the school gathers in order to monitor standards and to support curriculum planning and target setting.
100. Geography is part of the humanities curriculum with close links to history and religious education. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed by a co-ordinator who is relatively inexperienced and was appointed to the school only in September 2002. Since the last inspection in 1997 the progress made in geography has been impeded by staffing changes and a lack of sustained continuity and subject leadership. Obstacles to raising standards still exist and areas for improvement include completion of the revision of schemes of work and enlargement of the range and variety of resources and activities, in order to match the wide range of pupils' needs. The allocation of time for the subject is relatively low and the organisation of the teaching into half-termly blocks alternating with history constrains continuity of learning and the acquisition of geographical skills. The current development plan identifies the areas for improvement, but the planned actions require more detail. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and there is a clear, shared commitment and capacity to raise standards further.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and productive relationships in lessons
- Teaching and learning
- Rising standards

Areas for improvement

- The marking of pupils' work and the use of assessment information
- Pupils' evidence gathering, analysis and evaluation skills
- The timetable arrangements for the teaching of the subject

101. In 2002, teacher assessments showed that overall standards at the end of Year 9 were average; unusually, the percentage of boys reaching the expected level was above the equivalent national figure, whereas that of girls was well below it. Boys' attainment has risen steadily since 2000, whereas that of girls rose in 2001, before falling back in 2002.
102. There is great variation in the standards of work seen but, overall, by the end of Year 9 they are close to matching national expectations. These standards represent good progress, as pupils' attainment on entry is below average; pupils' limited literacy skills and low reading ages on entry are significant shortcomings in a subject such as history. The majority of pupils learn to read aloud confidently and accurately, and readily answer questions posed during lessons. Their exercise books are neat and well presented and reflect an evident pride in their work. Imaginative assignments such as letters home from the trenches are undertaken enthusiastically but too often lack historical rigour. Errors in spelling are not always corrected and only higher-attaining pupils regularly include dates in writing about historical events. Pupils have a detailed knowledge and understanding of some topics but overall, as in the last report, there is not enough curriculum time for the subject so that pupils do not develop their evidence gathering, analysis and evaluation skills as fully as they should. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as teachers provide suitably adapted resources and often there is additional in-class support. Standards in ICT, numeracy and literacy are close to those seen nationally, although the absence of work on units of measurement of time or scheduled computer-based lessons means that not enough use is made of these resources.
103. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. In most lessons pupils respond very well to the opportunities offered and mutually respectful classroom relationships enable them to learn well. Behaviour is never less than satisfactory and pupils remain attentive even during quite lengthy teacher expositions. The vast majority of pupils display a willingness to learn and the subject makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
104. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In a Year 9 lesson on the evacuation of children during World War II, pupils learned very well and were able to demonstrate empathy with the evacuees because of the teacher's skilful questioning about an informative video. In lessons that were good or better, which constituted the majority, teachers combined a lively and energetic approach with a variety of activities and a thorough exploration of subject-specific terminology; additionally, they insisted that pupils paid close attention to any instructions and explanations given. In a few lessons, characteristics highlighted in the last report, including over-long teacher explanations, an undue reliance on worksheets and not enough attention to chronology, prevented learning being better than satisfactory. The quality of day-to-day marking is variable; there is some that is simply tick marking with brief comment and little effort to correct repeated and elementary spelling errors. Overall, teachers manage their classes well and relationships between pupils and with teachers make positive contributions to the quality of learning.
105. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has been in post for eighteen months and is currently on maternity leave. Despite also having responsibility for religious education, she has made a convincing start in addressing the issues raised by the last inspection. Progress has been made on a number of issues raised including the standards attained and achievement of all pupils, but most evidently those of boys and pupils with special educational needs. However, in other areas such as the use and evaluation of different types of historical evidence, the amount of time devoted to the study of the subject and the grasp of chronology, there is little evidence of improvement. The rotational arrangement for the teaching of

history in alternating blocks with geography impedes the development of historical skills. Taken overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, but there is room for further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Exceptional leadership of cross-curricular ICT
- The core skills module used at the start of Year 7
- The ratio of computers to pupils
- Efficient technical support
- The enthusiasm and commitment of staff and pupils to the use of ICT across the curriculum

Areas for improvement.

- The consistency of subject reporting

106. The 2002 teacher assessments show standards to be above the national average. Inspection of pupils' cross-curricular portfolios confirms these assessments. Trends over time show a consistent improvement since 2000. Girls perform better than boys, but boys show the more significant improvement over the past three years.
107. Inspection evidence shows that the standards attained by pupils presently in Years 7 to 9 are improving and are above national expectations, indicating very good achievement. During Year 7 pupils undertake an intensive core skills programme to develop the work they do on two introductory visits, while they were in the primary schools. The programme also prepares for the cross-curricular approach to the use of computers the school has adopted. Pupils say that they found the intensive course very useful and would like a similar foundation at the start of each year.
108. Initially, pupils are introduced to the school's computer system; they learn about word processing and editing, spell checking, saving and retrieving work, graphics, basic control and responsible use of the Internet for research. Many pupils take advantage of the voluntary touch-typing class to improve their speed and keyboard efficiency. Some pupils achieve speeds of 86 words per minute. All subsequent work in ICT is taught as part of a well designed and monitored cross-curricular package that fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Effective use is made of computers to support teaching and learning in almost all subjects. The ICT co-ordinator has supported the cross-curricular use of computers by identifying specific ways in which they can be used to improve the quality of pupils' work.
109. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good. Pupils show their enthusiasm for the subject by attending school clubs with open access to computers. The library is used particularly well. Pupils with special education needs and those with English as an additional language are particularly well motivated towards the use of ICT because the success and accuracy of their work on screen boost their confidence.
110. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils' individual work from all subjects is stored in their personal portfolios and demonstrates very good improvement over time. Teachers' planning takes account of the national initiative for ICT, which is fully integrated as an effective tool for problem solving in all subjects. In a Year 8 tutor period, for example, pupils used ICT to follow up an assembly based on achieving potential. They designed the format for a personal poster to show how they intended to achieve their own potential. Very good teaching skills were used to challenge pupils' use of the correct terminology. Effective use of formatting frameworks, clip art and 'Word Art' illustrated the strength of the school's training programme to promote teachers' ICT skills. Very effective support from the part-time technical assistant provides the staff with added confidence because of the speed with which technical failures are rectified. Overall classroom management is very good; the use of computers encourages independence and self-

discipline. Peripherals, such as scanners, complement computer use, but there is limited access to interactive white boards to support teaching and learning. Assessment is co-ordinated carefully across all subjects. Most subject reports to parents contain a judgement on pupils' ICT progress, plus a specific ICT report. However, this is an omission in the reports of a few subjects, for example the physical education reports.

111. Overall management of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator shows an excellent commitment to the wider use of computers to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and monitors the cross-curricular use of ICT very effectively. The ratio of pupils to computers is very favourable and better than the national average; pupils are able to have individual access in most lessons and this is helping to raise standards. The computer rooms are well planned and teachers have ready access to computers. The energetic approach of the co-ordinator ensures that the use of ICT is firmly embedded in teaching and learning in all subjects. This is providing pupils with a valuable life skill. All issues from the last inspection report have been tackled successfully and the subject has very good capacity for further improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment and pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9
- Teaching and learning and pupils' attitudes to the subject
- Assessment procedures and the marking of pupils' work
- Leadership and management and teamwork
- Excellent links with other schools

Areas for improvement

- More open-ended homework tasks to extend pupils' learning

112. Teachers' assessments for 2002 show standards in French at the end of Year 9 to be well above national averages. There has been a steady trend of improvement, with substantially more pupils reaching above average levels in 2002, and some reaching very high levels. This indicates very good achievement overall. Considerable improvement by boys means that there is no difference in the standards attained by boys and girls, contrary to the national picture. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection.
113. Inspection evidence confirms teachers' assessments. Work seen in lessons and samples of written work show that standards in Year 9 exceed national expectations, and are likely to be well above these at the end of the year. Most pupils acquire knowledge and skills rapidly in Year 7. A strong emphasis on literacy skills helps them to understand how language works, and most transfer skills well to new topics. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils write accounts of holidays, using past and future tenses, and adding opinions. They begin to experiment with language as they draft and redraft essays, using ICT effectively to produce polished final versions. Most higher-attaining pupils speak well in structured situations but do not experiment as well orally as they do in writing, though some evidence was seen of the use of Power Point to make oral presentations. Overall, higher-attaining pupils show very good retention of vocabulary and structures, and this enables them to understand much of what they read and hear in French. Middle and lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, cover the same topics and respond well to high expectations for them to succeed. Their writing includes briefer attempts at accounts, with more difficulty in handling past tenses accurately, but most can communicate clear messages in both speaking and writing. They need more time and repetition in comprehension work, but manage to identify key details in short passages of written and spoken French.

114. Pupils with special educational needs make the same very good progress as their peers. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls, though, in the lessons seen, some of the more rounded oral contributions came from boys, notably in a Year 7 lesson on school uniform. A small amount of Spanish and German is offered as taster lessons to pupils in Years 8 and 9 during the Friday afternoon core skills option time. Written work sampled shows that pupils make good progress in the modules completed.
115. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils respond well to lively teaching. The pace and variety in most lessons help them to sustain concentration through the long lesson. They volunteer answers regularly, with little need for prompting, and this enthusiasm underpins their progress. In exercise books there is very little incomplete work, and most work is neatly presented. Pupils respect the oral contributions of classmates and are not unduly distracted by isolated instances of misbehaviour. A feature of all lessons is the very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and among the pupils themselves.
116. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching, an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers use French consistently to conduct lessons, indicating high expectations from the start of Year 7. Consequently, pupils hear a lot of French and this accounts for good standards in pronunciation. Planning for lessons is very effective, with objectives clearly shared, then revisited at the end of the lesson to give pupils an understanding of their progress. Teachers make very good use of available time to deliver a range of brisk, varied tasks that develop all four communication skills and often promote learning through fun. A Year 8 lesson on the future tense was significantly enlivened by energetic body movement to accompany choral repetition, and a race against time to write as many phrases as possible. Pupils enjoyed themselves as they met lesson objectives.
117. Teachers ensure that all pupils are involved, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or level of attainment, so that progress is equally very good across the attainment range. There is a strong focus on literacy skills, and learning is well supported by the use of a wide range of visual stimuli, including key words displayed on walls, and computers. For example, a Year 9 class spent the final two-thirds of a lesson doing a gap-filling exercise on computers, with a tangible effect on their level of interest and rate of progress. The breadth of learning experiences is increased by a planned focus on the culture of French-speaking countries. Marking is a strength of the department, with all teachers caring and supportive in the way they diagnose errors and provide helpful comments and models to show pupils how they can improve. However, too much homework consists of learning tasks, and opportunities are missed to provide creative and open-ended activities to further accelerate learning.
118. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Detailed policies, schemes of work and planning documents provide strong support for teaching and learning. Monitoring procedures are very good and lead to sharing of good practice, and mutual encouragement. Minutes of meetings show a strong sense of teamwork. Assessment procedures are very effective in informing and involving pupils, so that challenging but realistic individual targets are set. Very good accommodation is enhanced by display, which is well used to support learning. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development, and excellent links with local schools and colleges are used to bring in visitors and foreign language assistants to help in class and put on special events such as a Swedish breakfast, an Italian lunch, and a Chinese calligraphy session. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection, with minor weaknesses regarding the quality of reports and the use of homework diaries successfully rectified. The present team has good capacity for further improvement.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The very high standard of musical productions and events
- The enthusiastic subject leadership
- The use of ICT as an integral part of the music curriculum
- The knowledge and expertise of the subject co-ordinator

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for pupils to perform in lessons
- The management of the less committed pupils
- The range of multi-cultural musical experiences

119. Teacher assessments show that, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the attainment of a large majority of pupils was above national averages. Whilst these results were slightly below those of the previous year, they were above expectations in relation to predicted marks based on standards on entry in Year 7.
120. Inspection evidence shows that standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. The practical nature of the lessons and the use of ICT as an integral part of the activities enable all pupils to achieve well. Those pupils who do not play instruments are able to use ICT to compose, edit and refine their work and consequently achieve in line with or better than those pupils who do play instruments. Pupils in Year 7 were observed discovering the difference between major and minor scales by recording an eight bar melody from 'Song for Athene' by John Taverner over a bass drone. The first four bars are in a major key and the next four bars in a minor key. They then proceeded to copy the original drone and were starting to compose their own major/minor melodies. Pupils in Year 8 were observed using the ICT facilities to enter and perform the melody line of 'Frère Jacques'. This was then copied and layered to create a round in four parts. Pupils then proceeded to compose their own pentatonic melodies and create a round using the same techniques. Pupils in Year 9 compose pieces to non-musical stimuli. In the lessons observed pupils were writing appropriate music for a film score based on 'Macbeth', which they are currently studying for English. Whilst many pupils can define musical terminology and perform their compositions to their peers, they receive very little opportunity to evaluate these performances in class or use the terminology in any written work.
121. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in music lessons in all year groups are generally good. In some lessons a small minority of pupils chatter whilst the teacher is talking, but without hindering the learning of the remainder who listen attentively. Similarly, it is this small minority who require most of the teacher's attention during the practical work, either to repeat the task requirements, or to keep pupils working. In some lessons the teacher pairs lower-attaining and higher-attaining pupils. When this happens higher attainers demonstrate their willingness to help their partners. Relationships among pupils, and between pupils and the teacher, are generally good, although there were occasions when a few pupils, mainly boys, severely tested the teacher's good nature.
122. Teaching and learning in all years are generally good. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and lessons are very well planned and resourced. Tasks are appropriate and are well suited to the needs of most pupils, including the high attainers. They are clearly explained and demonstrated by the teacher, but the full attention of the class might be better maintained if pupils participated in these early expositions. Very good use is made of time and the learning is driven on by the teacher's high expectations, good use of praise and on-going assessment. The quality of lessons is sometimes eroded by weaknesses in the management of small groups of pupils who insist on chattering through a large part of the lesson.
123. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Since the last inspection all of the issues raised have been successfully addressed by the enthusiastic subject co-ordinator. Extra-curricular activities have now achieved such a high standard that they enhance the reputation of the school. This is particularly true of the annual production, which involves over one-third of the pupils. In 2000 the school was invited to contribute to the millennium celebrations in Loughbrough Town Hall where two performances of 'A Day Out' by Willie Rushton were given to great acclaim.

124. Whilst the present curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to achieve to a higher standard, the range of multi-cultural experience is limited to 'The Blues' and Indian music. There are other cultures whose music can offer exciting experiences for pupils. These can also involve the playing of pitched and non-pitched percussion in class without the need for prior acquisition of skills, and give the pupils the opportunity of taking part in a live performance. The subject has very good capacity for further improvements.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning
- Standards of attainment in lessons and extra-curricular activities
- Progress in lessons and over time
- The curriculum and the range and quality of extra-curricular activities
- Leadership and management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of girls by the end of Year 9

125. Teacher assessments for 2002 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be above average. While the assessments of boys were significantly above average, those of girls were below. This has been the pattern for the previous two years. Nevertheless, since 2000 the assessments of girls show a steady improvement.
126. Inspection evidence in lessons and extra-curricular activities shows that standards of attainment are above national expectations. The difference between girls' and boys' standards was less evident in the lessons seen than in the assessments. Careful revision of the curriculum and the extra-curricular programme has provided a wider range of activities. Activities such as dance, girls' football and basketball now appear. These activities, together with the thoughtful approach of teachers to mixed class teaching, have already begun to raise girls' standards, without detracting from those of boys. At the end of Year 9, pupils can plan activities and evaluate their own performance effectively. In athletics they co-operate well in efficient baton changes. They listen very well. Higher-attaining pupils make significant progress in lessons. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs also achieve well. Teaching assistants provide effective support and ensure that all pupils can participate fully in lessons. In a Year 8 lesson pupils showed excellent appreciation of the need for planning to improve performance in middle distance running. Year 7 pupils showed high levels of concentration in javelin throwing. All pupils make good progress over time and in individual lessons. Standards of extra-curricular activities are high, as evidenced by observations of the Year 8 badminton lunchtime tournament as well as the results of the many girls' and boys' school teams. The range of extra-curricular activities provides well for the needs of gifted and talented pupils.
127. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very positive. They are well motivated and keen to learn. They succeed in concentrating very well even in poor weather. Teachers' effective use of time helps pupils to develop their concentration. Support for pupils with special educational needs assists their motivation, performance and experience of success. In a minority of lessons, a small number of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour. Teachers' very good management skills ensure that these pupils do not disrupt lessons. Teachers also ensure that pupils maintain their learning, so that all can benefit from the fast pace of lessons.
128. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lesson planning is excellent and expectations are high. Assessment is used effectively: throughout lessons pupils are kept well informed of the standards achieved. This helps pupils to learn how to evaluate their own performance and set their own targets for improvement. The Year 8 middle distance running skills practice provided an excellent example of this. Teachers dedicate a great deal of their out-of-school hours time to the support of pupils through the exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities.
129. The subject is very well led and managed. Teaching and learning are effectively monitored and a team of highly experienced teachers work well together and plan effectively. They use a wide range of techniques to involve pupils in their own learning. The very good standards seen in the last inspection report have been maintained and indeed improved. The already very strong extra-curricular programme has been extended in a carefully organised way. This has resulted in an excellent range of activities, which involve the vast majority of pupils. Many are involved in several activities. Further work is needed to remove the continuing, although reducing, difference in standards between boys and girls at the end of Year 9. The subject has good potential for further improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The recently revised and improved schemes of work
- Planning for the new Agreed Syllabus and preparation for the assessment of pupils' attainment
- Teachers' lesson planning and the use of time in lessons
- The appointment of teachers with a better match to the needs of the curriculum

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment
- The priority given to religious education in the school curriculum
- The use of assessment to support teaching and learning
- The contribution the subject makes to pupils' spiritual development

130. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is below the standard expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils generally show adequate knowledge and understanding of the major beliefs of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Most pupils know how to interpret the symbolism of religious stories and observances. High attaining pupils are good at giving an account of religious belief and practice. They lack, however, the skills of application and reflection and rarely use more extended writing to show how religious ideas might be relevant to their own experience of life. Many pupils know about pilgrimage and why Christians, Muslims and Hindus visit sacred places. Given that pupils in Year 7 start from a below average level of prior attainment, this represents satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support from teaching assistants and they too make satisfactory progress. However, although they have basic levels of knowledge, their understanding of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and the differences between them, is often confused. Pupils generally are not as good as they should be in applying what they learn about religion to themselves. They lack the reflective skills expected of pupils by the end of Year 9. Pupils have not learned to use the study of religion to discover more about themselves and so the subject does not make the contribution it should to their spiritual development.
131. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Most pupils show the expected degree of maturity and relate appropriately to their teachers and to each other. Most pupils make an effort, work at a steady pace and so gain knowledge of religious beliefs and practices. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally satisfactory, but some display a lack enthusiasm. Pupils generally know what they have to do but many are far from clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers usually manage and motivate pupils to learn, but some lessons lack the challenge and inspiration necessary for good progress and high standards.
132. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall. A good feature of the teaching is that teachers plan lessons well and achieve continuity of learning. Teachers indicate the intended learning outcomes as well as the intended activities of lessons. Teachers generally make good use of time in lessons. For example, in one Year 7 lesson the teacher used the reading – speaking – writing sequence well to help pupils gain knowledge through practice of these basic skills. There are weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. In general, teachers have enough subject knowledge to provide pupils with basic information but do not have the depth of knowledge necessary to set higher levels of challenge. Most teachers also do not recognise the opportunities that arise to develop sensitivity to the spiritual dimension of life through gains in self-knowledge. Because of this the subject does not make the contribution to pupils' spiritual development that it should. Teachers set homework that extends what pupils have learned in class and pupils' work is marked regularly. However, marking rarely refers to the statements of attainment or to the standards expected of pupils at the end of Year 9. As a result, most pupils are uncertain about the present standard of their work and the targets towards which they should be working.
133. Although there are weaknesses in the school's arrangements for the co-ordination and teaching of the subject, the overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is also the co-ordinator of history and was on maternity leave at the time of the inspection. Although not a specialist in religious education, she has worked very hard to revise the schemes of work and these are much improved. She has also made good progress in preparing for the introduction of

the new locally agreed syllabus. The school has timetabled eight different teachers for sixteen lessons of religious education. The co-ordinator teaches four of these and most other teachers teach one or two. These teachers do not meet regularly as a department and the co-ordinator does not have the time to ensure consistency in the teaching of the subject through the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. These are not circumstances in which strengths can be identified and shared and weaknesses tackled in a systematic way. There is no dedicated teaching room for the subject. Religious education lessons are taught in several different rooms and so pupils never have the benefit of being taught in a specialist room. That religious education has had low priority and status in the past is unmistakeable and not enough progress has been made since the last inspection. As a result, pupils do not yet enjoy the opportunities for success they have in other subjects. There is a need for a higher level of specialist input and for the development of the subject to be given a higher priority if improvement is to be made. However, new departmental documentation shows a much clearer sense of direction and purpose. The subject expertise available to the school should be considerably strengthened when the newly appointed headteacher, who is a specialist teacher of religious education, takes up post in September. Staffing in the humanities has been further strengthened by the appointment of a new humanities teacher, who will also take up post in September. The good efforts of the co-ordinator, together with the better match between the needs of the curriculum and staffing possible from September, mean that the capacity of religious education to succeed is likely to improve significantly.