

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RODING VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL**

Loughton

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115235

Headteacher: Mr JC Wincott

Reporting inspector: Mr I Benson  
2739

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 251218

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 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Alderton Hill LOUGHTON Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. P Aylett
Date of previous inspection:	18 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2739	Mr I Benson	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Citizenship	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well is the school led and managed?
9931	Mrs MJ Kerry	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How high are standards? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18950	Ms C Rodney	<i>Team inspector</i>	English	
12885	Mr J Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics	
18453	Mr C Lower	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science	
20767	Mr J Royle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology	
31685	Mrs V Girling	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art	
31963	Mr M Padmore	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Design and technology	
20497	Dr V Williams	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography	
5832	Mr M Morton-Thorpe	<i>Team inspector</i>	History Educational inclusion	
27058	Mr D Saunders	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern languages.	
12475	Mr S Johnson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
18888	Ms J Boulton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education	
11239	Mrs S Flockton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive community school for 1220 pupils. The majority are white and the remainder (7%) come from a range of ethnic backgrounds: one pupil has English as an additional language but is not in the early stages of acquisition. Boys outnumber girls in Years 7-9 but not in Years 10-11. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic circumstances; an average proportion (9%) is eligible for free school meals. An average proportion (10%) has special education needs - most with moderate learning difficulties, and some (2%) have Statements of need. Attainment on entry to the school is average, but the full range of attainment is not present, especially of higher attaining pupils.

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

This is an effective and rapidly improving school that no longer has serious weaknesses. Standards are rising and pupils achieve well in their academic and personal development. Teaching is good across the school and pupils respond positively to the high expectations and the challenges it provides. The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior staff and the governing body are outstanding. Together they have provided a clear direction for the school's work. The identification of key priorities and the implementation of a coherent strategic plan have resulted in major improvements. The school now provides good value for money.

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

- The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior managers and the governing body are outstanding and provide a clear educational direction for further development of the school
- Pupils' have a strong commitment to school: their attitudes are constructive and they enjoy profitable relationships with peers and teachers. They are well supported in their academic and personal development by very good quality monitoring and tracking systems and effective target setting
- There are coherent information systems to support improvement and raise achievement at whole school and departmental levels
- All pupils have access to a good curriculum that includes very good provision for mathematics, music, physical education and a very rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities.
- There is very good support for pupils' moral and social development
- There is a very successful partnership with parents. The school provides reports and regular information for them of outstanding quality

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

- Continue the programme to raise the level of pupils' attainment at ages 14 and 16 years
- Improve the challenge and pace of lessons where there are weaknesses in teaching
- Further develop provision for basic skills, especially that for literacy and the use of information and communications technology, in order to support pupils' learning
- Meet the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11; move further towards meeting the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils

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

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

The previous inspection, in September 2000, judged the school to have serious weaknesses. Very good improvement has been achieved through the successful implementation of an extensive development programme. Senior management roles and responsibilities are now coherent and effective in implementing planning priorities and in strategically using resources. Communication within school, with governors and parents is now highly effective

in meeting the needs of all. The programme of raising standards continues: it has been successful in establishing an upward trend in pupils' performance at age 14 and 16 years, including for exceptionally able pupils and those who have special educational needs, and in improving numeracy. More effective use is made of homework. Teaching quality has improved, assisted by implementing Performance Management, the national Key Stage 3 strategy and a programme of monitoring classroom practice. The curriculum has been enhanced by the introduction of a range of prevocational and other courses to meet a wide range of learning needs. Statutory requirements for the curriculum are now met, with the exception of religious education for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Support for pupils' spiritual development has improved, but the school still needs to move further towards meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Levels of exclusion have been considerably reduced: a process that encourages personal responsibility and better behaviour management is effective. Marking is more consistent and better information systems help to monitor pupils' academic and personal development as well as in inform target setting. There is a high level of commitment among staff to improve standards and the quality of education provided for pupils. As a result, morale is high in the school.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards at both age 14 and age 16 are improving at a rate higher than that achieved nationally. In 2002 results in GCSE examinations were above average for the first time, and well above average when compared to similar schools. There was particular improvement in results for higher attaining pupils. Results at age 14 are in line with the average, and strongest in mathematics. Observation during inspection showed that pupils are working at a level in line with national averages, and likely to achieve well. Pupils have broadly average standards of attainment on entry and make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils who are exceptionally able and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Achievement is good overall at both age 14 and age 16. There is some fluctuation in the achievement of boys and girls, with girls recently performing better than boys after the national picture has been taken into account. Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects including English, and is good in mathematics, science, history, geography, information communication technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Standards are particularly good in mathematics where pupils achieve above average standards at age 14 and well above average at age 16. Standards in English are below average, but improving. In design and technology standards are below average and in geography and physical education they are above average. Standards in reading, speaking and listening are good: standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Standards of writing are satisfactory and are improving. Targets are set based on individual pupil data. They are realistic but challenging, and have been consistently exceeded.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show great pride in their school and are enthusiastic about many aspects of its life and work. They feel safe and well supported in their personal development. The school marks and celebrates pupil's achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond well to the high expectations the school has of them. They behave very well in and out of classrooms and now exercise greater self-control and accept responsibility for their own misdemeanours.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils make considerable progress in their personal development, accept and take responsibility in the wider life of the school and enjoy very profitable relationships with peers and with their teachers.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Following the last inspection attendance fell but is now about average. There have been improvements in levels of authorised and unauthorised absence in this last year. An education welfare officer now works closely with the school on implementing strategies to improve attendance.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teaching in the majority of the 171 lessons seen was good or better and in only a few lessons (two) was it unsatisfactory. Examples of excellence were seen in nine lessons: two lessons each in English, science and citizenship and one lesson each in art, history and personal development. Teaching is very good in history, music, physical education, leisure and tourism and citizenship and good in English, mathematics, science, art, business education, geography, information and communication technology, modern languages, sociology and personal development. In other subjects teaching was satisfactory. Most pupils make good gains in their learning as a result of well-planned and challenging teaching. In some lessons, where teaching lacks challenge and pace, pupils occasionally lose concentration and interest or display poor behaviour. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory but both, especially literacy, need to be further developed within pupils' learning. At the end of lessons effective use is made of plenary sessions to check what pupils' know, understand and can do. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and those who are exceptionally able allows them to be appropriately challenged and make good progress. Homework is well used to support and extend learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All pupils have access to the curriculum and their learning needs are met. Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is enriched by pre-vocational courses but the requirement to provide all of these pupils with religious education is not met. The curriculum is extended for all pupils by a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, drama productions, as well as educational visits at home and abroad.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported in mainstream classes and through dedicated individual lessons in basic skills. The targets in individual education plans are well used to plan learning and to monitor their progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good support is provided for pupils' personal development. Provision to support pupils' moral and social development is very good and encourages them to contribute as well as benefit from the school's life and work. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils receive very good support in their academic progress and personal development. The tracking of progress and use of individual targets is a particular strength. The management of behaviour motivates pupils to behave well and take a full part in the life of the school. Monitoring of attendance is very thorough and has resulted in improved levels of attendance. Pupils feel safe and secure in school.

The school works very well with parents and, since the last inspection, has entered into a productive partnership that includes the provision of high quality information about their child as well as about the school and its work. The pupil planner is used extensively to communicate with teachers and prompt replies to their enquiries are either in writing or by telephone.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding. The productive partnership between the governing body, headteacher and senior managers has ensured that key priorities for improvement have been coherently planned and implemented. This well-managed school now has a clear educational direction, high expectations of both staff and pupils and a coherent approach to its work. The senior team work hard and well with middle managers, helping and supporting them to become more effective in role. A programme of monitoring teaching and learning operates at senior and head of subject levels: effective action is taken to improve classroom practice.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Outstanding. Governors are very well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development, act strategically and consistently monitor the implementation of the improvement plan. They know that the school does not meet the requirement to provide religious education for all Year 10 and 11 pupils and that they need to move further towards meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils
The school's evaluation of its performance	Regular self-review, by the governing body and management team, is an important management tool in the evaluation of the school's performance and in determining priorities for development within the improvement plan.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is a very good match of staff to the curriculum, and the provision of accommodation and learning resources is good. The quality of development planning and changes to the allocations of departmental funding has ensured that resources are targeted towards improvement. Better strategic financial planning would improve effectiveness further. The principles of best value are applied well. The headteacher and senior management team provide challenging thinking and a clear rationale.

## 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 behaviour and learning</li> <li>• The school is approachable and responds positively to concerns</li> <li>• Achievement for all is the school's aim</li> <li>• Teaching is good and pupils progress well</li> <li>• Clear, well-organised communications</li> <li>• The school has improved markedly in the last two years under the leadership of the new headteacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of homework</li> <li>• Information about progress</li> </ul>

Inspection evidence fully supported parents' positive views, including significant improvement since the last inspection. Information about progress is frequent and readily understandable: annual reports especially are of high quality. Homework is well linked to learning in class, and is supported through the homework clubs.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry to the school pupils are attaining broadly average standards. However, there are fewer than average who are higher attaining pupils. As pupils move through the school they make good progress and achieve well. Standards have risen since the last inspection and this is evident in improved results. There has been particular improvement in standards in mathematics that are now above average at both age 14 and age 16.

2. Results at age 14 are in line with the average. Over the past three years the trend in improvement in average points score at age 14 has been above the trend nationally. It has risen from below average in 1998 to above average in 2001. In 2002 average points score is in line with the national average. It is lower than last year because of exceptional English results in 2001, and a change in the calculation of the score between 2001 and 2002. Despite this, there is a trend of upward improvement.

3. During the inspection pupils' work was scrutinised in every subject. The standards seen were in line with the average overall, but with above average standards being achieved in mathematics and physical education. Standards in design and technology were below average, as the results would indicate. All other subjects were in line with the average.

4. Results at age 16 are in line with national averages for higher attaining pupils and above average for lower attaining pupils. Over the past five years the average points score has been rising faster than the national rate. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\* to C grades has risen significantly. In 2001 40 per cent of pupils achieved these higher grades, but in 2002 this figure rose to 51 per cent, which is now in line with the national average. This marked rise in standards is closely linked to the major improvement made in the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11, which was a serious weakness in the last inspection. In 2002 the average points score was above average compared to national figures, indicating that both lower and higher attaining pupils achieved well.

5. Work seen during the inspection supported the improvements seen in results, and indicates that pupils are on track to achieve well by the end of the year. Standards are in line with national expectations in science, art, information communication technology and modern foreign languages. They are above average in geography, music, history and physical education, and well above average in mathematics. Standards are below average in design and technology and in English. The focus on the teaching of skills within English means that standards are improving, although they are currently below average. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in religious education, as the provision is so limited.

6. Achievement is good. In 2001 the average points score at age 14 was above average when compared to similar schools. In 2002 the value-added measure for pupils' progress between entry to the school and age 14 was above the national average, and well above average when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account. Similarly, at age 16, the average points score in 2002 was well above average compared with similar schools. These indicators show that pupils are making good progress.

7. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve to at least a satisfactory level in every subject, and in history, ICT, mathematics, modern languages, music and physical education their achievement is good. In Years 10 and 11 the picture is similar, except that achievement in geography is also good. The underachievement reported at the time of the last inspection is

now no longer apparent. There has been particular improvement in science and design and technology, and in geography and ICT in Years 7 to 9, and modern languages in Years 10 and 11. The situation in religious education in Years 10 and 11 remains unsatisfactory. The significant improvement in achievement is related to improvements in the quality of teaching that is now judged to be good across the school.

8. There has been a degree of disparity in the achievement of boys and girls. At the last inspection it was noted that boys' achievement had improved, and this has been sustained. Generally, the school's monitoring of the progress of boys and girls from entry to GCSE shows that any gap that is present on entry neither widens nor improves during pupils' time in the school. In 2002 however, girls did achieve better than boys across a range of subjects. The teaching and learning forum is exploring these gender issues and any steps that might be taken. For example, a survey on boys' and girls' approaches to study has been undertaken so that suitable advice and guidance can be given.

9. The progress of exceptionally able pupils is good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when it was judged unsatisfactory. Through the teaching and learning forum, subject specific criteria for the identification of such pupils has been developed, and a register drawn up. The school's programme of lesson observations includes a specific criterion related to the teaching of these pupils. Observations of teaching during inspection showed that good account was taken of these pupils in teacher's planning and methodology. There has also been improvement in the progress of pupils with special educational needs, which is now good. Although some individual education plans have not been reviewed each term, the progress of pupils against their individual targets is good.

10. The school has made good progress in implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy with the headteacher leading the launch, thus giving it a high profile. A senior member of staff manages the strategy implementation and this has had a big effect on the seriousness of the response by each department.

11. The numeracy skills of the majority of pupils in the school are satisfactory. This is an improvement from the last inspection when standards of numeracy were below expectations. As part of the mathematics curriculum, and particularly during Years 7 and 8, a significant emphasis is placed on the further development of pupils' competence when handling problems involving the use of number. Lessons during these years commence with starter activities designed to provide pupils with a greater level of accuracy and confidence when dealing with examples involving mental arithmetic. The form of the mental starters frequently involves the use of a counting stick or individual white boards. Teachers sometimes introduce an element of competition into these activities and the pupils particularly enjoy them.

12. Raising awareness of the links between numeracy and all other subjects across the curriculum was the primary focus of a staff development day during June 2002. Pupils' use of numeracy across subjects varies from satisfactory in most subjects to good or very good in a few. Examples of good practice occur in geography in Years 10 and 11 where numerical skills are particularly well used in the analysis of fieldwork and for coursework. Project work for GCSE in this subject also shows pupils making accurate and confident use of examples involving number. In music pupils use bar charts, graphs and pie charts in analysing surveys, and grids are used in sequencing work on computers for composition. Fractions and proportions are also used confidently in rhythm work in this subject. In both physical education and work with pupils with special educational needs, good use is made of number to support aspects of the work. In all other subjects satisfactory use is made of number.

13. Speaking and listening skills are good across the curriculum with effective questioning to extend oral skills. Pupils use discussion and evaluative skills to articulate their ideas confidently in subjects such as music and drama. In geography for instance, Year 10 and 11 pupils, particularly girls, display strong oral skills based on the interactive teaching and discussion. Attention is given to developing good reading skills through emphasising basic and technical vocabulary. Key words are displayed and reading aloud is encouraged in, for example, religious education and history. In history, pupils read widely around issues and make links to texts studied in English, such as *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and *Billy*, in order to gain deeper understanding about race relations. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support to improve their reading skills.

14. Standards in writing are satisfactory in most curriculum areas and pupils are encouraged to write for a range of purposes. They undertake extended project work in music and extensive diary and evaluative work in drama whilst in subjects such as geography, Year 10 and 11 pupils produce well developed discursive essays. Skills of planning and drafting are well taught in history. Presentation is good; however, poor handwriting and spelling skills limit the ability of some lower attaining pupils to write accurately. Overall, the literacy provision is good and is leading to the improvement of skills in writing, even though not all departments express this practice through a policy.

15. The school's targets for improvement are set based on individual pupil predictions informed by a range of data. They are challenging but realistic, and have helped to raise standards. There has been good improvement in standards since the last inspection.

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

16. This area of the school's work is much improved since the last inspection. The support for pupils' personal development is defined by clear policies, high expectations and very well conceived practices. The school's positive approach to all of its pupils, irrespective of background or gender, encourages considerate behaviour, self-discipline, commitment to hard work and the achievement and celebration of high standards as well as regular attendance. Pupils value this strategy, as it enables each to grow at their own pace, both as people and learners and to be provided with challenges, support and guidance from a school that has high expectations of them.

17. Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are generally very positive. Most of those who contributed to discussions during the inspection showed great pride in the school, enthusiasm for many aspects of school life, and praised form tutors and subject teachers for the support and guidance they willingly provide. All were confident that in a case of bullying the school would act swiftly and effectively to deal with it.

18. Pupils feel that the school provides them with an environment in which they are trusted, feel safe and are well supported in their learning and personal development. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, in lessons and the wider life of the school.

19. Each day, Year 8 pupils undertake a variety of roles in the reception area, others take responsibility for the form diary, act as monitors in class, work co-operatively with others, become a representative on the school council. Members of Years 10 and 11 are trained as peer counsellors, become prefects or head or deputy head boy or girl and help younger pupils in extra-curricular activities. Many pupils show visitors around the school and on open days take a major role as guides for prospective pupils and their parents. Pupils, in undertaking these responsibilities, show great pride in their school.

20. Behaviour in the public areas of the school, at breaks and both at the start and end of the day, is much improved on that reported at the last inspection: it is now good. Pupils move responsibly between lessons and exhibit the expected exuberance at break and lunchtime when they are involved in a range of games and activities in their designated area of the school grounds. Behaviour in lessons is good, as it was at the last inspection.

21. The school is increasingly effective in dealing with those pupils that challenge its aims and values. Progress has been made particularly in helping pupils to gain a more mature approach to managing their own behaviour, both in class and around the school. An outreach worker from the local pupil referral unit works well on strategies to help pupils at risk of exclusion to manage their behaviour and benefit from remaining in class.

22. In most lessons, attitudes and behaviour are generally very good, especially in English, mathematics, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education. Pupils are keen to be involved in learning, sharing experiences and ideas, answering and asking questions, working well in pairs, small groups or on their own. In many lessons the high quality of relationships, between pupils and with their teachers, contribute to the achievement of good levels of concentration and commitment to work. In a small number of lessons where teaching provides little challenge and the pace of learning is slow, some pupils are easily distracted, concentration and behaviour deteriorate and, consequently, insufficient progress is made. In some lessons, where lower attaining pupils find learning demanding, teachers skilfully structure learning and design tasks so that their attention and commitment to their work is held and the learning objectives are met. On such occasions, the good use of the plenary session helps pupils to review the important progress they have made in both their learning and in managing their own behaviour.

23. The majority of pupils benefit from highly productive relationships with peers, teachers and support assistants, and from the wealth of knowledge adults have of the learners with whom they work. Pupils listen carefully to each other, challenge the ideas shared with them without causing offence or showing disrespect. The enthusiasm they show for learning rarely results in behaviour that prevents others from taking part in discussion or from asking or answering questions. Most pupils have made considerable progress in taking responsibility for their behaviour: self-discipline is now established as the norm rather than the exception.

24. Pupils receiving teaching or classroom assistant support usually appreciate the additional help offered to them, make good use of it and have positive attitudes to their learning. Those who have individual or small group teaching try hard and are keen to make progress. Pupils particularly appreciate the opportunities to use the learning resource base at lunchtimes and after school and also benefit from the help from members of the special educational needs team who are always there if needed. Volunteering to help regularly with the after school homework club run by the special needs department enhances the personal development of prefects.

25. Attendance levels have improved. After a fall to below average in 2000 they are now in line with national averages. The level of authorised and unauthorised absence has been markedly reduced, but there is still too much parentally condoned absence.

26. The school starts promptly at the beginning of each session and most pupils arrive in time for registration. Those who are late usually sign in at reception and make their way to their first lesson. The register taken in each lesson is part of the strategy to ensure full attendance but also to monitor internal truancy. There are few occasions when pupils arrive late for the start of each lesson in spite of the distances some travel across the site and through some narrow and congested corridors. When pupils do arrive late there is usually an apology, a good reason offered or a note from the staff member who has detained them.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

27. The quality of teaching is good across the school. Teaching was at least good in just over two-thirds of the 171 lessons inspected and satisfactory in just under a third of them. Some examples of excellent teaching were seen in two lessons each in English, science and citizenship and one lesson each in art, history and personal development. In a very small number of lessons (two) teaching was unsatisfactory: this occurred in English and art. The current teaching profile is a very significant improvement on that reported at the last inspection, when teaching was good or better in half of the lessons, satisfactory in over a third and unsatisfactory in one-tenth, with a significant weakness in Years 10 and 11.

28. Teaching is good across Years 7 to 11 with some that is excellent: in one lesson in each of Years 9 and 11 teaching was unsatisfactory. Within subjects, teaching is very good in history, music, physical education, leisure and tourism and citizenship and good in English, mathematics, science, business education, geography, ICT, modern languages, sociology and personal development. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress.

29. Teaching has a number of good characteristics. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to inform lesson planning and in the design of interesting tasks to help pupils explore the learning. They willingly share their interest and enthusiasm for their subject with their pupils, and use practical examples as a stimulus for learning and this helps to meet the learning needs of all pupils, including those with special needs and the exceptionally able. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils and use a range of teaching and learning methods to help them explore the subject matter. As a result, the pace of learning and progress is good as pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils are provided with good levels of challenge and learning tasks are well supported by the selection of appropriate resources. Homework is regularly set and provides opportunities to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The results of marking pupils' work inform the planning of further teaching and learning. Generally, pupils are well managed.

30. Where teaching is highly effective, lessons are well planned and there are clearly identified learning objectives. In the classroom teachers have high expectations of all pupils that are clearly established and consistently reinforced. For example, in a Year 9 ceramics lesson where teaching was excellent, from the beginning pupils were aware of the learning objectives and of the teacher's expectations. They responded to both extremely positively. Teachers subject knowledge is very well used to stimulate and challenge pupils' learning. This was seen in a Year 11 science lesson where the teaching provided pupils with high levels of challenge. The very effective use of practical examples and question and answer sessions encouraged both intellectual curiosity and a high commitment to the learning tasks and resulted in all pupils making very good progress. In these lessons, the development of literacy, numeracy and in many, the use of ICT is integral to the learning. The briskness of pace in these lessons, as well as the involvement of pupils in the learning ensures that, in the plenary session, all are able to demonstrate confidently what they now know, understand and can do. This was certainly the case in a Year 10 citizenship class where there was a very effective use of role-play. In the plenary session, when pupils reviewed the learning it challenged them to evaluate their own views and values about the consequences of unprotected sex.

31. In lessons where teaching was less effective, planning was less detailed and the length and nature of activities and the time needed imprecise. However, while starter activities were quite well done, teaching in the main part of the lesson often used a limited range of methods,



both pace and challenge were often lacking and pupil management was not always as firm as was needed. This was seen in a Year 11 design and technology lesson, where pupils were working on individual practical projects, and learning lacked both pace and challenge. While they all progressed at their own pace, some making good progress, few pupils had any target to meet in relation to the stage they should reach in their work by the end of the lesson. In a Year 9 science lesson, ineffective use of time and poor pupil behaviour during the main activity inhibited the use of a plenary session to review learning and set the homework.

32. In those lessons where the teaching was unsatisfactory, learning objectives were poorly defined, and planning lacked a well-defined structure and details of how pupils would gain access to the learning. In a Year 9 English lesson, for instance, pupils' analysis and exploration of a question, for the National Curriculum English test, lacked both pace and challenge. The lack of clear objectives resulted in an uncritical approach to the task. The acceptance of pupils' low level or single word responses to questions resulted in few of them making any significant progress in the one-hour lesson.

33. In most lessons where the three-part structure is used, starter activities are well used. Pupils enjoy, for example, the quick mental arithmetic questions or the revision of the arguments between suffragettes and suffragists and, as a result are keen to further develop the learning in the next stage of the lesson. In most cases the transition from starter to the main activity is well managed, although the plenary session, if used at all, varies in its effectiveness. In most lessons where it was used, pupils enjoyed the review of the lesson and benefited greatly from the reassurance of how effective they were as learners.

34. The teaching of the basic skills is satisfactory. In many classrooms learning is supported by lists of key technical words and in marking credit is given for their use in an appropriate context. In some English lessons, however, pupils' progress is limited as the production of written responses to a task is not sufficiently accurate to convey appropriate use of language, style, or grammatical construction that may be the subject of the exercise. In some subjects the use of writing frames, dictionaries or well-designed work sheets contributes to pupils' learning in the subject and the development of appropriate vocabulary and good quality note making. In some subjects the analysis of numerical data, and its relevance to topics in history, geography, leisure and tourism or sociology for example, is well done. Increasingly, the application of ICT is an integral part of pupils' learning. However, although limited use was seen during the inspection, ICT is effectively taught in areas such as music, design and technology as well as leisure and tourism.

35. The quality of teaching of individual pupils who have special educational needs is good. Teachers create an ethos in which pupils can learn and seek support. Subject teachers in different curriculum areas are generally aware of the special educational needs of pupils in their classes and some include pupils' individual targets in their lesson planning. However, in some lessons, occasionally in for example English and design and technology, there is insufficient planning to meet the needs of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. Support teachers and learning support assistants provide pupils with additional help and guidance. Some good examples were seen with pupils being helped to stay on task, to understand the lesson content and to record their responses to tasks.

36. Teaching quality has improved significantly since the last inspection. There is no longer underachievement in lessons and subject knowledge, including that in science, is of a higher order and better deployed to inform teaching and learning. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy, and particularly the use of the three-part lesson, is beginning to have a positive effect on teaching as well as learning.

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

37. In the school's well-conceived curriculum policy, the governing body expects that all pupils will have access to, and benefit from, the high quality of education provided. The range of learning opportunities within the taught curriculum should and be complemented by extra-curricular experiences and enrichment activities that will enhance pupils as learners and people. The curriculum should, therefore, meet the learning needs of all pupils, but also enable them to benefit from the school's ethos, expectations and values as well as to fulfil their potential.

38. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced, is generally of good quality and builds effectively on pupils' learning in their primary school. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, including religious education. The arrangements for teaching a second foreign language are in transition and thus currently German is taught to Year 8 and 9 high attaining linguists in twilight time. This provision, although temporary, is not ideal. In Years 7 and 9 there is discrete provision for ICT but in Year 8 it is successfully taught through a range of subjects. In Year 7 and 8 geography classes, pupils are not sufficiently challenged by a wide range of learning opportunities. This is because of insufficient curriculum time and the lack of specialist teachers. The teaching of drama and a programme of personal development extend range of learning opportunities.

39. Year 9 pupils are well supported by a programme of information and careers education and guidance as part of their decision making about courses to be studied in Years 10 and 11. This programme, and the consultation with both parents and pupils, is good. The choice of courses takes account not only of pupils' learning needs, interests and achievements but also future aspirations. The process for seeking the lifting of statutory requirements, particularly for design and technology and modern languages, is well informed and takes full account of the guidance offered nationally. The vast majority of pupils benefit positively from the time and effort the school puts into helping them make well-informed decisions.

40. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Core provision that includes English, mathematics, science, physical education and citizenship is supplemented by choices of appropriate courses from a series of option groups. The optional courses include a good range that provide good progression from learning in Year 9, an accelerated course for early GCSE entry in mathematics as well as double-award ICT and pre-vocational courses in business and leisure and tourism, for example. The minority of pupils for whom statutory requirements have been lifted, in modern languages and design and technology, follow a variety of optional courses, including pre-vocational and creative subjects, ICT, an extra humanities or technology course or physical education at GCSE level. The wide range of core and optional provision enables the learning and interest needs of all pupils to be met. However, the present citizenship programme does not enable statutory requirements for religious education to be met.

41. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good. As there is a policy of providing most learning support in class, few pupils have to miss lessons for individual tuition and all, therefore, have full access to the curriculum. However, there are some pupils who require individual teaching in order to meet their specific literacy and numeracy targets. Further provision to improve pupils' basic skills is to be considered. Although in Years 10 and 11 there are some alternative subject choices, the options for pupils with special educational needs are being extended by a community programme.

42. A rich and varied programme of tutorial, extra-curricular and enrichment activities offers further learning opportunities for all pupils. The tutorial provision for support, guidance and mentoring of individual pupils also includes regular reviews of progress in academic and personal development. The daily opportunity to consider and reflect upon the very well chosen and stimulating “thought for the week” is not consistently undertaken across all tutor groups. As this theme is an integral part of the year group assemblies it means that pupils have an uneven experience of what the school provides in place of a daily act of collective worship.

43. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and take-up is high. The provision for both music and sport is extensive. In music there are numerous vocal and instrumental ensembles and in sport a variety of games and skills are taught. The Duke of Edinburgh Award, visits to theatres, overseas trips and exchanges as well as subject based enrichment and homework clubs provide something for everyone. All pupils are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular programme and to enjoy the opportunities available to them, whether or not they are capable of achieving the highest levels of performance.

44. The community keenly supports pupils’ learning through the involvement of parents in the library, local organisations providing mock-interviews, relationships through the education-business partnership and links with partner establishments, including mainstream schools and special and further education providers. Links with primary and special schools are strong and enable a smooth transfer, or re-integration, of pupils at various stages of their learning. The local pupil referral unit works well with the school in assisting pupils at risk of exclusion to improve the management of their behaviour. The school enjoys profitable relationships with a range of 11-18 schools and further education colleges that provide post-16 education. The importance of helping pupils to gain appropriate places for further study and supporting progression in pupils’ learning are central to these partnerships.

45. The school’s provision for supporting pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Although there are currently no whole school policy documents relating to this aspect of the curriculum, individual departments have carried out audits of their provision. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection when this provision was satisfactory, but support for pupil’s spiritual development was unsatisfactory.

46. The provision for pupils’ spiritual development is good. This has been improved in most subjects as a result of training about the place of spirituality in the curriculum. This comes through particularly strongly in art and citizenship where pupils explore emotive issues and in history where there is sensitive handling and exploration of, for example, the Holocaust. Feelings are also explored and expressed through dance and music.

47. Pupils’ moral development is very well promoted. The school has clear expectations regarding attitudes and behaviour and many subjects make a valuable contribution to pupils’ personal development. This is particularly good in history, where pupils explore the ethics of gas and chemical weapons in war, and in geography where the effects of pollution the depletion of the world’s natural resources and China’s one child policy are discussed. In art pupils explore issues surrounding child abuse, materialism and disability whilst in PE pupils gain a sense of fair play and sportsmanship through extra-curricular team games and clubs.

48. Provision for social development is very good. There is a very extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, which provides opportunities for social interaction and teamwork. Many are in sport and music, but are not solely confined to these areas. In the week of the inspection, 47 extra-curricular activities took place, ranging from a well-supported boys’ choir to extra German lessons for able linguists. Pupils’ social development is very well supported through, for example, learning about the workings of democracy and seeing it in action in the

school council, taking on responsibilities as prefects, acting as mentors for younger pupils, working in the school reception or providing sports coaching for a local primary school. Provision to support social development is also found in a wide range of trips, at home and abroad, theatre visits and residential fieldwork as well as in learning about wider issues of social responsibility in many subjects, for instance in geography and history. Pupils also benefit greatly from the strong emphasis placed on collaborative working in lessons, in pairs and small groups, learning to help and respect each other.

49. Provision for cultural development is good with many subjects making a strong contribution. Pupils have many opportunities to: visit major galleries at home and abroad; be involved in an annual drama production; participate in local dance festivals. Public performances are a major feature of the music department's activities along with listening to examples of great European music and music from other cultures such as Indonesian and African. In citizenship lessons, pupils learn about other cultures through such topics as equal opportunities and race while in RE pupils study different religions and their effect on social development in various countries. Pupils study a range of literary texts, including the work of authors from other cultures. Cuisine from different cultures is encountered in food technology and pupils use stimuli from various ethnic cultures in textiles projects.

50. Overall, there have been important improvements since the last inspection, all of which have provided a wider range of learning opportunities and support for pupils' academic and personal development.

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

51. Pupils are very well supported both in their academic progress and personal development. The coherent systems to support progress, and the highly effective use which is made of information, mean that all pupils are helped to achieve as highly as they can. There has been significant improvement in the management of behaviour since the last inspection, and in procedures for assessment, health and safety and child protection.

52. Academic performance is monitored through well-designed systems that track progress and attainment from when pupils enter the school until they take their GCSE examinations. The excellent quality of liaison with partner primary schools means that good quality information is collected about pupils before they arrive, and this is built on as they move through the school. From early in their school career, pupils are aware of their likely future performance, and this is presented to them in a way that is understandable and motivating.

53. A wide range of information is used to predict and measure individual performance, including the use of school's own system of "Roding Valley Numbers". Because this system is consistently used in written documents and carefully explained to parents and pupils, it is well understood and works very well in raising pupils' aspirations in a challenging and realistic way. Pupils are supported through regular individual mentoring sessions with form tutors who help them identify what they need to do to improve. Those who may be at risk of underachieving receive additional support.

54. Targets are set for pupils that have meaning for them. These may be, for example, short-term targets as a result of individual mentoring, or grades within subjects. In Year 11 pupils understand clearly the difference between their minimum predicted grade and the higher grade predicted by the teacher, that they can, or hope to, achieve through sustained application. Targets are listed on a page of the planner so that pupils and parents can share them. The format of annual reports also acts as a prompt for further improvement by showing clearly the next level to be reached, as well as the one currently attained.

55. The quality of assessment procedures within departments is good overall. In mathematics and physical education it is very good: in design and technology and modern languages it is satisfactory and in religious education it is unsatisfactory, although improvements are being made. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is somewhat severe in ICT and music: as a result, standards in both subjects at the end of Year 9 are in line with those for pupils of a similar age nationally. Generally assessment is well used to plan appropriate work, and to adapt planning where the need for this becomes apparent.

56. Pupils' personal development, like their academic progress, is monitored and supported by comprehensive records and coherent systems. There is a strong pastoral team that is well supported in its work by the coherent whole school ethos and good quality information on pupils, which is readily available. This team meets together for a monthly pastoral forum. The consistent expectations of behaviour and the opportunities presented for personal responsibility ensure that pupils are well-motivated participants in all aspects of school life.

57. There is a clear and consistent expectation that pupils will be self-disciplined, responsible contributors. The newly introduced prefect system, the school council, the peer counselling scheme and many other examples are well thought through and offer real opportunities for pupils. They are therefore keen to take up these opportunities and demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility. The prefect system is a very good example of the care and planning which ensures that pupils are well matched to the duties they undertake. The engagement of pupils in all these positive aspects of responsible behaviour has a significant effect on the levels on unacceptable behaviour. The management of behaviour is no longer based on control as reported at the last inspection.

58. The programmes of personal development and citizenship make a strong contribution to promoting personal responsibility and mature behaviour. Year co-ordinators also use assemblies to promote achievement in the widest sense, including acting as good citizens. The use of tutor time is variable in its effect on personal development, with some tutors planning effective sessions that support pupils, and others making little use of the time beyond administrative tasks.

59. When behaviour is not as good as it should be the school takes prompt and effective action. Parents and pupils are confident that bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with. There are various systems of monitoring behaviour that is giving cause for concern, tailored to the individual with very specific targets when this is needed. Parents are well involved where there are problems. There have been significant improvements in the way in which exclusions are used, and when exclusion is necessary it is supported by detailed records, based on clear criteria. The seclusion room is a highly effective deterrent, and the monitoring of the use of the room is a further example of how information is collected, analysed and actively put to good use in supporting improvement. Outside agencies such as behaviour support are well integrated into the overall strategies.

60. There are very good procedures for monitoring attendance, including an on-site education welfare officer who attends the monthly pastoral forum, monitors totals, and tracks pupils or groups of pupils. A system of contacting parents on the first day of absence is in place and works very efficiently according to parents. This means that the efforts of the education welfare officer can be targeted towards the hard core of pupils with poor attendance. There is an attendance target for the school and attendance has improved significantly from 2001 when it was below average. The discouragement of holidays in term time is not as rigorous as it is in some schools.

61. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are good, and much improved from the last inspection when they were of serious concern. The governing body have reviewed the child protection policy and appointed a named governor, and staff are aware of the named person and what procedures they would follow. There are suitable arrangements for attending case conferences and keeping records. No health and safety concerns were noted at this inspection, unlike the last, and procedures are good.

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

62. Parents are very pleased with the school and recognise that it has greatly improved since the last inspection, when a significant minority was concerned.

63. A very high proportion of parents see the school as having high expectations and being approachable. They also view the progress of pupils, the quality of teaching, and the quality of leadership and management as important strengths of the school's work. Parents feel that their children are well supported in their personal development. The major concerns raised through the questionnaire at the time of the last inspection are not apparent this time: the proportion of parents expressing concern on, for example, behaviour, has dropped dramatically.

64. This picture of an improved school that is meeting parents' expectations was reinforced at the parents' meeting, where achievement for all across a wide range of areas was seen to be a hallmark of the school. Parents also appreciate the excellent communications that they receive about routine matters and about pupils' progress. The high level of satisfaction shown thorough the parents' meeting and OFSTED questionnaire was similar to that expressed in the survey of parents, undertaken by the school in 2001.

65. The school has a very effective partnership with parents. Close collaboration starts at induction with parents and pupil having individual interviews with members of staff in which the home-school contract is discussed and signed. Parents report that this has a lasting effect on pupils' understanding of what is required of them. The partnership is supported by regular and well-presented information coming from school: it keeps parents abreast of what is happening. They are also highly involved in learning through, for example, setting targets with pupils on the basis of annual reports. Parents are informed if their child's behaviour is giving cause for concern. Parents can, if they wish, request the monitoring of their child's behaviour.

66. The quality of information is outstanding. The quality of annual reports is excellent with the system of reporting National Curriculum levels is particularly well designed and helpful. Supporting information is being provided to help parents understand what reports are saying and what levels mean. For example, in Year 7 parents can attend an evening at which assessment procedures and reports are explained. Snapshot reports provide additional information on progress during the course of the year. An important feature of reports is that consistent terminology is used and explained.

67. Routine information is efficiently distributed on a regular day. It is attractively presented and very readable. Additional information, including thought for the week, can be found on the school's website. The governors' annual report is very well laid out, accessible in language and format, and sets the school's work within the context of its aims for each and every pupil. The reporting of support for pupils with special educational needs should be improved. The school prospectus is also clear, very informative, and succinct.

68. There are many opportunities to raise concerns before a complaint needs to be made, including a weekly surgery with the headteacher, or by talking to staff. The school

responds positively to complaints, and monitors and investigates them carefully. The level of complaints has fallen substantially in the last year.

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

69. The governing body has provided the school with clear aims, expectations, values and policies. These statements provide a secure framework within which the school has worked and achieved significant improvement in many areas of its work since the last inspection. As a result, the school no longer has serious weaknesses.

70. The partnership between the governing body and the head and his senior colleagues has been important in the process for promoting and supporting change over the last two years. The outstanding leadership and vision of both the governing body and headteacher have resulted in the identification of key priorities and a strategic plan for their implementation. Together they regularly review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement programme. As a result, governors are now fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and each year they contribute to the identification of priorities for the next stage of development.

71. The identification of key priorities, and the meticulous planning for implementing as well as monitoring and evaluating their effect, have been central to the process of re-establishing a well-managed school that has a clear educational direction, high expectations of both staff and pupils and a coherent approach to its work. This was seen as the best way to deal with the serious weaknesses identified at the last inspection and also with other issues in the policies, procedures and practices of the school that required improvement. One important result is that staff morale is currently very high as teachers and the support staff members see positive evidence of the effect of their hard work on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and commitment to school and their work.

72. The high quality management information that governors and their committees now receive, about a wide range of areas, including standards and finance, enables them to be well informed, to question and provide challenge to the head and his colleagues, but also to exercise their strategic role more effectively. Through the detailed work undertaken by the committees, governors monitor both the effectiveness of development work in their area of responsibility and of the spending under the related budget headings.

73. The governing body is now much better placed than at the last inspection to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They are aware of the need to make more effective RE provision in Years 10 and 11 and to move further towards meeting the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils as part of improving support for pupils' development.

74. The review of roles and responsibilities of senior managers has resulted in a strong and committed team approach to both the strategic and operational management of the school. The process of monitoring the work of senior managers, with teams that they manage and areas over which they have oversight, has ensured that there is a coherent and consistent approach to implementation of priorities and the monitoring of the impact of change. Senior managers are using a similar process with those leaders of the teams they manage. The methods that senior managers have adopted when working with team leaders have also ensured that the school's values and expectations are effectively disseminated.

75. The quality and effectiveness of work at middle management level is good. Some outstanding management practices already exist while, for example, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of work sampling to look at marking and homework, are still developing. However, leadership and management are outstanding in mathematics,

history and music and very good in English, geography and physical education. The school is also fortunate in having a well-motivated and hard working team of year curriculum coordinators some of whom are still taking up their role and increasing in effectiveness. Both subject and year teams work well together on their common agenda in the teaching and learning, curriculum and pastoral forums.

76. The special educational needs coordinator provides good leadership to the area and the team of support assistants. He is also very effective in enabling pupils to make progress. He organises support that is focused on areas of greatest need and ensures that pupils have opportunities for additional reading and homework support where this is needed. He also ensures that the school's statutory responsibilities are met.

77. There is a school-wide programme of monitoring teaching and learning by senior managers, as well as programmes developed within curriculum areas. The progress in this area made by the curriculum and the teaching and learning forums has resulted in a more consistent approach to observation. Further training on evaluating the effect of teaching on pupils' attainment and progress, has been identified. However, the implementation of the three-part lesson, which is a key principle within the national Key Stage 3 strategy, has already had a positive effect on lesson planning and on the evaluation of the achievement of learning objectives within the plenary session. There is now greater confidence in subject teams to take effective action to improve teaching in order to meet the learning needs of all pupils.

78. The planning processes have been rationalised so that priorities in the school improvement plan are also integral to planning by all other teams, including subject and year teams, as well as, for example, support staff and the library. An important part of whole school and area planning has been the focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. In each plan, the resources needed to implement the planning priorities are carefully defined and supported through the financial and budget plans. These coherent plans are a powerful tool for managing the implementation of priorities and monitoring and evaluating the effect on pupils' standards and on the quality of education provided. Each year, the governors and senior team evaluate the effect of the implementation of school improvement priorities. This process helps to identify key priorities for the next planning cycle.

79. The school's communication systems have been overhauled and high quality information is shared with governors, parents, staff and pupils. The analysis of data is of a high order and informs a wide range of activities: tutorial work with pupils; tracking pupils' progress in their academic and personal development; reports for parents; and discussions governors have about raising standards or the effective use of resources. Data also informs the process for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's improvement programme.

80. At the time of the last inspection it was reported that there was an urgent need to define spending priorities. Governors were then in the process of re-establishing control over the budget following serious concerns. There was a significant surplus being carried forward, as a cushion against surprises caused by unreliable information. Although most of the twenty-eight recommendations of the audit report appeared to have been addressed, in fact weaknesses still remained within the financial systems concerning accounting for committed expenditure, and these gradually became apparent.

81. Further changes have now been made to financial systems so that information, and especially predication and forecasts are reliable. Governors' committees now receive financial statements relating to their areas of responsibility so that they can monitor the effectiveness of expenditure. The newly appointed business manager is a member of the



senior management team, so that strategic financial planning can be better linked to overall school planning. Secure budgeting and monitoring is now in place, including accounting for committed expenditure. There is regular monitoring of the operation of financial systems. Financial planning and day-to-day management are satisfactory.

82. Despite the problems with financial information, the quality of school development planning has ensured that educational priorities are funded. Changes to the allocation of money to departments have meant that this is better targeted towards improvement. The surplus has been wisely spent on improvements to ICT, and to premises. The budget now operates within tight margins and a five-year rolling maintenance programme has been set up. Overall the strategic use of resources is good, and needs the addition of good quality strategic financial planning to improve further. The use of specific funds, such as those designated for Key Stage 3, is monitored by budget holders, and is good.

83. There is a very good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the current curriculum. At the last inspection this area was reported as being unsatisfactory. There is a good balance between full and part-time teaching staff and there are very few temporary appointments. The majority of teachers work in their specialist areas, although in some cases they may also contribute to work in their second subject. The school is seeking to appoint a further full-time geography specialist to provide greater stability and better deployment of teachers in that subject. During the year nineteen teachers have been replaced. Making appointments has been difficult and subject specialists have been recruited mainly from the home market, but some from overseas. Some are still involved in the induction programme.

84. Many subjects are well supported by technician support time, thus enabling teachers to provide a more effective support service for pupils. Other support staff, especially learning support assistants, work well with subject colleagues and with some pupils on the further development of basic skills or the management of their behaviour. Other support staff teams are highly effective as technicians, in the library or school offices and reception. The latter team is particularly skilled in managing a range of competing priorities, but all contribute to the efficient organisation and management of the school.

85. All employees of the school benefit from outstanding provision for induction, training and continuous professional development. The programme, of core and extension modules, is highly effective in meeting the needs of a range of teaching and support staff. There are extension modules for each of the target groups as well as individual work with mentors. The training for overseas teachers is also part of the modular programme. The school's performance management process is now established and identified training and other needs, as well as those arising from priorities in the school improvement plan, are met by the professional development programme. The organisation and management of this range of activity is meticulous, with all training carefully evaluated and its effect on specialist areas followed-up.

86. The quality of accommodation is good and has improved since the time of the last inspection. Most areas are now "suited" with adjacent classrooms and storage areas. Some subjects are particularly well accommodated, such as PE, drama, music and art. Science laboratories have been upgraded but others still suffer from overcrowding. The dedicated mathematics rooms are good, but some lessons are in unsuitable rooms. Geography is taught in rooms widely distributed around the school, making the sharing of resources to support learning almost impossible. The site is clean and well maintained.

87. The quality and quantity of resources to teach the planned curriculum is good. Resource provision is very good in English, mathematics, history and music and good in art,

ICT, modern languages and physical education. In geography resource quality and quantity are good and in science they are satisfactory: both were judged to be inadequate at the last inspection. The ratio of computers continues to improve, remaining above the national average. Many departments now have their own computer area or laptops. The library has greatly improved. It is now a well-organised area with a range of fiction and non-fiction books, magazines, periodicals and newspapers. The librarian, supported by a willing group of parents, has just placed all books and resources on a computerised database. The computers and other resources are well used and all subjects are well represented. Many departments have a reference section, selected from the library, for in-class use. While this provides more space for the storage of other information resources the room is somewhat modest in size for its purpose and, at pressure points in the school day, is rather cramped.

88. The school applies the principles of best value well. This is an improvement from the last inspection. Extensive analysis of results allows comparison to be made with both national and local education authority data in a variety of ways. This includes focusing on the achievement of specific groups of pupils. There has been considerable challenge to established practices within the school, led by the headteacher and senior management team, and also involving all staff in reviewing what they do. An example of this is the teaching and learning forum, which has considered a wide range of issues linked to the quality and effectiveness of classroom practice. There is a clear educational rationale for expenditure linked to school development plan priorities. As well as the usual arrangements for competitive quotations and tendering, the school takes steps to see that expenditure is cost effective, for example by managing much routine maintenance through premises staff. Services are reviewed to see whether they are providing the best value. Consultation with parents, staff and pupils is good, an example being the recent survey of views. Parents have the opportunity to comment on changes such as the format of the annual report, and the school is willing to make changes as a result of the information gathered.

89. The school now provides good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. Although the school no longer has serious weaknesses, it should continue to implement the priorities in its current school improvement plan. In addition, the governing body and senior management team should:

- (1) Continue the programme to raise the level of pupils' attainment at ages 14 and 16 years  
[Paragraphs: 1-9; 52-55; 66; 92-94; 116-118; 136-140; 146-149; 156-159; 167-170; 176-178; 199-200; 207-210]
- (2) Improve the challenge and pace of lessons where there are weaknesses in teaching  
[Paragraphs: 22; 31-32; 35; 38; 75; 77; 98; 100; 111; 123; 132; 151-152; 172-173; 179; 196; 202; 212]
- (3) Further develop provision for basic skills, especially for literacy and the use of information and communications technology, in order to support pupils' learning  
[Paragraphs: 11-12; 34; 94-96; 100; 113; 119-120; 134; 152; 162; 168; 180; 187; 196; 203]
- (4) Meet the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11; move further towards meeting the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils  
[Paragraphs: 40; 42; 73; 204; 213]

Minor issue:

Improve strategic financial planning so that it supports longer term planning for improvement  
[Paragraphs: 82]

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	171
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	79

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	51	58	51	2	0	0
Percentage	5	30	34	30	1	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1220
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	112

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	122

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
%	%

School data	7.71
National comparative data	8.1

School data	1.16
National comparative data	1.1

*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	125	125

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	83	76
	Girls	102	92	90
	Total	167	175	166
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (85)	70 (66)	66 (64)
	National	66 (64)	67 (67)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (46)	56 (39)	31 (29)
	National	32 (32)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	75	85	83
	Girls	105	97	104
	Total	180	182	187
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (60)	73 (68)	75 (60)
	National	67 (76)	70 (69)	67 (65)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (21)	58 (39)	31 (27)
	National	32 (41)	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	114	126

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	48	108	109
	Girls	74	123	125
	Total	122	231	234
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (40)	96 (92)	98 (98)
	National	51.2 (48)	88.9 (91)	94.6 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	36 (38.4)

per pupil	National	34.6 (39)
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	5
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	4
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	5
White	1160
Any other minority ethnic group	34

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	70	3
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

*This 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)	71.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.76

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	609

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.7
Key Stage 4	22.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	3,875,458
Total expenditure	3,990,234
Expenditure per pupil	3,294.99
Balance brought forward from previous year	132,250
Balance carried forward to next year	17,474

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*





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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1220
Number of questionnaires returned	367

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	52	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	56	4	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	54	16	3	1
The teaching is good.	32	60	3	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	49	11	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	33	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	49	12	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	48	43	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	49	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	48	4	1	7

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### **Strengths**

- Improving standards in the National Curriculum tests
- The use of assessment information to track progress
- The contribution to pupils' personal development
- Leadership and management

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Consistent practices and approaches as a team in order to sustain improvement
- The attitudes of some pupils to their learning
- The level of challenge and pace in of work in some lessons
- The difference between the attainment of boys and girls

92. Standards in English in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average and the average for similar schools. The trend in the national tests has been above the national average and was reflected in the 2001 results which were high and well above those for similar schools. Although this high achievement was not sustained in 2002, standards are improving and the gap between boys and girls has narrowed. The English results were lower than those in maths but higher than those in science. These results represent good achievement by the end of Year 9, based on pupils' prior attainment on entry to the school.

93. GCSE English results in 2002 were well below the national average and below average in English literature. They were, however, a marked improvement on previous results in 2001. The 2002 results are similar to those achieved at the time of the last inspection. A high percentage of pupils achieve A\*-G grades in English and English literature representing good achievement for lower attaining pupils. The English results were lower than those of maths and science. When compared with similar schools, results are below average. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are improving because of the focus on improving writing skills and examination techniques. Based on pupils' prior attainment, by the end of Year 11 their achievement is satisfactory.

94. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirms the upward trend in results. The overall standard of most pupils' oral work is good and speaking and listening skills have improved since the last inspection. Pupils communicate clearly when explaining their ideas and speak at length when responding to questions. They use discussion and feedback when approaching their work: they work well in pairs and groups. Whilst most listen with respect to others expressing their ideas, the progress of a small number of pupils is hampered because their listening skills deteriorate when they disregard the basic ground rules. Higher attaining Year 11 girls have strong oral skills and tend to dominate discussion. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress and are receive help from diligent learning support assistants. The progress made by exceptionally able pupils, many of whom contribute well to learning, is satisfactory. A departmental approach to stretch these highly able pupils is being implemented.

95. Standards of attainment in reading are good overall. Higher attaining pupils read at levels that are often well above average as demonstrated in the Year 9 pupils' response to Dickens's *Great Expectations*. By the end of Year 11 they are secure in their knowledge and understanding of texts and they confidently explore a range of texts as illustrated in their written response to Bennet's *Talking Heads* or Shakespeare's *Othello*. These pupils make very good use of background information to increase their understanding and interpretation of texts. Lower attaining pupils respond accurately to texts particularly when writing, but although they use the taught approach - point, quote, develop - ideas are not analysed, hence answers, though relevant, achieve the lower grades. This is in contrast to middle attaining pupils who begin to give a more in-depth response to texts, as seen in Year 9 pupils' response to *Macbeth*. There is insufficient private or extended reading. The department is planning to address this lack of provision.

96. Writing skills are below average, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where pupils have had less exposure to the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Whilst pupils can explore texts analytically in their oral work, they do not write with the depth and sophistication expected to reach the higher levels in the national tests or GCSE examinations. The highest attaining pupils reach above average standards in writing and are secure in their sentence and text level work. They command a wide vocabulary and confidently structure their essays with most using mind mapping to organise their work. Standards of punctuation and spelling are generally satisfactory in the final draft of most pupils' work, the quality of expression is less refined and technical errors litter initial drafts. There is clear evidence that writing skills are improving because of the emphasis on using the literacy strategy. For instance, Year 11 middle attaining pupils worked with their teachers on persuasive techniques and connectives to model a letter. In it they used strong opening sentences to engage their target audience.

97. Pupils' attitudes are mainly very positive. Most work hard and co-operate well with their teachers. However, when pupils are not well managed, behaviour is unsatisfactory. The current setting arrangements result in a small number of Year 10 boys with negative attitudes being in the same group. These pupils with behavioural and learning difficulties are de-motivated and even though they understand the work, achievement falls well short of expectations because they lack the discipline to focus on their work.

98. The quality of teaching overall is good. Teaching is satisfactory or better in most lessons. In two lessons very good and excellent teaching were seen. In one lesson teaching was unsatisfactory. The main reasons for this were the weak management of pupils' behaviour and the lack of challenge and pace. However, in lessons where teaching was satisfactory there was also a lack of challenge or pace and planning was too sketchy to stretch and captivate pupils' attention. Planning is not consistently good and does not always take into consideration all pupils' learning needs. Learning overall is only satisfactory. While pupils' develop knowledge and understanding their progress in developing writing skills is limited and this is affecting their overall achievement. In some cases, the learning objectives and plenary sessions are not used routinely to review what pupils now know, understand and can do.

99. In lessons where teaching was at least good, very good or excellent, planning is highly structured and teachers draw on the three or four part lessons with concise learning objectives that are carefully linked to well-selected resources and the needs of pupils. The activities in such lessons are well balanced with a range of interactive discussion and effective questioning to extend pupils. Expectations are consistently high and pupils are stretched to think critically and apply the taught skill accurately. Teachers use the plenary sessions skilfully to draw out and review the key points of the learning. For instance, in a Year 8 lesson, where teaching was excellent, lower attaining pupils were enabled to use the more complex punctuation marks accurately because of the direct hands-on activities and

modelling to extend their understanding of using the colon and semi-colon. Similarly, Year 11 pupils were challenged to think critically about the use of language when analysing a character in *Of Mice and Men*. The teacher led discussion and use of resource materials led to very good learning because the strong opening, development and plenary drew out pupils' learning through very effective questioning. Marking is generally thorough but there is inconsistency across the department.

100. The leadership and management of the area are very good. The head of faculty has been in post for over two years and has steered the department through a period of review in the drive to improve standards. The clear vision is reflected in the substantial handbook and development planning. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' overall development and attention is given to the needs of exceptionally able pupils. The curriculum reflects the statutory requirements but medium term planning is still incomplete. There are good procedures in place for monitoring teaching and learning and clear lines of accountability are established. The match of teaching staff to the current provision is good, as are the resources. The further development of the use of ICT is to be implemented. The accommodation is mostly "suited" but two rooms are at some distance from the others. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in the national tests. There is still some misbehaviour among disaffected pupils. Whilst teaching is good overall, there remain inconsistencies in planning and strategies for challenging pupils. Although there is teamwork, there is insufficient coherence and consistency across the department. The capacity to sustain improvement depends on sharing good practice, the adoption of a common approach to the plans to improve teaching and raise standards.

### **Media Studies**

101. This subject attracts large numbers and nearly all pupils gain a GCSE pass grade. Results in the GCSE examination are similar to those in 2000 with over half gaining A\* to C grades.

102. In lessons pupils make good progress. After only a few weeks, Year 10 pupils can confidently work on a film trailer. They have good understanding of technical skills and the requirements for coursework. They can creatively interpret design briefs, analyse technical dimensions of the work and maintain good diary entries. Year 11 pupils show great maturity and ingenuity as they plan and develop ideas. They produce clear synopses, are aware of target audiences and know what needs to be done to improve their work.

103. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils are well prepared to work on design briefs without constant supervision. The teacher's supportive role ensures that pupils can develop their own ideas. Plenary sessions are not used well to summarise learning. Pupils have positive attitudes and work well together. They are keen and interested in their work. Those who are absent, quickly pick up the work they have missed. The teacher in charge ably leads the team and is continuing to build on the good practice of his predecessor.

### **Drama**

104. The quality of provision in drama is good. GCSE results in 2002 are below the national average but are slightly higher than previous years: all pupils achieved a pass grade. The standards in Year 7 are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils respond well to very good quality teaching, work well and use role-play, frozen pictures and "thought tracking" skilfully. They concentrate well, listen to instructions and use evaluative skills to discuss others' performances. They maintain roles well, using a range of stimulus material and different conventions to devise role-play. Exceptionally able pupils take a lead in developing group work. All pupils have good attitudes to the subject and work well together.

105. The overall quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teachers have considerable practical experience, use it very well to engage pupils and increase their evaluative and oral skills. They have high expectations of pupils and use mini-plenary sessions well to review learning. Lesson objectives are very clear and key words are discussed with pupils. Some stimulating starter activities energise and increase pupils' concentration and participation. A range of teaching methods ensure that each activity builds on to the next, enabling pupils to achieve very well in lessons.

106. The department is very well led and managed. There is a wide extra-curricular programme. Accommodation and resources are adequate.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Attainment is above average by the end of Year 9
- Attainment is well above average by the end of Year 11
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school
- Teaching is good
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good
- Leadership and management of the faculty are outstanding

### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of information and communication technology

108. By the end of Year 9 attainment is above average. In 2002 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was above average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels was well above average. Results in the end of year national tests for mathematics have improved consistently over the last four years. Since pupils enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment their progress during Years 7 to 9 is now good. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also good at this stage. Although the performance of boys and girls is frequently different in particular years the differences do not form a consistent pattern.

109. By the end of Year 11 attainment is now well above average. In 2002 the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A\* to C range was above the national average. GCSE results have generally improved each year but there was a reduction in the proportion of grades A\* to C in 2001. However, the results achieved in 2002 were the best ever recorded by the school. As happens earlier in the school, although frequently boys and girls perform at different levels there is not a consistent pattern. Achievement and progress of pupils throughout Years 10 and 11 are good. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also good at this stage. The school enters high attaining pupils for the Additional Mathematics paper during Year 11. Excellent results have been obtained. The school also obtains above average results for the candidates who are entered for the GCSE Statistics examination in Year 11.

110. Standards of work seen are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. For example pupils in a high attaining Year 9 class showed a good understanding of the basic principles involved when simplifying algebraic expressions. All pupils in the class had sufficient confidence to work on an individual basis when accurately simplifying and factorising a series of increasingly complex expressions. A middle attaining Year 11 class also showed a good range of skills and a secure understanding when

plotting linear, quadratic and cubic functions. Many were able to complete the task after an initial introduction by the teacher without further assistance. Most pupils show a good level of knowledge, understanding and skills when dealing with examples across the range of requirements. Pupils show confidence when dealing with a range of increasingly complex examples as they move through the school.

111. Teaching and learning overall are good. All lessons are well planned. There is effective use of three-part lessons, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Pupils enjoy aspects of the mental starter activities. Lessons have clear learning objectives and these are shared with pupils. Almost all lessons contain a good range of teaching and learning approaches including working as a group and individually. Only in one lesson were pupils expected to work for too long on an individual basis. In several lessons pupils are encouraged, and able to, work collaboratively in smaller groups. The pace with which the work proceeds is frequently brisk and challenging but well matched to the pupils in the class. Only in a very few lessons is the pace adversely affected by the need for the teacher to ensure that all pupils remain fully engaged. There is very good use of directed questioning of individual pupils during the group work. Several teachers show enthusiasm for the subject and this is seen in their teaching. Teachers set homework on a regular basis. This is accurately marked and returned to the pupils. Detailed records are kept of each individual pupil's progress. A range of factors, including poor accommodation and noise from adjacent rooms, adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning in one class. Overall attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good. Most pupils are highly motivated, enjoy their work and achieve well.

112. The quality of leadership and management of the department are outstanding. Effective monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place. These include regular lesson observations, the monitoring of the setting and marking of homework and of the short term planning of individual teachers. Test and examination results are reviewed and discussed with the line manager. The staff are working exceptionally well as a team. They meet on a regular basis to discuss and, when appropriate, resolve relevant issues. Detailed schemes of work have been developed and agreed. The national strategy has been effectively implemented and this is having a positive effect on the teaching and learning, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum provided is very effective in meeting the varying needs of pupils in the school. Extra curricular activities have been developed including entering pupils for the Mathematics Challenge and after-school classes designed to meet the needs of individual groups of pupils.

113. Although some use is now being made of information and communication technology this aspect is not well developed. Resources available support the work well. The specialist suite of rooms in use is of good quality. Significant use is made of high quality display materials in these classrooms and general corridor areas. This helps provide a physical focus for the subject in the school. Some use is made of inappropriate accommodation outside of the specialist rooms.

114. The faculty has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen and achievement is now good throughout the school. Standards of numeracy, which at the last inspection were reported to be unsatisfactory, have improved. Further links have been developed with primary schools. This is an improving department. Overall, there is a strong and shared commitment to improvement across the teachers involved and this contributes greatly to further raise standards.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good
- Leadership and management of the department are good
- Pupils' achieve well in Years 10 and 11
- Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are good

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to extend pupils' learning
- The consistency of the approach to literacy across the subject
- The effectiveness of planning for the development of numeracy across the subject.
- The consistent implementation of the departmental marking policy across the subject, but especially in Years 7 to 9

116. Standards of attainment by the age of 14 and 16 years are now close to the national average and represent a clear improvement since the last inspection. The main factors contributing to this are the significant improvement in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the department.

117. At age 14, pupils' performance in the 2002 National Curriculum tests was average. The proportions of pupils who obtained National Curriculum Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above were also average. Pupils' performance in science was similar to that in English but below that in mathematics. The performance of pupils overall was in line with similar schools. Girls tended to do better than boys this year but last year the situation was reversed. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory and they obtained the levels expected of them based upon their performance in National Curriculum tests prior to entering the school, which was broadly average. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented have progressed equally well. Pupil performance has steadily improved over the last three years and represents a greater rate of improvement than the national trend.

118. At age 16, the proportion of pupils who obtained A\* to C grades in the 2002 GCSE examinations was average and in line with that for similar schools and the proportion who obtained A\* to G grades was above average. Pupils' performance in science was similar to that for mathematics and better than that for English. Girls outperformed boys and this represents a reversal of last year's difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils' achievement was good and they did better than expected based upon their Year 9 national test results. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented have shared in this achievement and have progressed well. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades has increased over the last three years.

119. The standard of work seen in all years is in line with the average. Achievement over time and in lessons is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Year 7 know the names of, and can locate, the major organs of the body and many are able to understand the link between cells, tissues, organs and systems. Although they can predict well in scientific investigations few give scientific reasons for their predictions. High attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to carry out moment and pressure calculations successfully and understand the principles involved. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 can relate the amount of energy delivered to a beaker of water to the length of time it is heated but few can relate temperature rise to different quantities of water given the same amount of heat energy. Very little use of ICT was seen in Years 7 to 9.



120. In Years 10 and 11 achievement and progress over time is good and indicates improving GCSE results. High attaining Year 10 pupils can calculate the efficiency of an energy system. Lower attaining Year 10 pupils know how cystic fibrosis is inherited but few are able to transfer this process to the inheritance of sickle cell anaemia. Many high attaining Year 11 pupils understand the process of electron transfer in chemical reactions and can interpret ionic equations. Low attaining Year 11 pupils also achieve well and are able to construct molecular models of some basic hydrocarbons. The science investigation work seen is particularly good. ICT is used well by some pupils to write up their investigations. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all years.

121. The quality of teaching seen was good. In the lessons seen two thirds of the teaching was good or better and some was very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The proportions of satisfactory, good and very good or better teaching were approximately the same for both key stages. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in Years 10 and 11. Good teaching was characterised by well-planned lessons with clear objectives that pupils could understand; good teacher knowledge and understanding; high teacher expectations of pupil learning and behaviour; good management of pupils, time and resources; and appropriate and effective methodology. Where the teaching was good or better pupils learnt well, achieving what was expected of them, or better, based upon previous performance.

122. In addition to the characteristics above, excellent teaching had enthusiasm, high levels of challenge, pace and rigorous ongoing evaluation that resulted in pupils making excellent progress. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the generation of electricity, where teaching was excellent, the teacher's enthusiasm for relating the topic to the real world inspired and highly motivated pupils. All responded well to the fast pace of the lesson in which they were continually challenged to think and respond to the teachers on-going evaluation of their learning. As a result the pupils made excellent progress. In a Year 11 lesson on the basics of electrostatics the teacher demonstrated excellent teaching by using an enthusiastic delivery which related the subject to everyday life. Excellent demonstrations of electrostatic phenomena with real life examples coupled with relevant pupil experiments ensured a high level of motivation. Pupils were challenged to interpret unexpected results and developed a good understanding of the basic principles of charging by friction and electrostatic induction.

123. In lessons where teaching was less successful, timing was misjudged resulting in the end-of-lesson evaluation either being rushed or omitted. Some lessons lacked pace and challenge pupils did not work as productively as they could have done. As a result progress in these lessons was just satisfactory. Overall, the teaching of literacy and numeracy was satisfactory and there were many examples of good practice. However the practice and approaches were inconsistent.

124. Teachers use an effective range of techniques to assess pupils' learning. The use of a database ensures that the monitoring of individuals progress is well done. Exercise books are generally well marked and contain useful comment on what could be improved. However, the quality of marking by different teachers is not consistent in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use care in the laboratories to ensure safety. The good teaching and concern for pupils has resulted in good relationships. Pupils enjoy science and behave well.

125. The leadership and management of the department are good and contribute well to the on-going improvement in pupil performance. The day-to-day running of the department is good and clear medium and long-term plans are in place. Schemes of work ensure that the curriculum complies with National Curriculum requirements and, with the departmental handbook, provide clear guidance for departmental staff. The head of department holds

regular consultations through formal and informal meetings. The monitoring of teaching and the induction of new staff is well organised and effective and accommodation and resources are managed well. The head of department shares with all of the science teachers and technicians a strategy for further development. All are committed to the proposals.

126. Since the last inspection there have been many improvements. Teaching is now good across all year groups and is regularly monitored; the expertise in all science components, including physics, is good and teacher assessment is secure; standards are now in line with the average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' expectations are now higher and classroom management is good. Pupils enjoy science and relationships, especially with their teachers, are now good. There has been improvement in the leadership and management of the department; resources are now satisfactory; and teaching time is now sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

127. Overall, the quality of provision for art and design is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- The very good contribution art makes to pupils' personal development through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum
- Encouragement for pupils to develop their own expressive responses, especially in Years 10 and 11
- Teachers' good subject expertise gives confidence to pupils to try new techniques
- The improvement in boys' achievement at GCSE level
- Good quality relationships between pupils and teachers

### **Areas for Improvement**

- The facilities for ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject
- The levels of knowledge and understanding in pupils' work across all year groups to match more closely the quality of their technical skills
- Further development of schemes of work to inform the planning of teaching and learning
- Monitoring to ensure consistency of quality and learning experiences across the subject

128. GCSE results in art are among the best in the school. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades at GCSE was above the national average, continuing the upwards trend of the last three years. All pupils achieved better than expected. The great improvement in boys' achievement means that their performance is now above that for boys nationally.

129. In work seen at age 14, pupils are working in line with expectation and achieve satisfactorily over time when taking into account their standards on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs make progress consistent with their classmates. Technical skills improve gradually through Years 7 to 9 and some high attaining pupils achieve well. For example, in ceramics careful observational drawings of shoes are interpreted using clay and sensitive drawing from observation of seaweed and shells are used to inspire the design and making of jewellery from a wide variety of materials.

130. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 16, pupils are working at a level in line with the national average and they are achieving satisfactorily when related to their standards of work at the end of Year 9. Some high attaining pupils are achieving well, for example the pupil exploring emotions related his work to African graphic styles, documenting the development well in his sketchbook and making his intentions clear through thoughtful

planning. Another pupil produced a large, striking painting as a result of her exploration into arguments for and against the use of cosmetic surgery. However, most pupils do not research and plan their work in a way that helps them to develop their ideas and inform the final outcome. Technical skills are generally far better developed than the knowledge and understanding which should underpin them, with the result that much work resorts to cliché and copying too closely from secondary sources, albeit in a wide variety of materials.

131. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is consistently better in Years 7 to 9, where it is good, than in Years 10 and 11, where it is satisfactory. The quality of teaching in Year 7 to 9 lessons ranged from good to excellent in a ceramics lesson. Teaching quality in Years 10 and 11 varied from good to unsatisfactory.

132. Important features of the strong teaching are good planning and clear objectives, a good use of exemplar material, a brisk pace and an in-depth evaluation of progress. Features of weaker teaching are inadequate planning and a consequent poor use of teacher time. The time taken by a teacher in a Year 11 lesson to do a practical demonstration of an unusual printing technique is the same for three pupils as the whole class but the benefit is greater. The formal setting of lesson objectives and the evaluation of whether these have been met benefit pupils in all years equally well, but they are not used consistently throughout the department. The quality of learning relates directly to the quality of the teaching: the good attitudes of pupils also make an invaluable contribution. Relationships are good and teachers are very caring. All pupils, across Years 7 to 11, value and respect the advice they are given and pupils with special educational needs and the pupil who has English as an additional language learn equally well due to the good quality help they receive. The exceptionally able pupils are challenged by the work, but not sufficiently extended.

133. The art department makes a very good contribution to the personal development of pupils through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum. Features include collaborative work; extra-curricular clubs; trips to galleries both in England and abroad; the study of western and non-western artists and craftspeople and the exploration, particularly in Years 10 and 11, of contentious and moral issues.

134. There are good procedures and systems in place for assessment and recording progress. These are not used consistently across the department. Schemes of work are appropriate and interesting but lack the progression necessary to ensure a secure development of knowledge and understanding through Years 7 to 11. A start has been made to include literacy and numeracy into schemes of work, but the use of ICT is affected by limited access and outdated equipment in the department. The new head of department has been in post since the beginning of term and as yet has not had enough time to have an effect. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Some, but not all issues mentioned in the last inspection report have been addressed.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### **Strengths:**

- A design technology team that works well together and that has the capacity to improve pupils' learning and attainment
- Teachers who are able and qualified to teach a broad and varied curriculum
- Technical assistance that supports and enhances teaching

### **Areas for improvement**

- The low standards of attainment at age 14 and at age 16
- The ways in which teachers enable pupils to record and reflect on their progress across Years 7 to 11
- The amount of storage space, particularly for larger artefacts

136. Results in design and technology are well below national averages. Attainment is low compared to national figures and is generally lower in comparison with other subjects in the school. In the 2002 end of Year 9 teacher assessments, standards were well below national expectations. The 2002 GCSE results in design technology, catering and textiles were well below national averages, with just over one in five pupils gaining A\*-C grades. Results have been well below national averages over a period of at least three years with no sign of improvement. One reason for some of the poor results is because the GCSE catering and textiles courses have seen considerable disruption because of difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers. This problem has been now overcome and staffing is stable.

137. Standards seen in lessons at age 14 are, overall, below those expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. The development of skills is stronger than the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Most pupils are reaching average standards in their practical skills across both resistant and non-resistant materials, and the progress they make from a low level of attainment on entry is satisfactory. Pupils use a sound range of skills making a Christmas decoration using wood and incorporating a simple electronic circuit. They pay due attention to accuracy and finish. In a project that considers the packaging of items for sale, they use disassembly appropriately as a tool to gain an understanding of construction techniques. They learn to mark out, to cut, to use templates and to achieve a satisfactory finish. When working with food, they successfully learn to prepare and cook food following simple recipes, paying sound attention to hygiene and to safety issues. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding is generally weak, as are their overall presentational skills. Higher attaining pupils reach average standards, but for these pupils standards of presentation are weak. Lower attaining pupils often fail to complete their work. Research is largely simplistic and does not support the development of knowledge and understanding. Linked to this are evaluations that are often superficial.

138. By age 16 standards remain well below national expectations. Given the levels of attainment at age 14, pupils do make satisfactory progress and the school's predictions show that pupils do as well as might be expected from a low baseline. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve to a satisfactory level. As at age 14, the development of knowledge and understanding is a weakness. In catering, the levels of knowledge and understanding are below expectation as are skills in the areas of planning, analysis of products and evaluation. Pupils tend to attempt work that is well within their capabilities and need a lot of guidance to move beyond this. In work on resistant materials there are general weaknesses in all aspects of folder work. For example, pupils generate mood boards but do not use these to inform the development of their ideas. Customer

surveys are not well designed and the questions they devise do not generally yield answers that can be directly used in product development.

139. As at age 14, there is some good development of skills. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate good practical skills working with hardwood to produce storage boxes. They use modelling well to test designs. In graphic products, higher attaining pupils generate simple and clear design briefs and specifications for the products they intend to make that are of good quality. Some make good use of the digital camera to capture images of pop-up books that are then used to develop the product. Some pupils make good use of ICT to model their designs. However in general, sketching design is weak and pupils do not automatically annotate drawings to record the progress of the designs and to clarify their intentions. Some pupils use inappropriate media such as felt tip pens in their sketches and drawings.

140. In textiles pupils are making sound progress in learning about fabrics, including some of the common computer aided manufacturing processes. They are learning about ways in which firms apply quality control or minimise fabric waste using computers to model cutting patterns.

141. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In all lessons inspected teaching was satisfactory, except for a Year 8 and a Year 9 lesson when it was good. Lessons are orderly and due attention is paid to health and safety matters. Teachers have productive working relationships with pupils. These are further developed in, for instance, after school time when pupils are helped to develop or complete their work. All teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and skills and use them to help, support and guide pupils in tackling their theoretical and practical tasks. However, the planning of lessons is inconsistent and rarely detailed. Most teachers provide well-considered oral and written feedback, but these evaluations of pupils' work are not systematically recorded so that they can be used to monitor progress and inform the setting of targets. Where teaching was good, the lesson aim and learning objectives were shared with pupils, a range of practical activities were used to help them explore the knowledge, understanding and skills being developed and the lesson closed with a well planned plenary session when pupils reviewed the generally good progress that they had made in their learning. In other lessons, while teaching was satisfactory, some pupils who found it difficult to get down to work and concentrate on tasks were not consistently well motivated and managed, and thus learning and progress time was lost. Teachers are effective in teaching literacy through the use of writing frames and sharing lists of key words. Numeracy is also well supported. Pupils are expected to measure with accuracy in all projects.

142. This is a relatively new team, particularly in food and textiles technology, and working relationships are developing well. The technicians and administrative staff work well with teachers and provide effective support for the department's work. Both technicians work with pupils and have valuable expertise to share. A broad range of subject knowledge makes a good contribution to the continuing development of schemes of work. An example of the improvement in the profile of the department is to be found in the figures for next year's option groups. The numbers of pupils opting for textiles in particular has risen dramatically. Currently teachers do not insist that pupils record their work in the design booklets. Neither do teachers discuss with pupils how well they are doing and what progress they are making in both theory and practical skills. As a result the pupils are unaware of what they need to do in order to improve the standard of their work and the level of their knowledge and understanding.

143. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is good support for all staff, including for an overseas teacher seeking qualified status in this country. The monitoring and evaluation of work is effective and has accurately identified some areas

for improvement. These are the need to review and modify the schemes of work in Years 7 to 9; ensure the feeding back of information on performance to pupils is more systematic; provide clearer guidance to pupils of all ages through well-written design booklets and other materials. While accommodation generally is satisfactory, there is insufficient storage.

144. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. There has been satisfactory improvement in assessment at the end of Year 9: this is now firmly based on end of module assessments. A major improvement is the appointment of a team of specialists who can teach a broad and balanced design and technology curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement in the use of ICT and in setting homework.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- High standards in Years 10 and 11
- Pupils' good, and often very good, achievement in Years 10 and 11
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour
- Very good leadership and competent management

### **Areas for improvement**

- A further full-time subject specialist teacher
- Pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9
- The provision to meet fieldwork requirements in Years 7 to 9
- Shortfalls in accommodation and access to television, overhead projectors and fieldwork equipment

146. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Pupils' achievement over Years 7 to 9, in relation to their average standards when they join Year 7, is satisfactory. Very low teaching time in Years 7 and 8 restricts the depth of curriculum coverage and as a result limits achievement. There is also an inappropriate variation in the standard of work produced by different teaching groups.

147. Pupils receive a sound grounding in geographical skills. Most use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps well but more practice is needed in the graphical presentation and analyses of statistical data. Pupils of all attainment levels have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns. For example they do not realise that similar climates throughout the world usually result in similar environments. Their knowledge of location such as the main mountains, rivers and cities of the United Kingdom is very good although lower attaining pupils find this difficult. Higher attaining pupils are not given enough challenge in their work. Average attaining pupils are, however, suitably stretched and produce work of appropriate standard. Lower attaining pupil progress well when supported by teachers although many are hampered by weak literacy skills. Pupils with special educational needs, when provided with specialist support, often make good progress. Boys and girls produce work of similar standard, although boys' presentation is not usually as good as that of girls.

148. By Year 11, standards are above average and for many pupils well above average. This shows very significant achievement by boys and girls of all attainment levels over Years 10 and 11. It is due to consistently high quality teaching by subject specialist teachers and pupils who work hard and are motivated to do well. By the end of Year 11 pupils generally have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the main physical and human processes studied. The best independent study projects for GCSE, based on fieldwork at Blakeney

Point, are of excellent quality and show very good skills of enquiry using computer programmes. Average and lower attaining pupils produce work of a standard above that normally expected for their earlier level of attainment. Individual mentoring and monitoring of course work and deadlines are effective. This needs supporting with a rigorous revision and examination programme.

149. In recent years, GCSE examination results grades A\* to C have been broadly average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades has been below average but was better in 2002. The subject is more popular with boys than girls and boys do better than girls most years. Geography was not a popular option at the time of the last inspection but numbers taking the subject in Years 10 and 11 are much higher and closer to that found nationally. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school geography results have been close to the average.

150. Pupils' attitude to learning is very positive and many display real interest and enjoyment in their work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils work conscientiously and are keen to learn. Behaviour is very good and at times excellent. Relationships with teachers are constructive and the evident rapport in Years 10 and 11 contributes significantly to pupils' progress. Boys and girls work well together in pairs and groups but the use of group work is too limited. Relationships across gender and ethnic groupings are harmonious. Pupils' participate more in discussions than they do in most schools with both girls and boys participating well in lessons.

151. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is mainly satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Subject specialist teachers communicate their subject knowledge well, placing emphasis on pupils' understanding, and are committed, caring and supportive of their pupils. The management and control in lessons, based on the constructive relationships in the department, are of a very high standard. Lessons are well planned and structured, with a clear focus providing a helpful framework for learning. The best learning occurs when lessons offer a variety of suitable practical activities that require pupils' involvement and use effective teaching methods such as visual aids to illustrate key aspects of the lesson. Where there is good dialogue between teacher and pupils, as found in Year 10 and 11 lessons, this extends pupils' knowledge and understanding significantly. Most impressive in Years 10 and 11 are the regular monitoring and testing of pupils' knowledge and understanding of prior learning: it contributes to very productive learning. It is more variable in Years 7 to 9 and is sometimes unsatisfactory. Teachers' presentation is often lively and enthusiastic, with brisk pace and high expectations, particularly in Years 10 and 11. However, work is insufficiently challenging in Years 7 to 9, especially for those that are higher attaining pupils. As a result, progress by pupils with special educational needs is good, while that for the exceptionally able is satisfactory.

152. Learning in Years 7 to 9 is sometimes limited by insufficient use of local Ordnance Survey maps, local examples, and atlases to help pupils' understanding of spatial patterns and processes. Class learning would be improved with more regular re-enforcement of teaching points visually on the board and more use of visual aids in teaching. In some lessons learning suffers when teachers do not take sufficient time to place the lesson thoroughly in the context of prior learning appropriately for pupils of all attainment levels. Basic skills are well taught and while literacy skills are satisfactory, numeracy skills are better used in Years 10 and 11 than elsewhere. A very good, coherent programme of work has been planned using ICT but is not yet available for all pupils.

153. Leadership of the subject is very good. The department is effectively run and managed with curriculum planning of very good quality. The work of the department is suitably monitored through classroom observation and the analyses of pupils work. It is

however, at an early stage and the process requires more rigour and sharing of good practice. Staffing is stable and professional but there are insufficient subject specialists to meet curricular needs. The assessment policy is good overall and understood by pupils so that they are aware of the progress they are making. The quality of day-to-day marking is variable. Sometimes key words and place names are not corrected, which is unsatisfactory. Some marking is, however, impeccable, being accurate, thorough and with detailed comments that help pupils to progress.

154. Accommodation is unsatisfactory as teaching rooms are located widely apart and this restricts providing mutual support, the sharing of resources and the ongoing involvement in mutual observation and professional dialogue. Teaching rooms are limited for independent resource based learning. Very good quality wall displays provide an effective learning environment in rooms and adjacent corridors. Resources are good but there is need of an overhead projector and television monitor in each specialist room as standard equipment and a fieldwork budget. The fieldwork undertaken in Year 10 in Norfolk provides most effective learning and greatly stimulates pupils' interest in the subject. However, provision for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate. Overall there has been very good progress since the last inspection. There is good capacity to improve standards further with an additional appointment.

## **HISTORY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Leadership by the head of department
- Planning and very good teaching
- Support to enable lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to make progress
- Good level of challenge for higher attaining pupils
- Literacy development

### **Areas for improvement**

- Further development of the use ICT to support pupils' learning
- The further development of numeracy
- Provision for educational visits

156. In 2002 results in National Curriculum teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 were in line with the national expectation in history with over half of the pupils gaining National Curriculum levels 5 to 7. In 2001 GCSE results for those gaining grades A\* to C was below the national average but in 2002 they are slightly above it. The proportion gaining grades A\* to G is now above the national average. Grades predicted for the present Year 11 on the basis of their prior attainment indicates this improvement should be maintained. On entry to the school most pupils' historical knowledge, understanding and skills are about average. The standard of work seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory but by the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils are reaching above average levels. This represents good achievement. The progress made in Years 7 to 9 provides a sound foundation for work in Years 10 and 11. The standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 reflect those being reached in external examinations.

157. Pupils' achievement is good overall and shows a steady progression in knowledge, understanding and skills. They gain in understanding of how the past is investigated and judgements arrived at, and develop subject-specific skills by analysing evidence using a



variety of sources that include written, photographs, pictures, film/video and the internet. For example Year 7 pupils successfully investigated written sources to identify problems facing William the Conqueror in 1066 and to learn about the feudal system. Year 8 pupils used sources to formulate their own opinions as to why the Spanish Armada was defeated, and learned how to structure an answer using a writing frame which showed ways of introducing and sequencing paragraphs, leading to an overall conclusion. Year 9 pupils analysed pictures and statistical data about deaths and casualties, to evaluate the impact of gas as a weapon on the western front in the 1914-18 war. Year 10 pupils demonstrated very good interpretative skills when studying the limits of medical knowledge in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Year 11 pupils used written and pictorial sources as part of their revision for trial GCSE exams, demonstrating mature levels of perception, skills and understanding.

158. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress because their teachers ensure that they are fully involved in learning that is supported by appropriate activities and resources. Learning support assistants provide very good assistance and there is considerable collaboration between them and class teachers. All pupils were provided with work in history to match their levels of attainment.

159. In all year groups girls are achieving higher standards than boys. However the teachers' have high expectations of boys and strategies are being successfully deployed to raise their attainment. As a result boys are now making better progress.

160. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching in the majority of lessons was good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Well-qualified subject specialists establish very positive relationships with pupils, using their knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm to interest and motivate them. A purposeful learning atmosphere is created in lessons. Pupils learn particularly well because of the consistently good lesson planning as well as sequence and pace of learning. Pupils are expected to be active participants in the learning process. Teachers value their ideas and keep their attention. As a result pupils behave well and work hard. This is particularly noticeable in Years 9, 10 and 11. Teachers' expectations of all pupils are consistently high. Work matches capabilities and challenges are appropriately pitched, including for both higher and lower attaining pupils. Progress is effectively monitored in lessons, homework, and by formal testing. Results are recorded and shared with pupils to help them set individual targets for progress. Pupils are also required to evaluate their own progress at the end of each year. Parents are kept fully informed of progress, attainment and targets through history reports.

161. History makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, for example encouraging sensitivity when studying the Holocaust and warfare, changing attitudes to mental illness, male attitudes towards women's struggle for the vote, and forced feeding of hunger strikers in prison. The subject also furthers understanding of multicultural dimensions of learning through the study of slavery, the slave trade and the history of Afro-Caribbean peoples. Throughout all years pupils are successfully encouraged to be tolerant of each other's opinions, and to work co-operatively and collaboratively.

162. History also makes a very good contribution to developing literacy. Pupils are encouraged to listen, speak, write and read aloud and silently, as well as to extend their knowledge of key words and terms and to use a variety of forms of writing. Its contribution to the development of numeracy is good. Pupils use percentages and averages and interpret statistical data and graphs. The department has made progress in the use of ICT since the last inspection. The library and ICT suite computers are well used and pupils use websites on the Internet. Many pupils make good use of word processing and desktop publishing, mainly by using their own computers. The humanities faculty has recently acquired a number of laptop computers: history teachers will be using these next year.

163. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They are interested and enjoy it. Behaviour of almost all is very good. The very small numbers who are sometimes inattentive are dealt with efficiently and positively. Pupils work hard. Great care is taken with presentation of written work and at GCSE notes are very well organised. The department is working hard to bring standards of writing into line with the high standard of oral work.

164. The trend reflected in the raising of standards and achievement is a direct result of excellent leadership in the department, characterised by the clear direction for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment, and in teachers' consistently high expectations of pupils. There is ongoing review of the scheme of work, policies and procedures, especially assessment, target setting, prediction of GCSE grades and of a portfolio of National Curriculum work to guide assessment. Levels and grades are used as the basis for planning and setting learning objectives. A wide range of textbooks and other resources ensure that all pupils have equal access to learning resources. However, better provision for educational visits to historical sites would further enrich pupils' learning in the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- The above average results in the GCSE examinations
- The good management of the subject contributing well to pupils progress
- The procedures to assess pupils' progress
- Good pupil management allows lessons to proceed with challenge and pace.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Raising attainment in Years 7 to 9
- Developing pupils' understanding of the use of ICT in its wider sense in Years 7 to 9
- A consistent approach to the plenary session to provide wider opportunities for pupils to talk about their work
- Further development of the use of control technology

166. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 and 9, but not in Year 8. In Year 10 and 11 all pupils choose an ICT related subject and are offered a GNVQ and a vocational GCSE course.

167. Teacher assessment of 14-year-old pupils in 2002 showed that standards were well below the national expectation. However, a contributory reason for these low results is the lack of accurate and secure assessment information about pupils' ICT standards within subjects. However, in work seen during the inspection, the standards are in line with that for pupils of a similar age nationally. In the 2002 GCSE examination results at all levels were above the national average. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

168. Pupils enter the school with varied previous experiences but with the benefit of regular lessons they achieve well and by the time they are 14 years reach the expected level. The communication element is well established. Pupils use word processing widely and confidently, to present and edit their work. They have good working knowledge of a multi-media presentation using the Power Point program. An example was preparing a Year 7 topic on 'Myself'. Here pupils confidently presented a series of slides using procedures to move the text and animate graphics with sound effects. Pupils have a clear understanding of desktop

publishing techniques producing documents with added art graphics and adjusting the size to fit their publication and with a particular audience in mind. Pupils are developing an understanding of the use of a spreadsheet. This was noticeable in a Year 9 charity topic. Here, using the appropriate functions, pupils were able to calculate the profit and loss of an event and then present their findings in a graph form. Pupils have an understanding of data handling using a database. They can enter the data and have an appreciation of its use for a mail merge function. Their understanding of how to filter information is less secure. Although pupils are able to gain a basic understanding of control technology using *Logo* - a simple control program - opportunities to develop more in-depth understanding, using a more advanced program, are currently limited. The school is aware of this omission and plan to include a more sophisticated experience in Year 9. Pupils' knowledge of the use of ICT in its wider sense is too narrow, few being able to give examples of where it might be used. Attainment has improved since the previous inspection.

169. The overall attainment of 16-year-old pupils is at the level expected for this point in the course. Achievement however is good and if progress continues they are likely to gain results that are in line with those obtained in the 2002 GCSE examinations. Pupils further develop their knowledge of communication by using, with confidence and understanding, a range of applications to present their work. Pupils have developed a clear understanding of the use of a data handling devising their own data capture sheets, entering the information into appropriate fields and an appreciation of the benefits of being able to quickly select and filter information using the query facility. They also have an understanding of the Data Protection Act and the need to safeguard sensitive information. Pupils have developed a good level of skill to design and develop their own website. They are using their desktop publishing skills to design programmes, posters and a CD cover for the forthcoming music department Christmas concert.

170. Standards of attainment have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils in all years use the Internet with confidence and understand the benefits when researching information for topics and projects. Exceptionally able pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve realistic targets. They also benefit on occasions with additional help from learning assistants.

171. Pupils' attitude to the subject is very positive. The behaviour is good and they generally remain well focused during lessons. They talk confidently and enthusiastically about their work. On the occasions when they have to share a computer they are sensible, work collaboratively with their partner and help each other to progress. Once they understand the task they settle to work quickly. They respect their teachers and seek help when required.

172. The overall quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Generally lessons are thoroughly planned and the learning aim is always shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons. The outcome of this was that pupils had a clear understanding of what they needed to achieve by the end of the lesson but the aims are not always referred to at the end of the lesson to establish progress and guide future planning. Teachers have good subject knowledge, use their expertise well and advise and guide pupils to the next stage of learning. During lessons teachers circulate well, praising good work and dealing with issues when necessary. Pupils respond well to this approach, seek help when they need it, and make good progress. Teachers generally use focused and well targeted questioning to find out pupils' levels understanding before commencing a task. All teachers have good pupil management skills insisting on quiet when explaining a procedure. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with promptly and sensitively, thus allowing lessons to proceed with pace and without interruption. There are, however, occasions when the task lacks challenge, in particular for the higher attaining pupils who

become restless towards the end of the lesson. However, the response tends to be from a few, in particular boys, who tend to dominate these sessions. Although the majority of lessons conclude with a plenary session, these focus on reminding the pupils what they had learned. Limited opportunities are taken for pupils to talk about the work they had completed and for teachers to ascertain their learning.

173. Teaching was less effective when pupils were inappropriately seated during the explanation of the lesson. The outcome of this was not all pupils were in a position where they could see the demonstration. This resulted in pupils not understanding the procedures and slowed learning. Teaching has improved since the last inspection due to the settled staffing after a period of instability.

174. The management of the subject is good. The head of department has a clear vision about future developments of the subject and the need raise standards. The good support provided by the head of department for teachers and the regular monitoring of teaching are contributing well to pupils' good progress. Assessment procedures are good, although improving the quality of information about ICT standards within subjects at the end of Year 9 is a target for improvement. All the pupils know the levels they are achieving and what to do to improve.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

175. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- Improved staffing since the last inspection
- Willingness of pupils to learn
- The very good level of resources and accommodation

### **Areas for improvement**

- The level of attainment, particularly among boys
- Provision for the second foreign language and time allocation for French
- Development of the use of ICT

176. Standards at GCSE in both languages (French and German) have risen steadily since the last inspection, while remaining below national averages and below those of some other subjects in the school. Girls generally out perform boys.

177. At the end of Year 9 teacher assessments are close to national expectations, though the boy / girl difference is equally marked. The first priority in the area improvement plan is to raise standards, particularly among boys. The discrepancy between genders is reflected in the composition of teaching groups throughout the school, and is reflected in the standards attained. Top sets of 30 pupils typically include only half a dozen boys. Action is not taken early enough in the pupils' school careers to ensure that the gap is narrowed.

178. Standards during the inspection largely reflect both the improvement since the last inspection and the remaining areas for concern. Although standards of reading, speaking and listening are at least in line with the average, written work remains strong, with higher attaining pupils producing extended work of a high standard, using three tenses of the verb. Most, including lower attaining pupils, have tidy exercise books and files and take a pride in their work. Promising linguists now have the opportunity to take up a second language (German) from Year 8, and make excellent progress in the short time available to them. The incorporation of the second language into the formal timetable structure would be a means of

enabling the department to make a much greater contribution to the future success of exceptionally able pupils.

179. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teaching is good or better in about two out of three lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and some lessons with very good teaching were observed. All teachers are competent, sometimes exceptionally so, in the languages they teach, prepare lessons well, teach them with pace and challenge and use a variety of methods and media to involve pupils in learning. Pupils in Year 7 show enthusiasm for this new subject and can readily be motivated to use the foreign language as they learn it. Older pupils are usually more reticent in speech and need constant prodding from the teacher. In classes of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 and Year 11, very good work was seen as pupils developed oral work around a set theme: an innovative group activity motivated every pupil in the class resulting in some excellent work. Pupils concentrate well and can work independently. However, in some examples of pair work, pupils worked well together often with encouragement from the teacher. Pupils come to their lessons on time, equipped and ready to work, and are pleasingly ready to show appreciation of the efforts of fellow-pupils. The school's two foreign language assistants make a first-rate contribution, both in class and in smaller extracted groups. Pupils with special educational needs respond well, particularly when they have in-class support. Homework is regularly set and marked.

180. The leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. The department is committed to improving the quality of language provision. It now needs to work effectively as a team in order to achieve this aim. All teachers prepare lessons well and teach them with pace and challenge. Only one member of staff is new to the school this year. As teachers take their classes through to the following year, this continuity of teaching has had a positive effect on the steadily rising standards. Staffing levels are favourable and teachers are well deployed. The timetable allocation is, for some years, inadequate: provision for German, as the second language, needs to be improved. Provision of accommodation and resources is very good. The recently installed ICT suite is underused: development of ICT is an important priority.

181. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. The last inspection took place at a time of considerable turnover of specialist language teachers: since then the situation has stabilised. The use of oral work has improved considerably. There is not enough encouragement of pupils to make spontaneous contributions to learning in the target language. The department has much potential for growth and improvement. With an increased sense of common purpose and teamwork there is every reason to believe that language teaching will, in future, make an increasingly important contribution to the life of the school.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department are outstanding
- Very good teaching and learning
- Attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good
- Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average
- The accommodation is very good
- The use of ICT is outstanding

### Areas for improvement

- Use of staff notation in Years 7 to 9
- Extended melodic composition
- Expansion of instrumental teaching to include brass instruments

183. GCSE results in 2002 are above average with over three quarters of the pupils gaining grades A\* to C. This is a significant improvement on the previous year when there was a dip in the results. There were no significant differences in the results of boys and girls. Taking into account that the number of pupils entered was well above national averages, this represents a high level of achievement.

184. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Pupils play simple melodies on keyboards and maintain ensemble parts effectively, displaying a good sense of rhythm. By Year 9, most pupils are using fingering systems to improve fluency. However notation skills are limited: they are familiar with staff notation but still rely too heavily on letter names when performing. Their compositions show knowledge of chord structures and the ability to invent short melodic phrases, which are then manipulated well with the use of music technology. Melodic work is insufficiently developed and pupils do not have enough practice in writing longer tunes. ICT standards are above average and well used in producing compositions with a good feel for timbre and texture. Taking into account the standards on entry the level of achievement is good.

185. In Years 10 and 11, standards in work seen are above average. Performances, particularly vocal, show good feeling for style with some outstanding performances displaying great confidence and verve. The pupils' compositions show very effective use of ICT with pupils using sampling and sequencing techniques to great effect. There is a good feeling for texture and dramatic effect enhanced by good choices of tone colour. Melodic invention is good as far as it goes; most compositions rely on short phrases developed by repetition into longer sections. Staff notation skills are limited but students have a good grasp of grid notation. The level of achievement is good. This is reflected in the GCSE results, where they perform better than in other subjects, and takes into account standards on entry to the course. In both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational need make good progress and achieve well and there are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls or of pupils of differing ethnicity.

186. The pupils have a very good attitude to music; they take the work seriously and work with enthusiasm. This is reflected in the support given by both boys and girls to the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The excellent take-up for GCSE music is three times the national average. Behaviour is very good; pupils collaborate well in paired and group work and are willing to help each other, demonstrating very good relationships. They are courteous and respect each other's feelings; for example when evaluating each other's performances

and compositions they are always polite and constructive in their comments. Much of this can be attributed to the quality of teaching and learning that they experience.

187. Overall, and in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching is very good. In well over half of lessons seen teaching was very good and practically all the remainder were good; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teachers, including specialist instrumental staff, have very good subject knowledge and they use it well to illustrate explanations and demonstrate. Lessons are very well planned with very good use of time and resources. The pupils' learning is enriched by the outstanding use of ICT, particularly in composing. Explanations are clear and objectives well set, but sometimes explanations are too long making it difficult for pupils to remember all aspects of the task when they start the practical work. The management of pupils is very good; the teachers give a high level of individual attention to pupils and this makes for good progress and productive working. This is particularly helpful to pupils with special needs, as is the essentially practical approach adopted by the department. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is good overall, particularly the latter, but more attention should be given to the correction of spellings and grammar in the marking. Much of the teaching is charismatic and enthuses the pupils, resulting in the very high take-up for all of the department's activities.

188. The level of improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Attainment has improved in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching has improved. The quality of the accommodation and resources for learning has been greatly improved. In particular the accommodation and resources for music ICT have been improved, resulting in excellent use of ICT in the curriculum. A priority, to extend instrumental teaching and include more provision for brass instruments, is a natural extension to the current programme.

189. The department enjoys excellent leadership and management. The head of department is committed and hardworking and has a clear vision of the future direction of the department. This is reflected in the very appropriate priorities in the development plan and the effective action that is being taken to achieve them. The department is making a strong contribution to the school's life and work.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Attainment is above the national average
- Pupils' achievement is good and very good in GCSE examinations
- Teaching is very good
- Pupils' attitudes are very good
- Leadership and management are very good
- Extra-curricular provision is very good

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' analytical skills
- Include recent department initiatives, for example, assessment, curriculum planning, examination analysis and pupil tracking, in the handbook
- Identify risk assessment and opportunities for ICT in the schemes of work

191. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results for those gaining A\* to C grades was well above the national average. Girls' and boys' results were similar and pupils achieved very well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. In 2001 GCSE results were in line with the national average. The results in 2001 and 2002 were better than those gained by the pupils in other subjects.

192. The present GCSE pupils are working to a standard above the national average. The presentation of pupils' analytical investigations in Year 11 is very good. They make perceptive and valid observations of fitness results. All pupils make good use of ICT and higher attaining pupils use digital images, graphs and charts to show their results. Their work on these assignments is well above average and the first drafts are very well marked with informative comments that help pupils to improve their work. Boys in Year 10 have consistent passing and footwork skills in basketball and girls have a reasonable knowledge of badminton at this early stage of the course.

193. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes reach standards above those expected nationally. Pupils perform well on the trampoline and boys have secure skills in football. When playing netball girls pass accurately with good use of space. Pupils' analytical skills are not as well developed as their performance skills and there is a lack of emphasis in promoting this strand of the national curriculum in a few lessons.

194. On entry to the school pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national expectations in a few activities and by the time they reach the end of Year 9 their attainment is above that for pupils of a similar age nationally. Girls in Year 9 have a good sense of rhythm and their body tension when dancing is good. In football, Year 9 boys show an awareness of space when in conditioned games. However, a few boys have below average hockey skills. Girls in Year 8 can demonstrate advanced gymnastic counterbalances and boys in Year 7 are developing their basic basketball skills well, after only two lessons. Boys and girls are mostly well co-ordinated and able to work co-operatively in small groups. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to warm up and stretch independently and effectively. In lessons all pupils, in all years, made good progress. Their achievement is good and illustrates well the department's commitment to improving the performance of all pupils.

195. A few individual pupils and teams achieve very high standards in district, county and national competitions in athletics as well as in cross country, rugby, netball, cricket, hockey, gymnastics, swimming, dance and football. The attainment of these talented pupils is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the very good opportunities offered by the hard work and dedication of their teachers. The numbers of pupils who attend the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the increased numbers taking the GCSE course demonstrate the very positive attitudes and involvement of pupils in the subject.

196. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and promotes very good learning in the majority of lessons. None of the teaching is less than satisfactory, a quarter is good and two thirds is very good. In lessons where teaching was at least good, pupils benefit in their learning because a wide variety of challenging tasks are set and matched to the needs of all pupils. Teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the pupils. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give pupils a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. All lessons begin with a health and fitness section and this promotes pupils' knowledge of this strand of the National Curriculum. The department focuses on developing literacy skills. Key words and objectives are displayed in the activity area but strategies for the development of numeracy and ICT are not as regularly used. Teachers use a variety of challenging methods in theory lessons to help pupils improve their knowledge. Insufficient emphasis on aspects of theory in GCSE practical lessons results in a lack of consolidation of



pupils' learning. Teachers mark homework and tests thoroughly with constructive comments but class work is not consistently checked to see that it is complete and correct for revision purposes. Teachers have high expectations and there is an insistence on high standards. These factors linked with the very good relationships between staff and pupils are responsible for pupils' very good learning.

197. The curriculum team leader provides a clear educational direction, very good leadership and management for the subject and leads by very good personal example. Good monitoring procedures for GCSE pupils have been implemented. All the issues raised in the previous report have been addressed but the recent initiatives are not yet brought together in a handbook. A wide range of activities in Years 7 to 9 has been established to include gymnastics, dance, outdoor and adventurous activities, games, health and fitness and athletics. Activities are all taught in single gender groups. Activities are not well balanced, especially for boys, who are not taught the dance unit. The head of boys' PE has developed very good links with primary schools and with outside amateur and professional sports clubs. These links benefit the pupils considerably and during the inspection a coach from a local professional football club came in to coach pupils after school. Very thorough assessment procedures have been developed to meet the school's criteria. They are, linked to National Curriculum levels, activity specific and reflect the four teaching components. The facilities are excellent and the very good quality sports hall, gymnasium and all weather pitch support high standards of performance. The formal use of risk assessment is, however, not well established within the department's otherwise very good practice. Display is very well used: it includes numeracy and careers information, brightens the corridors and improves pupils' knowledge, interest and commitment to the subject

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Schemes of work are being developed in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus
- Baseline assessment has been introduced, enabling teachers to see how much progress pupils make.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Meet statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11
- Through effective lesson planning, meet the learning needs of all pupils
- The development of assessment in line with national guidelines
- Use visits and visitors to enhance pupils' understanding of different faiths

199. In 2002, only a small number took the GCSE examination and the majority gained A\* to C grades. This is too small a number to compare to national results. There is no GCSE being taught at present as too few pupils chose the subject in their options.

200. Pupils enter the school with attainment slightly below the levels expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus. By the age of 14, the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with these expectations, with higher attaining pupils attaining above the expected levels. In the lessons seen, and in the work available for analysis, their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils know about the main beliefs and customs of some of the world's main religions. They know about festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali, and about customs such as fasting during Ramadan. The majority can name the Five Pillars of Islam, and give some description

of what is involved, for example, in prayer or pilgrimage. Higher attaining pupils explain the meanings of different festivals and other special times in the Christian religion. They consider key events in the lives of individuals and consider the ways in which these are celebrated in the different religions, for example, birth customs and marriage ceremonies. Most pupils know stories from Christianity, such as the baptism of Jesus, and are able to link it to infant baptism. Higher attaining pupils consider what it would be like to be involved in a fast. Most pupils are willing to listen to each other and recognise that different peoples' opinions are valid, even if they do not share them. Most take care with the presentation of their work, but the written work of a number of pupils is limited because of poor literacy skills. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when the tasks take into account their capabilities.

201. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good features. Consequently, pupils' learning is satisfactory and in about half of the lessons good progress is made. Teaching has improved since the last inspection: currently, higher attaining pupils are provided greater challenge. In lessons where teaching is good, the clearly defined learning objectives are explained to the pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers use questions effectively to help pupils to recall previous lessons, and to ensure that all pupils are involved. Good class management keeps pupils' attention and involvement in lessons, ensuring that they concentrate well. Key words are reinforced through a variety of strategies, ensuring that pupils develop a good knowledge of specialist vocabulary. In these lessons, teachers use a variety of resources and short activities ensure that pupils' interest and concentration are sustained. As a result pupils work and behave well. Excerpts from videos are well used to reinforce information and to provide a point of discussion. For example, in learning about baptism, pupils saw brief excerpts from the baptism of Jesus, and from a video about adult baptism, enabling them to make links between the two. In addition, good use is sometimes made of excerpts from modern films and music which have a religious theme and which also capture pupils' interest. When pupils' interest is aroused, they work hard, and often continue a topic at home. For example, pupils in Year 7 had produced Muslim prayer mats, many of which were of a high quality and showed good understanding of the type of designs with which they could be decorated. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, which give the latter the confidence to attempt tasks that they find difficult, and to contribute to discussions. Lessons often close with review that reinforces what has been learnt.

202. Less effective lessons are characterised by limited planning for tasks matched to the different attainment levels in the class. Pupils are given few opportunities to discuss topics, limiting their ability to understand the meanings of events. There is too much copying from the board or from textbooks, a particularly difficult task for lower attaining pupils. All work is marked regularly, but does not often give comments about how pupils might improve its standard and quality.

203. Some opportunities are given to pupils to research topics that allow them to work independently: they respond well and use a variety of resources such as books and the Internet. Some use word processing to record their homework. Apart from this the use of ICT is limited, although its use is now being introduced into the scheme of work. There have been a few visits to local churches, and visits from a local church group but, as yet, there are no links with other faiths. Such a development could strengthen pupils' understanding of beliefs from a variety of traditions.

204. Management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department is developing schemes of work and assessment procedures that are in line with both the locally Agreed Syllabus and with national recommendations. A system of baseline assessment has been introduced. As at the last inspection, statutory requirements are not met for pupils in Years

10 and 11. For this age group, religious education is taught as part of the citizenship programme. Although opportunities to focus on religious aspects of topics have been identified, these are insufficient to meet the Agreed Syllabus' entitlement. There are currently no general or GCSE courses in either Years 10 or 11. As a consequence, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the importance of religion in believers' lives is not well developed, and there are few opportunities for them to reflect on their own beliefs.

205. The religious education curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is making an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also provides opportunities for them to consider the moral and social teachings of the different faiths, and the ways in which these have an impact on how believers live. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when it was reported that religious education made insufficient contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

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

### **Strengths**

- The very good quality of teaching and learning
- The very positive response, attitudes and behaviour of pupils
- The standards pupils reach in their oral and practical work

### **Areas for improvement**

- The monitoring of the quality of provision
- The assessment of pupils' work and the tracking of their progress
- The place of religious education in the programme of study

207. The development of the subject is in its early stages. Provision is made across the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9, including a lesson that focuses on personal development. In Years 10 and 11 there is a dedicated weekly lesson of core provision and other aspects are taught within subjects, resulting in uneven provision for some pupils.

208. Standards at the end of Year 9 are satisfactory and pupils' achievement is good. Pupils show appropriate understanding of the nature of British society and the richness of its racial, cultural and religious diversity. They know and understand that the time and place in which people live and what they believe affects their attitudes, values and life-style. For example in a Year 9 geography lesson on global warming, pupils considered the causes and effects of this phenomenon and the effect it has on the global village in which we live. Similarly in a Year 8 religious education lesson, pupils explored the various rites of passage through which human beings pass and the importance of these in terms of their future role within society. In the personal development programme pupils are clearly made aware of the importance of decision-making and its role at school, in the home and in the wider community.

209. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and their achievement is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of democracy, and can see the results of it in the work of the school council. They are also developing an understanding of the complexity of human relationships and importance of values, such as truth, honesty, trust within close personal friendships. Pupils taking history also understand the long and difficult road that was taken to achieve the suffrage for both men and women while those studying the media are aware of the varying views and stances adopted by newspapers because of their editorial, political or social outlook.

210. Much of the work undertaken in dedicated personal development and citizenship lessons is oral, or sometimes a practical piece within role-play. There are, as a result, too few opportunities to assess what pupils know, understand and can do in these contexts.

211. Pupils' attitudes and responses to the subject are good. They are better in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower part of the school. Pupils work well together, show respect for differing points of view and learning benefits from the good and very good teaching. In all lessons, account is taken of the needs of all pupils. The inclusive approach adopted ensures that delicate and controversial issues are handled with great sensitivity. Matters relating to human behaviour, religion, politics, gender or race are dealt with so well and they make an important contribution to pupils' personal development.

212. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in the dedicated provision. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 the majority is very good or excellent. Lessons in the dedicated provision are well planned, use very well the interest, expertise and experience of teachers, are well focused with clear learning objectives and include demanding and interesting methods and tasks to explore the learning and develop knowledge, understanding and skills. In a Year 11 citizenship lesson role-play was used to good effect to enable pupils gain insights into behaviour in a complex human relationship. Such an approach was highly effective in helping to focus on the sensitive issues rather than being overwhelmed by the emotional dimension of the problem. In a Year 9 personal development lesson good planning and an outstanding use of question and answer provided a clear view of what pupils already knew about alcohol abuse and contributed greatly to the direction of further learning. The use of a variety of learning approaches, for instance the use of well scripted case histories, "hot seating" and some role-play produced high levels of understanding of the problems and allowed pupils to empathise with both victims and perpetrators. In lessons with less good teaching, although planning was never less than sound, clear expectations were not always well established and there was some insecure management of pupils. On one occasion, the classroom was too small for a group of 30 pupils to undertake role-play and thus learning and progress lacked both pace and focus.

213. The citizenship programme is still developing as subjects begin, for the first time, to formally contribute to this aspect of pupils' learning. The programme is broad but lacks some balance. For example, there are currently insufficient well-developed opportunities for religious education to contribute to pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills within the citizenship framework. The assessment of pupils' work and the monitoring of their progress are not well developed. There is no process for monitoring the effectiveness of the programme on pupils' learning.