

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST CLERE'S SCHOOL**

Stanford-le-Hope, Thurrock

LEA area: Thurrock

Unique reference number: 115356

Headteacher: Mr P Griffiths

Reporting inspector: Brian Oppenheim  
2686

Dates of inspection: 11 – 13 March 2002

Inspection number: 251146

Short 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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Butts Lane Stanford-le-Hope
Postcode:	SS17 0NW
Telephone number:	01375 641001
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. R. Osborne
Date of previous inspection:	11 May 1998

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Clere's School is a mixed comprehensive school for 1013 pupils aged 11 – 16. This makes it about the same size as other secondary schools in England. Most pupils come from the local area. The school is a designated Language College. Other important information about the school is that:

- there are more boys than girls in Years 8 and 11;
- nearly all pupils come from White heritage backgrounds and a small handful comes from Black and Asian heritages;
- the proportion of pupils who can have free school meals is similar to the average for England;
- the proportion of pupils who have identified learning needs or have a statement of special educational need is lower than average;
- pupils join the school at the start of Year 7 with a wide range of attainment. There are fluctuations from year to year but overall it is a little lower than the national expectation.

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

St Clere's is a good school. It succeeds in giving its pupils an effective education and a strong start to their adult life. Pupils make good progress with their learning and achieve well because teaching gets the best from nearly all pupils regardless of their circumstances. The school is led and managed very well so that the potential of staff and pupils is harnessed to create a climate of respect and learning. As a result the school gives good value for money.

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

- Sixty-one per cent of pupils gain at least five A\* - C grades at GCSE which is above the average and most pupils achieve their potential.
- Good teaching promotes strong relationships between staff and pupils.
- The headteacher, senior managers, key staff and governors all have a hand in leading and managing the school effectively.
- Pupils are cared for very well, creating the conditions where all pupils are able to achieve their best.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted successfully: the strong moral and social framework creates an orderly school.

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

- In a few cases teaching is less than satisfactory because teachers do not manage the 70 minute lessons well\* or because they lack the skills to manage some challenging behaviour.
- French GCSE results are below average.\*
- The range of vocational GCSE courses is not broad enough.

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

\*The school has already decided to change the length of lessons in September. Standards in modern languages are already rising as a result of the school becoming a Language College and a wider range of languages is now taught including Mandarin.

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

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1997. GCSE results have improved year on year and have always been above the average for England. Nearly all the areas identified in the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. Standards have improved in geography, a subject

identified as a key issue in the last inspection. There is a comprehensive programme for monitoring work in classrooms and marking is more consistent between departments. The good teaching identified in the last inspection has been maintained but now a higher proportion is very good or excellent. Similarly, the school continues to be led and managed very well and this is one of the reasons why the climate for learning is so positive. The school's status as a Language College is helping to improve standards but has not yet had an impact on GCSE results. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of worship is still not met in full but the quality of assemblies makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools <sup>1</sup> .
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	B

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

St Clere's School achieves standards that are above average overall. The table above puts all the GCSE results together to give an overall evaluation and shows that the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 have remained above the average for all schools in England for the last three years. The table also shows that results are above those achieved in schools that have characteristics similar to St Clere's. Another way of looking at these results is to compare them with pupils' earlier achievements in the national tests that they took in 2000, at the end of Year 9<sup>2</sup>. This shows that as pupils move through Years 10 and 11 they make good progress with their learning: this is why they achieve well at the end of Year 11. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science but slightly below those of schools with characteristics similar to St Clere's.

The 2002 results for the Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations show a continuing rise in performance. GCSE results are not rising quite as fast as the national trend but are still very securely above average. However, results have risen very significantly since the last inspection. In 1997, 34 per cent of pupils gained the top GCSE grades of A\*-C but this figure had risen significantly to 61 per cent in 2002. Another telling figure is that the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes is well above the average for all schools in England and illustrates how effectively the school is helping all pupils, including those with special needs, to achieve well. Girls do better than boys which is not uncommon in many schools although both groups are above the average. The best results are in English literature, science, business studies and physical education but in most of the 18 subjects taken by pupils the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades is above the national average. Results are below average in French, German, information and communication technology and home economics.

This picture is confirmed by lessons and other evidence seen during the inspection. Standards of work are broadly above average and pupils achieve well making good progress with their learning. What the evidence also shows is that standards in modern languages and information and communication technology are getting better but that improvements have yet to work their way through to GCSE examination results. French is a good example: here, results are below average at GCSE but standards in Years 7 to 9 are improving and in 2002 the school met its Key Stage 3 targets

<sup>1</sup> Similar schools means schools with a similar proportion of pupils who qualify for school meals free of charge which, for St Clere's, is between 5 and 9 per cent of pupils

<sup>2</sup> This means that pupils' GCSE results are compared with other schools that have similar National Curriculum test results (SATs); for St Clere's this is an average point score of between 33 and 36.

for the subject for pupils at the end of Year 9. Similarly, in information and communication technology, the school came close to meeting its GCSE targets.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen and interested in their lessons and in the range of activities provided by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because teachers set high standards of discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with their teachers, and staff treat everyone with respect.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national median.

A unique strength in pupils' attitudes is the way they get involved in the life of the school. The school council, pupils' involvement in promoting the school's involvement in ecology and taking part in sports are all examples of the positive attitudes pupils have to school. Attendance is also another significant strength because it is the essential first step in ensuring all pupils achieve their best.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good

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

Teaching is good overall. During the inspection much of the teaching was good and some was very good and excellent, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The significant strengths that make teaching good or very good are:

- teachers have a firm grasp of the subjects they teach and are skilled in presenting them in interesting ways;
- teachers have very good relationships with pupils and they achieve high standards of discipline in lessons;
- lessons are prepared and planned thoroughly and pupils know what they are doing and what they have learnt.

These strengths mean that pupils learn well. Pupils put substantial effort into their work, show real interest in their studies and concentrate on what they are doing. As a result of this effort, pupils accomplish a good amount of work during lessons and achieve well. A particularly strong feature of pupils' learning is the way teaching helps them to build on earlier work to achieve well. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11.

This good teaching is only part of the story. The school is also very effective in creating a strong climate for learning in which everything from the displays in many classrooms, the well-kept building and landscaped open spaces, to the quality of assemblies and the effective use of form time all help to promote the importance of achievement. Another reason for the good learning is that literacy and numeracy skills are often taught effectively: difficult spellings are displayed on the walls of many classrooms, for example. This explains why so many pupils achieve at least five GCSE passes at the end of Year 11. Information and communication technology skills are taught reasonably well but are not yet developed fully in all subjects.



Not all the teaching meets these good standards and there remains room for some improvement. In a few lessons teachers are not skilled enough in managing the small number of pupils whose behaviour is challenging or the pace of learning in the last ten minutes or so is slow. As a result pupils' achievement is not as good as it could be.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a wide range of subjects and out of school activities that meets the needs of nearly all pupils well. However, there are not enough vocational and work-related subjects to meet the needs of all.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special needs are managed with dignity so that they achieve well and reach their potential.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides very effectively for pupils' social and moral development and sets a strong moral framework. Pupils' growing cultural awareness is being helped by having Language College status. Spiritual development is promoted very effectively by assemblies and religious education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. The school has established a very strong ethos in which care and achievement go hand in hand and are the concern of everyone.

The school's status as a Language College and the provision of three European languages is beginning to broaden pupils' horizons effectively. The school is making good progress in developing its provision for pupils who are gifted and talented. Pupils have the opportunity to experience work in America, as well as extension classes at school, and this is providing a greater degree of challenge. The school cares very effectively for its pupils because it makes sure that achievement is at the top of its agenda. The Securing Pupil Success initiative is an example of the effective way the school is promoting pupils' achievements. At present the school does not meet the statutory requirements for teaching information and communication technology but plans to do so are well advanced.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Practical, thoughtful leadership by the headteacher and senior managers, and efficient management by key staff, mean that improvement, achievement and care are all top of the school's agenda.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The results of the regular programme to monitor and evaluate the work of subjects are used well to identify priorities for improvement. Senior managers have a thorough knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and there is good support for teachers.

Aspect	Comment
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are allocated appropriately to the school's educational priorities and good use is made of the money it has available.

A particularly strong feature is the way leadership and management come together to create a very well-organised and ordered school. This shows itself in much of the everyday life of the school: the very well-maintained building and lack of graffiti, movement around the school, pupils' involvement in ecology and relationships between staff and pupils are all examples. In a nutshell, the very positive climate for learning has a strong impact on pupils' achievements. The school is applying the principles of best value effectively.

## 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 way the school gets the most from pupils.</li> <li>• The school promotes positive attitudes and values.</li> <li>• The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils do not always get enough homework.</li> <li>• Some parents feel they do not get enough information about how well their children are doing.</li> <li>• The school does not always work closely enough with parents.</li> <li>• Some parents would like to see a more interesting range of out-of-school activities.</li> </ul>

These views represent a small proportion of parents. Less than 10 per cent returned the questionnaires and only 14 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors. At the meeting, the great majority of parents were very positive about the school: inspectors endorse these positive views. Parents have mixed views about homework. All the evidence from the inspection shows that homework is linked appropriately to class work and set regularly. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils write the homework in their planners. Inspectors judged that the school does provide sufficient information about pupils' progress and that reports are often very useful. There is a reasonable range of after-school activities that are well attended by pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Sixty-one per cent of pupils gain at least five A\* - C grades at GCSE which is above the average and most pupils achieve their potential.**

1. GCSE examination performance at St Clere's School is above the average for all schools in England and above those with similar circumstances. Over the past five or six years standards have continued to rise. The school's results are not rising quite as fast as they are nationally but St. Clere's 2002 results are still the best ever achieved. A more detailed analysis of the examination results shows that GCSE results are improving year on year and that this represents good achievement.
2. If the 2002 results are compared with schools that have similar characteristics to St Clere's, then results are also above the average. Another way of looking at these results is to compare them with pupils' earlier achievements in the national tests that they took in 2000, at the end of Year 9. This shows that as pupils move through Years 10 and 11 they make broadly good progress with their learning and achieve well by the end of Year 11.
3. Analysing the number of GCSE passes and the grades adds further to the positive picture:
  - the proportion of pupils who gain at least five GCSE passes at the higher grades of A\* - C is above average at 61 per cent;
  - many more pupils at St Clere's achieve five GCSE passes at any grade making performance well above the average and much higher than in similar schools;
  - the proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE pass is also high and above average.
4. What is interesting about these figures is that they also explain why the upward trend has tailed off a little in 2002. What has happened is that more pupils gained five GCSE passes at grades A\* - C but slightly fewer achieved at least five GCSE grades A\* - G. In 2001, 100 per cent of pupils gained at least five GCSE passes, a considerable achievement, but in 2002 just four pupils missed achieving this benchmark. In other words, although performance in 2002 was not quite as good as in 2001, the difference represents just four pupils out of 190.
5. Another important piece of evidence is that GCSE results have risen very significantly since the last inspection. In 1997 only 34 per cent of pupils gained the five GCSE grades at the top grades of A\*-C but this figure has risen appreciably to 61 per cent in 2002. Looking more specifically at subjects also shows that pupils achieve well. In nearly all the 18 or so subjects taken at GCSE the proportion of pupils gaining the top A\* - C grades is above the national average with the best results in English, science, design and technology, business studies and physical education. Another way of looking at these results is to compare the pupils' performance in each subject with their results in all their other subjects to show the relative progress they make. Again, English literature, science, business studies and physical education show the best progress although only in French, German, home economics and information and communication technology is progress significantly less than expected.
6. These high standards are confirmed by lessons and other evidence seen during the inspection. Standards of work are broadly above average and pupils achieve better than expected making good progress with their learning. What the evidence also shows is that standards in modern languages and information and communication technology are getting better but that improvements have yet to work their way through to GCSE examination results. French is a good example: here, results are below average at GCSE but the results at the end of Year 9 have improved and in 2002 the school met its targets for the subject. In a good Year 9 French lesson, for example, the teacher used her very good subject knowledge to move learning forward quickly and involve all pupils. As result, pupils made good progress and developed good speaking and listening skills. Similarly, in information and communication technology, the school came close to meeting its GCSE targets and lessons, too, show that standards are improving. In a very good Year 7 lesson pupils achieved very well and

although their level of skill in using information and communication was low they made brisk progress with their learning.

### **Good teaching promotes strong relationships between staff and pupils.**

7. Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 7 to 9. Inspectors saw 64 lessons during the inspection which means that percentages need to be treated carefully. Nevertheless, well over two-thirds of the lessons were at least good, one-third very good and an eighth excellent. Only five per cent, or three lessons, were less than satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, nearly a fifth of lessons were excellent. As a result of this good teaching, pupils learn well, enjoy their work and make good progress.

8. One of the strengths that makes teaching good is that teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach and can present difficult ideas and information enthusiastically. What this means is that teaching motivates pupils and keeps them interested in their work. They are actively involved, enjoy their lessons and work hard. A good example was an excellent Year 11 English lesson where pupils made formal presentations to the rest of the class about their recent work experience. The teacher's very strong knowledge helped pupils understand the different ways of speaking in public: the use of humour, tone, speed and telling examples were all applied very effectively and pupils made very rapid progress. The teacher ensured that pupils were very well prepared for the lesson and knew exactly what was expected of them. As a result, pupils responded very positively to the task and listened carefully to others showing them real respect. This respect for others helps to explain why relationships between teachers and pupils are so good: pupils respect teachers' subject expertise and, in turn, teachers respect the contribution made by pupils.

9. The effective way teachers plan and prepare their lessons is another strength of the teaching which also contributes to the strong relationships. In an excellent Year 9 mathematics lesson for a class with a significant proportion of pupils with special needs, for example, thorough preparation captured pupils' attention and inspired them. The teacher had a clear focus on the forthcoming national tests and the pupils understood that this was about making sure they achieve their best. As a result they all worked hard, made good progress and were engrossed in their work: pupils with special educational needs received a particularly good deal. Similarly, in a Year 7 science lesson, excellent preparation ensured that all pupils were challenged and interested in the work on the solubility of salt in water. Here, the very good planning and preparation ensured that time and resources were used well: as a result, pupils used the science equipment very well to carry out their investigations. The way the teacher used humour was particularly effective in promoting very good relationships: the response from pupils was positive and showed how well they respected the teacher. By the end of the lesson pupils had a very good understanding of the main ideas and could use scientific language to explain their work.

10. Nearly all teachers achieve high standards of discipline in lessons because they are good at managing behaviour. This is especially significant because it is central to the way the school works. Good management of behaviour encourages strong relationships between staff and pupils because of the way it encourages the respect of the class. But it is also the good relationships that teachers have with pupils that enables them to achieve good discipline. Pupils show respect to teachers who are able to maintain good behaviour in class because they want to learn and achieve their best. In a good Year 11 business studies lesson, for example, the teacher achieved very good behaviour by valuing pupils' contributions and asking challenging questions. Pupils responded well to these questions and listened attentively, taking careful notes. Similarly, in a very good Year 11 religious education lesson looking at using the correct words to maximise pupils GCSE achievements, challenging questions and high expectations ensured that learning and progress was good. By the end of the lesson all pupils had a better understanding of both the examination requirements and important ideas such as religious conversion and belief, and how these affect behaviour, empathy and respect.

11. As a result of this good and very good teaching pupils learn effectively in nearly all lessons. This, in turn, means that pupils put substantial effort into their work, show real interest in their studies and concentrate on what they are doing. In a Year 10 design and technology lesson, for example, the

very focused and professional atmosphere ensured that pupils concentrated very well and were highly enthusiastic about their work. In another example, in Year 9 French, the teacher's very good classroom management skills made the lesson enjoyable. Pupils worked very hard, and successfully, to develop their skills in speaking and writing French and make very good progress. As a result of the effort pupils put into their work, they accomplish a significant amount of work during lessons and achieve well. Year 11 pupils developing a multi-media presentation in GNVQ information and communication worked in groups effectively and achieved well, making good progress.

12. A particularly strong feature of pupils' learning is the way they build on earlier work to make good progress as they move through the school. In a Year 9 history lesson pupils responded very well to the challenges set by the teacher to extend their knowledge and understanding of global relations. Similarly, pupils in a Year 10 drama lesson built on their previous performance skills to develop their expertise in role-play.

**The headteacher, senior managers, key staff and governors all have a hand in leading and managing the school effectively.**

13. Good leadership and efficient management are at the centre of St Clere's School's success. Thoughtful leadership by the headteacher and senior managers and practical management by key staff all work together to create a school in which improvement and achievement are top of the school's agenda.

14. A good example of this commitment to improvement is the way the school monitors and evaluates its work in order to identify areas of strength and weakness and priorities for action. Recently, the work of both the modern foreign languages and mathematics departments have been monitored, the outcomes evaluated and priorities for improvement set. This is now having a strong impact on pupils' achievement. In modern languages, for example, although standards at GCSE remain low, pupils' achievements are improving in Years 7, 8 and 9: pupils make good progress and standards are now close to average.

15. The governing body has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. A good example of this understanding is that governors identified modern languages as an area of relative weakness in the school and have worked closely with the school to develop a strategy for improvement. The gaining of Language College status is a central part of this strategy and is clearly having a positive impact on improvement. Again, rising standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are clear evidence of this improvement.

16. The results of the regular programme to monitor the work of subject departments are used well to identify priorities for improvement. Senior managers have a thorough knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and there is good support for teachers. This is supported by the Securing Pupil Success initiative through which pupils are set individual targets for improving their work and achieving their potential. The initiative has been one of the school's central planks in raising pupils' achievement and its success is illustrated in the improving examination standards. It is also effective in developing and reinforcing parents' involvement in their children's learning, giving them a stake in the school's success.

17. A particularly strong feature is the school's leadership and management is the way they come together to create a very well organised and ordered school. This shows itself in much of the everyday life of the school. A good example is the very well-maintained building and lack of graffiti: the school is kept clean and the playground and building are free of litter. The public spaces, too, are strong contributors to the school's positive atmosphere: the cactus plants and the new memorial garden give the school a sense of calm, order and care. Movement around the school is another example of how well the school works on a day to day basis. For the most part pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and although there is sometimes some pushing, this is kept to a minimum by careful supervision.

**Pupils are cared for very well, creating the conditions where all pupils are able to achieve their best.**

18. The school is very effective in creating a strong climate for learning. This is shown in the everyday work of the school as well as in the way staff strive to improve and raise pupils' achievements. A good example of the everyday work of the school is the classroom displays. In many classrooms, high quality displays celebrate the work of pupils and support learning by providing interesting and stimulating information. In one English classroom used by a Year 11 tutor group, for example, the high quality display supported pupils' GCSE achievements very effectively. Such displays, together with good quality assemblies and the effective use of form time, all show care for pupils and help to promote the importance of achievement.

19. The school has established a very strong ethos in which care and achievement go hand in hand and are the concern of everyone. This very strong ethos, or climate for learning, shows itself in a number of ways. The fact that the building is very well maintained has already been noted and the impact of this is to create an atmosphere which reflects the care for others and for property. Second, the school has established a climate in which learning is valued by pupils and where teachers are able to gain the respect of their classes. A unique example is the way many teachers leave the door to their classroom open throughout the lesson: this is possible because there are no interruptions and because pupils are well behaved. Of course, behaviour is not always very good and a few pupils can disrupt lessons. But such incidents are managed well ensuring that all pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity or background, do well.

20. Another example of the way the school cares very effectively for its pupils is the effort it puts into making sure that achievement is at the top of its agenda. Again, the Securing Pupil Success initiative is a good example of how seriously the school takes achievement: the impact is clear in the better than average examination results and the good progress pupils make between the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 11. Other examples of the way pupils are encouraged to do their best is their involvement in ecology where they have collected money to pay to maintain rain forests in South America. Similarly, the strong relationships established by teachers give pupils the confidence to achieve. In a nutshell, the very positive climate for learning has a strong impact on pupils' achievements.

**Pupils' personal development is promoted successfully: the strong moral and social framework creates an orderly school.**

21. The school is very successful in promoting pupils' personal development. The good teaching is central to this: teachers' good subject knowledge, effective planning and high standards of discipline and the way they show considerable respect for pupils all provide a strong moral and social framework. Furthermore, the good teaching means that pupils respect their teachers: pupils respond best where they are set clear expectations about behaviour and achievements.

22. The good relationships that pupils have with their teachers, and with each other, are evident in day to day life around the school. Movement between lessons and at lunch time is usually well-mannered despite some occasional jostling. A good example of this good behaviour is the respect shown to the common areas of the school such as the arid and memorial gardens. Pupils get on well with each other: again there are some occasions where pupils have fallen out with their friends but the school works hard and broadly successfully to resolve any difficulties. During the inspection pupils often sought out teachers for help and advice about their work: teachers give their time willingly to help pupils with their learning. During one lunchtime, for example, Year 10 pupils received help with their drama work and the information and communication technology room was used regularly by pupils after school.

23. One of the reasons that pupils' personal development is strong is that school assemblies are very successful in promoting a clear moral and social framework. In a Year 7 assembly, for example, pupils responded very well to the input on making choices by listening attentively. The same assembly also reinforced the school's emphasis on achievement by presenting achievement

certificates to a wide range of pupils. Similarly, a Year 9 assembly promoted the same values and standards. What was particularly significant about the assemblies was the way they gave pupils a clear framework for their behaviour and how to make their own choices about right and wrong. This is one of the reasons why pupils' behaviour is broadly good: they have a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong.

24. Another reason for pupils' good personal development is the way the school promotes diversity and equality. Senior staff recognise, for example, that in a mainly all white school promoting racial equality is especially challenging and have adopted a number of strategies. The school has successfully recruited teachers from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds to provide different role models for pupils. In a similar way, the language college is being used to promote diversity: the teaching of Mandarin is a good example of how this is working in practice. What is important about these strategies is the impact they have on pupils' understanding and their relationships with others. Year 11 pupils, for example, felt that there was no racism in the school and stated that the "Respect" programme that they study in tutor time had been helpful in raising their awareness. This is confirmed by the evidence: pupils show real respect for others, including their teachers, and this adds significantly to the sense of order around the school.

25. A unique strength in pupils' attitudes is the way they get involved in the life of the school. This is largely due to the way the school promotes successfully a range of activities that help pupils take responsibility. Pupils' involvement in promoting an ecological school is a good example. Here, pupils have made notices reminding teachers to switch off lights, raised money for tropical rain forest in South America and helped make an ecological area in the school grounds. The school council is another example of pupils' involvement in the school. Through the school council pupils are involved in a project to upgrade the lavatories. Those pupils involved in promoting the school's approach to ecology and taking part in sports are all examples of the positive attitudes pupils have to school. These projects and initiatives make a very real contribution to pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to school, benefit from what it has to offer and are being helped successfully to understand their place in the wider world.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**In a few cases teaching is less than satisfactory because teachers do not manage the 70 minute lessons\* well or because they lack the skills to manage some challenging behaviour.**

26. Although teaching is good overall, not all the teaching meets these high standards and there remains room for some improvement. In a small proportion of lessons teachers are not skilled enough in managing the small number of pupils whose behaviour is challenging and this makes it difficult for pupils to learn. In one lesson, for example, the teacher took too long to settle the class and this wasted time. In another, the teacher's lack of experience meant that pupils received little praise for what they were doing well: instead, the teacher emphasised all the negative points which did little to promote good behaviour.

27. In other cases, teachers do not manage time well and the pace of learning in the last ten minutes or so of lessons is slow. As a result time is wasted: sometimes, as in one Year 9 lesson, pupils put away their work and sat and waited until the end of the lesson. They were not disruptive or badly behaved but certainly did very little. What this meant was that pupils achieved less than they should have and thus their progress was slower than expected.

28. The net effect of these weaknesses in teaching is not huge but does have a negative impact on some pupils' learning. The school, through its monitoring systems, is fully aware of these weaknesses and where necessary has taken the right action to improve teaching.

## **French GCSE results are below average.**

29. GCSE French results are well below average and were lower in 2002 than in 2001. In 2001, just over 29 per cent of pupils gained the top grades of A\* - C but in 2002 this had dropped to 22 per

cent of pupils. Although this mirrors a fall in the French results nationally, performance remains well below average. Further analysis of the results shows that the grades tend to be bunched around the middle grades C, D, E and F showing that although the school did not perform well at the higher grades it nevertheless managed to get nearly all pupils through the examination with at least a pass. This suggests that while standards are low, there is the potential for them to improve.

30. When the French results are compared with those of the other subjects pupils take at GCSE, French does relatively less well. That is not to say that all other subjects do much better and there are a few that do not: but French does relatively less well than other subjects. Broadly, this is confirmed by lessons. The standards achieved by one Year 11 class, for example, were well below average: despite some detailed lesson plans, pupils made little progress and had poor skills in using the French language for writing and speaking.

### **The range of vocational GCSE courses is not broad enough.**

31. The school has already introduced vocational GCSE courses in information and communication technology and leisure and tourism. These are having a strong impact on pupils' achievements: in a Year 11 information and communication technology lesson, for example, pupils developed their skills in working with others effectively because of the way this vocational course is structured. Similarly, in a very good leisure and tourism lesson on marketing, pupils achieved well and consolidated their learning effectively. Again this is because the course is well matched to the needs of pupils and, like the information and communication technology lesson, because of the teachers' good knowledge of the vocational content.

32. Although these courses provide a greater range of opportunities to most pupils there are a few who do not wish to study these subjects and are not motivated by an "academic" diet: as a result they are unable to benefit fully from the vocational GNVQ courses. Significantly, it is boys, rather than girls, who are least likely to have positive attitudes to a traditional range of subjects, particularly as they get older. This explains why the attitudes and behaviour of a few boys can be more difficult and challenging than most other pupils and, in turn, why boys do less well than girls in their GCSE examinations.



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

33. In order to maintain and improve standards further, the school should:

- (1) Improve teaching in the few cases where it is unsatisfactory by:
  - using the change in the length of lessons to ensure that time is used effectively;
  - improving the classroom and behaviour management skills of some teachers'.
- (2) Improve the French GCSE results by:
  - targeting those pupils who are predicated to achieve grades D or E in their GCSE examination.
- (3) Broaden the range of vocational GCSE courses.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	2

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	13	24	16	3	0	0
Percentage	13	20	38	25	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1013
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	90

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	99

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	97	106	203

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	33	63
	Girls	90	85	77
	Total	146	141	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (63)	74 (73)	69 (69)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (14)	44 (41)	31 (29)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	68	63
	Girls	91	88	69
	Total	143	156	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (66)	77 (80)	73 (76)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (18)	51 (44)	30 (33)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	90	100	190

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	53	88	89
	Girls	62	98	99
	Total	115	186	188
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (56)	98 (100)	99 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.6
	National	39.8

*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

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

## 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
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

## Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
983	114	1
0	0	0
3	1	0
11	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
2	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
18	1	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.87
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	580

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.4
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.68
Key Stage 4	20.20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,367,803
Total expenditure	3,351,623
Expenditure per pupil	3,362
Balance brought forward from previous year	102,256
Balance carried forward to next year	118,436

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1013
Number of questionnaires returned	81

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	46	6	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	48	2	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	57	7	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	63	12	6	0
The teaching is good.	35	53	1	1	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	46	16	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	40	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	30	0	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	31	44	17	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	57	36	1	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	49	4	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	41	7	5	7

### **Other issues raised by parents**

One set of parents were concerned about the way the school had dealt with their children. At the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors, the great majority of parents were very happy with the school and felt that it gets the most from its pupils. The evidence from the inspection endorses these positive views.