

# INSPECTION REPORT

## FINAL DRAFT

### **ALEXANDRA PARK SCHOOL**

Bidwell Gardens

London

LEA area: London Borough of Haringey

Unique reference number: 131758

Headteacher: Mrs Rosslyn Hudson

Reporting Inspector: Mr G.S. Bignell  
OFSTED inspector number: 1880

Dates of inspection: 11 - 15 November 2002

Inspection number: 249265

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bidwell Gardens London
Postcode:	N11 2AZ
Telephone number:	020 8826 4880
Fax number:	020 8888 2236
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D. Tunstall
Date of previous inspection:	This is the school's first inspection

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1880	Garry Bignell	Registered Inspector	Citizenship Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9275	Candy Kalms	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19499	Barbara Baughan	Team inspector	English	
8076	Terence Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology	
25743	Peter Butler	Team inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught?
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
30553	Rick Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History	
31332	John Marshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Staffing
31688	Brian McGonagle	Team inspector	Art	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

8052	Kenneth McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business education	Assessment
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education English as an additional language	
31850	David Nevens	Team inspector	Music Drama	
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Alexandra Park School opened in September 1999 and now has 652 boys and girls in Years 7 to 10. It serves a diverse community from all parts of the London Borough of Haringey, including some of the most socially disadvantaged areas. Boys significantly outnumber girls in all years except Year 7. Over half of the pupils come from white heritage backgrounds with the largest minority groups being Black (mainly Caribbean) and mixed race. Over one quarter of pupils speak a language other than English at home, but most are relatively proficient in using English at school. The school receives extra money to support 56 ethnic minority pupils, including 4 Traveller children. About one third of pupils are entitled to free school meals: this is much higher than the average for England. About one pupil in five has identified learning needs, which is close to the national average. The main reason for support is emotional and behavioural difficulties, though pupils come with a wide range of needs overall. 32 pupils (about one in 20) have statements of special educational need: this is nearly twice the national average. When pupils start at the school, their overall attainment is lower than average.

As the school has increased in popularity with parents, it has become over-subscribed. More recent intakes of pupils have been from the local area, resulting in a better gender balance and fewer pupils entitled to free school meals. The school is in an *Excellence in Cities* area and achieved *Sportsmark* status in 2002.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school which enables all its pupils to do very well. Standards are much higher than might be expected of pupils with similar backgrounds and prior attainment. This is due to good teaching, excellent leadership and management, high expectations of work and behaviour and a real commitment to ensuring that every single pupil benefits from what is provided and is encouraged to give their best. In its use of resources, the school offers good value for money and is very effective overall.

#### What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress - often from low starting points - and achieve well in all subjects
- Pupils' behaviour is very well managed and most demonstrate good attitudes to learning
- Good teaching and learning are at the heart of the school's success in raising standards
- The school is extremely well led, managed, and governed and there is a clear vision for its future development
- The curriculum has many strengths, particularly the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the range of extra-curricular activities
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well
- Pupils are cared for very well and receive good targeted support for their learning through initiatives such as *Excellence Challenge*

#### What could be improved

- The school library stock does not support good learning in all subjects and pupils' wider reading
- Information for parents on pupils' standards and progress is not always well communicated through school reports
- Some aspects of provision constrain learning, for example the size of teaching groups in some practical rooms and the leaking accommodation for physical education

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first inspection of the school.

## 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			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
End of Key Stage 3 tests	N/A	N/A	C	A

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

The first cohort of pupils to take the Key Stage 3 tests produced exceptionally good results, particularly in English and mathematics. This represents a significant achievement for the school and for its pupils. Standards in art and design and in geography are also above average and there are strengths in Spanish and design and technology. Pupils' work seen in lessons, in books and in displays confirms that standards in all other subjects are in line with those expected for their age.

The challenging targets set by the school for 2002 were exceeded, as indeed were those in English and mathematics set for next year. Although science was the weakest of the three core subjects in 2002, standards are starting to rise significantly. Both boys and girls did better in the tests than their peers elsewhere. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds performed equally well and recorded levels well above the local authority average.

All pupils achieve well, especially when their attainment on entry to the school is taken into account. Many pupils capable of high attainment are working at levels above those expected for their age. Pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well and are keen to make progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress; some gaining two or three National Curriculum levels during Key Stage 3.

In Year 10, the momentum of progress is maintained and pupils have made a solid start to their GCSE studies. This is largely due to very good teaching. The prospects for continued success are good.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils want to learn and do well - as the school expects them to.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons and act responsibly around the school. Some let the school down at times.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are very good. Pupils respond well to what the school provides.
Attendance	Good. Better than the national average and low unauthorised absence.

The school engenders a good response from pupils. The high expectations of standards of work apply equally to behaviour and attitude. The school makes every effort to ensure that pupils take responsibility for their conduct and understand the consequences of their actions. Pupils respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others and their discussions of these issues in class show that they can see things from other people's points of view.

Some pupils present challenging behaviour and are not easy to teach. In general, teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and keep learning on track. The good attendance is a reflection of the stimulating curriculum, good teaching, care for individuals and constant vigilance by staff.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Year 10
Quality of teaching	Good	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 quality of teaching is a significant strength of the school. At Key Stage 3, two lessons in every three are good or better and only three unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In Year 10, four in every five lessons are at least good with many being very good. In all years, some excellent teaching takes place, particularly in English and mathematics. The good teaching accounts for good learning and leads to the significant progress that pupils make. Overall, this happens in about three-quarters of all lessons.

The teaching of basic skills is good in most subjects with very good features in English, science and history. The development of pupils' literacy skills is good across the full range of subjects, reinforcing the high quality of teaching of these skills in the English department. Literacy skills are particularly well taught in art and science. Numeracy is successfully taught in mathematics and across other subjects. In history, pupils confidently handle chronological and statistical analysis; in science and design and technology, pupils accurately record and use numerical data in a variety of applications.

There is good teaching and learning in all areas of the curriculum. In addition to the core subjects, there is much very good teaching in art and design, geography, history and in Year 10 in design technology, ICT and RE. Pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language are taught well, because teachers are familiar with their needs and plan to meet them.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Breadth and balance are achieved at both key stages. Extra-curricular activities are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are assessed accurately and their learning needs are made known to teachers. Support is of good quality.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils are taught and supported well and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils' personal development is promoted through many subjects and in assemblies, registrations and out-of-school activities such as study support.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Many more strengths than weaknesses.

The school offers a rich curriculum which extends beyond the normal school day. Pupils are given many opportunities for enrichment and support. There are some gaps in provision: for example religious education at Key Stage 4 is not fully in place and some aspects of design and technology need to be developed.

The school's links with parents are good and many show an interest in school activities, particularly those involving target-setting and the progress of their children. Reports to parents do not always convey information in a helpful way and ICT is not reported on satisfactorily. Although care for pupils is good overall, some procedures need to be more robust.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. There is a clear vision and a very strong will to succeed. Senior staff keep a very firm focus on learning in everything the school does.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors play a significant role in shaping the direction of the school and hold it to account for its achievements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Effective monitoring systems are in place and good use is made of performance and other data.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are well targeted towards areas of need.

The excellence of the leadership and management of this school has brought it to where it is today. Senior staff encourage all teachers and support staff to give their best in the interests of the pupils. High expectations start at the top and permeate the whole school.

Governors exercise their responsibilities diligently and have an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and development needs. There are some aspects of the school's work which do not fully meet requirements, for example the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. In general, the school uses its money wisely and seeks to get good value from its resources.

The school is adequately staffed with well-qualified teachers and support assistants. All staff are hard-working, committed and constantly striving for higher standards. Learning resources are good, although the library has a poor stock of books to support pupils' learning and to encourage reading for pleasure. Accommodation is sufficient and generally suitable for purpose. There are some problems with leaking roofs in physical education and some practical rooms are too small for class sizes.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high expectations of the school</li> <li>• How well the school is led and managed</li> <li>• The good teaching</li> <li>• The progress made by pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consistency of homework</li> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils</li> <li>• Information about their child's progress</li> <li>• Expansion into a sixth form</li> </ul>

62 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and nearly 200 responded to the questionnaire. Several parents also wrote comments about the school, amplifying their views. Parents hold overwhelmingly positive views of the school and appreciate the hard work of all staff.

The inspection team agrees with the very favourable opinions of parents - they have identified some of the key features of its success. The team also agrees with most of the areas for improvement. There could be a more consistent approach to homework, though the variability is sometimes a result of patchy recording by pupils of work set. Some pupils do act irresponsibly at times and there are incidents of serious misbehaviour, though these are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The fixed-term exclusion rate is high because the school does not tolerate unacceptable behaviour that affects learning. Reports to parents on pupils' progress could be better. Based on the evidence to date, there are good prospects for future success at GCSE and post-16 if the school were to be so designated.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. Many pupils enter Alexandra Park in Year 7 with lower attainment than is expected nationally. After three years at the school, during which they make very good progress, their attainment is much higher than that of pupils in similar schools nationally, and in English, mathematics, art and design and geography, standards are above the average for all schools. There are also strengths in other subjects such as design and technology and Spanish. This is a significant achievement for the school and its pupils.
2. In 2002, the first group of pupils to take the statutory tests in Year 9 did exceptionally well. In English and mathematics, they exceeded their targets at both Level 5 and Level 6. More pupils achieved these levels than on average in other schools. The equivalent of a whole class of pupils achieved Level 7 in English and mathematics, with a slightly smaller number doing so in science. Five pupils in mathematics and one pupil in English achieved Level 8 - the highest National Curriculum level. Whilst girls did proportionately better than boys, the difference is no more than that found nationally. Both boys and girls did better in the tests than their peers elsewhere.
3. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds did equally well and achieved standards well above the average for the local education authority. For example, a significant proportion of Black pupils entered the school below Level 4 (the expected level on leaving primary school) and achieved very good results in the Key Stage 3 tests. This is a notable achievement and is a strong indicator of the school's success in ensuring that all pupils achieve their best.
4. There are 170 pupils in the school who have English as an additional language (EAL). None of these are beginners (stage one), though about 18 pupils are at stage two, and most of these benefit from active support. Their overall progress is good. Very good attitudes and behaviour support their learning. These pupils are keen to get on and consequently they are well behaved and concentrate on the work in hand.
5. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is, characteristically, unequal across subjects, with pupils working below the national expectation. Progress is, however, very good. Most pupils achieve levels ranging from 2 to 7 in core subjects by the end of Year 9, with the majority achieving Level 4. Progress, though variable, is very good. A few pupils advance 3 levels during Key Stage 3. A high proportion progress by 2 levels over the same period. Pupils make significant gains in reading, behaviour, self-help, confidence, and independent learning.
6. The major success of the school so far in relation to pupils' attainment has been the very impressive rate of progress made by many pupils from different starting points - many of which were below average. This "value-added" measure places the school in the top 5% of similar schools nationally. Whatever pupils bring to the school in Year 7, whether it is particular gifts or talents, high prior attainment in certain subjects, or whether they come with specific learning needs, the expectations of the school are very high and everyone works towards achieving the highest possible outcomes.
7. In **English**, standards are above average. Pupils make good progress in acquiring skills in literacy. From a general level on entry to the school that is below the national average, particularly in writing, they gain competence that is above average by the end of Year 9. They speak confidently, using a good range of vocabulary and structures and in small group discussion they listen well to each other, building on each other's ideas to develop their arguments. Their use of technical vocabulary in subjects is good, particularly in science, mathematics, geography and drama. Reading skills develop well and they learn to use reference material, including the Internet. They present written work well and, in most subjects, they write with good levels of accuracy and correctness, although in history and PE there are some weaknesses in writing. There is particularly good independent and personal writing in art, English and science.
8. Standards in **mathematics** are high, with more pupils than expected achieving the higher levels. Work in mathematics lessons is supported very well by the contribution made to pupils' numeracy skills by other subjects, for example, science, history and design and technology. Pupils are

developing their mental agility well and are competent in using calculators in a range of contexts. Whilst standards in **science** were not as high as the other core subjects in the 2002 tests, pupils are now achieving average standards and there are good prospects for continued improvement.

9. In all other subjects, pupils' standards are in line with expectations for their age. This means that their achievement is good, as many pupils have had further to come in order to reach those standards. The very good progress made is directly attributable to good teaching and learning in lessons and, in particular, the high expectations made of pupils of all abilities. Targets set with pupils are challenging and act as a spur to higher achievement. The school has made very effective use of *Excellence in Cities* resources to target groups and individual pupils in order to raise attainment. Initiatives such as *Bringing Boys on Board*, the work of learning mentors, the Student Support Panel and study support arrangements all contribute to keep the focus on learning and to help the school live up to its motto of "Success for All".

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

10. The pupils' good attitudes to learning have a positive effect on the standards they achieve. In all year groups, most pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. They respond well to the good teaching and the encouragement to work hard and achieve to the best of their ability. Pupils are very well motivated and interested in their lessons. They concentrate in class, listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions carefully. They particularly enjoy practical activities such as design and technology, art and design and physical education. Responses of pupils with special educational needs are highly positive, even amongst pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.
11. Pupils participate well in lessons by asking and answering questions and contributing well to discussions. In a Year 10 English lesson, for example, the mature discussion on poems from other cultures both increased their understanding and showed how they were thinking and feeling. There are, however, some occasions when pupils, especially boys, are less interested, become noisy, and are unable to concentrate for the whole lesson. Although their teachers generally manage them well, this affects the learning of the pupils themselves and of other pupils in the lesson.
12. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is satisfactory overall. Behaviour in many lessons during the inspection was good and on occasions it was very good. This contributes significantly to the atmosphere in the school and the quality of learning. Most pupils know how to behave and respond well to the values promoted. The school's clear and consistent approach to behaviour management, for example the consideration of "choices and consequences", is having a very positive effect.
13. Last year, 62 pupils were involved in 114 fixed-term exclusions and one was permanently excluded. This figure is high and illustrates that some pupils re-offend, often because they have difficulties in conforming to the school's high expectations of behaviour. Exclusion is used for the most serious misbehaviour and the school works hard to involve parents wherever possible, to prevent it recurring. There are few reported incidents of bullying or racial harassment, and these are dealt with effectively.
14. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and their teachers are very good. Boys, girls and pupils from widely varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds work together well. Pupils also work well in pairs or in small groups. They share textbooks sensibly, and listen to others' views attentively. They encourage and support each other well, as seen in a science lesson on sources of energy where small groups of Year 10 pupils were observed collating their homework findings. Pupils respect other people's feelings, values, beliefs and points of view. Most pupils are aware of the impact that their actions can have on others.
15. Pupils' personal development is good. They gain an increasing sense of maturity and confidence as they move through the school. They are friendly and polite. They respond well to the variety of opportunities that the school offers to enhance their personal development. For example, Year 8 pupils willingly give their time to act as guides during parents' evenings and each day two Year 8 pupils conscientiously act as school receptionists. Pupil representatives on year group councils understand the issues involved in improving the school facilities.

16. Overall levels of attendance are good. This contributes to the good learning that takes place. Although there are no significant differences between groups of pupils, variations do occur between the different year groups, with Year 7 having the highest level of attendance and Year 10 the lowest at 90 per cent. Punctuality is not as good as it could be with a number of pupils arriving late - some frequently. The school has recognised this and takes rigorous action, including late detentions, to deter latecomers. Many pupils travel a considerable distance to school and this is having a contributory effect on the overall lateness.

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

17. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 3 and very good in Year 10. Some excellent lessons were seen, with only a very small number being unsatisfactory. Overall, almost three out of every four lessons are good or better. Teaching is stronger in Year 10, with eight out of ten lessons judged to be good or better, compared to two thirds at Key Stage 3. This high level of quality is the result of establishing a school culture with learning as the number one priority - clearly seen in the innovative approaches to teaching and learning by hard-working, committed teachers. Good practice is shared among all departments through staff conferences, in-house staff training and curriculum team meetings.
18. In most subjects, teaching and learning are good overall with many very good features. In history and in Year 10 English, teaching is consistently very good. In modern foreign languages and music, teaching and learning have good features, particularly teachers' knowledge and understanding and their planning and expectations. In religious education, teaching and learning are satisfactory or better at Key Stage 3 and very good in Year 10. In design and technology, teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good in Year 10. More able learners are identified and supported through the gifted and talented programme, although those with higher academic ability are not always fully stretched in lessons.
19. The teaching of basic skills is good in most subjects with very good features in English, science and history. The development of pupils' literacy skills is good across the full range of subjects, reinforcing the high quality of teaching of these skills in the English department. The school literacy policy is followed in all subject departments. Literacy skills are particularly well taught in art and science. Subject departments place an emphasis on using correct language and the production of free expressive writing. Pupils generally show good listening skills and express themselves confidently and clearly in all learning situations.
20. Numeracy is successfully taught as an integral part of mathematics lessons. A strength of the provision is the way in which numeracy is applied to situations familiar to pupils. There is no whole school policy at present, but numeracy supports other subjects well; teachers have attended a numeracy awareness day, and many incorporate numeracy in their lesson planning. In history, pupils confidently handle chronological and statistical analysis; in science and design and technology, pupils accurately record and use numerical data in a variety of applications.
21. Teaching and learning in the core subjects are good. In English, strengths include the pace and focus of lessons and the quality of lesson structure and planning. This was seen, for example, in a lesson on one of the set scenes from 'Macbeth', with a thinking activity leading on to the next development and the plenary task fitting perfectly with what had been learned. In mathematics, strengths include the quality of questioning, clarity of explanations related to everyday examples and establishment of homework as an integral part of learning. In science, strengths include the use of starter activities, usually with a literacy focus, the clarity of lesson objectives and the variety and effectiveness of teaching methods. In all subjects, high expectations are made of pupils.
22. In all subjects where teaching was at its most effective, the following features were observed in lessons:
- Good pace from the outset, usually with an appropriate attention-grabbing starter activity quickly settling the pupils to work.
  - A variety of teaching methods suited to the needs of all pupils.
  - Teachers' expertise stimulating pupils' interest.
  - Skilful questioning encouraging pupils to clarify their ideas.
  - Good planning and management of lessons with clear objectives discussed with pupils.

- High teacher expectations encouraging pupils to think points through and work out answers from previous knowledge.

23. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, and in the few unsatisfactory lessons, reasons were:
- Higher attainers not challenged sufficiently by the work set and a failure to provide extension work.
  - An over-emphasis on teacher-centred activity, with pupils becoming passive for periods of time.
  - Ineffective use made of homework and lack of guidance for improving pupils' work.
  - Weaker classroom management.
24. The quality of marking is satisfactory overall, with good constructive comments provided in some subjects such as English and modern foreign languages. It is more variable in science, depending on the teacher, and could be improved in mathematics and history. Homework is generally set on a regular basis and supports classroom learning. It is particularly effective in ICT and RE, though it could be further developed in art and design.
25. Teachers deal effectively with the learning requirements of pupils with special educational needs. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) ensures that staff are well informed and that support teachers are fully involved in the pupils' learning. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers and learning support assistants prepare well and plan their lessons to ensure pupils make the best possible progress. The very good standard of assessment allows teachers to fill specific knowledge gaps. Activities are interesting and well focused. Relationships are good. A climate of praise is rapidly established which supports learning well. The use of specialist resources is a significant strength.
26. In the classroom, learning support assistants help individuals and small groups, mainly in core subjects. Departments have provided comprehensive guidelines for assisting pupils in a range of subjects. The level of liaison between class teachers and support assistants, usually of high quality, falls down, however, when class teachers do not plan sufficiently well to use the learning support to which the pupils are entitled.
27. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are also well supported and make good progress. The quality of EAL teaching is good. The specialist teacher works closely with class teachers in advance to familiarise herself with the content of lessons and to prepare work accordingly. She takes an active role in lessons working alongside subject teachers. As a result, the learning of EAL pupils is good.
28. As specialist EAL teaching is not full-time in the school, support has to be prioritised. This is done on the basis of several factors: individual attainment; the length of time a pupil has been educated in Britain, and pupils causing concern. For example, pupils who have been in Britain for less than 3 years receive a period of targeted support. Where support is provided, the EAL teacher spends most of her time in those lessons where there is a heavy reliance on the use of language, particularly in English and geography.
29. Pupils are also supported in more general ways such as team teaching, and also in the giving of time and advice in order for subject teachers to develop their materials to the best advantage of EAL pupils. There is also additional help available for the pupils at lunchtime and after school. All classroom teachers receive general information about the EAL pupils so that they know who they are and in order for them to plan their work accordingly.

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

30. The overall quality of the curriculum provided for pupils at both key stages is good. There are vibrant aspects which are responsive to the interests, aptitudes and needs of pupils. Statutory requirements are not met for religious education, because the agreed syllabus is not yet fully implemented. Appropriate time is allocated for subjects, most being taught in six mixed-ability groups for Years 7 and 8. Pupils are taught in broad ability groups for mathematics from early in Year 7 and for science and modern foreign languages from Year 9. Class sizes are reduced in Years 9 and 10 by providing eight teaching groups for English, mathematics and science.

31. For Years 7 to 9, the development of English, mathematics and science fully reflects the expectations of the national strategies. In design and technology, pupils lack experience of systems and control and use of computer-aided design and manufacture, but their implementation is planned. One-hour lessons constrain the teaching of food technology. ICT provision is satisfactory overall: in Years 7 and 8 there is a cross-curricular approach, enhanced during Year 9, when specialists begin teaching a two-year GCSE course. All pupils begin a modern foreign language in Year 7 and study an additional language in Years 8 and 9 - this is good provision.
32. In Year 10, all pupils follow a double science course: 26 pupils have taken up the opportunity to study physics, biology and chemistry as separate GCSE subjects by attending after school classes. All pupils in the current Year 10 are following a GNVQ course in ICT. Upon completion of this course, additional time will be allocated to English, mathematics and science in Year 11. In addition to English language and literature, mathematics and double science, pupils choose four further subjects leading to GCSE examination. These are selected from the arts, humanities, technology and modern foreign languages. The school, in consultation with governors, determined the pattern of choices after conducting a pilot survey with the first cohort of Year 9 pupils. This is a further example of how pupils' views and needs are taken into account. Although no pupils have chosen two modern foreign languages, the study of a language is a popular choice. The drama and music provision builds very well on Key Stage 3 experience. GCSE physical education, business studies and media studies are also offered. Less than half the pupils follow the GCSE course in religious studies and there is limited religious education provision for the remainder.
33. The school has begun to provide additional focused support for gifted and talented pupils through membership of an *Excellence in Cities* consortium. In addition, *Excellence Challenge* funding will also provide resources, Internet access and two additional hours study support per week for each of 35 targeted pupils in Year 10. The planning for this is well advanced and the group of potentially under-achieving pupils has been identified.
34. The school has recently appointed a literacy co-ordinator, who works within the Key Stage 3 strategy group, and who has written a draft literacy policy based on good practice already developed in the school. There is a realistic and comprehensive action plan for the Key Stage 3 Strategy which sets out plans, department by department, to implement and consolidate literacy support across all subjects. Attention to literacy is noted in all schemes of work. A range of specific strategies is already in place – such as the use of writing frames in history, geography and English, extensive use in most subjects of displays of technical vocabulary and terminology, and provision of dictionaries in subject rooms. A Key Stage 3 Literacy Booklet informs pupils and parents of the school policy and contains key words from all subjects. In Year 7, there are early morning classes for pupils who have not yet reached an appropriate level in their writing, and in Year 9 there are after-school and holiday sessions for those who need extra help in preparation for the national tests. The overall effect of these strategies on pupils' learning is good.
35. The school provides a rich and varied programme of activities outside the normal school day and educational visits - all of which contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment and the high standards achieved. These include a very good range of sporting and cultural clubs as well as additional support for study for some curriculum areas, for example, in English and mathematics. The sporting opportunities include participation in inter-school competitions, a community dance project, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the Junior Sports Leader Award. High standards were observed when 25 pupils played a mixed basketball game. Music, art and drama activities are well provided for, at lunchtime and after the school day, and more than one hundred pupils avail themselves of additional instrumental lessons. Pupils visit theatres for drama and musical productions and all Year 7 visit the Tate Gallery. The after-school technology club enables pupils to develop their own ideas using resistant materials. Year 10 media studies pupils, together with younger gifted and talented pupils, attend a club with an ambitious project to produce an eight-page supplement for a local newspaper. Residential visits provided by the school include language study in France and Spain, a ski trip and netball and football visits to Holland. A comprehensive and very successful programme of booster and extension classes in English, mathematics and science was provided prior to pupils' taking Year 9 tests.
36. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is satisfactory. It encourages pupils to think about their own attitudes, the impact of their actions on others and about wider social issues, including citizenship. Pupils in Year 9, although not having a lesson each week,



do have a series of focused days that cover important topics such as drugs awareness, and careers guidance. The Year 10 "carousel" of PSHE, citizenship, religious education, careers and sex education has linking themes which enable pupils to make helpful connections between them, for example, discussions of pupils' personal qualities and skills.

37. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good. Most pupils are successfully included in classes with varying levels of support. Some attend progress units in English before and after school, but for those with greater need, there are lessons in phonics or behaviour modification for which they are withdrawn from lessons. There is very good provision for speech and language development. Consistent one-to-one help as specified in statements is given to individuals and small groups to ensure all can benefit from the curriculum.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

38. Overall, the provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are presented with many opportunities to explore their own ideas, attitudes, values and beliefs and those of others in society. They are encouraged to develop a much deeper understanding of feelings and emotions and how these can affect behaviour. Most subject areas help pupils to recognise and accommodate the differences that are to be found in modern society and to respect the integrity of individuals. They operate within a well-structured learning environment that enables them to express their own views and to participate in the decision-making process. They feel that the opinions that they express in the School Council are heeded and subsequently acted upon. The school is highly active in promoting racial, religious and other forms of equality throughout the school curriculum.
39. Provision for spiritual development is very good. It is promoted through assemblies and in the teaching of subjects such as English, art, geography, religious education, physical education and design and technology. Pupils are given ample opportunity for reflection and for self-analysis through their written work in English and also through their self-portrait studies in art. These activities enable them to develop much greater awareness and understanding of feelings and emotions. In dance, pupils express themselves through physical movement and creative activity. In design and technology, pupils explore ideas and concepts that interest them most, such as design ideas that are related to endangered species. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their opinions, express their feelings openly and develop respect for the opinions and views of others.
40. There is very good provision for pupils' moral development. Throughout the school, pupils are given many opportunities to develop good relationships with one another and with their teachers. There are constant reminders of the school's values in posters located in corridors and in classrooms. In drama and music, pupils learn to observe the creative efforts of others in the group and to discuss and evaluate this work. Many topics in drama are directly related to issues of citizenship and moral and ethical dilemmas such as drugs, ageism, gender and anger management. Respect for others is reinforced during lessons. Mature and sensible discussions take place on such diverse topics as selective breeding of animals and human beings, which were linked to practices under the Third Reich in Hitler's Germany. In design and technology, highly significant moral issues, such as those that are related to sustainable technology and to the use of limited natural resources, are regular topics for discussion.
41. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to work as team members and participate fully. In physical education, group work is found in most activities. There are very good links with the community through clubs and inter-school competitions. In music and drama, pupils frequently work together in groups. This helps them develop social and interactive skills, both as team members and team leaders. Opportunities for good debating and brainstorming exercises exist in both subject areas. In science, pupils work co-operatively in small groups. This enables them to gain respect for the work of others and some of the higher-attaining pupils were seen supporting the slower learners during lessons. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. The English department has established good links with one of the local newspapers as a result of which pupils are in the process of preparing an eight-page insert for the newspaper.
42. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Throughout the school pupils are given many opportunities to explore their own culture and other world cultures. In art and design, there are many examples of investigations of the architectural features of buildings, such as St. Paul's Cathedral, in London. They explore African and Asian art in addition to European art. They have

been introduced to the work of Lubna Chowdry who is an Asian potter. In mathematics, work on display includes conversion graphs where pupils accurately compared the relationship between the value of the currency of their own country of origin with pound sterling. In science, teachers encourage pupils to reflect on the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of Britain today and world society in general. This promotes the view that scientific knowledge does not belong to any one single culture. There are very good examples of this in Hindu Astronomical Research and in the fact that steel was produced in Tanzania over 2000 years ago. *Planet Science* is also seen as a very useful resource, drawing attention to the achievements of black people working in the fields of science and technology.

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

43. A high level of care is demonstrated by the school in its inclusive approach to meeting the needs of all pupils, including those with a wide range of learning, emotional and behavioural needs. The procedures for child protection and children in public care are secure.
44. Support for and monitoring of pupils' personal development are very good. A well-organised team structure, in which form tutors play a central role, provides pupils with very good care and pastoral support. Tutors know their pupils well and have a genuine concern for their progress and personal well-being. The directors of studies have overall responsibility for monitoring their year group and maintain an overview of each pupil as they move through the school. They liaise closely with tutors, sharing any issues or concerns at year group meetings and the frequent informal discussions. This ensures important information is shared and enables any emerging problems to be quickly identified and dealt with. Issues and concerns are carefully recorded. The two learning mentors, partially funded through *Excellence in Cities*, provide valuable support for identified pupils who are having difficulties in fulfilling the school's expectations and whose behaviour may lead to exclusion. Pupils' achievements are frequently recognised and rewarded in a number of ways, including assemblies, notice boards in the corridors and newsletters as well as letters and calls to parents.
45. The school is committed to ensuring a safe environment, although the setting up of formal systems is in a transitional stage. As a result, a clear structure has not yet been established, although the LEA health and safety policy has been adopted. Regular arrangements to identify and document health and safety issues are not yet in place and regular risk assessments are not undertaken in all areas. Informal checks of the site and premises do take place and appropriate action is taken where needed. Since the opening of the school, some equipment has not been subject to regular checks. For example, portable electrical testing has not been carried out, but the school now has the equipment to do this. Internet access is secure.
46. The systems to monitor and improve behaviour are good. High standards of behaviour are implicit in the ethos and values of the school. These are made very clear to pupils. The school has worked hard to create a positive environment in which all pupils have the opportunity to learn. A structured behaviour management programme plays a significant part in promoting good behaviour and contributing to the orderly atmosphere in the school. Most pupils understand and respond in a positive manner to the structured system of rewards and sanctions. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are carefully documented using a variety of systems. Form tutors monitor these, and any pupils causing particular concern are referred to the directors of studies. This enables appropriate support to be provided, involving parents where necessary. Pupils and staff spoke of some bullying, but pupils confirmed that any incidents are dealt with appropriately.
47. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is a significant strength. Liaison with feeder schools is excellent. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) is present at a high proportion of annual reviews of pupils in Year 6, so diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses begin before pupils enter the school. Baseline testing of pupils on entry is rapid and reliable, with the almost immediate re-testing of pupils with additional special needs used as a valuable diagnostic tool. As a result of this good practice, the school rapidly establishes a high level of appropriate provision for all pupils with SEN, so that they begin to make immediate progress. The targets which are given to pupils and which appear in their individual learning plans are good, simple, effective and easy to monitor. Pupils' progress towards them is monitored helpfully and effectively. The SENCo produces a rounded picture of pupils' progress and attainment by highly effective use of national curriculum level descriptions, comparison of pupils' progress against the

objectives of the national literacy and numeracy strategies, progress unit assessment and whole school assessment procedures. The learning support assistants make additional and continuous formal assessments of pupils they assist in the classroom. They meet the SENCo regularly for informal reviews.

48. Record keeping for pupils with SEN is comprehensive. Individual records of pupils' attainment and progress include those from previous schools, the wishes of parents, behaviour records, and pupils' own perceptions of the nature of their difficulties. Records are kept of the interventions and information provided by health and social services, voluntary agencies, and the specialist Careers Service. Annual and transitional reviews for pupils who have statements are highly effective and fulfil statutory requirements. As a result of this very good practice, pupils' needs are well known to all teachers. All are enabled it to be fully included in their lessons and to make the greatest progress possible.
49. Managers and curriculum leaders make extensive use of ICT and of information from a wide range of sources to inform planning at all levels and to set targets. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. In their first month in the school, pupils' prior learning and potential are assessed to inform planning for groups and individuals. The use of assessment to guide curriculum planning is good. There is a common marking system which is well understood by pupils, although marking is not linked to National Curriculum levels in all subjects.
50. Target setting for pupils of all abilities is a strength of the school. It is based around a non-teaching day in the Autumn term when all parents and pupils are invited to meet tutors to discuss progress and targets. Strategies which can be used to help pupils attain their targets are also an integral part of these discussions. Parents value this opportunity and the number attending the target-setting day is very high.
51. Current systems for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory, but have been affected by the lack of an education welfare officer. Despite this, daily attendance has been monitored through the electronic registration system and parents contacted if their child is absent. Data on attendance and punctuality have been supplied to directors of studies who have worked with their tutors to follow up unauthorised absences and target those pupils with the more severe attendance problems. The school is committed to improving levels of attendance and punctuality.

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

52. The majority of parents who attended the parents' meeting and responded to the questionnaire have very positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with their children's progress, the school's expectations of hard work and the standard of teaching. They are confident with the leadership and feel the school is helping their children mature. Some parents expressed concerns over homework, behaviour, the information provided on pupils' progress and the links between home and school. Inspection evidence supports the positive views parents have of the school and acknowledges their concerns. In particular, the information received by parents through reports could be improved.
53. The headteacher and staff recognise the value of a close partnership with parents. In the relatively short time the school has been established, good links have been developed and have helped support the standards achieved. The very good induction process for Year 7 pupils establishes initial links and, together with the home-school agreement, clearly defines the expectations the school has of parents. They are made clear about the role they have in supporting their child's learning both at home and in school. The school's strong pastoral monitoring systems ensure that contact is made with parents of those pupils whose behaviour or achievement are causing concern as well as when their child has achieved well. Many parents have responded positively to the school's high expectations. They ensure homework is completed, willingly discuss their child's individual targets by attending the annual target-setting day and use the pupil planners to communicate between home and school.
54. Parents are welcome to attend tutor group assemblies, although few actually do so and parents of pupils in Year 9 responded well to the invitation to attend the graduation ceremony and the GCSE options evening. A supportive parents' association organises events that raise funds for the school's use, subsidises school trips and purchases prizes for Year 9 pupils' graduation. A large

number of parents from ethnic minority backgrounds are not yet being used as a resource to support their own culture within the school. A small group of African Caribbean parents did, however, respond positively to *Bringing Boys on Board* and to an *Excellence in Cities* initiative aimed at improving their child's achievement.

55. The information the school provides for parents is satisfactory. Monthly newsletters keep parents informed about school matters, diary dates and forthcoming events. There is a helpful induction booklet for parents and pupils in Year 7. The school prospectus, included in the local authority compendium brochure, provides useful information about the school. Good quality booklets provide details of the curriculum, although some parents would welcome this more regularly in order to support their children's learning at home more effectively - as happens with pupils with SEN. Interpreters are available at meetings, arrangements can be made to translate documents and some standard letters are available in community languages, but written communication between the school and the many parents for whom English is an additional language is not routine.
56. Parents receive three styles of written reports. The first, issued prior to the target-setting day, provides a brief, but useful, overview of effort and attainment. Secondly, parents receive an annual written report that, although giving more detail, has some shortcomings. A third report issued at the end of the school year reports examination results. Reports do not consistently provide information about progress in the skills of a subject or give enough information on strengths and weaknesses. They do not report on information and communication technology in Years 7 and 8. In addition to the annual target-setting day, each year group holds one consultation evening for parents to discuss their child's progress with both tutorial and subject staff.
57. The school works in partnership with the parents of pupils with SEN very well and procedures are a significant strength. Parents are fully involved in a joint home/school learning approach. All pupils with SEN who have statements have a key worker who liaises effectively with parents on a full range of issues to ensure their wellbeing and progress. The induction of pupils with SEN into the school fully incorporates the views of parents. Review procedures of pupils' statements and the production of their transitional statement involve parents fully. Almost all attend review meetings. Parents' views are actively sought and willingly given in the interests of the pupils. Excellent curricular links enable parents to help pupils with SEN at home, which improves their progress. Parents fully support pupils in extra curricular activities, which effectively promotes their personal development.

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

58. Leadership, management and governance are very good with many features of excellence. The school would not be as successful as it is today without the excellent leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and other teachers with responsibilities throughout the school. The clear vision which drives the school is shared by staff, governors and many pupils. This vision is underpinned by high expectations of everyone - staff, parents and pupils - and embraces all aspects of the school's work. The strong ethos for learning is evident when walking around the school, when talking to pupils or staff and when considering the standards achieved.
59. The school has clear aims which inform the Code of Conduct. These relate to the importance of learning as a lifelong process, mutual support and respect, developing a strong sense of responsibility and recognising the contribution and achievements of individuals. The extent to which these aims and values are reflected in the life of the school is most impressive. Displays, pupils' work, school documents, attitudes of staff and pupils, the quality of teaching and learning and the achievements of pupils - all demonstrate how the school aims are being realised in a very practical way.
60. In its unrelenting desire to raise standards, the school has set challenging targets for improving performance in subjects and in attendance. Good use is made of data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of action taken to achieve these targets - an electronic database on the school's intranet is accessible to all staff and is fully used. There are good systems for checking on the quality of teaching and learning and the progress made by pupils through lesson observation, looking at teachers' planning and reviewing pupils' work. Through this process of monitoring and

review, appropriate priorities have been agreed for improvement. These are supported by very good financial planning and a programme of staff development.

61. Performance management of staff is well in place and links to whole school priorities such as producing Key Stage 4 schemes of work and behaviour management. Learning support assistants and learning mentors will soon be included in this process. Staff new to the school receive very thorough guidance on school procedures and newly-qualified teachers confirm they are very well supported in their work. This is likely to be an ongoing need as the school continues to grow. The annual staff conference held in the Summer term is a very effective way of reviewing the progress made over the past year and setting out the priorities for the year ahead. This year, it was also an opportunity to launch new developments for the school such as citizenship and the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
62. A major focus for the school has been implementing the national strategy for Key Stage 3 and this has brought tangible benefits to classroom practice. There is a clear and well-structured development plan, organised and overseen by the strategy manager and the literacy co-ordinator, who lead a cross-curricular planning group. The role and responsibilities of key staff are clearly defined and details of the action plan are distributed to all staff. Objectives for the current year are realistic and appropriate and very good progress has already been made in meeting them.
63. The governing body has made a major contribution to the successful development of the school since it opened three years ago. Through effective lobbying, persuasion and negotiation, governors and senior staff have secured good facilities for pupils and quality services to support the daily running of the school. Governors take great pride and interest in the school's achievements and have a comprehensive understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Through committees and working parties, they are helping to shape the school's future direction and plan for further success. With relatively minor exceptions, such as the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, the governing body fulfils its statutory duties.
64. Teaching and support staff are well qualified and are timetabled to match their expertise. The recruitment of suitably qualified teachers to fully staff the curriculum has presented challenges because of the national shortages in some subjects. Despite this, the school has successfully recruited high quality staff due to the rigour of the selection process and the very good reputation enjoyed by the school. All staff are hard-working, committed and constantly striving for higher standards. The low absence rate is commendable. Many teachers are in the early stages of their careers: dynamic, versatile and ambitious. This professional energy is recognised and harnessed by senior staff through the allocation of responsibilities such as primary liaison, environment, Duke of Edinburgh Award and co-tutoring. Teachers with responsibility for leadership of a subject or curriculum area are highly skilled and forward-thinking. They carry out their role efficiently and effectively.
65. The Directors of Studies for each year group fulfil a key role in the school. Several hold additional responsibilities such as assistant headteacher, gifted and talented education co-ordinator or *Connexions* co-ordinator. Their role is wide-ranging and includes attendance and punctuality, behaviour management, monitoring progress and liaison with parents. As such, they are able to maintain a holistic view of pupils and keep the focus squarely on achievement. They progress through the school with their year group, thereby enabling strong continuity and coherence. The role is well conceived and conscientiously exercised.
66. Management of the provision for SEN is very good. All statutory requirements are fully met. Departmental documentation is of a very high standard and contains guidelines particularly helpful to all staff. The school and its governing body are fully aware of their roles and the procedures and responsibilities within the department. The SENCo is highly effective. She supports the school's success in the field of SEN by helping to promote a whole school culture which expects all pupils to be included in active and successful learning. She initiates and communicates principles of best practice to all staff. Her management of procedures, staff and resources promotes the high quality learning for all pupils with SEN seen during the inspection.
67. Induction, training and deployment of staff are a significant strength. For example, the school's team of learning support assistants is particularly well trained. All have access to professional courses available to teachers, and all have attended training on the recently introduced strategies for Key Stage 3. A high proportion intend to become teachers. Other courses taken recently by

learning support assistants range from Down's and Asperger's syndromes to behaviour management and locally arranged courses to help them with day-to-day strategies in the classroom. A key strength is their deployment in their areas of qualifications and interests. Record-keeping and teamwork are of a high standard and lead to efficient interventions and curricular continuity

68. Induction of learning support assistants is excellent. Day-to-day management is good and organised by a senior learning support assistant. A career structure is being developed to aid professional development and retention of personnel. Learning resources are a significant strength. The school has specially adapted computers to help with literacy skills. Other resources, not usually seen in mainstream schools, are on hand to help those with particular difficulties. These were well used and seen to be highly effective during the week of the inspection.
69. Learning resources for subjects are generally good, being of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the demands of the school curriculum. A notable exception is the school library, which has an insufficient range of fiction and non-fiction to support good learning and encourage pupils to read more widely. There is currently a good ratio of computers to pupils and they are well used both during and out of lessons. The new Study Centre has good potential to become a focus for research-based and independent learning.
70. Accommodation is sufficient for the current number of pupils on roll and is generally of good quality. The site manager works many hours and plays a role well beyond that normally expected. She is a real asset to the school and ensures that the premises are well maintained and clean. Classrooms are reasonably spacious and well equipped. Some specialist rooms, for example in technology, are too small for the number of pupils in classes which use them. ICT rooms are large, but have inadequate ventilation. Whilst physical education facilities are generally good, there are problems with leaking roofs and some outside areas are prone to flooding.
71. The school benefits from very good financial management and keeps within budget. The newly-appointed business manager, who is a member of the senior team, provides good quality and regular information to the governors and headteacher and keeps expenditure under review. The school makes very good use of available resources and specific funds to support effective learning. The resources to support pupils with special educational needs, for example, are very well targeted and clearly lead to very good outcomes. Resources support whole school development planning and appropriate decisions are taken, based on priorities. The principles of best value are considered when major projects or services are reviewed - most recently this was the case when the school meals contract was awarded. The school spends its money wisely.
72. The currently high expenditure costs per pupil are distorted by the fact that the school is still expanding. The school adds value to pupils, enabling them to make very good gains in achievement during their time there. This makes the school highly effective and shows that good value is provided for the money spent.

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

73. In order to maintain the progress made by the school so far and to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
  - (1) Improve the school library stock in both fiction and non-fiction in order to support high quality learning and encourage pupils' wider reading. (Paragraph 69)
  - (2) Ensure reports to parents provide (a) good quality information about pupils' progress against national curriculum criteria, (b) an explanation of the significance of test marks where given, and (c) appropriate information on attainment and progress in information and communication technology. The language used in some reports is not easily understandable to all parents and could be improved. (Paragraph 56)
  - (3) Take steps to remove the constraints on otherwise high quality provision by ensuring (a) that food technology lessons are of an adequate length, (b) that class sizes in practical subjects (technology, art, drama) can be safely accommodated in the rooms available,

(c) improvements are made to the accommodation, especially ventilation in ICT rooms and the water penetration in physical education areas, and (d) that regular risk assessments are undertaken in subject areas and safety checks on equipment. (Paragraphs 45, 70, 113)

The school should also consider the following additional areas for development:

- Compliance with statutory requirements in religious education by ensuring the Agreed Syllabus is fully in place. (Paragraph 30)
- Compliance with National Curriculum requirements in design and technology by including electronics, systems and control and that part of the programme of study in ICT to “measure, record, respond to, control and automate events”. (Paragraphs 113, 144)
- Providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. (Paragraph 63)

## **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

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

Number of lessons observed

135

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

50

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	44	50	34	3	0	0
Percentage	3%	33%	37%	25%	2%	0%	0%

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

### ***Information about the school's pupils***

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

Y7 – Y10

Number of pupils on the school's roll

652

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

217

#### **Special educational needs**

Y7– Y10

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

32

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

123

#### **English as an additional language**

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

170

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils

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

18

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

16

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	98	62	160

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	71	60
	Girls	53	47	40
	Total	117	118	100
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73.1	73.8	62.5
	National	66	67	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34.4	48.1	29.4
	National	32	45	33

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	72	63
	Girls	50	49	44
	Total	114	121	107
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71	75	67
	National	67	70	67
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32	38	29
	National	32	44	34

**N.B. This is the school's first cohort to take the Key Stage 3 tests and teacher assessments.**

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
248	21	0
12	0	0
100	14	0
42	6	0
5	0	0
12	0	0
16	9	1
11	3	0
6	0	0
13	0	0
18	0	0
79	41	0
23	6	0
16	0	0
1	0	0

Any other ethnic group	
No ethnic group recorded	

7
43

0	0
14	0

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

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y10

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.2:1

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y10

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	496

#### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y10

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.8
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#### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y10

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	20.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	1916217
Total expenditure	1848453
Expenditure per pupil	4433
Balance brought forward from previous year	106081
Balance carried forward to next year	173845

### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	652
Number of questionnaires returned	196

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	48	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	48	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	49	12	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	50	14	2	5
The teaching is good.	40	47	3	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	43	10	2	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	36	6	5	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	27	2	1	5
The school works closely with parents.	36	41	11	5	7
The school is well led and managed.	54	35	4	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	44	3	2	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	42	6	1	11

## 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

- Leadership and management of the subject are very strong.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Key Stage 4.
- Pupils make very good progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- The roles of support staff in lessons need developing.

74. Standards in English for individual pupils are very varied when they enter the school in Year 7. A good proportion have done well in the tests taken at the end of primary school. These pupils have wide vocabulary, speak well, are good readers and often good writers. However, there are also substantial numbers who, while reaching standards in reading appropriate for their age, have problems with writing. A smaller number have limited competence in both reading and writing. The overall level of attainment in English at this stage is below national averages.
75. By the end of Year 9 the picture is considerably improved. Pupils at all levels, including those with special educational needs and those whose home language is not English, have made good progress in three years. The school runs special classes in Year 7 for pupils with difficulties in reading and spelling, currently taken by members of the support department before school in the morning. In the period leading up to the national tests in Year 9 there are extra classes for those whose attainment is still below the appropriate level. These extra classes are clearly effective. Results in English in the recent tests for fourteen-year-olds were above the national average. Compared with results of schools in similar contexts, they were well above average. Work seen during the inspection confirms these results.
76. From early in Year 7, pupils are expected to think carefully about their use of English. All lessons start with short activities that focus attention on technical details of expression, such as vocabulary and spelling, effectiveness of different sentence structures and correct use of grammar in standard English. Reading skills are improved by the range of literature studied and by the analysis of content and style. It is in writing that the greatest progress is made: pupils learn to present their work well, to apply their growing knowledge of language and, most importantly, to draft and redraft their work in order to improve it - ICT is used well for this purpose. Overall, pupils make very good progress in English.
77. Work in the first three years of the school gives excellent preparation for the two-year GCSE course and the work of pupils in Year 10 is extremely promising. They are writing with confidence and conviction, structuring their pieces well, and showing good understanding of the basic rules, and the possibilities, of using English. All pupils take GCSE courses in English and in English literature. In three lessons seen studying poems from the GCSE Anthology, pupils showed very good understanding and critical appreciation of content, and very good knowledge of poetic imagery and use of pattern in structure. Some pupils are taking media as a further examination choice. Here too, the class seen was working with commitment and enthusiasm that extended beyond the lesson itself into the lunchtime meeting of the editorial committee producing work for the local newspaper.
78. Teaching is good overall. In Key Stage 4 it is very good, and in Key Stage 3 it is good, with very strong features. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, three-fifths were judged good or better and just over half very good or excellent. Lessons at all stages are very well planned and structured. The courses in both key stages are jointly planned and followed by all the teachers, but within the schemes teachers choose the focus particularly suited to their own strengths and to the needs of the class. There are always specially structured tasks to enable pupils with difficulties to cope with the work, and in most lessons there are opportunities for the more competent to explore the topics further. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils and are reviewed at the end of the lesson. All rooms contain lively displays of

stimulating posters and language prompts, as well as displays of pupils' work. Teachers use a variety of materials and approaches and this adds to the sense of pace and purpose in lessons. There are high expectations of standards to be reached, both in the lessons themselves and in the resulting independent work. Marking of written work is clearly focused and helpful; there is consistent practice across the department in making comments about content and effort, setting targets for improvement, and often indicating the National Curriculum level pupils are reaching. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and, in most lessons, the pupils respond with commitment and similar enthusiasm. Pupils with special needs, and pupils from overseas who are at early stages of learning English, are well supported by specialist teachers and teaching assistants. In some lessons, there is a need for more active involvement by support staff.

79. Leadership and management of the department – which comprises a range of experience and expertise - are very good. The head of department and her deputy are fully committed to the priorities set by the school and have worked hard to ensure that the scheme of work and the teaching approach in English reflect the school's high aspirations. Good use is made of the attainment data available in the school in order to check the progress of individual pupils. The department has responded very positively to the national strategy for improving pupils' literacy in Key Stage 3 and is taking an effective lead in establishing good practice across the whole school curriculum. It also makes a very good contribution, through its approach to the study of literature, to the opportunities the school offers for pupils to develop awareness of spiritual, moral and cultural issues.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- High expectations of pupils and the focus on developing pupils' ability to learn independently.
- The study of the subject is in contexts that reflect the interests and cultural backgrounds of the pupils.
- Pupils work diligently: by adopting the high standards of presentation and explanation of their teachers they learn well and make good progress.
- Very good relations between pupils and teachers, working in an inspiring mathematical environment, support pupils' learning.
- Very good subject management; the teachers are industrious and enthusiastic.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' work should be marked so that it is always clear what is correct.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work should include indications of the standard achieved.
- Teachers should always ensure that talented pupils are challenged and that suitable support is provided for those with special educational needs.

80. Year 9 pupils attained good average standards in the 2002 national tests. They did exceptionally well compared with pupils in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 and above is good compared with that of pupils nationally. Pupils come to Alexandra Park School with below average standards in mathematics overall: they progress well. Boys and girls reach similar standards, pupils with special educational needs achieve well; five talented pupils attained the highest level - Level 8.
81. Fourteen-year-old pupils have a very good range of skills and understanding rooted in the study of mathematics in familiar situations. The standard of work seen during the inspection is in line with and occasionally better than that recorded for the 2002 tests. Pupils present their written work including investigations with clarity, using correct mathematical terminology. Their numeracy skills include agility with mental questions, precision in calculations and proficiency in using calculators, which they apply well in science and design technology. Calculations using Pythagoras' Theorem are applied to problems in which pupils deduce information required from pictures, text and diagrams. Pupils can interpret and construct statistical diagrams such as pie charts and some understand the concepts of cumulative frequency. Data handling skills are used well in history to consider Civil Rights issues and in French to compare breakfast habits.

82. The GCSE course builds rapidly on pupils' understanding of Key Stage 3 concepts and skills. Early in Year 10, higher attaining pupils understand more complex algebra involving indices, factors and solution of equations. Spatial concepts are understood well by pupils including those with special educational needs who can justify their reasoning by referring to diagrams. Concepts of probability and skills in constructing questionnaires are being developed well. ICT is used well to construct graphs and spreadsheets.
83. Teaching is good overall, resulting in very good and excellent learning, particularly with Year 10 pupils. Typically, pupils are inspired to achieve just that little bit more than might be expected. Pupils learn well because their teachers know how to develop understanding, have very high expectations of them and plan their teaching accordingly. Most lessons begin with an interesting 'starter' activity reviewing a skill required for the main topic to be studied. Very good resources to underpin learning and a range of progressive tasks are used well to engage pupils' interest and involvement. During the inspection, these techniques were used to very best advantage for less capable pupils, reviewing their understanding of fractions before studying pie charts and for higher attaining pupils drawing upon a range of techniques in order to simplify complex algebraic fractions. Teachers emphasise the correct use of mathematical terminology; they give very clear explanations, illustrating them well with appropriate examples. Pupils respond with attentive enthusiasm. Lower attaining Year 10 pupils can, for example, compare the properties of quadrilaterals, competently using mathematically correct descriptions in various contexts.
84. In a minority of lessons, talented pupils spend too long reviewing topics in which they are already competent, for example by practising addition of numerical fractions before moving to algebraic examples. Others were given too much guidance to find lengths in spatial problems. The support given to students with special educational needs is very effective in helping them to focus on topics, but sometimes lacking in mathematical suggestions to develop understanding to advantage. Teachers should ensure that pupils are aware of the correct answers so that their books show what they have completed successfully and where errors have been made. Although pupils are given an indication of targets and the quality of their work, they need more detail in relation to National Curriculum expectations.
85. Excellent relations between pupils and teachers ensure that time is used to the advantage of pupils' learning throughout lessons. Consequently, pupils express themselves confidently, experience success and enjoy the study of mathematics. The displays in the mathematics area are testimony to the scope of their work. Colourful tessellations, attractive curve stitching and isometric representations illustrate pupils' aesthetic experience with mathematical shapes. Interesting displays of currency conversions reflect the international background of pupils' heritage at the same time as comparing quantities of contrasting proportions. Photographs provide pupils with a reminder of mathematical games they have experienced; concepts of probability have also been extended through discovery of games popular in different countries worldwide.
86. The team of mathematics teachers is led very well. They work strategically and collaboratively with abundant enthusiasm demonstrating the extent of their skills and specialisms. A particular strength is the sharing of excellent ideas to the advantage of pupils' learning, using extensive resources and activities in their teaching, to this end. Investigative work is given appropriate emphasis and computers are used to extend specific skills such as constructing spreadsheets and to underpin learning in mathematical topics. There is a generous provision of after-school support on an individual basis and structured additional classes to help prepare for the tests for 14-year-olds. Pupils enjoy success at all levels because of enthusiastic teachers who have ambitious expectations of them.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the department.
- Good teaching with well structured lessons and a range of activities.
- Good learning: pupils build up their knowledge and understanding effectively.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient challenge to higher attaining pupils to achieve their full potential.
- Lack of sharply focused targets for improving pupils' work.

87. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work is in line with expectations. In the 2002 national tests results were just below average when compared to all schools, but well above average when compared to schools in similar social circumstances. In comparative terms, the percentage of pupils attaining at Level 6 and above was better than at Level 5 and above. Performance in the school in science is currently below that in mathematics and English. Pupils show good scientific knowledge and understanding and enjoy the subject. Year 7 pupils use correct scientific language, think logically and express themselves clearly when discussing relative energies in foods, related to their own diets. In Year 8, they showed good scientific reasoning when exploring and explaining medical and non-medical situations in which breathing is difficult, and Year 9 pupils enjoyed a pleasurable and effective learning experience comparing pulse and breathing rates before and after exercise.
88. In Years 7 to 9, pupils make generally good progress in lessons. Achievement throughout the year and progression based on prior attainment are good. Results show that girls slightly outperformed boys in the 2002 SATS results, but there now appears to be no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress based on results on entry to the school.
89. In Year 10, the standard of work seen is average with pupils making good progress and achieving well based on prior attainment. The performance of pupils of all abilities in the recent mock tests prior to the first external GCSE modules has been encouraging. All pupils are following a GCSE double science course at either higher or foundation tier level and a group of 26 pupils are taking additional studies enabling them to take GCSEs in the three separate sciences. In a triple science lesson, these higher attaining pupils showed very good research skills in a problem-solving approach to a task on animal feeding strategies. In a second set, pupils aiming mainly for foundation tier learned effectively by playing a board game on the topic of respiration in which they had to describe key words by either drawing or speaking non-stop for thirty seconds. A feature of lessons in all years is the ability of pupils to express themselves clearly and confidently as they respond to questions which draw out knowledge from within.
90. Attitudes to learning and pupils' behaviour are good. There is a friendly and supportive working atmosphere in lessons. In group activities, pupils are co-operative and show respect for each other. Pupils are interested in science and the learning and teaching approaches which are adopted build on the pupils' enjoyment of the subject. In all years, pupils quickly settle down to work as they carry out the starter activity included in all lesson plans and they maintain good concentration throughout the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons. They make good progress, receiving planned and directed support from teachers and support staff.
91. Learning and teaching are good, and equally good in different year groups. Pupils acquire good levels of skills, knowledge and understanding as they are taught by teachers with high expectations and very good subject expertise. Work is sufficiently challenging for most pupils, but opportunities are sometimes missed to fully stretch the high attainers. In some lessons, worksheets with questions at different levels are used. Questioning is good and encourages the pupils to work out answers based on previous knowledge. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives which are discussed with pupils and checked to see if they have been achieved at the end of the lesson. A variety of activities and teaching approaches are used to meet the needs of pupils with different learning styles.
92. The teaching of basic skills is very good. Literacy is strongly promoted in all years with good examples of expressive writing as in "the voyage of a chicken sandwich" approach to the teaching of digestion; key word lists are displayed in all laboratories and starter activities include "odd word out", "because" sentences and "correct labelling" exercises. Pupils have the necessary numeracy skills to support work in science as illustrated by accurate and confident graphical work. ICT and its applications, although still at a developmental stage, already include the use of a number of supportive learning programmes in all years and excellent data-logging facilities are soon to be available. The quality of marking of books varies. In some there are supportive and informative comments to help pupils improve, in others little more than an acknowledgement of

work completed. Systems for assessment of pupils are in place, but the use of ongoing assessment and target-setting following the monitoring of performance needs sharper focus.

93. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear sense of direction for the department and strong staff commitment to improving the subject. There is a noticeable promotion of high standards in all aspects of the department's work. Staffing is good, although, as the department continues to grow, the balance between subject specialisms of staff will need to be monitored. Technician support is good. All science teaching takes place in laboratories which are well maintained, contain good and informative wall displays and generally provide a stimulating environment. These contrast with the areas and corridors outside the laboratories which are not attractive to pupils. Learning resources are good in terms of apparatus, equipment and textbooks; however collaboration with the library needs to be developed to support pupils' learning.
94. The recent implementation of the Key Stage 3 Science Strategy means that the department has had to carefully review its position. The focus on literacy, numeracy and the increasing use of ICT in science teaching along with the emphasis on the structure of lessons are important elements arising from this review. They are amongst ten main priorities identified by the department to provide the highest possible quality of learning and teaching in Key Stage 3. To date, progress is good.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teachers possess good subject knowledge that informs teaching and improves learning.
- Planning prior to lessons is very good and teachers make very good use of exemplar material.
- Objectives are clearly set for pupils so they know what must be done.
- Management of time and resources is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Review the content of some lesson plans as some activities are too difficult for pupils.
- Create opportunities for all pupils to communicate their ideas and express feelings through ICT.
- Further refine assessment, recording and tracking procedures.

95. At the start of Year 7 pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in art and design that are below the national average for pupils of their age. In the initial stages, basic drawing and painting skills are underdeveloped and pupils experience some degree of difficulty in producing accurate studies of simple objects. However, due to their enthusiasm for art and design, they make rapid progress in Year 7. Most make a concentrated effort to acquire new knowledge and improve their basic drawing and painting skills. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work is above national expectations. Thus achievement is very good between the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 9. In 2002, the number of pupils who achieved Level 5 and above at the end of Year 9 was above the national average. Boys' attainment was above that of boys' attainment nationally, but below that of girls' attainment in the school. Girls' attainment was well above that of girls nationally. The figures for 2002 show that girls' attainment was much higher than boys' attainment in the subject.
96. In Year 8, there is evidence of sound improvement in the standard of work produced. Pupils work with greater confidence, are more productive and work at a good pace. They are much better at extending work over longer periods of time. Some are beginning to demonstrate the capacity for thinking and learning for themselves and for working with some degree of independence. Most are producing work of a standard that is broadly in line with national expectations.
97. By the time pupils reach Year 9, they are productive and work well to acquire new knowledge and improve their skills in drawing and painting. In one lesson seen, they were making very good progress. They had used a digital camera to record images that had then been scanned into the computer and manipulated and altered using a software package called *Photoshop*. These pupils were making excellent use of modern technology to create highly personal and individual images that enabled them to communicate concepts and ideas and to express feelings. Pupils are producing work of a standard that is above national expectations.



98. Pupils with special educational needs work well to develop their potential to the full. Teacher expectations are high and very good support is provided for these pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are producing art and design work of a standard that is well above the national average. Pupils with English as an Additional Language work very well and are making good progress.
99. In Year 10, pupils make good progress and attainment is above the national expectations. They work well, are productive and work at a good pace. However, some activities that have been set for pupils are too challenging for their ability level. Many pupils are beginning to make very good use of photography as a learning tool that enables them to collect information and communicate ideas. One pupil has produced an interesting set of photographic images in her visual diary of a study based upon the theme of movement. Others have excellent research work in their visual diaries that combines text and visual imagery. These show that many pupils spend a considerable amount of time conducting independent research away from the art studios. They are making very good use of photography, and gaining in confidence in the production of images that are based on their own ideas, concepts, attitudes, values and beliefs.
100. Teaching ranges from good to very good and is very good overall. Teachers display real enthusiasm for the subject and there are many strengths in teaching. There is evidence of very good organisation within the department. Teachers are very well informed and possess good subject knowledge which has a very positive impact on learning. They are familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum and with the GCSE examination specifications at Key Stage 4. Clear objectives are set for pupils at the start of each lesson, which results in very good learning, as pupils know what they are expected to do. However, more could be done to encourage pupils to spend more time working independently at home away from the art studios. The regular setting and marking of homework would help this process.
101. In general, pupils' attitudes are very positive and behaviour is very good. The majority enjoy their art and design lessons and apply themselves readily to the tasks that are set by their teachers in order to help improve the standard and quality of their work. Pupils in Year 7 make very good progress because they are interested in the subject and because of good teaching and good classroom control.
102. Leadership and management are very good. In spite of some recent staffing difficulties, there has not been any noticeable decline in the overall standard of pupils' work. With the recent appointment of a new member of staff, greater stability has been restored to the department. Although very good use is being made of ICT in Year 9, pupils in Years 7 and 8 should also be given ready access to these resources. Assessing and recording procedures are good at present, but they could be improved even further by recording greater detail in respect of pupils' levels of attainment. In turn, this information could be used to set more accurate targets for individual pupils.
103. Accommodation is good in terms of the space provided in the two art studios. However, there were many occasions during the inspection when the available space was inadequate due to large class sizes of twenty-seven and twenty-nine pupils. Inevitably, this has some impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Although resourcing is quite good at present, the range of art, craft and design activities on offer to pupils could be extended to include silk-screen printing, photography and greater opportunities for pupils to generate images through the use of computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers within the confines of the art studios themselves.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

Strength
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- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The successful introduction of the subject into the school curriculum.</li> </ul> |
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104. As citizenship has only been taught as a subject since September 2002, there is limited evidence on which to base a judgement on standards. However, it is clear from work seen during lessons and in samples of books that pupils in all year groups are working at the standards expected for their age. Even at this early stage, many pupils are demonstrating that they are able to take part

effectively in school and community-based activities such as the School Council. There is some good use of ICT, for example the creation of a poster using word processing and "clip art".

105. In Year 7, pupils are introduced to basic concepts and their definitions such as democracy, electoral systems and communities. In Year 8, these are extended to include different forms of government, the importance of rules and the characteristics of good citizens. Pupils are beginning to develop a broad understanding of the principles underlying social structure and issues such as conflict and discrimination. Year 9 are to be taught citizenship through a series of focus days throughout the year when their normal timetable is suspended and they spend the entire day working on a theme. It was not possible to observe these during the inspection.
106. In Year 10, citizenship is taught as part of a "carousel" of related subjects such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), careers, sex education and religious education. Topics covered within these lessons, include war and peace, crime and young offenders, drugs and equality of opportunity. Pupils spoken to were able to see the connections between many of these themes and this helped to reinforce their learning. For example, during a good lesson about "peace", pupils explored the differences and similarities between the stances taken by major world religions towards war and peace and could see how people's beliefs influenced their social behaviour.
107. Pupils show great interest in citizenship topics and this is due in large measure to the stimulating way in which the subject is taught. Their behaviour is good, often very good, and their attitudes are very positive. This, in turn, leads to good learning. Much of the teaching is good, with some very good lessons. Challenge, brisk pace, well managed discussions and clear learning objectives are features of the best teaching. Where teachers bring personal experience to bear on the subject e.g. in a very good Year 10 careers lesson when the teacher was explaining her own dilemma over which career to choose, this brings the topic to life for pupils and they relate to it more easily.
108. Combining citizenship themes with those addressed in other subject areas is an effective way of linking the work to the whole curriculum. A "mapping" exercise was undertaken to check where other subjects dealt with these topics. Tutor time also plays its part by providing pupils with opportunities to discuss topical issues and to take initiative and responsibility within the class or year group. In this way, citizenship contributes significantly to promoting pupils' personal development. Citizenship already has a high profile in the school: various posters in the library and corridors ask "what is citizenship?" and invite opinions. Educational visits e.g. to the Houses of Parliament and meetings with a local MP support the subject.
109. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and dynamic teacher. It was successfully "launched" at a whole staff conference in June 2002 and 13 teachers now contribute to the teaching. They bring a breadth of expertise and perspective which enriches the subject. A particularly interesting development is the "citizenship card" which records pupils' achievements, positions of responsibility held, involvement in other activities and contributions to the school and the wider community. This is entirely in keeping with the whole school philosophy of recognising achievement across a broad spectrum.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Good planning, both of the overall scheme of work and individual lessons.
- The high quality of work produced by pupils.
- The staff are very well led and work effectively as a team.
- The very good range of resources.

### Areas for improvement

- The department needs to urgently integrate the use of information and communication technology into all aspects of work, especially computer-aided designing and making.
- The scheme of work needs to include work on electronics, systems and control.

- The size of teaching groups in Key Stage 3 is too large for the size of the rooms. Action needs to be taken to ensure that teaching groups in all years number about 20.
- The way in which pupils who have special educational needs are supported needs to be documented.

110. Standards of work produced by pupils are good. In the teacher assessments of work produced by Year 9 pupils in 2002, two thirds of the year group achieved Level 5 or above. This is close to the national average and represents good progress in the two years since the department was established. Girls achieve results which are considerably above those achieved by boys. The department has not yet identified particular reasons for the differences, but design work produced by girls generally shows a wider range of ideas. Standards of work seen are good, especially in designing and planning. Pupils in Year 10 have made a good start on examination courses and the standard of work which they have produced so far is good. Achievement of pupils is good and often very good and represents good progress from the standards which pupils have on entry to the school.
111. The standard of teaching in the majority of lessons is good and some is very good. Other teaching is satisfactory. Where the teaching is very good, the planning of lessons is carried out in detail, and a good range of teaching methods is used, including very effective use of small group work. Teachers cope well with the demands of very large classes, and the range of work which pupils undertake. Medium-term planning for the modules of work which pupils produce is clear and all necessary support materials have been produced. Staff have taken care to ensure that the materials produced for pupils to use are pitched at an appropriate level and that the needs of different pupils are met. Staff in the department make effective use of teaching aids. In a resistant materials lesson, a lap top computer and video camera were used in conjunction with a data projector to make it clear to pupils how a drawing was to be done and to reinforce the key points of the lesson. Good use is made of staff who support pupils with special educational needs and the technicians in the department are also used effectively to support teaching.
112. As a result of the high quality of teaching, learning is good or very good in most lessons. The very comprehensive planning means that pupils learn effectively. The teaching of strategies for designing is very effective and, in consequence, pupils are able to produce a wide range of design ideas which show flair and imagination. This was demonstrated in a Year 8 resistant materials lesson where pupils had produced a wide range of ideas for storage of small items. Pupils in Year 10 developed a sound understanding of the need for careful planning when working in pairs to make lemon meringue pies. The majority of pupils respond very well to the teaching and enjoy the subject.
113. The curriculum offered by the department is appropriate and has evolved during the last two years as staff with different specialisms have joined the school. The type and range of activities are good, but there is an urgent need for the department to develop the use of information and communication technology throughout the department, and especially in the areas of computer-aided designing and making. Some aspects of the programme of study are not currently covered, particularly systems and control, and this also needs attention as soon as possible. The one-hour lessons in Key Stage 3 are not appropriate, especially in food technology, where the short amount of time does not allow for group evaluation of finished products. Consideration should be given to providing double lessons for the subject. The size of teaching groups is far too large for the size of the rooms and the type and range of activities done. The size of groups presents a concern for health and safety. Arrangements should be made to ensure that group sizes are no larger than 20 pupils.
114. The department has worked hard to establish processes for the assessment of the work which pupils produce. Work is assessed at the end of each module and pupils are aware of the level of attainment which they have gained. Staff then use this information to plan future work. Effective use is made of assessment booklets produced by the department and of published text books which include sections on assessment.
115. Leadership and management of the department are very good and staff work well together as a team. In the last two years, the curriculum team leader has invested much time to establish the department and particularly to set up the physical resources. The progress which has been made in a relatively short time has been excellent. The department presents a vibrant image to pupils which is reflected in their positive approach to the subject. The department, and the curriculum

team leader in particular, have worked hard to establish a high profile for design and technology. This has been achieved through visits to museums, through the involvement of practising designers, and the use of "Design Week". Displays in teaching rooms and corridors are well used to celebrate the high standard of the work produced by pupils, and as a teaching resource.

116. Resources for learning are very good and these are used very well by all staff. The level of resources has actively contributed to the high standards of work. The department handbook and scheme of work are comprehensive and well presented, but some parts could be more detailed. Although there is well documented planning to support the needs of able pupils, there is a need for rather more detail to show how the needs of pupils who have special educational needs are supported in the department. Some very effective use is made of information and communication technology as a teaching aid. Some aspects of department organisation still need action, such as the way in which food materials are provided where the present arrangements are not appropriate.
117. Although some technician help has been available in the last 12 months, progress has been interrupted by the ill health of the technician. Recent arrangements to overcome this problem have been successful, but the situation has caused considerable disruption and inhibited progress. The department has not been served well by the contractors responsible for the building alterations and installation of equipment. There are examples of equipment which has been installed incorrectly, and of building repairs and finishing of work which have been outstanding for many months. All of these matters have prevented staff from making progress in other aspects of the subject.

## DRAMA

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **satisfactory** with some good features.

### Strengths

- A good scheme of work supports the development of pupils' skills and understanding.
- Pupils explore a wide range of moral and social issues.
- Good specialist teaching promotes good learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve pupils' subject skills throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 to raise standards of attainment.
- Ensure that pupils develop self-control and good subject practice as early as possible.

118. As pupils have no prior experience in drama, their standards of attainment on entry are well below average. However, by the end of Year 9 standards are average. The current attainment of pupils in Year 10 is moving towards above average standard. This represents good progress and achievement for most pupils.
119. Pupils in Year 7 have already made good progress in the development of skills such as freeze technique and tableaux. They are beginning to understand the work practice of the subject, how to contribute to group activities and how group development can benefit their own progress. They also demonstrate how their imagination and creative responses to stimulus are more focused when they concentrate and interact purposefully with their classmates.
120. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have had unsatisfactory continuity and progression in their previous learning. As a result, their skills are less developed and their lack of confidence in controlling and communicating their creative ideas sometimes frustrates them. In Year 8 particularly, this means that they do not always make the best use of group preparation time and do not sufficiently review or develop their original ideas. Pupils in Year 9 achieve slightly better because of their enthusiasm and good relationships. However, the benefits of the new scheme of work and specialist teaching are already beginning to improve learning for all pupils in Years 8 and 9.
121. These factors are already making an impact on the good progress of pupils in Year 10. Their development of skills and work practice over a short period of time is impressive. Their commitment to a double period of two hours duration, involving the exploration of many facets of

characterisation was rigorous and physically demanding. It demonstrates their high levels of concentration as well as the creative and supportive relationships within the class. They are determined to succeed and improve.

122. The recent reorganisation of the curriculum and the appointment of a specialist teacher mean that learning is now improving. Overall, it is now good and is promoted by good teaching. Pupils are always challenged and they have very good support at all levels of attainment. Teachers are good role models and can provide effective demonstrations. Planning is good and objectives are clear. Pupils receive valuable feedback and have many opportunities to evaluate their own efforts and those of their classmates. Drama contributes significantly to pupils' development of oral literacy, through challenging questioning, improvisation, debate and critical reasoning. It also allows them to explore and express their responses to moral, social and topical issues.
123. Drama and music are organised and managed within the performing arts framework. They share policies, procedures and good practice where it is appropriate and beneficial to both subjects. However, they also develop independently where this is judged best for the subject. The performing arts framework is strongly led and managed by the curriculum leader. Recent specialist appointments mean that the new curriculum is now in place and standards of attainment are improving.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning in the subject are good.
- The subject is well led and the curriculum is rich.
- The department's good use of ICT helps pupils to write independently.
- The department promotes literacy well and this helps pupils to learn.

### Areas for improvement

- Consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Procedures for recording and assessment.
- The further development of pupils' extended writing.
- Library resources.

124. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made good progress and their attainment is above average. This is confirmed by departmental assessment. At the beginning of Year 10, pupils look set to achieve significantly above the national average in the GCSE examination.
125. By the end of Year 9, pupils have good knowledge of natural features such as volcanoes, and know how and why they erupt. They understand fully their connection with earthquakes. All have some understanding of the specialist vocabulary associated with volcanic activity. In their study of Brazil, pupils have studied differences between rich and poor and have empathy with those who live in shanty towns. They have enquired independently and successfully into the distribution of population in the country, and explained some of the reasons for what they have found. In their study of environments, pupils have understood how a holiday package works, and know what is meant by sustainable tourism. Pupils have analysed the area in which they live in some depth and presented their findings graphically. When considering conflicting interests in the countryside, they have addressed a range of ethical and geographical issues. Pupils have a good grasp of map skills, and are capable of giving an accurate six-figure grid reference as early as Year 7.
126. In the first few weeks of their GCSE study in Year 10, pupils have revised their map skills in more depth and detail. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has proved to be effective in giving them a good grounding for further study on Brazil. Pupils study in depth how Rio de Janeiro and its shanty towns are linked physically and economically. They realise that they are mutually dependent and can say in what ways the city can improve life for the shantytown dwellers. They know that shanty towns are built on the poorest land, and realise how unsuitable for building the land is.

127. Teaching is good, though not always consistently so, at both key stages. The best teaching shows good knowledge of the subject, conscientious and detailed preparation of lessons and effective strategies for class management. Extension work for gifted and talented pupils is a strong feature of the best lessons. Pace is usually brisk and expectations are high. Strategies to catch pupils' interest are engaging, such as the opportunity given to pupils to prepare their facts carefully to take on the roles of rich and poor Brazilians, who are to be interviewed for an imaginary chat show. This process enables pupils to describe, factually, greatly differing lifestyles, and realise what it is like to be truly unequal. Resources in the classroom are good. Teachers make very good use of ICT, which helps independent learning. Library resources are, however, poor. Video clips, maps and photographs further promote pupils' interest and motivation. There is good and explicit attention to examination preparation. In a few lessons, noisy or difficult behaviour remains unchecked, and this is a weakness. Response in lessons is usually positive, with pupils showing interest, involvement and concentration. Besides working independently, pupils have good opportunities to learn in pairs and small groups.
128. Leadership and management of the subject are well informed and energetic. The newly-appointed head of department has made a well planned start on what needs to be done, aided by a well founded subject development plan of high quality. Opportunities for pupils to undertake fieldwork trips have already been improved. A bank of starter activities is being developed for lessons in Key Stage 3. Plans are now well advanced to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the department. Portfolios are already being developed as part of a planned improvement in Key Stage 3 assessment procedures. The department plans to extend its literacy policy to improve pupils' extended writing. The issue of inadequate library sources has yet to be addressed.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good overall.
- There is a clear commitment to raise standards and heighten the profile of the subject in the school.
- Teachers have positive expectations of all pupils and provide for their individual needs.

### Areas for improvement

- A systemised correction policy which places greater emphasis on the improvement of literacy.

129. Overall attainment at the beginning of Year 9 is broadly in line with the national standard but, given the current quality of provision in history, attainment can be expected to rise over the coming year. Pupils have a basic understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. The majority of pupils recognise bias and can give reasons for differences in historical interpretations.
130. Oral and listening skills range from satisfactory to very good, but writing skills are often less assured. Lower attaining pupils can write in simple sentences to describe historical events, but their work is frequently flawed by poor sentence construction and spelling errors. Higher attaining pupils write extensively and with fluency, showing sound levels of analytical ability and synthetic understanding. Most pupils possess a good sense of chronology and can use historical terms appropriately.
131. At the beginning of Year 10, attainment amongst the cohort opting to continue studying history is above the national average. By this stage, pupils' historical knowledge and understanding have deepened. Able pupils analyse evidence effectively to produce fluent and well-reasoned arguments. Lower attaining pupils use sources to support their narratives and can draw simple conclusions. Pupils listen attentively and demonstrate good levels of recall. There are good examples of collaborative learning, for example one class was engaged in a role play exercise which involved them as syndicates in simulating the stages leading to the Wall Street Crash. Pupils work co-operatively in lessons and apply themselves conscientiously.

132. Pupils arrive at the school with few skills in history. They are making good progress largely due to the highly focused teaching of basic historical skills. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language are making similar rates of progress as their peers because of the quality of support they receive from their teachers and the high standard of graded teaching materials which are produced by the department.
133. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers possess superior levels of subject expertise and show excellent understanding in the way that they convey historical knowledge. Lessons are tightly structured and quietly, but effectively, controlled. Teachers create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, in which all pupils are valued. They demonstrate particular skill in challenging pupils appropriately and in helping individuals to surmount difficulties. Lesson objectives are clearly communicated to pupils so that they understand what is to be achieved by the end of the session. Teachers support pupils in structuring their work, for example with the provision of writing frames and "scaffolding". They engage pupils using a range of teaching strategies, including practical approaches. Good quality resources are selected to stimulate interest, as was seen in a Year 7 lesson where the use of "cause cards" helped pupils understand why William won the Battle of Hastings. All lessons were observed to include tasks well matched to pupils' abilities, and extension activities were set for the gifted and talented. Pupils are very well managed in lessons.
134. Teachers insist on full participation and high standards of behaviour. They work hard to raise the expectations and performance of all their pupils. Such expectations are implicit in their questioning techniques which encourage pupils to think critically and to evaluate their own learning. A culture of praise and a system of rewards, including telephone calls home, serve to enhance the self-esteem of pupils and establish a good work ethic. It is clear that pupils are taking significant interest in their lessons and are developing increasingly positive attitudes to history.
135. The department acknowledges the importance of skills development in lesson planning. However, more emphasis could be placed on the improvement and implementation of literacy to underpin progress. As yet no significant reading culture has developed amongst the pupils, and the school library holds only a limited range of history books which pupils can borrow. Programmes of study provide good opportunities for the development of numeracy, citizenship and ICT. As teachers recognise the potential of ICT in motivating pupils, and in generating achievement and personal success, it is regularly incorporated in lesson planning, whilst individual pupils are encouraged to use school computers for research purposes.
136. The department is very well managed and ably led by a new head of department who joined the school in September. The second history teacher also joined the school at the same time. Both teachers are ambitious for their pupils and very committed to their subject. As such, they are instilling a feeling of security and confidence in their pupils. Their strategies, which include addressing gaps in skills development particularly amongst pupils in Years 8 and 9, are already providing the necessary optimism to unlock new energies.
137. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but there are some inconsistencies in assessment practices. Certain discrepancies exist in the overall approach to correcting errors in literacy, the checking of class work and the quality of constructive feedback given to pupils. Comments made by teachers at the end of written exercises, whilst constructive in tone, can sometimes be rather shallow in content.
138. The department makes good use of school data, including performance in national curriculum tests. There is a clear vision for development, which is articulated well in departmental planning. For example, developments are underway to improve and computerise record-keeping and the tracking of pupils' progress. The department will follow the new school policy in setting individual targets, which are to be shared with pupils. A broad and balanced curriculum is offered and made relevant to the life of the pupils. Schemes of work are in place for Key Stage 3 and are under construction for Key Stage 4. The history area has attractive displays of pupils' work. There are plans to enrich the curriculum and develop cultural understanding by extending the programme of outside visits, for example by introducing excursions to the European battlefields. Topics of study help towards the development of moral and social understanding. During lessons teachers are exemplary in the emphasis they give to the importance of respecting the beliefs and values of others, and in the way that they help children to understand the impact of their actions on others.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching in ICT lessons and in many lessons in other subjects where computers are used.
- Good use of assessment in ICT courses.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to measure, respond to, control and automate events, in appropriate subjects.
- Reporting on ICT attainment and progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Ventilation in some ICT rooms.

139. Standards in ICT by the end of Year 9 are consistent with expectations. Work seen in lessons, in pupils' folders and stored on computer, indicate that pupils make appropriate progress in Years 7 and 8 where ICT skills are taught through subjects. Learning is more rapid, and more consistent during Year 9 where all pupils have discrete ICT lessons and begin work on an examination course. In a mixed ability Year 9 lesson, as a result of well-structured information sheets and software guides, pupils of all abilities were able to make good progress in the use of spreadsheets. They were able to construct a number of different formulae to be used by the owner of a café to calculate costs, profit, mark-up on items sold and VAT. ICT is used particularly well in several subjects. In art, computers are used to very good effect in a range of activities and in music, ICT is used imaginatively for composition.
140. In Year 10, all pupils are in the second year of their part 1 GNVQ course in ICT. Inspection evidence indicates that learning is very good. Despite the limited time available for the course in the previous year, standards are consistent with expectations overall and for some pupils attainment is good. In one lesson, higher-level skills were being developed to enable pupils to achieve merit and distinction grades in coursework. A spreadsheet was being used as the basis of a seating and booking system for an event, which is to be staged at the school. Pupils approached the work with confidence. The spreadsheet enabled the sale of specific seats to be linked to revenue at the box office. The sale of refreshments as well as various costs was also included in the overall calculations.
141. In the majority of ICT lessons in all years, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and this contributes to good learning. Most work with enthusiasm, are very willing to take an active part and answer questions. ICT sessions at lunchtime and after school are well attended by pupils completing classwork as well as using computers for homework tasks. Pupils support each other well in computer rooms. A small number of pupils were occasionally diverted from their work by the ease of access to the Internet. The revised layout of equipment in some rooms should be considered to ensure that teachers can see all screens clearly.
142. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. In Year 9, lessons and learning resources are tightly structured. This ensures that pupils are well focused. In Years 7 and 8, ICT is taught through subjects in a planned programme, which is well co-ordinated. Lessons are well prepared and have good pace. New skills are taught effectively, enabling pupils to make good progress in their ICT work. In an art lesson, pupils were successfully taught a range of skills, which enabled them to manipulate images which they had taken with a digital camera. The rapid pace of the lesson ensured that, by the end, pupils had combined their pictures with different backgrounds and added an interesting range of media effects.
143. Teaching in the examination course in Year 10 is very good. Assessment is very thorough and used effectively, enabling teachers to challenge and support all pupils appropriately. Teachers of GNVQ ICT are effectively co-ordinated and work well as a team. Homework is set regularly: much of this is computer-based and teachers ensure that adequate opportunities are available for pupils to complete this work in school where necessary. Teachers make an effective contribution to the school strategy on literacy and numeracy, through word-processing and spreadsheet activities.



144. The number of computers is above the national average for a school of this size. The Study Centre is well equipped with computers and printers. However, the requirement to use ICT to “measure, record, respond to, control and automate events” has not yet developed appropriately. Work on these aspects is still in the developmental stage in design and technology. In science, equipment and detailed plans are in place for a range of activities including data logging, when the recently refurbished accommodation comes into use in the very near future. Some of the accommodation used for ICT is inadequately ventilated and rooms, including the Study Centre, where window openings are very limited, can become hot and uncomfortable. Overall, the use of ICT is developing well and it is becoming an integral part of the curriculum as it enhances both teaching and learning.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision for modern foreign languages is **good**, with some very good features.

### Strengths

- The leadership and management of modern foreign languages are very good and provide a clear direction for the work of the department.
- Curriculum planning for the long, medium and short term is very thorough and provides good guidance for the teachers.
- Marking is constructive and the department makes good use of its rich assessment data to encourage pupils and set them challenging targets.

### Areas for improvement

- The standard of oral work is a relative weakness, as pupils do not have enough opportunities to ask as well as answer questions and to take part in meaningful exchanges with each other.
- Although some extension work is provided for higher-attaining pupils, they are not sufficiently challenged.
- Although the quality of teaching is almost always sound, most members of the department are relatively inexperienced and would benefit from additional support and professional development.

145. By the end of Year 9, standards in French and Spanish are at least in line with the national average, particularly so in Spanish, a reflection of the slightly stronger teaching in that language. Pupils in Year 10 have made a sound start to their GCSE courses and standards in both languages are in line with those that can be expected at this stage. Throughout the school, most pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, make good progress.
146. For the most part, writing consists of short exercises but, in both languages, higher attaining pupils write accurately on a number of topics, using a range of structures, vocabulary and tenses. The teaching of grammar is methodical and even lower-attaining pupils are able to use the past tense in French with some accuracy. Reading skills are well developed and pupils are able to extract information from a range of texts. Pupils have only limited opportunities to read longer, continuous texts and this is an area for development which has already been identified by the department. For the most part, pronunciation is good in both languages and Year 8 pupils were able to read a text in Spanish on housing accurately and with expression.
147. Listening skills are well developed because teachers use French or Spanish extensively for classroom communication and pupils have opportunities to listen to native speakers on tape. They understand passages of familiar language spoken at near normal speed and can identify and note the main points with varying amounts of detail. The ability of most pupils to hold simple conversations is limited. Answers tend to be short phrases and pupils find difficulty in formulating questions. They do not have enough opportunities to communicate with each other. Nevertheless, in a good Year 7 Spanish lesson, pupils were able, after careful preparation, to conduct a fluent conversation of some five or six exchanges on the topic of dates and birthdays. In a good Year 7 French lesson about pets, careful preparation enabled pupils to make three or four consecutive statements - a practice, which, if maintained, will result in higher oral standards.
148. Year 10 pupils in both languages are in the early stages of their GCSE courses but are making good progress and pupils have a competent grasp of the grammar covered. Extended writing is of a good standard and is the result of a careful build up of writing skills. From the necessarily limited amount of work done, standards in Spanish are somewhat higher than in French and the writing demonstrates a greater variety of construction, vocabulary and tense. Pupils show an increasing understanding of more difficult reading and listening texts. In a Year 10 Spanish class about lifestyle, in which the imperfect tense was being introduced and where expectations were high, pupils were able to give extended oral replies. Oral standards were lower in French and in neither language were there enough opportunities to develop communicative skills. Lower-attaining pupils in both languages are well supported and make good progress.
149. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally positive, but vary with the liveliness and the demands of the teaching. The very good Year 10 Spanish lesson mentioned above made the greatest demands on the pupils and produced the best response. Nevertheless, in several classes,

- including one where the teaching was good, a number of pupils, usually boys, were negative, contributed little and were not easy to manage.
150. In almost all lessons, the quality of teaching was at least sound and in some cases it was good or very good. A feature of all lessons is the careful and detailed planning to include clear objectives, which are communicated to the pupils, a variety of activities and an evaluation at the end. Support is provided for lower attaining pupils and some extension tasks for the more able who, nevertheless, need a greater degree of challenge. Teachers make good use of visual images to convey meaning and to avoid the unnecessary use of English, and make some use of cassette tapes. Except in Year 7, not enough use is made of ICT. Marking is regular and constructive and pupils understand the criteria being used. Consideration should, however, be given to making greater use of National Curriculum assessment criteria in the department's own marking and assessment. In the best lessons, expectations are high, the pace demanding, and pupils respond accordingly. In lessons which are otherwise satisfactory, the unnecessary use of English and a lack of challenge result in less effort from the pupils and some restlessness. Most communication is from teacher to pupil and not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to communicate with each other in French and Spanish.
151. The curriculum for modern foreign languages is broad, rich and inclusive. French and Spanish are offered as equal first languages. All pupils take two languages in Years 8 and 9, so that all can make a reasoned choice of the language they wish to pursue in Year 10. The schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are thorough and the department makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy, numeracy and citizenship and gives due emphasis to the countries in Africa, the Caribbean and South America where the languages taught are spoken. The Spanish course, for example, deals with urban and rural poverty in Mexico. The curriculum is enriched by support classes, the school's Languages Week and visits to France and Spain. A particularly strong feature of the provision are the courses in Spanish which the department runs in five local primary schools.
152. The modern foreign languages team works well together and is very well led and managed. Departmental documentation is very thorough, assessment data is analysed to inform future planning and the work of the department is very well monitored.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Good curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop performing, composing and listening skills.
- Pupils benefit from exploring a wide range of musical styles, types and stimulus through a good range of resources, including ICT.
- Strong leadership and management which are developing a high profile for the performing arts.

### Areas for improvement

- Some aspects of class management to promote better behaviour and concentration.
- Pupils' understanding and performing of basic music elements.

153. On entry, pupils' standards of attainment overall are below average. A significant number of pupils have had no effective experience of performing, composing or listening to music. By the end of Year 9 and currently in Year 10, standards of attainment are average overall. Some pupils, especially those who have additional instrumental lessons, are attaining above or even well above average. For a significant minority of pupils, however, attainment is below average.
154. About half the pupils in Year 7 know and understand the relationship between note durations, can distinguish simple time signatures and can define some basic elements such as pitch and tone. However, very few can perform a rhythm or melody, maintaining a regular pulse in ensemble with other pupils. They can play tuned percussion, but have poor stick technique and co-ordination. By Year 8 pupils' skills have improved, but rather more through familiarity than as a result of sustained technical training. Their knowledge of musical structure and terminology is limited and only about half the pupils can name titles of pieces of music or the names of composers.

155. Pupils in Year 9 are using keyboards to help their composing. Some lack adequate keyboard skills and their creative work is therefore limited. Others, in responding to the stimulus of a short film for example, produced imaginative work of above average quality. Pupils' written work in this year is sketchy, but written answers to listening tests and self-evaluations confirm an overall average standard of attainment.
156. Forty-three students have chosen to study music in Year 10. Two thirds are boys. But only eighteen have instrumental lessons and some are beginners. The majority of pupils have to rely on electronic keyboards to support their composing. These have a recording facility which enables pupils to save and later to review and refine their work. Most pupils can also access music computer processing programmes. Electro-acoustic resources are generous. As most of the work in performing and composing is individual, pupils' progress is dependent on their success at developing their own skills to extend their resources. For the majority, progress is satisfactory, although levels of skill in performance and sophistication in composing vary considerably.
157. Pupils' learning is supported by very good workbooks which cover each topic, provide historical context and definitions and give pupils the impetus to listen, appraise and evaluate relevant music. Most pupils understand the differences between styles and can describe them using good levels of technical language.
158. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, though some good teaching was also seen. Lessons are well planned and structured with a variety of activities which integrate performing, composing and listening. Outcomes are always clearly displayed and explained, although some pupils are not always quite sure how they should achieve a particular task. Most pupils, for example, do not know instinctively how to make the most of time allocated to group activity. They have no specific training in ways to structure collaboration more purposefully.
159. Teachers' very good knowledge and practical skills present pupils with high quality examples. Teachers make challenging demands on the pupils and, although pupils of all levels of attainment are well-supported, not all do as well as they could. This is sometimes because the management of classes does not ensure full attention from all pupils throughout and the physical changeover of activities wastes too much time. This permits a minority of pupils to disrupt the work of others and distract the teacher. Sometimes it means that the lesson cannot be fully completed.
160. Teaching and learning are good in Year 10. Pupils respond well to challenging questioning and are learning to analyse and evaluate well, using technical language. They are encouraged to use listening to inform their composing by approaching the same topic from different but related aspects. They are set tight deadlines for individual work and are well monitored and supported. This training, supported by their good concentration and enthusiasm, means they are gaining valuable experience in independent learning.
161. Music and drama are organised and managed within the performing arts framework. They share policies, procedures and good practice where it is appropriate and beneficial to both subjects. However they also develop independently where this is judged best for the subject. The performing arts framework is strongly led and managed by the curriculum leader. Recent specialist appointments mean that the new curriculum is now in place and standards of attainment are improving. The curriculum provision extends pupils' experiences through contact with a wide range of styles and types of music, including that from different cultures. Good accommodation and resources enhance provision. Opportunities for extension activities are available through the comprehensive instrumental lesson provision and ensemble training. Over one hundred pupils are learning instruments or voice. The performing arts framework also promotes joint performances which contribute to the growing profile of the school within the community.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The department's strong ethos of care for the pupils.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in the subject.

- The extra-curricular provision and take-up are very good.
- Leadership and management of the department are strong.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teachers' lesson planning should be more focused on pupil outcomes.
- The development of pupils' observation, evaluation and assessment skills.
- Development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

162. Standards of attainment in physical education at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. In Year 10, attainment by pupils working on the GCSE course is also in line with national expectations. Standards of work seen support the assessments made by teachers at the end of Year 9 and during the GCSE course. Comparison of pupils' standards of achievement on entry to the course and the standards being achieved in the GCSE coursework shows that pupils make good progress in Year 10. Pupils in non-GCSE physical education lessons reach standards in line with national expectations. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3.
163. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made good progress. In the course of the year, they develop competence in a range of dance movements working at different levels within their own personal space. In badminton, pupils could improve by varying the length of shots in order to move their opponent around the court. Some pupils are now able to transfer these techniques into the game situation through good decision-making. Their development of knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups, when developing basic techniques through Years 7 to 9. Pupils do not consistently develop their observation and assessment skills, and therefore are not always clear about what they can do and how to improve.
164. In Year 10, most pupils are making good progress. The continued progress in the development of knowledge and understanding of basic techniques enables pupils to use this in order to evaluate and assess each other's performance. Where progress is not as good, some pupils fail to transfer their ability to perform basic techniques to more advanced skill practices. This took place in a trampoline lesson where pupils' inability to perform a basic bounce, on the centre of the bed, restricted the development of bounces using different body positions and shapes. Some pupils' progress in GCSE coursework is restricted by a lack of literacy skills when communicating in verbal and written form.
165. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching. Strengths include very good knowledge of the subject, good management of time and space, organisational skills, positive interaction with pupils and a commitment to an ethos of care for their pupils. There is good planning for pupils with special educational needs, which means that they are able to learn at the same pace as other groups of pupils. Assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are now in place. There is a need to develop the use of assessment as part of learning so that pupils are aware of what they can do and how to improve through observation, evaluation and assessment skills.
166. Pupils' progress is sometimes restricted by a lack of opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills within the physical education context. In lessons where teaching is not as good, learning is restricted by pupils' being moved onto tasks before they are ready. The teacher is not focused on the intended learning outcomes of the pupils and the use of varied resources and tasks is not used to allow pupils to work at their own level. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. The vast majority enjoy physical education and participation levels are very high. There are very good strategies for involving non-performers in learning. Most pupils concentrate well and therefore remain on task. They are able to work as individuals, but also co-operate well when working in pairs and small groups. The behaviour of most pupils is very good. Pupils develop good relationships with each other and with the teacher.
167. Leadership and management in physical education are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for future development based on raising standards. This means that development planning is focused on learning. In order to raise standards faster, there is a need for: more planned opportunities for pupils to be involved in assessing their performance as part of learning; consistent strategies to improve pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of physical education terminology; and lesson plans focused more on appropriate pupil outcomes. There is a need for the head of department to develop further monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure consistency across the department. This would help him identify areas which need support.

168. The department has made good progress in developing assessment. There is a philosophy of care for pupils, which emphasises social and moral development. Teachers are well organised and the subject handbook provides good guidance on schemes of work, lesson planning and safety matters. In general, the quality of accommodation and resources has a satisfactory effect on learning. However, the incomplete changing rooms mean that time is lost at the beginning and end of lessons. Rain penetration and water-logged surfaces constrain activities at times. The physical education curriculum meets statutory requirements. The department offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities which enhance learning, and provides open access with elite teams and performers emerging in order to achieve good results in inter-school matches and competitions. The department is making good progress in developing its links with the local community in order to raise standards. The school achieved *Sportsmark* during 2002.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching in Year 10.
- The GCSE option course is very popular.
- The good attitude of pupils towards religious education.
- The very good contribution made by the department to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Statutory requirements are not being met in Year 10, except for the pupils following the GCSE option.
- Statutory requirements are not being fully met in Years 7, 8 and 9.

169. The standard of work seen during the inspection in Year 10, that is in the lessons and in the books and in conversations with pupils, is at least in line with national standards and often above. The pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christian perspectives on the moral and social issues they have studied so far. The written work in their books on these topics is well developed and they can talk meaningfully about issues such as the sanctity of life and abortion. The pupils can express personal opinions about these topics and can often see things from more than one point of view. Their ability to express clearly the range of viewpoints from religious perspectives is not so strong, as they have only just started this aspect of their work. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
170. In Year 9, the standard of work seen during the inspection was largely in line with the standards expected by the Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other world religions that they study. The pupils can talk meaningfully about a number of religious practices, such as rites of passage and they can often put these into the context of the religions that they are studying. The pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the use of symbols in religions and they can both recognise them and explain their meaning. Their knowledge and understanding of some of the principal beliefs of the religions could be stronger and the department is working on this. Their written skills vary from adequate to good. Pupils can express themselves well orally. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
171. The overall achievement of pupils is good and often in Year 10 it is very good. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also good, as is the progress of pupils who have English as an additional language, as the teachers are aware of their needs and provide work accordingly. Some use is made of ICT to support learning and to access information from the Internet.
172. The behaviour and attitude of the pupils in Year 10 are mainly very good. The pupils behave well and concentrate on the work in hand. They are keen to participate in the lessons both in written work and in discussion. They show an interest in their work and, as a result, they work hard. They respect each other and the teacher and they also respect other points of view. The behaviour and attitude of the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is largely good, though sometimes unsatisfactory. Where it is good, the pupils apply themselves sensibly to their work. Where it is unsatisfactory, pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration and they become engaged in off-task activities and their learning is affected.

173. In Year 10, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The lessons are well prepared and a good range of methods is used to put across the subject matter. The teaching includes a wide range of learning objectives which are clearly explained to the pupils both in written and verbal form. The religious content of the lessons is strong and the expertise of the teacher gives a confident drive to the lessons. Expectations in these lessons are high and pupils are pushed to achieve the best they can. The pace of the lessons is fast and, as a result, a lot of learning is done in the time available. The control of the lessons is firm, but pleasant.
174. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the quality of the teaching and learning ranges from very good to satisfactory in about equal proportion. As in Year 10, the very good teaching includes high expectation and the pupils learn a lot in the time available. Where the teaching is satisfactory, the lessons are well prepared, but the religious content of the lessons is less marked. Teachers' subject knowledge is also a factor in some of these lessons and they are taught with less confidence, slower pace and lower expectations. The learning as a result is less strong. The control of the pupils in these lessons is less firm and less learning is done. Homework is set and a good contribution is made to the standards of literacy in the introduction, explanation and use of new words and phrases. The teaching also contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development in its reflection on issues such as the sanctity of life and the study of moral and social issues in some world religions. Information technology is used in some of the teaching. Assessment is under review.
175. The department is very well led by a specialist head of department. Five other non-specialist teachers contribute to the teaching lower down in the school. The lack of expertise is having an effect on some of the pupils' learning. Statutory requirements are not being met in Year 10, as apart from the GCSE group of 62 pupils, the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not being met. Statutory requirements are not being fully met in Years 7, 8 and 9 as the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus have not yet been fully incorporated into the schemes of work, although this work is in hand. The accommodation and resources are very good.