

INSPECTION REPORT

SPEN VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Liversedge

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique Reference Number: 107778

Headteacher: Mrs A Cross

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe
1025

Dates of inspection: 11th - 14th November 2002

Inspection number: 252072

Full Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Roberttown Lane Liversedge West Yorkshire WF15 7LX
Telephone number:	(01924) 325676
Fax number:	(01924) 325679
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Bentley
Dates of previous inspection:	9 th - 12 th October 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Results and pupils' achievements; teaching and learning
9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector		Attendance; partnership with parents
5038	Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language; gifted and talented pupils	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; drama	
20119	Mr A L C Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science	
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art; design and technology	
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency: staffing, accommodation and learning resources
4603	Mr A F Ryan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Citizenship; music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
10448	Mr M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 8
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	9 - 13
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13 - 15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15 - 19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19 - 20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20 - 21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21 - 24
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24 - 25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26 - 31
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	32 - 58

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is slightly smaller than average and educates about 825 boys and girls, aged 11-16. It is a comprehensive school by status, but its intake is heavily “creamed”, particularly by a nearby, selective grammar school. The overall social and economic background of pupils is below average. Their overall level of attainment on entry to the school at age 11 is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is typical of the national picture, but that with SEN statements is double the national average. About 13 per cent of pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage, but only six pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school was last inspected in 2000, when it was judged to have serious weaknesses.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It has many sound features and a few weaknesses that still require improvement. Pupils' overall standard of attainment is well below average at the end of Year 9 and below average at the end of Year 11. In 2002, the school's GCSE results were well below the average of both comprehensive and secondary modern schools. The majority of pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects except science (Years 10-11) and religious education (RE). Teaching is good overall. In the last 18 months, the school's governors and senior management have worked hard, and with some success, to raise standards, but external examination results do not yet show the full fruits of their labours. Although still more effort is required to raise pupils' academic standards further, the school has made reasonable improvement since 2000 and now provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Its weaknesses no longer fall into the category of “serious”. On its average income and expenditure, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are first rate: she is calmly turning the school round.
- Most senior and middle managers discharge their responsibilities effectively and create a good team spirit.
- Most pupils behave well and display positive, courteous attitudes to staff and one another.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Years 10-11.
- The provision made for pupils' moral and social development and for those with special educational needs.
- The very good overall provision made in geography.
- The school provides a good quality of care and support for pupils.
- Most accommodation is very good – pleasant, spacious, attractive and well maintained.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in a minority of lessons and especially in Year 7.
- Further raising of the standard of pupils' literacy and oral work and of the work of high attainers.
- The overall standard of teaching, management and achievement in science and RE.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school.
- A small number of potential risks to pupils' health and safety.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development.
- The information provided for parents about their children's progress and the subjects or courses they study.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since 2000. The rate of recent progress, however, has been good, as a result of determined and inspiring leadership and, since September 2002, a more stable complement of teaching staff. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9, although still well below average, has risen in line with the improvement nationally. Their overall level of attainment in GCSE examinations remains well below average and at about the same level as in 2000. The school's teaching, however, has improved further. The school's ethos is generally hard-working, encouraging and caring. Good team work is the hallmark of this school. The school increasingly shows that it has the capacity to sustain long-term improvement.

The school has taken effective action on many fronts. It has made at least satisfactory improvement on most of the many weaknesses identified at the last inspection. It has, for example:

- raised pupils' overall attainment in class and a little in Year 9 tests – though not yet in GCSE examinations;
- improved pupils' literacy and numeracy a little through training its staff and partly applying its planned policy;
- made satisfactory improvement in the standards of teaching in information and communication technology (ICT) and made substantial improvement in art;
- improved its provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), so that this aspect is now sound;
- made steady progress on using tutorial time well;
- ensured that the course on personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is taught satisfactorily;
- created a high-calibre, effective senior management team and secured a sound, committed set of governors. The new headteacher's central contribution to the school's improvement is widely recognised and respected;
- steadily raised pupils' attendance to a broadly satisfactory level; and
- ensured that all aspects of financial management are now thorough and effective.

In contrast, the raising of pupils' standard of literacy and the quality of pupils' education in RE remain priorities. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and pupils' spiritual development remains unsatisfactory.

Overall, however, it is the inspection team's view that the school has made satisfactory progress in remedying the serious weaknesses identified in the inspection of 2000 and that the remaining weaknesses are no longer "serious". The signs for the future are encouraging. Sharper monitoring and evaluation – and any necessary subsequent action – are now required to continue to turn gains already made and widespread optimism into assured, long-term success.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school's results in the Year 9 national tests in 2002 were well below average in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The highest results have consistently been in mathematics. The overall results were well below the average for comprehensive schools of a similar kind (as measured only by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals), but in line with those for secondary modern schools. Standards have risen over the 1996-2002 period, at a similar rate to the rise nationally. By the end of Year 9, standards in the school are well below average in most subjects. They are somewhat higher overall, though still below average, in citizenship, geography, history and music, but of an average overall standard in art, design and technology, and physical education (PE). Boys and girls do equally well in most subjects, though girls tend to do much better than boys in English. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in their studies between Years 7 and 9.

Results in GCSE were well below the national average in 2002 on nearly all the usual range of measures. Pupils' overall standard in 2002 was also well below the average for both comprehensive and secondary modern schools of a similar socio-economic character. Results have risen slightly since 1997 and have nearly kept pace with the national rise. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall standard is below average in most subjects. It is, however, well below average overall in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and RE, but average in art, design and technology, geography and PE. Most pupils make reasonable progress in Years 10-11, but the most able pupils – and pupils generally in science and RE – could achieve more. The school fell well short of its (somewhat unrealistic) targets for examination results in 2001 and 2002. Pupils' academic performance is broadly satisfactory overall, but can be raised further.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are positive, considerate and interested in school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall: classroom misbehaviour is usually linked to unsatisfactory teaching. Property damage is rare.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships amongst pupils and with staff are generally strong and constructive, and are marked by mutual respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall. It has steadily improved over recent years.

Most pupils demonstrate maturity and responsibility in their conduct. Unusually, within this good picture, more unsatisfactory attitudes occur amongst Year 7 pupils than elsewhere. The school is an orderly community.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and in most subjects. It is very good in geography in Years 10-11. It is satisfactory overall in Year 7; in Years 7-9 in English and in ICT; in Years 10-11 in science; and throughout the school in mathematics, citizenship, history and modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory in RE. In one out of every six lessons, teaching is very good (and occasionally outstanding), but one in every ten lessons is not taught well enough. The overall quality of teaching is higher than at the last inspection. Its strongest features are teachers' subject knowledge, planning and class control. The setting of homework is

generally good. The teaching of numeracy is usually reasonable, but pupils' literacy requires more attention from teachers as a whole. In good lessons pupils learn well through well-organised, rigorous, pacy and stimulating teaching. Dullness, spoon-feeding and mild indiscipline characterise unsatisfactory teaching. The predominantly good teaching results in most pupils, of different ethnic backgrounds and capabilities, making reasonable progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory on both counts, although very light on vocational work. All statutory requirements are met, but some lessons are too long.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is sound and much better than two years ago – especially for pupils with statements. Management, teaching and support are good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	These aspects are satisfactory overall. There is good provision for pupils' moral and social development; satisfactory cultural experiences are offered. Spiritual provision and growth remain unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A generally good quality of care and support is offered to pupils. Staff take these responsibilities seriously. Some safety issues and the accuracy of assessing pupils' progress require improvement.

“Child protection” arrangements are thorough and sensitively handled, but the safety aspects of moving vehicles on the site, lunchtime supervision and some workshop practices require attention. Bullying is a minor problem. The current improvements being made in assessment arrangements have much further to go.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher's skill, dedication and approach are rapidly and impressively raising the school's performance. She has good support from senior and middle management. The future is bright.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Significant changes since 2000 in the governing body's composition have produced a satisfactory improvement in their strategic oversight.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Most aspects of the school's work are soundly monitored and evaluated. The evaluation of pupils' academic progress is currently unsatisfactory: it is, however, rapidly improving and promises soon to be good.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning, management, monitoring and administration are good. The school takes best value carefully into account.

The quality of the school's senior management is a vital strength of the school. To the headteacher must go the central credit for the school's continuing improvement. Almost one fifth of the teaching staff changed this year: the overall quality of staff is better than in 2000. Nearly all the accommodation is very

good; toilet provision is unusually high. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory, but there are a few shortages of textbooks, departmental (not central) computers and library books.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's ethos of hard work. • The school's steady improvement and will to succeed. • The strength of the school's management. • The high quality of care and support for pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A closer working relationship between school and home. • Information about pupils' progress.

The inspection confirms the positive aspects appreciated by parents. The school's high quality of management and its encouragement of all kinds of achievement are beginning to raise standards all round. Links and communications between school and home are satisfactory overall, but require strengthening – especially on academic matters.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' standards of attainment – and the overall standards reached in different subjects – vary very widely from above average to low, but the overall standard in the school is well below average by the end of Year 9 and below average by the end of Year 11. Pupils' overall level of attainment is well below average in the national tests taken in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Over the last five years, pupils' attainment has risen slightly in both the Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations. Standards can be higher still.
2. Any comparative judgements made about pupils' standards in this school in relation to the national picture do, however, require treating with a degree of caution. This is because the school receives only a portion of all pupils from its contributory primary schools. Of the cohort of pupils who could have become last academic year's Year 11, for example, 36 high-attaining pupils had gone at the age of 11 to a selective grammar school that serves the locality, and a further 97 pupils had gone to two other comprehensive schools. Seven out of every ten of these 133 pupils (a group larger than this school's present Year 11 of 125) gained at least five A*-C grades in GCSE examinations in 2000. This example illustrates how this school's entry has the academic characteristics more typical of a secondary modern school. The commentary that follows therefore compares the school's academic performance with the pattern found both in comprehensive schools and in secondary modern schools nationally.
3. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment is (according to the incomplete sets of data held by the school) well below the national average for comprehensive schools. The sets of data held on pupils' performance in the national primary tests over the 1998-2002 period suggest that, although intake standards have risen slightly over the four-year period, they remain well below average overall. In particular, the proportion of high-attaining pupils joining the school is low at less than half of what would be found in a typical comprehensive school. Other sets of national tests administered by the school also indicate that the school's intakes have consistently been well below average over the last few years.
4. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the proportions of pupils who reached the expected basic national standards of Levels 5 or 6 were well below the national average in all of English, mathematics and science. These results were very similar to those of the previous two years. The highest results have consistently been in mathematics. The rise in results achieved over the last five years has been broadly in line with the national trend.
5. Girls' results in these Year 9 tests are consistently higher than those of boys overall in English (as they were on intake) and girls perform a little closer than boys to the national pattern for their respective sexes. Girls also do slightly better overall than boys in mathematics and science. Teachers' assessments of pupils are usually fairly close to the test results pupils achieve, but are least consistent in science.
6. When these 2002 Year 9 results are compared with those in comprehensive schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed well below the group average in all three subjects. In 2001 (later comparative data was not available at the time of the inspection), they performed well below the average for all secondary modern schools. They were, however, in line with the average for secondary modern schools of a similar socio-economic background.
7. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 2002, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils as well below the national average in all of design and technology,

geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and in modern foreign languages.

8. In the GCSE examinations of 2002, pupils' level of attainment was well below average overall on most of the usual range of measures, but was close to average for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five grades in the range A*-G. The school's GCSE results are at a similar level to what they were at the last inspection in 2000. They have, however, risen since the inspection of 1996 – up from 17 to 23 per cent of pupils gaining at least five A*-C grades and showing a slight rise in average point scores. This rate of rise was slightly less than the national rise over the 1997-2001 period, but the trend line was lifted by the 2002 results.
9. Of the three core subjects, GCSE results in 2002 were highest in English and mathematics, although all were well below the national average for comprehensive schools. The results have been at a very similar level over the last four years in English, where a quarter of all pupils have gained at least a grade C. Apart from a drop in 2001, mathematics results have been higher (best in 2000 when one third of pupils gained grades in the range A*-C). Results have consistently trailed in science, however – a subject that is underperforming. Across all subjects very few of the highest A* and A grades are obtained. No pupil achieved the highest A* or A grade in 2002, for example, in mathematics, art, design and technology (resistant materials or graphics elements), history, German or music.
10. Girls achieved a greater proportion of the higher (A*-C) grades in GCSE than boys in both 2001 and 2002: the overall gap between the sexes was larger than it was nationally in 2002, but much smaller in 1999 and non-existent in 2000. Girls did much better than boys in English in 2002 and a little better in mathematics and science. Ethnic minority pupils in the school do worse than white pupils overall: most make reasonable progress, however, largely because many have a lower level of attainment on intake. Pupils have tended in recent years to do better in GCSE in English, mathematics, French and physical education (PE) than in most of their other subjects, but to do worse in art and in design and technology; standards are, however, now rising in the last two subjects.
11. When the school's 2002 average points score at GCSE is compared with that in comprehensive schools with a similar 'free school meals' background, this school's overall performance was well below the group average. In 2001, it was also well below the average for secondary modern schools generally as well as for those in similar socio-economic circumstances; on this last measure, mathematics results were average, English below average and science well below average. In 2001 and 2002, the school fell well short of its GCSE targets, although the target-setting process was shaky. Its targets for the current year are much higher than before, despite the Year 9 level of attainment of the current GCSE cohort being about the same as that of its predecessor.
12. The school does not yet have a clear model or comprehensive sets of data to track pupils' progress fully through the whole of their secondary education, although very rapid progress has been made this term on remedying the deficiency. Inspection evidence indicates that most pupils now make broadly satisfactory progress in their studies over both Years 7-9 and Years 10-11, but also that progress can be greater. Pupils make good progress where teaching is well planned, suitably brisk, interesting, rigorous and firmly in control of classes. Progress is less than it could be in a minority of classes where there is shallowness in study, little discussion, excessive spoon-feeding, dull teaching or unsatisfactory behaviour.
13. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 was well below average overall: some pupils achieve high or average standards, but a much larger proportion than usual do not reach nationally expected standards. Overall attainment is, however, higher in some subjects – below average in citizenship, geography, history and music, and average in art, design and technology, and PE. By the end of Year 11, the level of work is below average in standard overall. It is well below average in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education (RE); below average in English, citizenship, history, ICT and music; and average in art, design and technology, geography and PE. Overall, most pupils (including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language) make fair progress in this school. The minority

of pupils who are most able generally make similar progress to other groups, but do not do so consistently enough with all teachers and in all subjects.

14. In English, pupils' overall level of attainment is well below average by the end of Year 9, but rises a little through the school to be below average by the end of Year 11. By the time pupils leave school, the standard of reading of most of them, though still below average, improves because of the department's high emphasis on regular reading, close attention to the detail of texts and some very thorough work on literature in Years 10-11. Writing is below average overall: such aspects as planning, note-taking and drafting are sound, but presentation, handwriting, spelling and punctuation are a little weaker than often seen in similar schools. Most pupils show confidence in expressing a point of view and joining in discussion, but are not as good as usual at using appropriate vocabulary or talking at any length. Most pupils listen carefully.
15. In other subjects across the school pupils' standard of reading is below average overall. Most pupils read reasonably accurately. Only a minority of pupils, however, read with a combination of confident fluency and thoughtful expression. Pupils generally cope reasonably with the reading tasks set and the interpretation of reading material; they do so noticeably well in mathematics and geography, but more pupils than usual struggle in design and technology.
16. Pupils' standard of writing is below average overall. Its strongest features are the planning of work and its presentation in art, design and technology, and history. In mathematics and geography most pupils structure their writing soundly. There is generally insufficient drafting of work. Note-taking is not strong, generally because pupils receive insufficient guidance or practice in this skill; theoretical work in PE is an exception to this. Presentation and neatness are generally below average. The weakest aspects of written work are spelling and punctuation. Handwriting is generally below average, but a somewhat better all-round standard is achieved in art and in design and technology. The appropriate use of ICT enhances the presentation of some work. The smallish proportion of high-attaining pupils usually produce extended writing of an average standard.
17. The quality of speaking in class is sound overall in clarity and audibility. Pupils' ability to express their thoughts accurately varies enormously: a significant minority confidently use appropriate terminology and vocabulary to explain their thinking, but a similar number are often inarticulate, finding it difficult to convey their ideas with much coherence. A general weakness is the infrequency with which pupils take part in any extended or interactive discussion where they synthesise several points of view. Most pupils listen carefully and respectfully. The school's systems for promoting and coordinating a higher all-round standard of literacy are in place: more teachers now need to ensure that they carry them out in practice and target speaking and writing weaknesses more frequently and consistently.
18. In mathematics and numerical work across the curriculum, pupils' standard of numeracy varies widely, but is below average overall. A minority of pupils handle numbers and data with great confidence, but many lack quick facility in these aspects. Most make satisfactory progress and are fairly competent in basic skills and techniques, but are soon thrown by problems that require them to apply known methods in unfamiliar situations. Science, design and technology and geography make satisfactory contributions to pupils' capability in such aspects as data-handling and graphical representation, whilst in ICT pupils improve their number skills by using spreadsheets.
19. At its inspection in 2000, this school was judged to have serious weaknesses on many fronts. These included the need to raise standards in all subjects, in literacy and numeracy, and in GCSE results. The present inspection indicates that satisfactory progress has been made on most of these issues. There has been slight improvement in external tests and examinations and, on the evidence of current classwork, the promise of more to come. Numeracy is promoted satisfactorily. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in most subjects, although higher attainers could achieve more. Higher standards are particularly required in science, RE and in general literacy. Overall, although the weaknesses no longer fall into the category of "serious", they still require the concerted attention of senior management, heads of departments and all teachers to increase further the improvement made so far.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils are, for the most part, positive in their attitudes to school and most show interest in the range of activities provided for them. The school is generally an orderly community. Pupils' personal demeanour is pleasant and cooperative, while most demonstrate maturity and responsibility in their conduct.
21. While this positive picture generally applies, there are occasions when some pupils find it difficult to restrain their frustration and react angrily both to one another and to staff. These incidents are uncommon, but can flare up with little warning. Staff give such pupils firm support and guidance in recognising the impact of their actions and the effects of their behaviour on the wider community.
22. Attitudes and behaviour in the classroom are generally good and often very good. In six out of every ten lessons seen pupils' behaviour was good (or very good), and was satisfactory in a further third. Attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory or poor in just seven per cent of lessons. Poor attitudes are often associated with teaching that does not have clear enough expectations of pupils or lacks adequate structure and stimulation. Whilst the typical standard of behaviour in lessons is good in Years 8-11, it is only satisfactory in Year 7. Of the total number of lessons seen with unsatisfactory or poor attitudes from pupils, just over half were in Year 7. This unusual pattern of attitudes from the newest members of the school community warrants a careful investigation by the school's senior management of the factors involved, followed by corrective action.
23. The school shows little or no evidence of any animosity between boys and girls or friction between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. There is, however, an occasional indication of persistent (if minor) forms of harassment, carried out by older pupils on younger ones. When such incidents are reported to staff, they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Some pupils, however, appear reluctant to take such issues to staff, but either tolerate the situation or try to remedy it themselves.
24. Day-to-day relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are generally strong, constructive and marked by mutual respect. Very few examples were seen of graffiti or of deliberate damage caused by pupils to property or to the fabric of the school. Unusually, pupils' toilets are in first-rate condition, partly as a result of determined and imaginative management action. Where litter occurs, it is usually quickly cleared by teams of pupils or by support staff.
25. The number of fixed-term exclusions is broadly average for a school of this size and type. This figure has fallen consistently over recent years – from 100 three years ago to 52 in the last academic year. The incidence of permanent exclusions is low – only one such exclusion occurred in the last year. The school carefully monitors the pattern and trend of exclusions.
26. Pupils show a fair capacity to exercise responsibility, although they often rely on staff to provide them with the opportunity for such initiatives. Many pupils are involved in the work of the two school councils (for lower and upper schools respectively), both in a representative capacity and through general consultations. They do not, however, take sufficient lead in conducting the business of these bodies: staff are still too ready to take the responsibility for the organisation and progress of these events. Many pupils act as prefects, as library assistants and in general support to the school's administration. They enjoy the opportunity to extend their experience and development by taking on such responsibilities.

Attendance

27. The overall attendance of pupils is satisfactory: the attendance of most pupils is good, but a minority do not attend well enough. In the last academic year, attendance was 90.0 per cent. Both the level of authorised absence (8.5 per cent) and the amount of absence without good reason (1.5 per cent) were a little worse than the national pattern. Over the last six years, however, attendance has risen steadily from its unsatisfactory level of 88.3 per cent in 1996 and of 87.7 per cent in 2000 to its recent level of

90 per cent. The amount of unauthorised absence has dropped considerably over this time. In the first half of the current Autumn Term, overall attendance was 91 per cent (with almost one third of pupils having full attendance) – a little higher than in the corresponding period of 2001.

28. The attendance of a small minority of pupils is, however, unsatisfactory. This is occasionally due to illness, but is often the result of children experiencing serious trouble or having unsupportive home backgrounds. Holidays taken during term time, additionally, account for nearly one in every five absences (and about a quarter of all absences in Years 7 and 8).
29. The school has a very thorough and practical attendance policy to guide its work. It also produces very thorough analyses and reports on the reasons for poor attendance and on the effectiveness of its active measures to improve matters. Its own internal guidance documentation is clear, comprehensive and precise. The school plans shortly to move to a computerised system for recording and analysing pupils' attendance and for helping to identify problems. It undertakes occasional spot-checks to monitor and detect truancy: these reveal only a minor problem with truancy. The school's *Students' Planner* gives appropriately high prominence to matters of attendance and punctuality.
30. Punctuality for lessons is generally good: most pupils move promptly to lessons. Punctuality in coming to school on time is satisfactory overall: approximately 18 pupils are late for school on a typical day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and good overall across the school and (especially in Years 10-11) in most subjects. It is at least satisfactory in nine out of every ten lessons – satisfactory in about one third of all lessons and good in two-fifths of them. Additionally, teaching is very good (and occasionally outstanding) in one in every six lessons. Seventeen of the 170 lessons inspected had teaching that was largely unsatisfactory (and in one case poor).
32. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. In 2000, 91 per cent of the teaching was said to be satisfactory or better – a proportion that was very similar to what it is now. Forty-three per cent of the teaching was good (or better) at the last inspection, but that proportion has risen to 57 per cent. Teaching was very good in ten per cent of lessons; now it is of this quality in 17 per cent of all lessons. In this inspection, more good teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11 than earlier on in the school. Over half of all the unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 7, representing nearly a quarter of all the teaching inspected in that year group – a major task for senior management to rectify urgently.
33. In nearly all lessons teachers have a good command of their subject. As a result, most plan relevant and accurate lessons and answer pupils' questions with confidence and supplementary examples. They select appropriate topics and resources – as, for example, the range of photographs of trench warfare in World War I used in history. Only rarely – as sometimes occurs, for instance, in RE – do teachers not draw upon a great enough depth of specialist knowledge, resulting in pupils learning only superficial facts and ideas or wasting their time on such peripheral activities as unnecessary colouring in.
34. The best lessons have a range of important features in common. They are well planned and structured, so that pupils' learning is thorough, worthwhile and interesting. Lessons begin promptly and quietly, without fuss. The content of the previous lesson is quickly and penetratingly revised, so that pupils can see clearly how a sequence of lessons fits together. Teachers explain carefully to pupils the new material they are going to learn and how much time will be devoted to each aspect. A good amount of ground is covered in the time available. Teachers use whole-class time very profitably to explain new ideas and to check out understanding. Importantly, they ensure that, before the lesson finishes, they review what has been covered by checking progress carefully with pupils and not simply telling them what they (are supposed to) have learned.

35. A notable feature of the best lessons is that teachers set tasks that, whilst being within pupils' capabilities, nevertheless make them think hard, enable them to consider issues sensitively and comprehensively, ensure that their understanding of topics is firmly rooted and that they make good progress. They draw out pupils' views carefully, encourage pupils to add their own ideas or, where relevant, suggest alternatives, and ensure that pupils end up with a clear framework of facts, ideas or skills. In a few cases they regard the thorough discussion of topics as important and help pupils to acquire a clear pattern and shape to their writing.
36. In a geography lesson in Year 10 on the study of river basins and their management, for example, the teacher set the scene clearly, quickly establishing a very positive working atmosphere and expectation of high standards. Her very clear use of precise terminology and suitable illustrations immediately gained pupils' careful attention. A wide range of appropriate activities, careful timing of each stage, the effective use of pupils' mathematical knowledge and a brisk, well-organised pace ensured that pupils gained a sound understanding of a flood hydrograph.
37. In unsatisfactory lessons – and in some lessons that are otherwise broadly satisfactory – teachers start slowly, do not clearly specify the purpose or direction of work and set tasks that are undemanding. They tend to spoon-feed pupils, telling them what to do and write, and rarely allow them to express a point of view. They continually pose closed questions, do not probe issues and close down class discussion. They sometimes talk far too much and consistently take over and develop themselves the first answer that pupils give. They do too much of the work for pupils. They sometimes do not vary tasks or learning methods enough. They do not map out the structure or stages of lessons and frequently do not review at the end what has been learned. They tend to rush the setting of homework, so that pupils are unclear what they have to do.
38. The management of pupils' learning and behaviour is generally good (and very good in geography and history). As a result, pupils in most classes enjoy what they are learning and get on with their work confidently without interruption. Teachers generally ensure that pupils come quietly into class, get down to work immediately, concentrate on the work in hand and work purposefully throughout lessons. Many use appropriate humour and encouragement, but on occasions teachers' insensitivity and brusqueness damage pupils' confidence. In a few lessons, teachers do not control the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils enough – to the detriment of the majority who want to work – and allow too much chatter and inattention.
39. Most teachers pay some attention to the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Despite much careful preparation and training – and examples of good practice in, for instance, geography – literacy is still not fostered extensively or consistently enough across the school by all teachers. Further work remains to be done particularly in science, PE and RE. The result is that the low overall standard of literacy on entry to the school, though rising, is not tackled and improved fast enough or widely enough across all subjects.
40. Many teachers identify and display in class important, common, subject-specific words to help pupils to spell them correctly. Far too rarely, however, do teachers draw pupils' attention in class to common or slovenly misspellings or to unacceptably poor punctuation. Too infrequently are pupils encouraged to express their ideas orally at any length, to engage in debate or to present their own or group findings to other pupils. Not every teacher is a good role-model of speech for pupils' oral work: "shurrup", for example, is unlikely to produce either respect or precision of language in pupils. Numeracy, in contrast, is promoted satisfactorily in mathematics and is largely so, where appropriate, in most other subjects. The need to continue to improve pupils' overall standard of literacy remains the high priority it was two years ago.
41. Time is normally used well. The 50-minute lessons are generally an appropriate length for teachers to achieve a suitable balance between subject coverage and pupils' span of concentration. Both teachers and pupils, however, often struggle where two – and occasionally three – of these are timetabled for the same subject in sequence. Teachers generally use an increasing range and sophistication of equipment well – from an extensive range of standard computer equipment through to

electronic, interactive whiteboards and (in PE) an electronic vote-recording system. Support staff are generally well employed to support pupils with learning or other difficulties.

42. Teachers' understanding and use of assessment varies widely from very good in geography to poor in RE, but is broadly satisfactory overall. In the best cases, teachers continually check on pupils' knowledge, understanding and progress in class by a suitable range of means. Their marking of pupils' work is accurate and detailed, providing clear guidance and encouragement to pupils on how to improve. In the worst cases, marking is superficial, absent or discouraging, and classroom assessment is spasmodic. Homework was set reasonably during the inspection. The evidence of planners and written work indicates that it is satisfactorily set in most subjects, well set in English, art and in design and technology, and often of an exemplary standard in geography.
43. In most classes pupils make satisfactory progress in their studies. During the inspection, the quality of learning was satisfactory in Years 7-9, good in Years 10-11 and satisfactory overall. It was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in seven (especially in Year 7) and good in nearly half the lessons seen. Teachers generally assist pupils to acquire a reasonable base of knowledge and understanding – although many pupils have a short span of concentration and memory – and ensure that they keep up a fair pace of working. Except in English, geography and PE (where it is generally good) pupils are relatively weak in understanding the pattern and full significance of all that they learn. Overall, most pupils (including those with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English) learn satisfactorily. Some attention still, however, needs to be paid to closely matching learning material to the capabilities of pupils with special educational needs and to providing suitably challenging work consistently to the most able pupils.
44. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is very good in geography in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in Years 7-9 in English and ICT, in Years 10-11 in science, and throughout the school in mathematics, citizenship, history and modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory throughout the school in RE. Only one very well taught lesson was seen in Year 7, but a quarter of the teaching in Years 10-11 was of this high quality.

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

45. Overall, the school's curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities that mostly meet the needs of all pupils. Improvements have been made since the time of the previous inspection: both the use of tutorial time and the organisation and the quality of teaching of the personal, social, health and citizenship education course (PSHCE) are now satisfactory. The school meets all statutory requirements for the curriculum. The implementation of strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and some timetabling arrangements, however, are not good enough. The curriculum is enriched by a broad range of extracurricular activities and effective support and guidance for future employment or further education.
46. In Years 7-9, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are good overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are taught. Additionally, all pupils study drama and PSHCE, which includes education about sex, citizenship and the harmful effects of drug misuse.
47. In Years 10-11, a satisfactory range of curricular provision is offered. Pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics, (double) science, design and technology, French, ICT, PE, RE and PSHCE. In addition, pupils choose two subjects from an appropriate range of eight subjects (which include dance, drama and statistics). No opportunities exist for pupils to study vocational courses except for business studies, which ten pupils are taught, in partnership with a local college of further education.
48. One fifth of pupils, for whom the full range of GCSE subjects is not deemed suitable, appropriately study the Youth Award course or further develop their skills in research, writing and ICT. Clear guidance is given for the time pupils spend with their form tutors at the start of the day and its use

is lightly monitored by pastoral and senior staff. Overall, the use of this time is satisfactory: some teachers provide purposeful, well-planned activities, whilst a few use the time in an unstructured, mundane way.

49. To raise standards of literacy as part of the National Literacy Strategy, the school has appointed a coordinator, undertaken a programme of staff training and implemented cross-school initiatives that focus on key words, spelling and techniques to improve the standard of writing. The strategy is not effective enough, because teachers do not tackle literacy issues sufficiently in class, with the result that the overall standard of literacy remains too low. The initiative is not firmly embedded into the curriculum and, although it is successful in geography, it is inadequately developed in English, mathematics, science, art, citizenship and history. The school has a similar strategy to raise standards of numeracy in all subject departments as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. Work to introduce the agreed initiative across the curriculum is, however, at an early stage of implementation.
50. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. This is a distinct improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The school's planned teaching time of 25 hours each week is in line with the minimum recommended by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). All subjects receive an adequate allocation of teaching time except for history and French in Year 7, where the time is insufficient to study the subjects in sufficient depth.
51. The pattern of the timetable has unsatisfactory features. In Years 10-11, double lessons lasting 100 minutes in English, science, geography, history and music, and those lasting 150 minutes in design and technology are too long for many pupils to sustain their concentration and pace of working. The timetable is spread over a two-week cycle. Groups in English, mathematics, art, citizenship, geography and history have all their lessons in one week, resulting in a lack of continuity: many pupils find it difficult to recall work completed in the previous lesson. Some English and science classes have their lessons shared by two teachers. This split makes planning a coherent course difficult.
52. All pupils have the opportunity to study the full range of subjects offered. Pupils are grouped appropriately in classes either as mixed-attainment groups (mainly in Year 7) or setted by prior attainment. This arrangement is broadly satisfactory, when work is matched appropriately to the differing needs of pupils. A few subjects offer a suitable alternative accreditation to those pupils for whom the GCSE examination is not considered appropriate.
53. The education provided for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is now sound: the school has generally made good progress in addressing the serious weakness in provision highlighted in the inspection of 2000. The specialist teaching provided for pupils with SEN statements is now generally good. The provision made for pupils at the *School Action Plus* stage has improved to a satisfactory level, whilst that for the *School Action* pupils shows improvement, but is still not consistently sound across all subject areas.
54. The school's attempt to produce subject-specific Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and targets for *School Action* pupils has led to an unrealistic overload of paperwork for the SEN coordinator (SENCO) and is not manageable for subject departments. The current work to build a framework of grouped IEPs and generic targets as a starting-base for action is more realistic, provided that the assessment, monitoring and review of such pupils are improved to a consistently satisfactory level within all subjects.
55. Overall systems for special educational needs are soundly administered. The department is well led: the SENCO is well regarded and influential across the school and with both external agencies and parents. Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are well used and allocated suitably to subject departments. "Alternative curriculum" provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 10-11 is good. The current useful work undertaken with individual pupils or pairs of pupils with specific reading difficulties (dyslexia) requires widening to include small group work additionally.

56. The school's provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory and especially sound for the six pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The school's Community Liaison Worker is effective and gives suitably prioritised attention to any "early learners" who come to the school. The school requires, however, to pay greater attention to the literacy needs of those pupils who have been schooled in English, but still have a shaky grasp of idiomatic and technical terms.
57. The school's provision for its most able ("gifted and talented") pupils is thin. It is still at an early stage of action, since it has a draft policy only and is only just in the process of identifying suitable pupils. There is generally little indication that subject departments give this aspect any priority, although the art and PE departments have taken worthwhile, individual initiatives. The school now requires a strong management commitment to establishing consistently suitable work and initiatives for these pupils.
58. A clear process of consultation leads to sound, curricular decision-making and ensures that all views are carefully considered. The *Parents' and Community Forum* ensures that parents are consulted, but curricular information is not made available to them for each year group in Years 7-9. The regular cycle of review and evaluation effectively underpins planning for the future. Senior managers monitor the curriculum as part of a thorough process of departmental review. Schemes of work are of good quality (or better) in science, art, citizenship, design and technology, geography and music, and satisfactory elsewhere.
59. A good range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Pupils participate regularly in musical activities, including a choir and keyboard group, a musical and dance concert, and trips to local theatres. No residential experiences are provided. Over half the pupils take part in a variety of sports and a well-organised programme of inter-school fixtures. They are well supported by the strong, voluntary commitment of 16 members of staff.
60. Most subjects make worthwhile provision to support pupils in their studies through subject clubs and well-attended sessions for help with coursework, homework and revision, with many taking place during the Easter holidays. A breakfast club and a homework club are also organised.
61. Provision for careers education and guidance is of good quality and coordinated effectively. Close relationships are enjoyed with local employers, who attend an Industry Day to work with pupils and participate in a successful programme of mock interviews. Careers education forms part of the PSHCE programme and is well organised, with an appropriate scheme of work. The school's Connexions adviser provides impartial and well-considered guidance. This is appropriately focused on those in greatest need, but there are also ample opportunities for other pupils to receive support.
62. Careers information for pupils is available in a well-stocked, accessible careers library, situated in the main school library. It is well maintained and contains a wide range of booklets and facilities for pupils to have access to suitable computer programs. All pupils in Year 10 participate for two weeks in an efficiently organised programme of work experience. Pupils are thoroughly prepared and, whilst on the placement, complete a diary and are visited by a member of staff. When they return to school, the experience is fully reviewed.
63. Links with the community are satisfactory. In addition to the school's strong links with employers through the careers programme, the *Parents' and Community Forum* meets each term and the school welcomes a range of visitors from local churches and the police to speak with pupils. Close relationships are maintained with contributory primary schools, ensuring in most subjects a smooth transition into secondary education. Pupils in Year 10, for example, studying for the Junior Sports Leaders Award, work with pupils in Year 6 to develop their sports skills. Strong links with the local further education college and other local secondary schools have resulted in the business studies course for pupils in Year 10. Further similar initiatives are planned. The school has a close

association with Huddersfield University and regularly hosts the training of a group of six student teachers each year.

64. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. Provision for their spiritual development is unsatisfactory – as it was at the last inspection. Religious education is now taught to all pupils, but this subject has a weak impact on spiritual development across the school, apart from the regular moments of meditation that pupils experience at the beginning of RE lessons. In some assemblies, appropriate music is played, as pupils enter the hall. They also sometimes hear poetry – as, for example, about World War I in connection with Remembrance Day. In many assemblies, pupils are asked to bow their heads and reflect on the theme of the week.
65. In daily lessons across the curriculum, however, teachers rarely make the most of opportunities to encourage pupils' sense of wonder in their learning – although this is occasionally done in art and music, when pupils experience spirituality in their study of great paintings or when they sing songs or play pieces that are emotionally moving. The school still does not meet the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
66. Pupils' moral education is promoted well. Most staff demonstrate high expectations of good behaviour and are consistent in reminding pupils about right conduct. The school's policy emphasises the reinforcement of positive behaviour by giving pupils appropriate praise. There is a well-understood system of rewards – as, for example, the postcards which pupils receive for especially good work and conduct. Senior staff regularly supervise pupils as they move around the school at breaks and lunchtimes, but there is insufficient supervision during lunchtime around the school's site – a situation that requires correction.
67. Clear moral messages are given out in assemblies and pupils also learn about right and wrong in their RE and PSHCE lessons. The school now teaches citizenship as a requirement of the National Curriculum. In this subject, pupils also study topics that have moral implications – as, for instance, the criminal justice system. In PE, pupils learn about fair play, teamwork and the importance of rules, whilst in history they study such issues as the plight of North American Indians, child labour and the holocaust.
68. Provision for pupils' social development is good overall. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities (especially in sport), in which pupils form a wide range of friendships. The school runs a breakfast bar (which staff also use) and provides a roomy social area for pupils in Years 10 and 11. A wide range of subject clubs and the library serve both educational and social purposes.
69. Both lower and upper schools have a school council to represent and discuss their views or concerns. These councils are now regarded as essential elements of the school's provision of "education for citizenship". In the two councils almost all pupils learn about democratic representation and how they may have some influence on how institutions are run. Pupils have opportunities to exercise responsibility, too, as (for example) office assistants in Year 8 and as prefects in Year 11. The school sets no limit on the number of prefects it appoints: all who apply have a strong chance of selection. Pupils have limited opportunities to work in the community, although some engage in raising money for such charities as the Macmillan Cancer Appeal.
70. Pupils have further social opportunities through a number of visits to theatres and a school ski trip. At present the school does not offer any residential visits for pupils in different year groups. Within lessons, pupils work effectively in pairs and groups. In music, they collaborate in composing and performing pieces and in ICT they research and develop ideas together. Work in groups is a strong feature of the learning in geography.
71. Pupils' cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. Their cultural experiences are enhanced by a fair range of visitors to the school. These include the local authority's music service (whose staff

play to the pupils and give them a taste of instruments and music they might wish to study in more depth), a theatre-in-education group and a visiting artist. Music and dance are presented to pupils by "Zulu Nation", to extend pupils' awareness of cultural traditions that are very different from their own. The school is aware that more needs to be done to arrange contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Within subjects, pupils learn about a variety of cultures, including contemporary and historical cultures of the western world. In design and technology they study the ways of making artefacts used in ancient civilisations, whilst in music they learn, for instance, about Indian classical music, the Gamelan orchestra of Indonesia and black American music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

72. The school provides a good quality of care and support for its pupils. Staff see the exercise of this duty of care as central to their roles. This approach contributes strongly to the generally positive climate of relationships.
73. Arrangements for child protection are good. Staff are fully aware of the necessary procedures and deal sensitively with any incidents. Relationships with social services and with the police are generally constructive. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and staff are sound. Accommodation, resources and specialist equipment are routinely monitored and relevant risk assessments conducted.
74. There are, however, a small number of areas in which this good level of care is not sustained. The presence of moving vehicles in areas where pupils congregate (especially, but not only, at the beginning and end of the school day) is a potential hazard that urgently requires restriction; measures to improve the situation are being considered by the school's management. The arrangements for the supervision of pupils in the outside areas around the school, particularly at lunchtimes, are inadequate: during the inspection, only one lunchtime supervisor was on duty, covering an extensive area, with inadequate means of contacting assistance. This problem was also raised as a concern by pupils through their school council.
75. The school's policies for ensuring good attendance and behaviour are generally sound and effective. There is, however, evidence that some pupils endure a degree of harassment at the hands of other (often older) pupils. In some cases this persists because of the reluctance of pupils to report such incidents. The current policies need, therefore, to be strengthened and rigorously monitored, and pupils' concerns further explored.
76. Provision for the programmes of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) have recently been reviewed and are generally satisfactory. In the current transitional phase, the arrangements for teaching the now mandatory element of citizenship have not been fully specified within this overall programme. Steps are, however, being taken to ensure that these will be fully in place before the end of the current school year. The standard of teaching PSHCE is usually at least satisfactory and often good. Although the school has (wisely) chosen to develop specialist teams to teach the programmes, the overall standard of teaching in this area is slightly below that of teaching in the school as a whole.
77. Arrangements for providing educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are sound and well implemented by staff, who show a strong commitment to meeting pupils' needs. Whilst the overall picture is generally good, there is still room for additional provision to support pupils who require continuing sessions of support or counselling. The school nurse offers a valued, confidential "drop-in" service each week. Pastoral and tutorial staff make themselves available, wherever possible, to provide individual consultations for pupils. The newly appointed learning and behaviour mentors are now in a position to provide the opportunity for work in greater depth with individuals and groups of pupils who need such extended support.
78. The arrangements for the assessment of pupils' attainments and progress are unsatisfactory overall, despite some good features. They vary amongst subjects and across the school and are

not based on a fully robust system of analytical data and professional judgement. Focused action and vigorous efforts have been made in recent months by senior management to develop the framework for a systematic and comprehensive database of pupils' attainments and progress, against which the school's performance can be measured and realistic targets set for individual pupils. This work shows considerable promise: the present rate of progress suggests that the establishment of such an effective information system will be in place within the current academic year.

79. At present, individual form tutors are not sufficiently involved in tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils across all subjects. This limits precise, prompt action to support and improve pupils' performance. The standard of pupil assessment within individual subjects is variable and inadequate overall. There are some examples of good practice, especially in geography and PE. In the latter subject, for example, staff collectively review each pupil's attainments in each skill every term. This process provides firm evidence on which to base not only the judgement of current achievement, but also the degree of progress that can reasonably be set as a learning target for that individual.
80. The quality of annual reports to parents has some inadequate features. In many instances the written comments do not adequately or clearly convey a precise picture of what the individual pupil knows, understands and has achieved in different subjects. In addition, there is potential confusion about the meaning and application of some terminology and gradings used in the reports: two parallel systems for reporting on pupils' "effort", for example, were combined in the last set of reports and sometimes assessed pupils' actual progress rather than the effort they applied. In contrast, the assessment, monitoring and recording of pupils' attainments and progress are a strength of the SEN department.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

81. The school's links with parents are satisfactory overall, but have aspects that require improvement. The evidence of both the pre-inspection questionnaire and the parental meeting is that most parents are highly satisfied with what the school does for their children. Nearly every parent who responded felt that the school expects pupils to work hard and give of their best. The vast majority believe that their children make sound progress, particularly as a result of the quality of teaching they receive. Four out of every five of these parents also feel that their children like school and that the school is well led and managed. About one third of all parents returned the questionnaire.
82. Only ten parents attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents. They, too, spoke favourably about nearly all aspects of the school. They felt strongly that the school has established an effective atmosphere where it is expected that pupils will try to do their best and shine in any aspect of school life. They expressed pleasure at the positive attitudes adopted by most pupils, a situation strongly encouraged by the courtesy and friendliness of staff. Overall, they – like respondents to the questionnaire – felt that the school had improved noticeably over the last two years, especially since the appointment of the new headteacher, and that it was firmly on an upward path.
83. A small proportion of parents (almost one in five of questionnaire respondents) believe that their children do not (in varying degrees) like school, although they rarely indicate why their children feel this way. A smaller proportion feel a degree of dissatisfaction with the provision of homework: the limited evidence available suggests that at least a few parents consider that there is too much "finishing off" of classwork or that too little is set. In contrast, parents who had discussed the homework question with the school felt that their concerns had been taken very seriously and had resulted in improvements, whilst geography was held up as an example of a subject that set appropriate homework and demanded high standards in it. The evidence of the inspection and pupils' planners suggests that the setting of homework is good in art and in design and technology (and very good in geography), broadly satisfactory in most subjects, but needs to be better in RE.

84. The depth and effectiveness of the school's links with parents present a less positive picture. This can be seen in the fact that, although about two-thirds of parents feel that the school works closely with parents, over a quarter do not. Almost a third of parents, too, consider that they are not kept well enough informed how their children are getting on at school. Although the minority of parents who feel this way are generally unspecific about their concerns, the quality of reports sometimes emerges as a disappointment. The inspection team's judgement is that written reports to parents are inadequate overall and that their consistency and content could be improved substantially: in particular, as indicated earlier, it is not easy for parents to judge their children's attainment accurately across all subjects or their progress from year to year.
85. The range of information provided by the school for parents as one means of forging effective links is satisfactory overall. The school's new prospectus, for example, is clearly laid out and a significant improvement on the 2001 version, although still rather thin on curricular information. Except for a Year 7 induction pack and an options booklet for Year 10 courses, parents are not told clearly, in advance, what their children will study in each year they are at the school. The school's website requires updating and extension. Informative, termly newsletters and a jargon-free annual report from the governing body (covering all statutory requirements except those relating to its provision for disabilities) do, however, help to bridge some of this gap. The Pakistani community is very well supported by a Community Development Worker, who helps to form close links with the school system.
86. The school establishes a strong starting-point for its relationship with parents through its very helpful information pack for each Year 7 intake and its well-presented *Transition* folder. Its commitment is reinforced by a *Parents' and Community Forum* which meets termly and provides an imaginative means of expressing and exchanging views about all aspects of school life. Its home-school agreement policy, the *Partnership Agreement*, is clearly framed. The school does not, however, have an overarching policy (despite having a very substantial range of some 33 written policies) that draws together its strategy for promoting close parental communication and cooperation. The school's senior management recognises that the effectiveness of links with parents in general, though much improved over the last two years, requires still further strengthening.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

87. The school has a clearly expressed and relevant set of aims and objectives. These appropriately stress the importance of equality of opportunity for all pupils and the development of self-esteem and sound values. These ideals are, in large measure, well reflected in the daily life of the school, although occasionally marred by friction between pupils or by teachers taking a rather brusque attitude towards pupils. In such instances, the usual positive climate of mutual respect temporarily lapses.
88. The school has clear, decisive and effective leadership in place – the major factor in its present upward trend. This high quality of leadership has taken the school from a low state, with many areas of significant weakness, to a position where it is now functioning satisfactorily, has many progressive initiatives under way and offers the prospect of sustained improvement.
89. The achievement of the new headteacher in producing this rapid turnaround in the school's fortunes is impressive and widely recognised, both within the school and amongst outside groups and agencies. She has brought a sense of calm purpose, clear direction and optimism to a set of complex problems. She has confronted issues of under-performance, demoralisation and conflict in a firm but humane way and has maintained a steady, but realistic, momentum for change, whilst taking staff with her, through careful consultation at all levels.
90. The quality and effectiveness of leaders of subjects and other areas of work range from very good to (occasionally) unsatisfactory, but are good overall. Middle management have generally responded positively to the clearer expectations placed upon them to lead, inspire, improve and

monitor their teams' work. Staff, at all levels of leadership, have shown over the past two years a clear commitment and capacity to improve the performance of the school from a low base. There are positive indications that the improvements already made are likely to be sustained and successfully enhanced. Senior leadership has actively encouraged subject leaders to play a full part in the development of policies and in forging fresh approaches to teaching and learning in the school.

91. Senior management and leadership teams have recently been reviewed and enlarged. This has led to the establishment of new, revised roles for many senior leaders. These are generally soundly conceived and relevant to the challenges the school faces. In some instances, however, precise roles and responsibilities have not been sufficiently clarified, so that systematic programmes of action can be launched, with full support and understanding across the school – as, for example, in the key area of responsibility for the improvement of pupils' literacy. In the case of other newly designed posts, such as the two "key stage managers", there is a need to monitor carefully their interpretation and implementation, so that they match and support the school's objectives and work effectively in practice.
92. There is a good pattern of meetings and communications across the school. The headteacher has ensured that relevant staff have the opportunity to influence the formation of policy at all stages. This involvement has led to a strong sense of commitment and engagement by staff with the school's objectives. The school's performance management system is effective. In addition, the school's senior management has developed a good system of "curriculum area reviews", which are used to monitor, review and improve standards of teaching and learning. Staff at all levels are actively involved in this process and are given support and training, so as to achieve consistency of judgements.
93. One of the areas of past weakness in the school's leadership and governance has been the absence of consistent and comprehensive systems for measuring the effectiveness of its academic performance. There has been clear, recent improvement in developing such management information systems, designed to assess individual, group and overall performance. There is, however, further work to do, to enable the school to have comprehensive sets of useful data that can be used by staff to judge how far – and how and why – the school is successful.
94. The effectiveness of the governing body's performance of its statutory duties was judged at the last inspection to be unsatisfactory. There have, since that time, been significant changes both in the membership of the governing body and improvements in its committee structure. Governors take a keen interest in the progress of the school and are beginning to exercise their role more energetically than in the past and with greater insight into the school's direction and its strengths and weaknesses.
95. The school's development plan is soundly conceived, well drafted and clearly articulated. Planning has, understandably, been dominated over the past two years by the need to address the serious weaknesses highlighted in the inspection report of 2000. Management is, however, also directing efforts to longer-term development, including a change in the school's direction and stronger community links. The development plan's targets are generally self-explanatory and soundly based. They have relevant success criteria and costings, and are regularly monitored and reviewed.
96. Leadership at all levels is appropriately moving the school from over-reliance on a highly teacher-directed, didactic approach to a more open-ended, exploratory and inclusive strategy of teaching and learning. There remains much work still to be undertaken and achieved in this process. There are, however, clear grounds for optimism for the future of the school, as a result of the energy, imagination and effectiveness of the current leadership and management.
97. The school's financial planning and management, which were judged weak at the last inspection, are now good. They support the school's educational priorities effectively. The school has an

income that is average for secondary schools in its own local education authority (LEA). It plans both medium- and long-term spending well and appropriately keeps a small surplus in its budget for contingencies. Governors are fully involved in the financial management of the school and are kept well informed about the school's spending patterns. They do not, however, often take the initiative on financial matters.

98. The school's financial management and administration are good. The bursar ensures that all spending is fully monitored. The most recent external audit raised a few, very minor issues, to which the school has responded appropriately. The specific grants and funds which the school receives are used effectively – as, for example, those for staff training. The school makes good use of such new technologies as e-mail and the Internet.
99. When purchasing services, the school evaluates best value carefully. It has, for example, investigated the provision of cleaning and catering contracts, and considered thoroughly the question of leasing or buying ICT equipment. The school uses the detailed information it receives from its LEA appropriately to compare its spending with other secondary schools in the authority.
100. The amount the school spends on teaching staff is below average. This is, in part, because the school employs a significant number of teachers at or near the beginning of their teaching careers. The overall amount of time teachers spend in the classroom is below average: this is largely because of the number of members of the senior management team who, appropriately, do not teach a normal timetable. The provision of teaching staff is good. Almost all lessons are taught by permanent, specialist staff. There are, however, some temporary teachers in English, mathematics and science. There are now sufficient support staff for pupils with special educational needs, an improvement since the last inspection. The above average spending on administrative staff provides effective support for teachers.
101. The school's arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. Non-teaching staff are included in staff training days, when the issues are relevant. The support offered to teachers who are new to teaching and those new to the school is good. The providers of training from outside the school are carefully evaluated, to ensure that good value for money is obtained.
102. The school's accommodation is very good overall. A programme of new building has provided much pleasant, spacious and attractive accommodation. The site is pleasant and tidy, and the interior is clean and well maintained. In wet weather, however, large amounts of mud are brought into the school from outside. The common room does not provide a suitable space in which to teach drama. Some of the rooms where modern foreign languages are taught are cramped, when used by large groups. The school has not yet carried out the "disability audit" required by recent legislation (although it is firmly planned), nor appraised buildings to improve facilities for those who are physically disabled. The absence of lockers for Year 7 pupils is a weakness. The toilets provided for pupils are of good quality and are maintained at a very high standard, aided partly by a system of video-surveillance.
103. The proportion of the budget spent on learning resources is average and the provision is satisfactory overall. There are, however, insufficient books in science for Years 10 and 11, and not enough suitable books for low attainers in history. There are some shortages of equipment in music (which lacks recording equipment, CDs, good keyboards and tuned percussion), in art and in design and technology (where the computer-aided design equipment is unsatisfactory). The centrally provided ICT is good in quantity and quality. There is, however, unsatisfactory provision in modern foreign languages (where a change of system has meant that the department cannot now use some of its software), geography, history and music (where there are insufficient computers available for pupils to use). Resources (including ICT) for pupils with special educational needs are at least satisfactory and well used, with further expansion already planned.
104. The library/resource centre is spacious and attractive. Because of low funding in the past, however, it does not yet provide a strong enough facility for pupils' independent learning. Although

there have been some improvements recently and funding has been provided to add to stock, there are insufficient books and many are out of date. The resource centre holds no magazines or periodicals, has no video- or audio tapes for pupils to use and takes only one tabloid newspaper. It does contain four computers with Internet access, but has no printer. The centre is not always available for use for independent research during the school day, as it is used as a teaching room on several occasions.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

105. The school has made satisfactory progress overall since 2000 – and good progress since 2001 – in addressing the many serious weaknesses identified by the inspection of 2000. To improve and build upon the satisfactory quality of education that pupils now receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:

(a) improve the quality of teaching in a minority of lessons by

- removing the weaknesses identified in the main body of the report;
- increasing the overall rate of progress achieved by pupils; and
- giving urgent priority to eliminating the significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 7.

(Paragraphs: 12, 22, 31-33, 37-40, 42, 96 and in subject sections)

(b) continue to raise the overall level of pupils' attainment and progress by

- all teachers working together to improve pupils' overall standard of literacy – paying high attention in class to weaknesses in spelling common words and in punctuation and ensuring that pupils receive sufficient help in structuring their extended written work;
- improving the quality of pupils' oral work – by giving pupils more opportunities to discuss issues rigorously in class, to form their own opinions and to present their findings formally, ensuring that all pupils are trained to speak clearly;
- ensuring that pupils of high ability always undertake suitably demanding work; and
- by lifting the overall standard of work in science and RE.

(Paragraphs: 9, 10, 13-17, 19, 39, 43, 45, 49, 63, 83, 100 and in subject sections, especially 137 and 247)

(c) assess accurately pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school by

- ensuring that all departments assess pupils' progress during lessons as an inherent part of their teaching;
- completing the work, begun vigorously and effectively only this term, to collate and interpret basic data about pupils' performance;
- adopting a uniform set of criteria to evaluate pupils' attainment and progress across all subjects and year groups;
- defining clearly for all subjects the criteria for good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress; and
- using relevant data to enable managers at all levels to judge the overall academic performance of the school and of individual subject departments as well as to assist heads of year and form tutors to guide pupils confidently and precisely;

(Paragraphs: 12, 78-79, 93 and in subject sections)

(d) ensure that potential risks to health and safety are effectively addressed;

(Paragraphs: 74, 178)

(e) enhance the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development by

- formulating – and implementing – a clearly understood policy for its promotion within all subjects; and
- ensuring that spirituality is a strong feature of enhanced provision for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;

(Paragraphs: 64-65)

(f) improve the range and quality of information for parents both about the attainment and progress of their children and about the content of the school's curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 53, 80, 84, 86)

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 18, 23, 28, 41, 47, 48, 50, 51, 54, 59-62, 75, 76, 77, 83, 87, 91, 97, 102, 103, 104.

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	92

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	3	25	68	57	16	1	0
Percentage	2	15	40	34	9	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	825
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	211

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	44
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	219

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	95

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	N/A

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	84	60	144

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	41	36
	Girls	35	29	26
	Total	62	70	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (34)	49 (50)	43 (48)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (7)	24 (23)	8 (20)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	24	47	56
	Girls	24	28	38
	Total	48	75	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	33 (48)	52 (53)	65 (58)
	National	65 (65)	68 (68)	64 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	5 (12)	18 (28)	9 (14)
	National	31 (31)	42 (42)	33 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2002	72	54	126

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A* - G	1 or more grades A* - G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	12	64	66
	Girls	17	48	51
	Total	29	112	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	23 (18)	89 (81)	95 (87)
	National	51 (48)	89 (91)	95 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	26.5 (23.2)
	National	34.6* (39.0)

Figures in brackets refer to 2001.

* Average **capped** GCSE/GNVQ point score per 15 year old pupil

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	699	48	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	86	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	22	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	322

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	21.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2,417,951
Total expenditure	2,447,542
Expenditure per pupil	3,224
Balance brought forward from previous year	64,387
Balance carried forward to next year	34,796

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	825
Number of questionnaires returned	277

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	47	11	7	1
My child is making good progress in school.	31	53	5	2	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	53	8	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	44	12	3	5
The teaching is good.	30	54	8	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	36	24	7	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	45	6	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	42	24	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	20	60	5	2	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	56	10	2	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	48	4	1	23

Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on 16 of the questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points mentioned were:

- the high quality of the school's new senior management;
- the school's steady improvement; and
- the high quality of care and support for pupils.

Amongst the concerns expressed in questionnaires were:

- the insufficiency or unpredictability of homework; and
- the lack of lockers or alternative storage for Year 7 pupils.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths:

- the proportion of girls gaining grades A*-C in GCSE;
- the progress made by most pupils in Years 7-11;
- pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- the proportion of boys gaining grades A*-C in GCSE English language;
- the standard of pupils' basic literacy;
- the rate of progress of the most able pupils;
- the use of data to track pupils' attainment and progress.

106. On entry to the school in Year 7, the proportion of those pupils for whom data is available who have reached the benchmark of at least Level 4 in the national primary school tests is well below average, but has slightly increased over the last five years. The proportion of pupils entering the school at the higher Level 5 has doubled over the same period (but is still only one third of the national average).
107. Over the period 1998-2002, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 varied, but were well below average at the benchmarks of both Level 5 and Level 6. When compared with the attainment of pupils in comprehensive schools from a similar socio-economic background, pupils' performance was well below the national average. It was, however, in line with what is normally achieved in secondary modern schools of a similar background. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys. Attainment in the 2002 tests was higher than that of most previous years.
108. In GCSE English language in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A*-C was well below the national average for all maintained schools – as it was over the period 1998-2001. The attainment of girls was much higher than that of boys and girls gained more of the highest (A* or A) grades than boys during the period 1998-2002. The 2001 results were also below the average for secondary modern schools of a similar character. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A*-C for English literature was less than half the national average.
109. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard in English is well below the national average. Only a small proportion of pupils read with considerable fluency, expression and accuracy. Most pupils are competent readers of literature, using sequencing and prediction skills satisfactorily and identifying key aspects to support their points of view. Pupils' standard of writing varies widely, but is below average overall. Pupils generally structure their work soundly, but are weak overall on spelling and punctuation. Standards of presentation and handwriting, too, are lower overall than often found.
110. Pupils in a Year 7 class, reading the play-script of *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler* by Gene Kemp, did so with considerable fluency, clarity and enjoyment. Pupils in another Year 7 class enhanced their vocabulary by using a thesaurus to find synonyms for such words as "crash" and "vandal", before going on to identify key points in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* by Penelope Lively. A Year 8 class, reading some World War I poetry, carefully worked out their interpretations of the lines "And lined the train with faces grimly gay" and "May creep back, silent, to village halls" from Wilfred Owen's poem, *The Send-Off*. Pupils in a Year 9 class, who had researched Shakespeare

for homework, shared their information well, before going on to create their own “spidergrams” to note key points about him, including his date of birth and the title of several of his plays.

111. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make broadly satisfactory progress overall in Years 7-9, but could make more. The incorporation of such elements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy as lesson objectives and some word-level activities, particularly in Year 7, helps to increase pupils’ progress. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for example, extended their vocabulary by creating a list of alternative words for “said”. In a Year 8 class, pupils widened their vocabulary by quickly checking the meanings of “lenient”, “competent” and “monotonous”.
112. By the end of Year 11, pupils’ overall level of attainment is below average. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11. The progress of the most able pupils, however, is poor, because they do not receive suitably challenging work often enough. Small group discussions in Years 10 and 11 regularly deepen pupils’ understanding of the texts being read, but most pupils experience difficulty when asked to express their thoughts in writing. The majority of pupils understand the characteristics of different styles of writing and, when planning and drafting their own writing, consider their audience and purpose. When writing about literary texts, pupils satisfactorily use evidence to support their points of view.
113. In a Year 10 class, a “starter” activity focused on the spelling of homophones such as “current”/“currant” and “stationary”/“stationery” and noted for pupils useful clues to help them to remember how to spell each word. They then went on to read Roger McGough’s poem, *The Identification*, and focused on the line “Be on the safe side, as it were” to explore the poet’s use of alliteration. Pupils in another Year 10 class, working on the use of media, carefully considered how Peter Medak’s direction of a video about the life of David Bentley portrayed some of the influences on his life. In a Year 11 class, studying *An Inspector Calls* by J. B. Priestley, pupils considered the extent to which the character of Inspector Goole was credible. Working in small groups, pupils found evidence in the play to support the view, for example, that Goole is a strong character. In another Year 11 class, pupils deepened their understanding of Robert Westall’s *The Call*, as they worked in small groups to track the build-up of suspense through language and imagery.
114. Pupils’ overall standard of writing is below average by the end of Year 11. Most pupils plan and draft their essays satisfactorily and include appropriate textual references to reinforce their points of view. A small proportion of pupils’ written work is well crafted to ensure that ideas are expressed in a coherent, accurate manner and that appropriate textual references are included. The overall standard of handwriting, spelling and sentence structure is below average. Pupils’ standard of speaking and listening is average overall, but their ability to sustain extended discussion and readily use linguistic terminology in those discussions is below average.
115. Pupils’ attitudes to the subject and to learning are good throughout the school. The majority of pupils are willing to learn and listen carefully to instructions. The motivation of pupils is particularly good when lessons are well structured, include challenging objectives and are well timed.
116. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. Teachers have a sound subject knowledge and most demonstrate a clear enthusiasm for their subject. Most lessons are carefully planned and include at least one major learning objective. Plenary sessions are sometimes included and provide a valuable opportunity for pupils to consolidate their knowledge and skills. Some lessons in Years 7 and 8 include short “starter” activities that help pupils to improve their spelling and vocabulary.
117. In most lessons, teachers include opportunities for pupils to express themselves orally, but these are sometimes too few and brief. The teaching of key literacy skills, identified in the national Key Stage 3 Strategy, are not given high enough priority in English lessons to ensure that all pupils make rapid and consistent progress.

118. The department's leadership and management are satisfactory overall. A newly appointed head of department (in post for only two months at the time of the inspection) is well supported by a second in department, who has responsibility for literacy in Years 7-9. Difficulty in the recruitment of specialist English teachers has slowed the development of the department. The department organises its work soundly on a day-to-day basis, but does not use assessment and attainment data rigorously enough to track pupils' performance accurately over time. The standardisation and moderation of the marking of pupils' work are being addressed soundly, to ensure that staff and pupils have shared perceptions of the standards being reached.
119. Schemes of work are being redrafted to incorporate the objectives of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy, with the intention of ensuring greater consistency of work and standards. The improvement of key literacy skills remains a priority for the department. Discussions on possible links with the newly appointed head of drama are at an early stage, but include common assessment opportunities at the end of Year 9 and a few curricular links. Extracurricular activities include theatre visits, *National Book Day* celebrations, *National Poetry Day* and visits from a theatre-in-education group.

Drama

120. The subject is taught throughout the school. Pupils' level of attainment is below average. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the A*-C range in GCSE is usually well below the national average. Pupils in a Year 7 class, working on the theme of *The Travelling Companion*, consolidated their knowledge of setting and character before going on to create "freeze frames". In a Year 9 class, the teacher modelled a monologue, which helped pupils to reflect on the nature and purpose of monologues before going on to consider the importance of body movement, gesture, expression and language. Pupils deepened their understanding as they watched a video-recording of Julie Walters in *The Outside Day* by Alan Bennett. Pupils in a Year 10 class, working on a unit of work called *The Street*, improved their interpretations of characters by considering the dramatic value of stillness or exaggerated movements and the need to consider the position of an audience.
121. Most pupils show satisfactory attitudes to the subject, but cooperation and self-discipline are frequently undermined by a small minority of pupils. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. The subject is managed by a recently appointed head of department, who has revised the schemes of work to ensure continuity and progression across Years 7-9 and is putting in place procedures to assess pupils' progress and to raise attainment. Links are being established with English to consider assessment opportunities at the end of Year 9 and other curricular opportunities. The good facilities of a drama studio make a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- a strong core team of specialist teachers;
- the department's implementation of the national Key Stage 3 numeracy strategy;
- effective monitoring of teaching and learning and improved teaching as a consequence;
- the good use of assessment data to track pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement:

- the quality of marking;
- the use of assessment to guide teaching programmes;
- inconsistency in using and applying mathematics in Years 7-9;
- insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

122. In the national tests taken towards the end of Year 9 in 2002, the proportion of pupils reaching at least Levels 5 or 6 was well below average. Pupils' attainment has, however, improved steadily in line with the national trend. These Year 9 results were well below those in similar comprehensive schools, but broadly in line with those achieved in secondary modern schools of a similar background. Girls reach a slightly higher overall standard than boys in the subject. Teachers' assessments and national test grade results are similar. Mathematics is the best performing of the three core subjects.
123. In GCSE, results are well below average, but have risen steadily overall during the last few years. Girls generally do a little better overall than boys in the subject. Variations in the proportion of grades A*-C gained over the years have been broadly in line with pupils' earlier attainment. In 2002 (as in most years), mathematics results were the highest of the three core subjects. Pupils from ethnic minorities generally do less well than other pupils, but all pupils tend to do better in mathematics than in most of their other subjects. Mathematics results are usually in line with the average for secondary modern schools and are improving in line with the national trend.
124. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well below average overall, but most pupils attain a reasonable standard in their work on number, shape, space and data-handling. By the end of Year 9, a minority of pupils work up to the higher standard of Level 6 (and occasionally beyond it). Pupils demonstrate a clearer understanding of number work as a result of the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy: their mental skills are sharpened through an appropriate, short mental activity at the beginning of lessons. Pupils' capability in using and applying mathematics to practical tasks or new situations is well below average. Although there is some average work achieved on these aspects, as a result of effective teaching by experienced staff, other pupils have lower standards because less experienced teachers tend to avoid teaching these skills. Lower-attaining pupils have especially weak skills in estimation: they are shaky, for example, when asked to judge approximate weights, capacities and lengths of everyday objects in the classroom.
125. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of attainment is well below average, although most pupils demonstrate a sound grasp of number, shape, measures and graphical skills. They have satisfactory confidence and competence in handling numbers and use fractions, decimals and percentages, when solving problems. Their work on using and applying mathematics is now better than previously, since all pupils have to do this work as part of their GCSE coursework.
126. Higher-attaining pupils generally acquire a solid competence in graphical skills by, for example, drawing specialised graphs of information. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory (and sometimes good) progress. One pupil with specific reading problems, for example, has a support teacher to help him to understand the mathematical tasks he reads; as a consequence, he makes good (and often very good) progress. Pupils with English as an additional language generally do not attain quite as highly as other pupils. The department caters well for these pupils, however, and most make satisfactory progress: where they experience linguistic difficulties, they sit next to a fluent speaker who can translate for them as necessary. As a result of this policy, a pupil of Asian heritage, with no spoken English a year ago, has moved rapidly through the sets and is now in a top set. Gifted and talented pupils often make good progress, because most lessons cater well for their needs and extra work extends their knowledge and understanding.
127. The progress and achievement of pupils are satisfactory overall. They are particularly good in lessons where teachers use an interactive whiteboard effectively and plan to meet the needs of all pupils. Higher-attaining pupils are usually suitably challenged and lower-attaining pupils are well supported. In some lessons, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. This is often the result of inconsistencies in teaching – such as when work is set that is too difficult or the weak management of pupils allows some to misbehave and spend little time working. Progress is significantly better in the sets taken by the permanent, specialist staff.

128. Teaching varies from very good (nearly a third were of this quality) to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall throughout the school: teaching was at least satisfactory in all but two lessons. The best teaching demonstrates effective use of the (new) interactive whiteboard for demonstration and explanation, good planning that caters for the full range of pupils' attainment, suitable extension work for high attainers and adequate support for low-attaining pupils.
129. In such lessons, good class management ensures that pupils keep on task and waste little time. The system of support ensures that pupils are clear about the tasks they are given and are helped when they have problems. Their teachers use appropriate technical language accurately. They ask pupils to explain their thinking, thereby encouraging the careful use of language to deepen understanding. In Years 7-9, good use of "starter" and oral activities sharpens pupils' mental skills and helps them to develop their mathematical language and knowledge. Low-attaining pupils are suitably praised for their successes, thereby raising their confidence and motivating them to make greater effort and achieve more success.
130. In unsatisfactory teaching – and sometimes in broadly satisfactory lessons – planning is insufficiently detailed, lesson aims are unclear, incorrect methods of calculation are sometimes used, marking is weak or pupils are not well managed. An inappropriate choice of activity or missed plenary sessions at the end of lessons also inhibit pupils' progress. As a result of these weaknesses, a significant minority of pupils learn too little.
131. In a significant number of books, marking is barely adequate (and at times poor). Some books have not been marked at all. Others have graffiti in them or contain careless and untidy work that has escaped comment. Wrong answers are sometimes marked as correct, whilst missed pages, missed units, misspelling and incorrect methods are not always noted by teachers. The marking in many books does not draw pupils' attention to poor presentation.
132. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is sound overall, with the result that these pupils make satisfactory (and sometimes good) progress. Low-attaining pupils are beginning to use the "catch-up" programmes recently devised. Good use is made of learning support assistants to provide effective guidance to those pupils who find some of the work difficult. Insufficient use is made of short-term targets, however, as a means of giving pupils a feeling of success. There is insufficient emphasis overall on the subject's specific, technical language.
133. Assessment over time is used well to measure pupils' attainment and progress and set future targets for them. It is, however, used inconsistently to find out precisely what pupils know, understand and can do and in order to guide lesson planning. In one lesson, for example, at the end of a mental arithmetic test, no note was made of weak areas, so that these could be tackled in a future lesson. A lack of weighing equipment prevents pupils from acquiring a clear understanding of weight.
134. There is insufficient use of computers in lessons to enhance pupils' learning, a weakness of which the department is aware. A new suite of computers has recently been established and work on this aspect is currently developing at a good pace. In a Year 11 lesson, for instance, pupils made very good use of computers to plot different types of graph, so deepening their understanding of straight-line and curved graphs.
135. The leadership and management of the department, though with the gaps noted above, are good overall. There have been significant improvements in provision in the subject since 2000. Documentation is thorough and appropriate. Staff are rapidly and enthusiastically developing the use of the new computer suite. Effective monitoring of teaching has raised the quality of teaching. Many elements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy are well established in Years 7 and 8.
136. Pupils' numeracy skills across other subjects of the curriculum, though below average, are broadly satisfactory. Mathematics develops these skills well, particularly in Years 7 and 8, and other subjects make some contribution. Pupils improve their competence with graphs, for example,

through using them for their work in science and geography. They strengthen their numerical skills, too, through the use of spreadsheets in ICT. Opportunities, however, sometimes remain unexploited to sharpen pupils' numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- the department's clear strategy to raise standards;
- "starter" activities in lessons in Years 7-9.

Areas for improvement:

- the overall standard of pupils' attainment;
- the standard of pupils' literacy and numeracy, especially in Years 7-9;
- the range of teaching and learning methods used;
- sharing with pupils information about the standards they have reached.

137. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their overall attainment in the subject is well below the national average at Level 4. The proportion of pupils entering the school at the higher Level 5, too, is only about half of what is typical nationally. In Year 7, lessons are taught in form groups that contain pupils of a wide range of abilities. Insufficient challenges are offered to many pupils and, as a consequence, some make little progress. Departmental links with the school's main contributory primary schools, too, are limited. Activities are sometimes repeated from primary years: as a result, some pupils lose momentum and produce work of a lower standard than they could.
138. Over the last four years, pupils' overall attainment in the national tests carried out at the end of Year 9 has remained well below the national average at Level 5. There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 6, but in 2002 that proportion was still only one quarter of the national average – in contrast to around half in mathematics. Boys and girls tend to do equally well, although girls' results were slightly better than boys in 2001. Overall, results are well below the national average, but usually in line with that for secondary modern schools of a similar socio-economic background.
139. All pupils in Years 10-11 follow the usual national pattern of taking GCSE double-award science. Results in GCSE have improved little over the last five years. In 2002, 16 per cent of pupils gained a grade C or above, compared with about half doing so nationally (and 26 per cent doing so in this school in mathematics). The 2002 results were well below the national average for all schools as well as for secondary modern schools of a similar background. These results represent unsatisfactory progress overall. Over the last few years, pupils have tended to perform less well in science than in most of their other subjects. Overall, boys do not do quite as well as girls, but continue to be closer to boys' national performance than girls do to that of girls nationally.
140. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is well below average, but most pupils make satisfactory progress from their start in Year 7. In Year 9, for example, pupils related their lesson observations on the reactivity of metals with dilute acids well to that predicted by their position in the Periodic Table and previous work. Pupils in the lower sets acquire reasonable, basic scientific skills and use appropriate vocabulary when conversing with teachers, but are generally weak at explaining in writing what they have understood. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress, but are often insufficiently assisted in Years 7-9 by, for example, suitable frameworks to structure their writing.
141. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment remains well below the national average. Many pupils display an average competence in the standard techniques involving chemical reactions. Some pupils in top sets soundly plan, organise and execute fair tests – choosing variables, making predictions and

subsequently analysing their findings appropriately. Most Year 11 pupils of middling ability have a fair level of understanding of the influence of variables in investigations, as demonstrated by a group that prepared an investigation on the conversion of starch to glucose by amylase. Pupils understand the basic concepts and theory, but display little curiosity to provide anything beyond the simplest explanations.

142. The standard of both the evaluative and written aspects of investigations is often well below average. The spelling of both scientific and common words is frequently poor. Pupils pay insufficient attention to accuracy, when copying words from books or the board, and many are too easily satisfied. Teachers expend a lot of effort marking books and pointing out errors, but many pupils continue to repeat the same mistakes. The drafting of written work is rarely practised and scientific arguments are insufficiently developed in both class discussion and written work.
143. In Years 10-11 especially, there is insufficient progress made by many mid-range pupils and their overall achievement is unsatisfactory. The relatively small number of high-attaining pupils achieve an average standard, because they are prepared to work hard and receive appropriate encouragement from their teachers. Most usually achieve a grade higher than C in GCSE examinations. There is still, however, room for many of them to acquire greater depth of knowledge and understanding through more demanding questioning and debate. In most lessons, pupils have little opportunity to explore their views, understanding and opinions on scientific issues with their teachers or classmates, because teachers generally do not give them the opportunity to do so. Many pupils of mid-range ability, despite repeated offers, are reluctant to join out-of-hours support lessons. Generally throughout the school, where numeracy skills are required, pupils manipulate data satisfactorily in equations, formulae and graphs, but their work often lacks sufficient attention to detail and accuracy.
144. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy practical work and readily acquire new skills at a basic level. In many classes the majority work hard. Pupils handle equipment safely and correctly and treat chemicals with due regard for potential hazards. Behaviour is at least satisfactory (and often good) in the majority of classes. Pupils form good relationships amongst themselves and with their teachers. In a small number of classes where mixed-sex seating arrangements are used, pupils' practical work is undertaken with more purpose and completed faster. A small number of boys in Years 8 and 9, however, are easily distracted, prone to chatter and, unless promptly silenced by their teacher, cause prolonged distraction to the majority of pupils who remain on task. In Years 10 and 11, some pupils are complacent and lack motivation. They are content with minimal effort, not striving to improve their first attempts in the recording and analysis of investigational work.
145. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. Teaching is better in Years 7-9, where two out of every three lessons seen were good (or better), but in Years 10-11 only one out of three lessons were good (in one case very good). The best lessons incorporate detailed planning, carefully timed sequences of activities, the sharing of lesson objectives with pupils, a suitable variety of exposition, penetrating question-and-answer sessions and a learning summary on the board. In most lessons in Years 7-9, teachers use a range of ways successfully at the beginning of lessons to engage pupils' attention. These include the use of individual whiteboards and exercises on identifying scientific phenomena or explaining the meaning of words. These techniques are tailored to the different needs of individual pupils, reminding them of recent work and incorporating allied topics to enable all pupils to see the larger scientific picture. Practical work is an important feature of some lessons, but does not occur frequently enough. The use of homework is satisfactory overall throughout the school (best in Years 7-9), but on too many occasions pupils are asked to complete work started in class: this often results in written work being hastily completed in the last few minutes of lessons and thereby losing much important detail.
146. The department lacks a common approach to literacy. There is, for example, too little attention to displaying key scientific words in rooms and using them consistently. Insufficient importance is attached to using appropriate words in the right context and spelling them correctly. In many lessons, teachers' questioning seldom progresses beyond the level of recalling the information covered a few minutes earlier. In the better lessons, some teachers encourage an extended discussion, as a result

of which pupils are keener to learn. In some Year 7 lessons, when pupils talk about their understanding of scientific concepts – as, for example, in a lesson on the movement of gas molecules – abler pupils showed perceptive understanding of the subject. Whilst teachers mark work well, few reinforce pupils' literacy by encouraging them, for instance, to read aloud sections of text in class. Pupils have the necessary skills to search for relevant answers on Internet websites, although staff do not always ensure that pupils use their time profitably when doing so.

147. The leadership and management of the department have weaknesses, but are broadly satisfactory overall. This position is partly because the department is actively supported by means of an LEA-led national scheme for "Schools in Challenging Circumstances": the head of science from a neighbouring school spends two days each week developing additional means of securing departmental improvement. Some of the targeted approaches adopted successfully involve Year 11 "improvers", the support of the school's learning mentor, assistance for a small group of underachieving Asian boys and a modular, GCSE course that incorporates short-term goals. Since the last inspection, the department has implemented a range of other improvements, but these have yet to have a marked effect on examination results in Year 11. Since the last inspection, there has been broadly satisfactory improvement, but much more needs doing.
148. A team of conscientious, hardworking teachers has a good team spirit. There is a good balance between experienced teachers, two recently qualified teachers and an effective team of supportive technicians. The department's schemes of work are good. The department has also developed a thorough system for analysing pupils' attainments and achievements that it is beginning to share with pupils.
149. The department has a good stock of datalogging equipment and laptop computers. Overall, the level of use of ICT in science is greater than often seen in similar schools. In contrast, there are insufficient textbooks for use with pupils in Years 10-11. Pupils are encouraged to purchase commercial revision guides in preparation for GCSE. Much audio-visual equipment has reached the end of its useful life. The department has six attractive, up-to-date laboratories and associated preparation rooms. The rooms contain attractive wall displays and form a visually pleasing learning environment. Extracurricular activities include a robotics club and occasional visits to such regional centres as the Thackeray Medical Museum in Leeds.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- the overall quality of teaching and learning;
- good achievement by pupils;
- the provision for talented pupils;
- the quality of display in the art rooms and the main school.

Areas for improvement:

- raising further the overall standard reached by the end of Year 11;
- pupils' standard of speaking, listening, reading and writing;
- more opportunities for three-dimensional work;
- greater use of ICT.

150. The overall standard of work in two-dimensional drawing and painting is average by the end of both Years 9 and 11. In contrast, pupils' overall level of attainment in speaking clearly, listening actively, writing and reading efficiently for meaning is below average. Pupils' levels of achievement in art are good, in relation to their below average standard on entry to the school.

151. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment was assessed by their teachers in 2002 as below average. The evidence seen in sketchbooks, drawing and paintings, however, indicates that pupils' overall attainment is average by the end of Year 9. Most pupils produce a standard of work that is typical for their age. This represents a good achievement in the acquisition of practical skills.
152. The GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C, but near average for grades A*-G. Pupils' level of performance was higher in 2002 than in previous years: this represents an improvement over the position in 2001, when pupils in this subject tended to achieve less well than they did in most of their other subjects. There has been a significant improvement in standards since the previous inspection.
153. By the end of Year 9, as a result of the department's focus on observational drawing, pupils have a good understanding of form and composition – as when, for instance, they use line expressively in drawing plants. Their understanding of ideas such as cubism varies widely across the year group. Where teachers pay close attention to pupils' needs and plan steps in learning carefully, the majority of pupils make the move from realistic drawings to abstract art successfully. This happened when one class developed press-prints after studying cubism. Where steps in learning are missed or the teacher rushes pupils through a process before they are ready, pupils do not fully understand the ideas involved and, instead of reflecting cubist practices, simply create amusing collage images. Where literacy is carefully nurtured, as in a spelling homework, pupils noticeably improve the accuracy of their written work. Where, however, they are encouraged to assess one another's work, but the teacher then dominates the discussion, many pupils lose heart and withdraw into silence.
154. Pupils with special educational needs, in all year groups, are well supported by a classroom assistant or learning mentor. Key words are displayed prominently and worksheets are planned with pupils' literacy needs prominently in mind. Pupils with particular talent are offered extension activities after school and make very good progress.
155. In order to break an artistic culture based on tracing and cartoon imagery, the new head of department has sensibly concentrated on raising pupils' awareness of hand-drawing techniques in Years 7-9. The attractive countryside around the school, for example, is used well as a basis for pupils' torn-paper, landscape studies in Year 8. Some pupils work to a good standard much quicker than others: one talented boy in Year 7, for example, drew a three-dimensional view of a box easily and repeated the exercise several times before other pupils had completed one drawing. Pupils do not have experience of three-dimensional work, although this is planned. With the exception of the sound use of the digital camera, scanner and the Internet for research, ICT is used less well than normal.
156. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of work is average, but that of a significant minority is above average – a good level of achievement. Higher attainers plan well and make the most of their talents. Most middle and lower attainers also attain well, but require more guidance from teachers: often their practical work is well in advance of their ability to speak or write about the process they have undertaken. The best work in Year 11 is in still-life studies based on plants, whilst the best work in Year 10 stems from drawing real fish. These drawings have individual character, reflecting different pupils' interests in shape and pattern. A number of Year 11 girls benefit from attending "catch-up" sessions after school.
157. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. A few pupils turn up late to lessons. The majority work hard and listen attentively. Few speak willingly, when questioned by their teacher, and those who do give very brief answers. Work is carefully presented and handwriting is neat and legible. Poor spelling and sentence structure spoil otherwise good research work.
158. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent, but is good overall throughout the school. Its strengths lie in teachers' high expectations, careful planning to suit pupils' needs and good

classroom management. Its weaknesses occur in not providing opportunities for pupils to speak at any length or to have the time to reflect on their learning and feed back to the teacher what they think they have learned. Time-lines are not provided to help pupils to date artists or art movements. Pupils appreciate visual stimuli, often looking at wall displays to find a clue to help them answer teachers' questions. Homework is set frequently and marked regularly, with helpful comments.

159. The new subject leader has made good progress in changing and improving the culture of this department in a very short time. Assessment procedures are generally good, but are not rooted in a specifically art and design baseline from which to judge pupils' progress. Sketchbooks are dated regularly and provide a potentially rich source of help for pupils to judge their progress and to learn more effectively. Pupils' social, moral and cultural development are promoted well. Their spiritual development is limited, although features such as the spiral structures of plants arouse wonder in the eyes of some pupils. Statutory requirements for the subject are met. The art displays both in the art rooms and around the school are very good. Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses noted by the previous inspection through the improvement of teaching and learning and the introduction of a more relevant curriculum. Good enrichment activities (such as a visiting artist) are planned. Recent work by Year 7 pupils was entered for a public competition, thus extending the art curriculum.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths:

- the quality of long-term planning and documentation;
- the quality of teaching in some lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- the identification and monitoring of citizenship across the school curriculum;
- provision for pupils to exercise more responsibility, particularly in the school councils;
- the organisation of pupils' involvement in community projects;
- assessment and recording.

160. Taking into account the fact that the provision of citizenship as a subject is at a very early stage, the evidence available indicates that the attainment of pupils by the end of Years 9 and 11 is below average. Pupils have the potential, however, to reach higher standards than at present in their participation in practical projects and in taking responsibility within both their own school and the wider community.
161. The quality of learning and progress in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall. Most pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of some central features of citizenship. In Year 7, for example, they construct a classroom display of photographs and information about themselves, in order to compare and understand their different backgrounds and lifestyles. All pupils in Year 8 have the opportunity to work in the school office, where they learn about different systems of communication, particularly those dealing with enquiries.
162. In Years 10-11, pupils learn about the criminal justice system and especially about the rights and responsibilities of young people. In this connection, they begin to understand the meaning of legal terms and, for example, the correct procedures for police restraint, arrest and charging. In lessons, pupils work in pairs and groups to discuss and research documents, gaining information that they then share with the whole class.
163. In some lessons across the whole school, higher-attaining and more confident pupils readily take leading roles in activities, although at times overshadowing the contributions that other pupils might

make. Most pupils feel that they have some influence in running aspects of the school through the two school councils; in most tutor groups pupils receive good feedback from their form representatives. In a few cases, however, pupils are not sufficiently informed about the process and importance of representation. In some school council meetings the teacher's input dominates proceedings and unduly influences pupils' opinions.

164. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They are genuinely interested in the topics and take part with enthusiasm in paired, grouped and whole-class activities. They take some responsibility for their own learning, when encouraged to do so. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons. Where the content of lessons is personal and sensitive, pupils approach topics in a very mature way.
165. Teaching ranges from good to (occasionally) unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned effectively. Teachers employ common approaches – as, for example, in “brain-storming” (although in this activity pupils are not always enabled to formulate and present their own ideas forcibly enough). Overall, the teaching of literacy in lessons receives insufficient attention: teachers do not always offer pupils good models of spelling and clear sentence construction or pay sufficient attention to the standard conventions of grammar when speaking to, and discussing topics with, pupils. The school does not have clear criteria for assessing pupils' progress in the subject. During the inspection, very few lessons in other subjects had a significant focus on citizenship. Sometimes opportunities are missed – as, for instance, in science, where the implications of exposure to tobacco smoke were not shared widely enough.
166. Citizenship is presently coordinated jointly by two teachers, one of whom is appointed to the role for one year only. The school is, however, well aware of the need for firm, single leadership of the subject for the whole school. Effective work has been undertaken in preparing good schemes of work and in deciding the best ways of organising the curriculum. The school is now at the stage of formally introducing discrete lessons for all pupils, but does not have a model for the long-term assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Whilst the school has made a good start in providing activities outside lessons – as, for example, through work in the community – the long-term planning and organisation of these events require coordination to ensure that pupils mature and make appropriate progress in the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- the quality of teaching and learning;
- pupils' achievement in practical work in textiles, food and graphics;
- the use of ICT in textiles and graphics;
- the quality of displays in all design and technology areas.

Areas for improvement:

- the standard reached in resistant materials by the end of Year 11;
- the use of classroom assessment to improve pupils' learning;
- more computer-aided design and manufacture;
- the strategy for improving pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening.

167. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard of attainment is in line with the national average. In recent years, teachers' formal assessments have indicated that fewer pupils reach the national benchmark of Level 5 than do so nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 is very low. Above average practical skills are balanced by low standards of literacy. In a subject with an emphasis on written coursework, weak linguistic skills are lowering pupils' overall performance.

168. In GCSE in 2002, pupils' overall standard of attainment was below average. Girls gained more of the higher grades than boys. Slightly more pupils attained grades A*-C in 2002 than in the previous year, but more pupils failed to complete the course than in 2001. The best performance in both years was in food and textiles; attainment reached in graphics and resistant materials lowered the subject's overall performance. During the period 1999-2001, pupils tended to achieve lower grades in this subject than in most of their other subjects. In the wake of a new appointment, performance in graphics is improving rapidly.
169. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard of work is broadly average. Practical work is at least average overall in all areas of the subject. Higher attainers in both food and textiles plan their time well and sequence their activities sensibly. Lower and middle attainers, however, do not have the concentration to sustain the three-period lesson currently in place. Boys dominate question-and-answer sessions and girls generally remain silent. Once investigating or designing starts, girls forge ahead because of their strong commitment and good levels of concentration. Brainstorming sessions are usually too controlled by teachers, thus further limiting pupils' standards of speaking and listening. Pupils offered more extended or thoughtful answers on the few occasions when teachers paused after a pupil had responded, before commenting or asking more questions.
170. The majority of pupils in Years 7-9 make good progress and achieve well in practical tasks in all aspects of the subject. Pupils' design work is best in textiles and graphics and their knowledge and understanding most secure in food. Progress is slower in Year 7 than in other year groups, because many pupils have short concentration spans. Ideas explained by the teacher are not always fully understood by middle and lower attainers, if they do not have time to apply the ideas in practice. Some Year 7 pupils find the evaluation of work difficult, owing to their poor linguistic skills. Progress in textiles and graphics in Year 8 is on occasions very good, because theory and practice are intermingled well by their teachers and high quality resources are provided. Year 8 pupils, for example, concentrated well on their board-game designs, while listening to classical music.
171. Learning support assistants work well with pupils who have special educational needs. These pupils make good progress, because their needs are well known and their adapted worksheets follow a multi-sensory approach, providing a good mixture of pictures, diagrams and written text. Presentation is at its best where pupils are provided with writing frames or line-guides to support neat writing. Key words are displayed in classrooms, but pupils are not provided with appropriate dictionaries or a thesaurus to look words up for themselves. There are too many missed opportunities for allowing pupils to read aloud. When they are allowed to do so, they can usually read the words, but do not always fully understand the meaning.
172. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to make good progress in the practical aspects of food technology. The quality of coursework varies greatly. One higher-attaining girl, for example, achieved a very high level in her written work on world food dishes, whilst others produced much less, both in quantity and quality. The quality of making and the attention to surface decoration are often very good in textiles – as, for example, in the making of a child's garment or toy. One Asian girl spoke well about her adaptation of a western style of child's dress to reflect her cultural background. The majority of pupils in a Year 10 graphics group made good progress in designing display stands for such products as cars. Written work is below average overall: it often consists of very simple, repetitive statements and a poor standard of spelling and punctuation.
173. The only aspect where unsatisfactory achievement and progress are evident is in Year 11 work with resistant materials, where many pupils lack interest in what they do. Asian boys tend to sit together, using their first language as a barrier, behind which they chat socially and generally waste time. Similarly, a group of white boys clusters together, working when supported by the teacher or a classroom assistant, but doing very little at other times.
174. Information and communication technology is used very well as a design tool in both textiles and graphics. Year 10 pupils, for instance, used a CD-ROM effectively to choose and download single images of Chinese designs or to manipulate and repeat images as part of their cushion project.

Year 8 graphics work also used ICT well for producing high quality products. Its use is not evident in resistant materials for computer-aided design or manufacture (CAD/CAM). This is a missed opportunity for making the subject more relevant for Year 11 pupils and for making full use of expensive resources. Work in food technology is limited by the lack of compatible software for use in nutrition.

175. Teaching is good overall across the school. It was very good (and in one case excellent) in Years 10-11, with just one lesson taught unsatisfactorily. Teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory in Years 7-9, and was good overall. The strengths of teaching are in teachers' subject knowledge, planning, high expectations and management of pupils. The weaker elements are in the teaching of literacy, the quality of classroom assessment and teachers' domination of discussions: these weaknesses restrict pupils' intellectual effort, their ability to work independently and their understanding of their achievements. Appropriate homework is usually set.
176. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Relationships are generally positive. Boys and girls work well together. There are no indications of racial tension in lessons. Problems occur when Year 7 pupils are left waiting too long in the corridor before the teacher arrives or (as in the Year 11 class described above) when pupils find the work boring.
177. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The department has emerged from a period of staffing difficulties stronger and determined to improve. There is a very good team spirit amongst all staff, including the learning support assistants and the skilled technician. The cam-mechanism models that the technician has made for the department are an invaluable resource and, in one lesson observed, greatly enhanced pupils' understanding and learning. Displays are very good in all parts of the department, including the shared areas.
178. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in monitoring teaching and learning as well as in improving the provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT. There is, however, still more work to do. Statutory requirements for the curriculum are met. Outstanding health and safety issues relate to the lack of warning lines on the floor in front of machines in the workshop; procedures to ensure that safety buttons cannot be interfered with by pupils; and the need for food-chopping boards of different colours to prevent cross-contamination.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- pupils make good progress;
- teachers plan very well and have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour;
- leadership and management are very effective;
- the excellent use of homework.

Areas for improvement:

- greater opportunity for fieldwork and the use of ICT in Years 7-9.

179. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is below the national average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2002 at the end of Year 9, results indicated that the overall standard was well below that expected nationally. In 2001, in contrast, teachers' assessment suggested that pupils' overall standard was in line with the national average. These differences are due to inaccurate assessment in the past: the department has now improved its procedures to provide an accurate assessment of pupils' standards.

180. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Overall results in the GCSE examination in 2002 were below the national average, but were in line with the national pattern for the higher A*/A grades. All pupils gained at least grade G. This pattern of results represents a considerable improvement on those gained in 1999; results have improved markedly each year since. Girls achieve a higher standard than boys, largely because they tend to revise more thoroughly. During the inspection, the standard of work seen was average. This represents a good achievement by teachers and pupils.
181. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a satisfactory basic knowledge of the subject – as, for example, how most landscapes are formed. Geographical features such as the shape of river valleys and waterfalls are described accurately, but pupils have difficulty in explaining why they occur. They have a satisfactory understanding of such geographical terms as “erosion” and “birth rate”, but only the higher-attaining pupils use them accurately in written work. Higher attainers have a good understanding of the reasons for the uneven distribution of population and for differences in the populations of different countries. Early in Year 7, pupils have a poor knowledge of where important places are.
182. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of (for instance) why natural events such as flooding occur, how they affect the lives of people and how the worst effects can be avoided. They have a satisfactory knowledge of the geographical issues that surround different methods of generating electricity (such as coal, oil and nuclear power stations) and of the link between energy consumption and global warming. Pupils understand the reasons for such geographical patterns as the distribution of different types of farming in the British Isles. The majority of pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of where important places are and of key geographical terms, which they use correctly in their extended writing.
183. Throughout the school, pupils extract information from resource materials effectively and accurately transfer mapped information – as, for instance, from an atlas to their own maps. They draw and analyse graphs correctly. In Year 9, for example, one group compared the population graphs of two countries accurately and in Year 10 pupils used a flood hydrograph to explain the main features of the flow of a river at the time of flooding. Written work is structured appropriately, but spelling and punctuation are poor.
184. All examination results are analysed thoroughly by the department. A clear strategy to improve standards has been implemented, including a focus on coursework, revision and examination techniques. Appropriate changes have been made to the scheme of work and teaching to improve the achievement of boys. Pupils make good progress throughout the school, owing to the good quality of the teaching they receive. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress, as they have suitable opportunities to use their skills and knowledge in extended pieces of writing and research. One pupil, for example, completed a very well written, detailed and carefully researched study of outstanding quality of a hill farm in the Lake District. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because they undertake work that is adapted to their individual needs, are fully involved in lessons and receive effective support.
185. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and one third of that seen was very good. It is very good in Years 10-11. The preparation and organisation of lessons are meticulous: lessons start promptly, involve all pupils, immediately arouse their interest and curiosity and continue at a rapid pace. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons with great care and provide a variety of worthwhile activities to maintain pupils' enthusiasm.
186. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils studied the way that local land was used. In pairs they rapidly reviewed what they had learned previously, made a sensible prediction from their own knowledge of the likely pattern of land use, successfully used fieldwork findings and a mapping technique to establish the actual pattern of land use, tested their predictions, compared their findings with a geographical model and reviewed their results. The work was completed at a rapid

pace in an industrious atmosphere. As a result, pupils made good progress in sharpening their skills of analysis, learning new terms and gaining new knowledge about the patterns of land use.

187. A great strength of the teaching is that the highest standards of work, behaviour and attitude are expected of pupils, who respond by behaving well and working hard to achieve the high standards set by teachers. The objectives of lessons are always made clear to pupils, but lessons rarely conclude with a review of whether they have been achieved. Exercise books are always marked up to date, with useful comments explaining what was done well and what pupils need to do to improve. The quality of homework is excellent. It is set regularly, is a piece of relevant additional work arising from the work completed in lessons, is quickly marked and is followed up in the next lesson.
188. Pupils learn well. They always work hard and maintain their concentration, as lessons move at a swift pace and provide a variety of activities that are pitched at an appropriate level. Pupils are keen and well motivated, co-operating very effectively with one another. In one lesson in Year 8, for instance, lower-attaining pupils studied how water reacts to different soil samples. Following a skilfully led discussion and demonstration by the teacher, the pupils worked enthusiastically and with great responsibility as a class to successfully complete the scientific experiment, supporting one another effectively and reaching appropriate conclusions.
189. The curriculum is very well structured and fully complies with national requirements. The limited opportunities provided for fieldwork and for pupils to develop their skills in the use of ICT in Years 7-9, however, do not sufficiently support the examination coursework in Years 10-11. Four groups in Years 7-9 have all their geography lessons in one week of the two-week timetable: this interrupts the continuity of work and makes it more difficult for pupils to recall work completed in the previous lesson. Groups in Years 10-11 are allocated double periods, which are too long for pupils to maintain full concentration and work at a swift pace throughout. The system of assessing, recording and using assessment results is very effective and ensures that the progress of each pupil is clearly analysed.
190. The leadership and management of the department are very good, giving a clear sense of direction for the subject. Well-focused plans for the future are based on a close monitoring of teaching, marking and the rate of progress made by pupils in the subject. A considerable improvement has taken place in the work of the department since the previous inspection in standards, planning, monitoring and evaluation. New technology is exploited very effectively by teachers – as, for example, in the skilful use of the interactive, computer-controlled whiteboard. The department does not, however, have immediate access to its own computers. Staff have a high degree of teamwork and a shared commitment to improve. The department has the capacity to succeed in raising standards still further.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- the overall quality of teaching;
- the good behaviour and attitudes of most pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- the standard of attainment in Years 7-9 and in GCSE examinations;
- making work for the highest attainers more demanding;
- more work for pupils to involve historical enquiry and using sources;
- the provision of suitable textbooks for the lowest attainers.

191. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment overall is below that expected nationally. This is a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils begin Year 7 with a level of attainment that is significantly lower than the national average: many arrive with little experience of studying the subject. In 2001 and 2002, teachers assessed their pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as being, overall, well below the national average.
192. The overall standard of work seen by the end of Year 9 during the inspection was below the national average; only a small proportion of pupils produce work of a standard that is average or above average. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although most attain significantly below average standards. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring new knowledge about the past. The higher attainers, however, do not make good enough progress in learning how to use and evaluate historical sources. This is partly due to their below average levels of literacy, but also because they are given a limited number of opportunities to practise this skill.
193. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 2001 was significantly below the national average. The results in 2002 were lower than those of the previous year: only about one in 20 pupils entered for the examination in 2002 gained a grade in the range A*-C and a quarter did not get any classified grade. In 2002 both boys' and girls' results were significantly below their respective national averages. Most pupils begin the GCSE course with well below average knowledge and understanding; the results therefore represent broadly satisfactory progress overall. The overall standard of work seen in Year 11 during the inspection was below average, although a small proportion was of an above average standard.
194. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have satisfactory knowledge about the past. Pupils in Year 7, for instance, described adequately some features of Roman life, some in Year 8 described aspects of England in 1500, and pupils in Year 9 successfully identified the different coal-mining systems used over time. Although they describe the past adequately orally, most cannot do so successfully in writing. Their overall understanding is below average and their ability to use historical sources is poor. For pupils in Year 7, this weakness often reflects a lack of historical study. For those in Years 8 and 9 it is partly attributable to the recent instability in staffing, when many were taught for long periods by temporary or non-specialist teachers.
195. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. Many, however, have a level of knowledge that is well below average. The highest attainers make valid deductions about the past from sources – as, for example, in describing the feelings of men in the trenches in World War I, based on a video that included first-hand evidence. They do not, however, successfully consider the reliability or usefulness of such sources. They see that different views of the past exist, but not why this is so. Most pupils understand and explain adequately the causes of past events. The highest attainers explained successfully how the treatment of Germany in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 might have been a cause of World War 2.
196. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is occasionally very good, but also occasionally unsatisfactory. Teachers know their subject well and communicate it effectively, so that most pupils acquire sound knowledge about the past. Aims are made clear to pupils at the start of lessons and in most lessons teachers return to them to check what pupils have learned. Sometimes, however, not enough time is left to do this well enough. In some lessons teachers set work that challenges the highest attainers well – as, for example, on different interpretations of the past – but in other lessons the work is not demanding enough. Some work on drawing a cartoon strip about the founding of Rome, for example, was appropriate for most pupils, but higher attainers found it very easy.
197. In the best lessons, teachers have a lively delivery, which motivates pupils and makes them want to learn. The teachers provide clear instructions and a good structure to the work, so enabling

pupils to succeed in completing the tasks set and ensuring that they are actively involved in what they learn. Lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers set deadlines that keep pupils working throughout the lesson. Unsatisfactory features are sometimes the lack of a clear structure and sufficient guidance for the work, resulting in pupils not making satisfactory progress. In some cases, teachers do not ask pupils to develop their initial answers to questions, with the result that pupils do not gain sufficient depth of thought and understanding.

198. Most lessons are led by teachers, but pupils are occasionally asked to work in pairs and groups. Some successful group work, for example, helped pupils in Year 11 to identify and learn about the attitudes of the Great Powers, as they drew up the peace treaty to end World War I. Some very good whole-class teaching, in which the teacher told the story of Romulus and Remus, held the attention and interest of the pupils very effectively.
199. Teachers begin lessons in a calm and business-like manner, so ensuring that there is a good working atmosphere in class. Pupils clearly know that they are expected to work hard and behave well. The majority of pupils have a positive approach to their work and want to learn. They concentrate reasonably well on work and their behaviour is usually good: these are important contributory factors to their usually satisfactory progress in lessons. A small minority have a poor attitude to their own work and to that of others. Teachers deal with poor behaviour from pupils in a firm but pleasant manner, to ensure that it does not disrupt the learning of the class.
200. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department has been in post for only half a term. She has identified reasons for the decline in attainment and for some of the low achievement of the higher attainers, and has begun to implement strategies to improve the situation. Schemes of work are being re-written and the system for assessing pupils' attainment in Years 7-9 is being amended. There are clear indications that these changes will give more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of enquiry. The department has identified as priorities the need to raise the esteem of the department amongst pupils and to stimulate interest in the subject. They are already succeeding in that task.
201. There are, however, still weaknesses to remedy. There are not enough suitable textbooks of good quality for the lowest attainers. The department does not make sufficient use of the local environment or of ICT as resources for learning. The time allocated to the subject in Year 7 is insufficient to enable teachers to help pupils with low levels of literacy and little knowledge of history to make good progress. There is no alternative course in Years 10 and 11 for pupils who wish to continue to study history, but for whom the GCSE course is too demanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- the effective action taken to remedy the weaknesses identified at the last inspection;
- teachers' subject knowledge and relationships with pupils;
- the school's commitment to the progressive improvement of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- the overall standard of pupils' attainment, especially in Years 7-9;
- pupils' awareness of their standard of work and how to improve;
- the auditing, monitoring and evaluation of the use and impact of ICT in all subjects.

202. Pupils' overall attainment in the subject on entry is well below the expected national standard. Partly as a result, the overall level of attainment in ICT of most pupils is well below the national

average by the end of Year 9: although most pupils make satisfactory progress between Years 7 and 9, their attainment by the end of Year 9 remains well below the nationally expected standard. This judgement is in line with teachers' assessments in 2002: only 40 per cent of pupils were assessed as having reached at least Level 5 (compared with 66 per cent nationally) and 13 per cent Level 6 (22 per cent nationally).

203. In Years 10 and 11, pupils now follow a (recently introduced) short course in ICT for the GCSE examination. The attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is currently below average, because their previous experiences of ICT have been inadequate to ensure that enough pupils work at the level normally expected of 16 year olds in the subject.
204. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are confident in their use of such basic ICT applications as word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheets. In Year 7, pupils access networked computers, know about passwords and log onto the school's network to access their work files. They learn to use and apply relevant ICT terminology in lessons. They use word processing and presentation software, planning and creating a multimedia presentation about themselves for their peers. They correctly save successive versions of their work to show their progress over time. They effectively use Internet search engines, learning to perform complex searches with Boolean logic (as, for example, by using *and*, *or* and *not*). They cite visited websites and paste the details into their word-processed work, thus providing evidence of purposeful research. Most learn these skills well. A significant minority of pupils, however, whose literacy skills are weak, do not find information easily, because they misspell such basic keywords as "friends" in their searches.
205. Pupils in Year 8 continue to build their skills in using software programs and learn satisfactorily to produce a range of desktop-published and word-processed publications. They compare the characteristics of different information resources – as, for example, the differing content and layout of BBC websites with their printed equivalents. In Year 9 they use sophisticated databases to collate and sort data: they create, for example, advanced data-tables to search and graph the results of class questionnaires on other pupils' social and leisure interests. They learn to combine the use of more than one piece of software – as when they use the Internet to find text and graphics for an information sheet on the different types of input devices (such as mice, keyboards and plotters) used by computers.
206. Pupils' work in Years 10 and 11, although below average overall, demonstrates their increased capability to use ICT effectively. Many produce work to a good standard of sophistication and quality. Some effectively use several ICT applications in combination to carry out their GCSE coursework assignments – as, for example, the combined use of word processing, spreadsheets and databases to produce an attractive brochure for a school sports day. Overall, most pupils make satisfactory progress in extending their ICT skills. Pupils' progress in Years 10-11 is also enhanced by the thorough evaluation they apply to their work: their folders show thoughtful critiques as well as different approaches to achieving the required results in coursework.
207. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, owing to the intensive, sensitive help of teachers and the very effective work of committed learning support staff in Years 7-9. Higher-attaining pupils also make satisfactory progress overall by moving more quickly than others onto work that requires a more complex use of ICT. They could, however, achieve more: too rarely are they given the opportunity, for example, to design complex, multimedia presentations and information systems or to work with computer-controlled devices. Overall, most pupils make good progress in acquiring a suitable level of independence, showing responsibility and persistence in producing coursework to specific performance criteria.
208. Pupils are eager to begin work in ICT lessons and usually show a willingness to work. Some participate thoughtfully in discussions, although many make only brief comments about their work. Most demonstrate persistence in drafting and producing improved versions of their work. Pupils take increasing responsibility for their own progress and for maintaining their work files on the

network. Pupils' annotations on their work files demonstrate their increasing understanding of the need to reflect upon, and critically evaluate, the quality and accuracy of their work.

209. The quality of teaching ranges from good to (occasionally) unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory overall throughout the school – good in Years 10-11 and satisfactory in Years 7-9. Good teaching is characterised by careful planning, high levels of expectation, a suitably brisk pace and a pleasant, orderly classroom climate. Teachers usually intervene constructively and sensitively to help pupils to improve the accuracy of their work. Teachers' subject knowledge and lesson documentation are good. Lessons are always well documented, with clear objectives and generally well-timed sequences of activity. In contrast, some aspects of class management require improvement: in some of the lessons observed pupils made unsatisfactory progress, because they did not listen to the teacher. Some concluding plenary sessions are effective in synthesising and reinforcing what has been taught. Teachers generally make good use of praise to encourage pupils and to help them to recognise their achievement. Homework is well targeted to extend pupils' skills in research and information handling.
210. The department of two teachers is well led and managed, albeit on a temporary basis, by an experienced PE teacher, who has been responsible for the subject for less than one term. Her vision for the developing role of ICT in the school's curriculum and the improving manner in which the subject is taught are key strengths of the department: she carries out her role with commitment and energy. In a very short time she has generated a strong team feeling, offering good support to her colleague. Both teachers are specialists. They plan, teach and work together very well, and share an enthusiasm for improving the subject.
211. Departmental schemes of work are largely confined to printed summaries of national guidance. There is no departmental handbook that could guide all teachers in the school on such matters as assessment, resources, skills, linkages to school policies or measures to protect pupils from undesirable materials on the Internet. A major need is for materials, in the form of "help sheets" and prompt cards, to improve pupils' basic software skills on entry to the school in Year 7. The assessment of pupils' learning and progress is satisfactory, but pupils in Years 7-9 are insufficiently aware of the standard they have reached in relation to national levels of attainment.
212. The school has made good progress in ICT since its last inspection. It has greatly improved the quantity and quality of ICT taught throughout the school. All statutory requirements are met. The school now has a costed development plan for the subject. It has increased the number of computers available to pupils, extended the school network, introduced good quality peripheral equipment and up-to-date software in additional ICT rooms, and provided broadband access to the Internet for pupils and staff. The department's technician responds efficiently to technical problems. Over the last two years almost half the staff have completed a *New Opportunities Fund* ICT-training programme and it is planned that all staff will have completed their training by the end of the term. There is still, however, more to do: one ICT teaching room, for example, urgently needs facilities for interactive display and projection as well as more suitable seating and ventilation.
213. Despite the school's good progress in meeting all pupils' statutory entitlement, including the wider use of ICT in all subjects, there are still some gaps and inconsistency in the use of ICT within departments, nor does the school have effective systems for auditing, monitoring and evaluating the contribution of all subjects' use of ICT. Excellent, imaginative use is made of ICT in the PE department, where pupils use interactive ICT to evaluate, record and improve their physical performance. In mathematics, pupils in Year 11 use spreadsheets well to create and interpret graphs that model mathematical formulae. In design and technology very good use is made of a range of ICT hardware and software to simulate the control of information systems and to research, analyse and present information appropriately. In art, pupils scan images and research art-based topics on the Internet. The science department has a good supply of laptop computers and data-logging devices. In contrast, the modern foreign languages department's software is incompatible with the school's new software systems.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- the improvement in GCSE results in French;
- the department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement:

- the attitudes and behaviour of many pupils in Years 7-9;
- the standard of pupils' oral skills in Years 7-9;
- the provision of up-to-date textbooks for pupils in Years 7-9.

214. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A*-C in the full-course, GCSE examination in French in 2002 was well below the national average. Overall, girls performed better than boys, and to a greater extent than happens nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A*-G was above the national average. These results show an improvement on those of the previous year: boys improved considerably in obtaining grades in the range A*-C and the overall proportion of pupils attaining these grades increased by 12 per cent.
215. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 9 is well below average, a level also indicated by teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2002. Pupils understand basic commands in the foreign language and are able to extract information relatively successfully from texts that they hear. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the vocabulary from the topic that they study: they link up French and English sentences successfully and note the main points from short texts. In a lesson in Year 8, for example, most lower-attaining pupils showed a sound understanding of a letter about leisure activities and preferences. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 participated satisfactorily in a role-play about shopping, using prompts, and two boys made a presentation to the class, speaking from memory.
216. In their written work by the end of Year 9, pupils copy key vocabulary, substitute words and phrases, and use writing frames to complete their own sentences, with varying degrees of accuracy. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 display good knowledge of the perfect tense, with both *avoir* and *être* and the agreement of the past participle, but they do not always reproduce this accurately from memory. Few pupils in Years 7-9 redraft their work or complete corrections to improve its accuracy.
217. By the end of Year 11 pupils' overall level of attainment is well below average: considerably fewer pupils than usual reach the nationally expected standard. Pupils in a Year 10 class, for example, who had little specialist teaching last year, required much support from their teacher in a listening exercise and their understanding of clock times was very weak. The development of pupils' oral skills was unsatisfactory in many of the lessons observed, because of limited opportunities for pupils to speak. Pupils generally lack confidence in speaking and tend to respond briefly, unless they receive support from their teachers: they are very dependent on prompts and few volunteers to speak. In a lesson in Year 11, however, higher-attaining pupils spoke reasonably confidently about work experience, using the past tense.
218. In their written coursework in Year 11, the highest-attaining pupils write very accurately, using three different tenses and displaying a good knowledge of the relevant vocabulary to describe how, for instance, they help at home or keep fit. Other pupils display the same knowledge of vocabulary, but are less consistently accurate in their use of the grammatical constructions.
219. One group of pupils in Year 11 currently studies German, but the language has now been discontinued in the curriculum for new starters. Their attainment is well below average, but they

make satisfactory progress on this modular course. In the one lesson sampled, pupils had a fair understanding of a reading passage about leisure activities: the teacher developed the topic appropriately, including the use of the past tense, and pupils looked up words that they did not know. In their written work, pupils write short, simple paragraphs about their daily routines and part-time jobs.

220. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, as they move through their topics of study. In Years 7-9, pupils' writing skills improve soundly, but there is insufficient emphasis on their oral skills. They learn to understand satisfactorily a basic range of vocabulary and structures, often through worksheets that support the French by having meanings in English. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a suitable course in four modules, each providing short-term objectives. Pupils with special educational needs are either well integrated into full classes or are catered for in smaller sets. They make similar progress to others in the same class.
221. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour vary from very good in a Year 7 lesson (when pupils responded well to the teacher and worked with a sense of enjoyment) to unsatisfactory in a Year 9 lesson. In the latter case, pupils did not listen to others, shouted out and were noisy at the change over of tasks: persistent talking impeded their progress and they did not learn enough. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, but are better in Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9. In the earlier years, in different lessons observed, pupils talked as they worked independently and did not give the teacher their full attention. In contrast, pupils in a Year 11 lesson worked well with computers to produce illustrated presentations of their oral coursework. Pupils do not always respond positively to the comments in exercise books about their work or its presentation.
222. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, but do not always use the foreign language adequately in some lessons to challenge pupils and make them think. Much of a lesson with lower-attaining pupils in Year 10, however, was conducted in French by the teacher (a native speaker) and the pupils responded positively. Teachers make a sound contribution to the teaching of basic skills. Each lesson begins effectively with a short activity, comprising sentences, clock times or numerals (for example), to help pupils to focus on recent work.
223. Teachers are conscientious in their lesson planning. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils, who write them into their exercise books. In many lessons, however, oral work (and particularly the use of paired work) is given insufficient attention. Suitable opportunities for pupils to read aloud are also missed. Teaching methods are generally effective, when teachers use flash cards, the overhead projector and chorus work to introduce or consolidate vocabulary. These methods are, however, not used sufficiently to stretch some pupils. Teachers' expectations are not yet consistently high enough within the department.
224. The less experienced members of the department display weaknesses in classroom management, when they do not keep the full attention of the whole class for the whole lesson. This was apparent in the one unsatisfactory lesson in Year 8, when pupils made little progress, because they did not focus sufficiently on the tasks set and spent too long on one activity that was not entirely appropriate. Time limits set for tasks were not adhered to in several lessons, with the result that the evaluation of the lesson was rushed.
225. Resources are well used in class, but a lack of up-to-date course books in Years 7-9 means that pupils' interest, concentration and independence are not sufficiently extended. Homework is set regularly and pupils' work is marked well with comments and targets.
226. The department meets the statutory requirements for teaching the National Curriculum. Departmental leadership and management are good overall. The amount of curricular time devoted to French in Year 7 is low and it is a little below average in Year 11. The provision of textbooks in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory. Software for ICT also requires updating. Assessment information about pupils who have studied French in Year 6 is not provided to this school by their primary schools.

227. The department has suffered from major staffing difficulties and a high turnover of teachers since the previous inspection. These factors have resulted in some lowering of pupils' progress and a deterioration in attitudes and behaviour. In spite of these difficulties, the results in the GCSE examination in French improved in 2002. One classroom assistant works closely with the department and provides very good support for many pupils in lessons. A very thorough review of the department has taken place to evaluate its strengths and to begin to act on its weaknesses. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- the overall quality of teaching;
- the range of extracurricular activities.

Areas for improvement:

- the assessment of pupils' work within lessons;
- the provision of ICT for pupils in Years 7-9;
- the provision of recording equipment, keyboards, tuned percussion and compact discs.

228. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, their overall attainment is below the national average in composition, performance and listening. Teachers' formal assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 indicated that the proportions of pupils achieving at least the national benchmark of Level 5 were 63 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. These results need, however, to be treated with caution, since there are no national norms available.
229. By the end of Year 9, pupils perform and compose to a standard that is below average. Practical work is mainly done on electronic keyboards. Pupils gain a fair familiarity with the keyboards, although many rely on letter names being written on the keys. Higher-attaining pupils play simple melodies with chords, whilst lower attainers play melodies only. Most pupils recognise the names of some major composers and are familiar with the terms "raga" and "sitar" in connection with Indian classical music.
230. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 11 is below the national average. In the 2001 and 2002 GCSE examination results, taken together, three out of 21 pupils gained grades in the range of A*-C. No pupil gained an A* grade.
231. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standard of performance, composition and listening by the end of Year 11 was below the national average. Only a very small number of the present Year 11 pupils play an orchestral instrument. Much classwork is done on keyboards. In one lesson, for example, pupils listened to a recording of Indonesian gamelan music, in which they identified the scale and instruments used and the overall structure of the piece. They then worked well in groups to recreate the piece on xylophones and keyboards. The piece was also presented to them in staff notation, which they understood and used well.
232. The quality of learning in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with an overall educational attainment that is well below average and with very varied levels of musical experience, knowledge and skills. Early lessons focus appropriately on time and tune. In one lesson, pupils were introduced to a five-note, diatonic scale and then required to select a short sequence of notes from it to compose a simple tune that included a sequence and elements of repetition. Most pupils managed to compose these pieces to an acceptable standard.
233. Almost all pupils are interested in their lessons. In only one class were they distracted to the extent that progress was impeded. Some pupils in Year 8 make good progress in their work on

keyboards. In one lesson, for instance, they were asked to devise variations on *Frere Jacques*. Higher attainers realised that they could transpose sections of the tune into different keys. One group combined two keys to produce a whole-tone scale, in the French impressionist style. Many pupils, however, do not readily perceive dissonant sounds that they produce in error. Pupils with special educational needs are well involved in all class-music activities and make satisfactory progress. Musically talented pupils make satisfactory progress (good in Years 10-11), because they are given tasks that extend them.

234. In Years 10-11, most pupils learn well and make good progress. The GCSE course is very demanding, especially since very few pupils have already learned an orchestral instrument. These pupils are, however, well motivated by the coursework, which provides good structures to help them to achieve success in composition and performance. In one lesson, for example, they listened to a set of Mozart variations on a children's song. Using it as model, they went on to produce their own variations on the song, *Bobby Shaftoe*. Pupils at this stage use computers satisfactorily to help them to notate their pieces and to record several tracks.
235. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good throughout the school, and especially so in Years 10 and 11, where they develop a mature approach to their work. Although teaching space is limited, pupils are able to work in a nearby practice room, where they can experience some independence in working without direct supervision. Most older pupils behave well and responsibly.
236. Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, the teacher uses his or her own musical expertise well to present examples as illustrations or to accompany songs. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. Musical terms are always written on the board, as they arise. Good displays on the classroom walls also include specialist terminology, musical rudiments and information about composers. The oldest pupils are encouraged to "skim read", in order to glean essential background information on music and musicians.
237. Lessons are always prepared carefully and in good detail, with sections of the lessons timed. In most classes pupils are managed effectively, without unpleasant confrontation. Appropriate, individual attention is given to pupils with special educational needs, in order to clarify their task or to retain their attention. The assessment of individual pupils' work within lessons is usually informal. The department now needs to assess all pieces of work, so that pupils are aware of the criteria for gaining higher marks in their individual tasks and become more involved in assessing their own work.
238. The department is managed satisfactorily and effectively overall. Its scheme of work is good. There are some shortages of musical equipment – such as keyboards, percussion and recording equipment. Instrumental lessons are well timetabled. Up to 85 pupils receive individual or group lessons on orchestral instruments, guitars, keyboards and voice. Visiting teachers make a good contribution to the work of the department. A choir of about 50 pupils meets at lunchtimes. There is also a samba band, keyboard club and rock band. Pupils in Years 10-11 make good use of ICT, especially for musical notation and composition. Pupils' work is assessed and recorded well at the end of units of work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- the good standard of teaching;
- the leadership and management of the subject;
- the excellent use of ICT for both teaching and assessment;
- the very good accommodation and resources;
- the high proportion of pupils taking part in extracurricular activities.

Areas for improvement:

- the marking of pupils' work;
- the encouragement of independent learning in the setting of homework;
- more use of ICT by pupils.

239. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of performance is satisfactory and close to average. Pupils tend to perform better in this subject in GCSE examinations than in most of their other subjects. In 2002, about two in every five pupils who took the GCSE examination gained grades in the range A*-C, a standard in line with that in similar schools.
240. Some written coursework for GCSE is of good standard and pupils acquire an appropriate depth of knowledge and information. There is, however, over-dependence on printed handouts, mostly completed, but providing little challenge for pupils to think. As a result, too much work follows the same pattern. Pupils make too little use of ICT in their coursework. In the practical aspects of the subject, boys and girls participate well and reach standards of performance that are comfortably in line with those nationally. Girls, for instance, show enthusiasm for dance, concentrating well to improve their techniques, whilst a few boys take dance at examination level. In basketball, boys and girls have good basic skills: in one extracurricular session, for example, boys switched easily between different defensive strategies.
241. At the end of Year 9, the overall standard of attainment in practical activities is average. Occasionally in rugby – as, for example, in a Year 8 lesson – boys' attainment was good. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, understand both the skills and tactics of the game and apply them; this is because teachers have high expectations and because activities and practices are always worthwhile and challenging. In gymnastics, pupils insufficiently take body weight on their arms, in order to develop basic movements and balances. In games, poor organisation occasionally leads to many pupils being inactive for too long and, as a result, lessons lack pace and purpose. Pupils with special educational needs are well involved in all lessons and progress satisfactorily. Talented pupils generally make good progress.
242. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Few pupils miss lessons without acceptable reasons and both boys and girls clearly enjoy the subject. They concentrate well and make sustained effort. Pupils co-operate and collaborate well in practices and games.
243. Teaching is good overall. Much is very good (and occasionally excellent). Where it is excellent, preparation is of the highest order and very imaginative use is made of ICT. This high standard was observed, for example, in a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson, where each part of the lesson was extremely well planned, organised and executed. Several uses were made of the electronic, interactive whiteboard which resulted in pupils being very interested, attentive and fully involved. Most lessons have a clear purpose and brisk pace, and incorporate objectives that are displayed and shared with pupils from the start. The marking of pupils' work, however, often does not contain sufficient corrective information to enhance or guide pupils' future writing: very few errors of spelling or grammar are corrected.

244. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. All the weaknesses identified in 2000 have received careful, appropriate attention and a number of significant improvements have been introduced. Dance has been started as an examination course, partly to help to redress the imbalance between the number of boys and girls taking examinations. Leadership-award courses have been introduced to improve pupils' communication skills. Liaison with the local primary schools has been improved to a satisfactory level.
245. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The department has a very strong corporate spirit and is efficiently run. Formal staff meetings are held and minutes taken. Very good displays throughout the department celebrate pupils' achievements and provide important information for them. Accommodation – and particularly that indoors, including the changing rooms and showers – is very good. It is clean, well maintained and safe.
246. Pupils who are talented in PE (including sport) are carefully identified. The provision of extracurricular activities has been extended to ensure that both boys and girls have enough opportunities to participate. Over half the pupils take part in these activities – a good achievement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- teachers' management of pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- teaching is not based on sufficient subject knowledge;
- teachers do not give enough attention to basic skills;
- the planning of lessons is not precise enough;
- assessment is not used enough to help pupils to improve their work or to guide teaching;
- pupils do not receive enough continuity and progression from lesson to lesson.

247. The department does not undertake formal assessment at the end of Year 9, but the observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show that pupils' attainment is well below expectation. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the most able, make limited, unsatisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding during Years 7-9. Their progress in learning is unsatisfactory.
248. In a study of the question "Does God Exist?", for example, pupils in Year 7 considered the argument from the design of the universe, but failed to understand the logical link between design and designer. In Year 8, pupils listed the differences in the birth ceremonies of Jews, Christians and Muslims: they selected and presented correct information in a simple way, but failed to relate differences of practice to belief. Pupils in Year 9 knew the plagues of Egypt and could illustrate them, but did not understand the role of Moses in the exodus or his importance to Judaism.
249. Pupils generally have other difficulties, too. Most do not remember enough from one lesson to the next, with the result that their learning is not deepened and developed over time. Most pupils have difficulty relating what they learn to their own lives and so fail to clarify their own thoughts and feelings from their study of religion. The scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that they do not undertake enough writing and that many have difficulty expressing themselves in their own words. Work in pairs or groups, when it happens, is not subsequently recorded (when appropriate) in written work. Pupils fall considerably below what is typical at this age in the competence and confidence of their learning. In attitudes and behaviour and in their personal development and relationships, however, pupils show the expected degree of maturity.

250. At the time of the last inspection neither GCSE nor any other form of accreditation was available to pupils. Since September 2001, pupils have followed the GCSE (short course) with the first entry to the examination due in 2003. There are, therefore, no GCSE results on which to report. Pupils' progress in learning, however, remains unsatisfactory and their attainment in Year 11 is well below expectation.
251. Pupils in Year 10, for instance, display very simple medical and social knowledge about abortion. They know of the 1967 and 1990 Acts, for example, but not why Parliament amended legislation in 1990. Pupils are unaware of the principle of the viability of life. They also show little familiarity with, or capacity to explore, the issue of differences of attitude amongst Christians and Muslims to abortion. In Year 11, pupils show that their standard of knowledge, understanding and skills of evaluation in answering examination questions is heavily weighted to the lower grades of GCSE.
252. The proportion of pupils on course to achieving grades A*-C is small. Pupils are not secure enough in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam to apply Christian and Muslim principles to life and then compare them to their own point of view. In both Years 10 and 11, pupils lack the depth of knowledge necessary to extend and develop their thinking about deeper social and moral issues. They show a significant lack of confidence as learners, but the attitudes and behaviour of most indicate an appropriate level of maturity. The lack of confidence is particularly noticeable in pupils with special educational needs, whose attitudes and behaviour sometimes become uncooperative.
253. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Pupils' written work shows that they do not learn enough from lesson to lesson. Despite weaknesses in teaching, teachers are generally good at achieving high standards of behaviour. Pupils are attentive in class and do not interrupt lessons: teachers insist on appropriate behaviour, even when pupils are challenging.
254. Although they manage pupils well, teachers have insufficient knowledge and understanding of religion and of the purpose of religious education. In Year 9, for example, pupils spend too much time decorating their folders and filling in or colouring commercially produced worksheets. In Year 10, pupils need more structure and content to their learning in the project on abortion. Lack of precision, absence of depth and detail in teaching, and mistakes (such as a reference to "Three Gods" in Christianity) inhibit pupils' learning. Teachers' lack of knowledge represents a loss to pupils of their entitlement to RE, especially in Years 10-11, and undermines the credibility of the school's provision.
255. Teachers do not do enough to develop pupils' ability to listen intelligently to religious talk or give enough structure to pupils' learning. Pupils lack opportunities to practise the sequence of listening, speaking and writing skills: lessons are not structured to include oral work followed by written work, in pairs or groups, so that pupils develop these skills in a balanced, sequential way. Lessons are prepared, but not planned with enough precision. Objectives are routinely stated at the beginning of each lesson, but precise learning goals are not shared with pupils. The plenary session at the end of a lesson is either not used well or not used at all, even when included in lesson plans.
256. Lack of continuity and progression from lesson to lesson is evident both in lessons and in pupils' work. Teachers mark pupils' work satisfactorily, but do not use assessment as a tool for pupils to learn better. Although pupils have copies of attainment levels in their files, teachers do not refer to them in their lessons or lesson plans and do not use these levels or GCSE grades with pupils. The result is that pupils cannot track their own progress: they do not know what level they have reached or at what level they should aim next.
257. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum was unsatisfactory, but the school now meets statutory requirements. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 now have enough time to study the subject. The school has improved its provision by introducing the GCSE (short course) as the programme of study. Detailed, appropriate schemes of work are either now in place or in the course of

construction: at present, they do not provide enough continuity and progression to match the expectations of the scale of attainment.

258. The subject's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. Its potential contribution to pupils' all-round personal development is largely unrealised, because pupils do not learn enough. The tracking of pupils' attainment and progress appears as a commitment in departmental documentation, but is not yet in place. The school is, therefore, unable to report to parents on their children's performance or progress in the subject, as it is statutorily required to do: last year the school failed to send a report on RE to many parents. Assessment procedures and their use were a weakness at the time of the last inspection and remain poor.
259. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory overall. Since the last inspection, the school has made improvements, but not done enough to improve pupils' learning. Improvements in the amount of teaching time, new textbooks and the visually attractive specialist room show that the school has given priority to the development of RE, but the desired raising of standards has not happened. Low attainment and lack of progress are now less the result of inappropriate schemes of work and more a consequence of the unsatisfactory planning and teaching of lessons. The replacement of exercise books by papers kept in document wallets has contributed to making continuity and progression of learning more difficult.
260. Teachers' qualifications do not match the requirements of the curriculum. Teachers show too little understanding of religions. They make too much use of worksheets of modest quality rather than active methods of teaching and learning. Selective copying from the textbook, done quickly by a high-attaining pupil, for example, is a feat of concentration, but is not a model of good learning. The content and presentation of lessons offer pupils little challenge or inspiration. Not enough is done to structure and stimulate pupils' learning. There is a lack of clarity and purpose in the planning and teaching of lessons.
261. The school's aims and values for religious education are sound, but have not yet been realised. The school monitors teaching, but pupils still do not learn enough. The school's commitment to improvement since the last inspection has been good, but actual improvement remains unsatisfactory. This subject is an urgent priority for improvement.