

INSPECTION REPORT

**HURSTMERE FOUNDATION SCHOOL FOR
BOYS**

Sidcup, Kent

LEA area: Bexley

Unique reference number: 101480

Headteacher: Mr I G Sharp

Reporting inspector: Mrs S D Morgan
1355

Dates of inspection: 18th –22nd November 2002

Inspection number: 252683

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Hurst Road Sidcup
Postcode:	DA15 9AW
Telephone number:	020 8300 5665
Fax number:	020 8300 2039
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs V Hughes Narborough
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
9053	Mrs V Phillips	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22423	Mr J Lovgreen	Team inspector	English	
18178	Mr I Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30433	Dr C Corp	Team inspector	Science	
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	How well is the school led and managed?
10666	Mrs P Wheeler	Team inspector	Geography History	
2496	Dr A O'Sullivan	Team inspector	French	
30264	Sir Lyndon Jones	Team inspector	Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3726	Mrs M Bean	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
10761	Dr P Willan	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	
30800	Mrs B Colley	Team inspector	Citizenship	

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited
Langshaw
Pastens Road
Limpsfield Chart
Oxted, Surrey
RH8 0RE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hurstmere is an average-sized modern (non-selective) Foundation school. It has 973 boys on roll and is situated in the London Borough of Bexley. About 25 per cent of pupils in the borough are offered places in selective schools. This results in the school not recruiting boys from across the full range of attainment. Overall, boys' attainment on entry has shown some improvement and is currently below average. Over the last four years the school has become increasingly popular with parents and is oversubscribed. The school now draws its boys predominantly from the local area, which is a relatively affluent suburb of London. The percentage of boys who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, at just over seven per cent. The proportion of boys identified as having special educational needs, at just over 20 per cent, is broadly average, and has shown some increase recently. These boys have a range of needs, with most having learning and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of boys with a statement of special educational need is below average. Over 90 per cent of boys are white, other boys come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. No boys are at an early stage of speaking English. During the last two years there has been a high turnover of staff, 23 have left and 28 have been appointed. Seven teaching staff are temporary. Hurstmere is taking part in a number of initiatives. For example, it is working in partnership with the local grammar school to become a joint specialist sports college and is part of the Sports Co-ordinator scheme. It has Investor in People status. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies in English and science, and special educational needs assessment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which provides an environment in which the personal success and the achievement of all are promoted. Over the last two years GCSE results have improved significantly. In relation to their standard of work at the start of Year 7 boys are achieving well and the standards they attain at the end of Year 11 are broadly average. Boys make satisfactory or better progress in all subjects, except music in Years 7 to 9 and religious education in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in most subjects. The headteacher and senior managers are providing very good leadership and together with governors they have a clear vision of how to improve the school further. Overall the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Recent GCSE results have improved significantly.
- Boys achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Staff morale is high. They work well as a team and this is helping to raise standards.
- Boys and their parents share the school's drive towards high achievement and personal success through hard work.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior managers, effectively supported by governors, has led to very good improvement.

What could be improved

- The range of opportunities for boys to develop and use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all subjects.
- Provision to ensure that boys are prepared fully to take their place as well educated members of a culturally diverse society.
- The consistent implementation of some whole-school policies.

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 very good improvement since it was last inspected in 1996. The leadership and management of the school have improved. A number of weaknesses that were holding the school back have been dealt with. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and this has led to a significant improvement in standards at the end of Year 11. Strengths reported in the last inspection have been maintained or built upon. Almost all of the issues raised in the last inspection report have been dealt with. However, the school still does not meet statutory requirements for ICT across the curriculum or ensure that all boys experience a daily act of collective worship.

A strong commitment to further improvement is shared by the school community. The school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

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

GCSE results have shown significant improvement over the past two years. The 2002 results showed particular improvement with 52 per cent of boys gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades, a more than 16 percentage points improvement on the previous year. The table shows that the results achieved by all boys were average compared with schools nationally. Hurstmere is a modern school. Schools of this type are situated in local education authorities which have a selection process and admit around 25 per cent of each age cohort to grammar schools. When boys' GCSE results are compared with these schools, they were above average. Comparing boys' GCSE results with their prior attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 indicate that they achieved very well. Improvement in GCSE grades in the last year was well above the previous trend. The results for individual subjects varied considerably. Comparing boys' results in each subject shows that they did comparatively well in English, art and design, design and technology, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) ICT and history. They did less well in mathematics, science, business studies and geography. The 2002 results show an improvement in a number of subjects, including English, history and physical education. The school exceeded the targets for GCSE results in 2002 which had been agreed with the local education authority.

Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below average for all pupils. Whilst the 2002 results in English, mathematics and science were below average for all pupils they were similar to the national average for boys. A comparison of these results with boys' prior attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6, shows that, overall, they achieved well, even though there had been significant staff turnover in the last two years. Compared with other modern schools, results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were average.

The standard of work in Year 9 shows some improvement. Current standards are broadly average in both Years 9 and 11, due to improvements in teaching. In relation to their attainment when they come into Year 7, boys' achievements are good over their time at the school, in almost all subjects. However, in music in Years 7 to 9, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in ICT across the curriculum, boys are not achieving as well as they should.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Boys are enthusiastic about opportunities offered by the school. They work hard and are keen to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most boys behave well in lessons and around the school. Their good conduct helps them to learn effectively. A few boys have more difficulty than the vast majority in behaving consistently. The school permanently excluded two boys in the year prior to the inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Relationships among boys and between staff and boys are generally good. Boys' personal development is satisfactory.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most boys attend regularly unless they have good reason to be absent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. This is an improvement on the last inspection, as the proportion of satisfactory or better teaching has increased significantly. Teaching is most effective in Years 10 and 11 and weakest in Year 7. Boys' learning reflects the overall quality of teaching; it was good across the school, best in Year 10 and least effective in Year 7. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and satisfactory in modern languages. It is also satisfactory in religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in music in Year 11. However, in music in Years 7 to 9 it is unsatisfactory. Teaching has many strengths across all year groups. This has a positive impact on boys' learning and progress and enables them to achieve well. Teachers carefully prepare boys for GCSE examinations and this has a positive impact on results. The teaching of basic literacy skills is satisfactory and boys' numeracy skills are well applied in many subjects. A weaker aspect of teaching is the lack of planned opportunities for boys to use and apply their ICT skills in all subjects. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor this was often due to teachers lack of experience and subject knowledge. In almost all lessons, teachers provide work that meets boys' needs. Most marking of boys' work is of good quality.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum provides a sound range of learning opportunities, including some vocational subjects for older boys. The statutory curriculum is in place for all subjects, except ICT across the curriculum, and religious education in Years 10 and 11. Good partnerships with other educational establishments and the community have been developed. However, the programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and careers is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Assessment and support for boys entering the school is very good. As a result, boys make good progress. Currently, parents and boys are not involved enough in reviewing their individual targets and progress.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No boys are at an early stage of learning English. Boys seen during the inspection were making good progress in lessons. Boys with heritage languages other than English are encouraged to obtain GCSE accreditation in these languages.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Good efforts are made to foster boys' moral and social development. Inadequate attention is given to cultivating boys' spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school which provides strong support for boys through tutors and year heads. Good procedures and practices are in place to ensure the academic development of boys. The identification of boys' educational potential is good and is leading to an improvement in standards.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school works well with parents. Their very strong involvement in their son's learning has a very significant impact on the standards they achieve.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership by the headteacher is very good. Staff morale has improved and there is a clear vision and powerful commitment to improvement. Governors, senior team and staff with management responsibilities, make a very effective team. Through their shared efforts significant improvements in standards have been made.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Effectively. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This knowledge is put to very good use both on a daily basis and when drawing up longer-term development plans. However, governors do not ensure that all aspects of their statutory responsibilities are met, for example ensuring that all subjects provide opportunities for boys to develop and use their ICT skills.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Senior managers make use of a wide range of information on boys' progress and achievement. This has been used very effectively in Years 10 and 11 to raise standards. It has been used less effectively to plan work and set goals for younger boys. Some subject leaders have undertaken a very successful programme of monitoring to improve teaching and learning. However, whole-school initiatives for example, ICT, literacy, numeracy and citizenship require closer monitoring.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and control are very good. Staffing and learning resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is good with further improvements taking place. The school is rigorous in applying best value principles.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and are helped to become mature and responsible.• The teaching is good and their children make good progress.• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.• The school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few parents raised issues both in written responses and at the parents' meeting, but none was significant to most parents.

Parents written responses and their comments at the meeting held prior to the inspection were positive. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In this report, the term "standards" refers to boys' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels at the end of a key stage. "Above average standards", for example, means that a higher proportion of boys of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set than is the case in the majority of schools. "Achievement" means how well boys are doing now in relation to their prior attainment, which is what they could do when they started Year 7 or Year 10.

2. GCSE results have shown significant improvement over the past two years. The 2002 results showed particular improvement with 52 per cent of boys gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades, an improvement of more than sixteen percentage points on the previous year. In 2002, the overall GCSE results achieved were average compared with schools nationally. The proportion of boys gaining five or more GCSE A*-C passes was in line with the national average for all schools. The proportion of boys gaining five or more A*-G grades was well above average and a very high proportion gained one or more A*-G grades. The trend of improvement in GCSE grades has increased significantly this year. The results for individual subjects varied considerably. Comparing boys' results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in English, art and design, design and technology, GNVQ ICT and history. They did less well in mathematics, science, business studies and geography. The school exceeded the targets for GCSE results in 2002 which had been agreed with the local education authority.

3. Hurstmere is a modern school. Schools of this type are situated in local education authorities which have a selection process and admit around 25 per cent of each year group to grammar schools. When GCSE results are compared with these schools, the proportion of boys attaining five or more A*-C grades was well above average. The proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades and was well above average, and the proportion gaining one or more A*-G grades was very high.

4. Taken as a whole, standards of work of boys in Year 11, as observed in lessons during the inspection and through their work, are average. However, boys' achievements are good in most subjects. This is because teaching has improved. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations, and plan activities which are well structured. Boys' achievements fall short of expectations in religious education and cross-curricular ICT.

5. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry to the school has shown some improvement and is currently below average. The 2002 results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were similar to the national average for boys. The trend of improvement in results is broadly in line with that found nationally.

6. Compared with modern schools, results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were average. Results were average in English and science, and above average in mathematics.

7. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are close to the national average. Standards in art and design, design and technology, ICT, and physical education, as observed in lessons and through recorded work, are average. In other subjects standards are below average. However, boys' achievements are good in almost all subjects. This is because the quality of teaching has improved and teachers concentrate on developing appropriate skills and improve boys' confidence and self-esteem. Boys' achievement falls short of expectations in cross-curricular ICT because they are given

insufficient opportunities in subjects to develop and apply a range of skills. In music, boys' achievement falls short of expectations because of weaknesses in teaching due to staffing difficulties.

8. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies within English and science has acted as a focus for raising the standards in both subjects. In English, given some variations in boys' attainment on entry, standards are improving. Boys are attentive in lessons, the majority taking part in class discussion. Listening skills remain variable because some teachers ask general questions of the class, rather than demanding and specific questions of individuals, during the early parts of lessons. There is clear evidence that younger boys, across the ability range, are more used to using pair or class discussion as a means of sharing and exploring ideas. Reading standards are improving, thanks to early identification of need and potential and good support systems. The routine of regular silent reading, beyond English lessons, is also supporting the status and quality of boys' reading. Written work is neatly presented and boys are clear about how to structure their writing. Younger boys develop a more secure understanding of conventions of layout for reports, letters and diary entries. Most attempt to vary the language and tone in longer pieces according to the task in hand. A general weakness is insufficient extended writing by some boys.

9. "Catch-up" sessions, in English, were only available to thirteen boys last summer term and there is conflicting evidence about their effectiveness in raising individual boys' standards. There were positive gains, however, in terms of confidence and motivation. Despite the late arrival of materials, "booster classes" for 24 Year 9 boys were run. These were a success: all the boys who were less secure at National Curriculum level 5 gained the level, as did half the boys in the target group who were working at level 4.

10. In science, the various strands of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy have only been formally introduced over the past year and so the full impact has yet to be seen. Attainment, at the end of Year 9, has been rising over the past few years and has continued since the introduction of the strategy. The department keeps accurate and meaningful data that it is using to track and compare the progress and achievement of all boys. The staff use this information to set targets and to raise the expectations of the boys in a constructive manner.

11. Across the curriculum, teaching of literacy skills is good within English and satisfactory across other subjects. Following training, teachers identified areas for a literacy focus across the school. An emphasis on specialist vocabulary was agreed. Many boys have sound understanding of an increasing range of precise terms, such as 'emotional portrait' and 'mood' in Art and the correct names for muscle groups in physical education, and are becoming more confident in using them. There are impressive banks of subject specialist terms in almost all classrooms, but they are often ignored by teachers and boys alike. The strong foundations of numeracy developed in the mathematics department are being well applied in many subjects across the curriculum. Most boys are capable in basic calculation with integers, fractions and decimals. Teachers are effective in developing confidence in the boys in applying these, and other numerical skills in a variety of situations. Modern languages were applying numeric skills in work on European currency; science was using formula and developing work in graphs and timelines. Concepts involving shape and space were being developed in art through studies of perspective and the use of scale and proportion. Work in ICT included the development of statistical skills.

12. Boys identified with special educational needs in Year 7 made good progress by the end of Year 9. This is a direct result of the work done by the special educational needs team who assess all boys on entry to the school, and provide regular support. Boys are provided with individual computerised learning programmes, and also given reading support from the committed group of parents in planned and carefully monitored sessions. Boys with special educational needs are also supported in small

groups in English, mathematics and science, often assisted by learning support staff. They make good progress in these subject areas.

13. There are a small number of boys whose first language is not English. None is at an early stage of learning the language. Boys seen during the inspection were making good progress in lessons. The school encourages boys whose first language is not English to gain GCSE accreditation in their heritage languages. Three boys achieved this in Italian and Turkish in 2002.

14. The school has recently identified a number of boys who are gifted and talented and some specific provision has been made for them. For example in English, boys in Years 10 and 11 are taught in “express” sets, and this has a positive impact on the standards attained. Boys who have particular talents in sports are encouraged to play for clubs and teams outside of school. For example, the school has well established links with a local professional football club which encourages young talented players. However, planned opportunities are not yet in place for extending the learning of gifted and talented boys in all subjects. Although provision is at a very early stage of development, the positive learning environment of the school stimulates and enhances these boys' learning and they make good progress.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development

15. The quality of boys’ attitudes, behaviour and response to school life was judged to be good at the time of the last inspection. The positive picture has been maintained well.

16. Boys’ attitudes to school and to work are good. Within a short period of time, new boys are quick to recognise that the culture in school is one of effort and striving to succeed. Younger boys respond well in and out of lessons more consistently than older boys, whose early experiences of the school were less strongly influenced by this culture. Boys of all ages are proud of the school and happy to talk about its achievements. Although not everyone is willing to put in the hard work required for progress in subjects or success on the sports field, the vast majority of boys respond well to the support and encouragement given. They have a go, even with work they find difficult, especially when teaching is focused well on the skills they need to develop and activities are interesting. Occasionally, when teaching is dull or tasks are inappropriate for individuals, boys lose concentration and interest. This is because they depend on strong teaching and the experience of success to motivate them. They take pride in what they do, which shows in the quality of presentation in many exercise books. Overall, boys with special educational needs respond well in lessons. For some boys with statements of special educational need, teachers from the local authority team provide support for basic literacy skills, and boys were seen responding well to this provision.

17. Behaviour in and out of lessons is generally good and usually supports learning very well. Most boys do as instructed in the classroom and readily follow school codes of conduct elsewhere. Individual boys have particular difficulty with self-discipline and conforming to the rules. Most of the time, they manage to stay out of trouble, but on isolated occasions, their lack of self-control results in conflict with others. Bullying is rare and dealt with promptly and firmly in a context where boys know that they will be protected if they have to identify the bully. Sometimes, a few boys behave badly in individual lessons, which they choose to spoil for others, even when the teacher tries hard to provide relevant and interesting work for the class. On occasion, the tendency of individual staff to shout, rather than deal calmly with rowdy or jostling boys, triggers deterioration in otherwise reasonable group behaviour. Boys respond particularly positively to the calming, constructive influence of individuals, and the increasing numbers of female staff provide very good role models. The school has a clear commitment to ensure that all benefit from being included in school life. Only two boys were excluded

permanently in the year prior to the inspection, in spite of significant challenges and difficulties posed by other individuals.

18. Overall, personal development and relationships are good. This results from the school's emphasis on raising boys' self-confidence and aspirations as quickly as possible after they start at Hurstmere. Commendations are used well to encourage a 'can do' culture. The school's emphasis on the rewards of hard work and good behaviour within an orderly community helps boys to cope confidently with school life. When they see improvement in what they can do, their self-esteem blossoms. They get on well together and have great respect for staff who respect them in turn and give up time to help and encourage them positively. Most relationships between staff and boys are very productive and in one or two cases are exceptionally strong and highly motivating.

19. Personal development is satisfactory, overall, because of all that the school does to promote self-belief, but skills of reflection, empathy and reasoned debate are underdeveloped. This is linked to gaps in the school's provision. Boys' lack knowledge and understanding of different cultures and ways of life that show up occasionally in thoughtless comments about other people's backgrounds, born more of ignorance than malice.

20. Attendance is similar to the national average. The school has done well to keep pace with the rising expectations of what is judged to be satisfactory attendance. Most boys come to school regularly, unless they have good reason to be absent. A very small number of boys are absent because of truancy. One or two boys are late quite often. A few boys take too many days off during term for holidays, and other avoidable reasons, that interrupt their steady progress and spoil their chances of achieving the grades of which they are capable.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is good overall, and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The percentage of lessons which were satisfactory or better has risen to 96 per cent; it was 79 per cent in the last inspection. In almost two thirds of the lessons, teaching was good or better, this is again an improvement on the last inspection when the figure was just under 30 percent. Over a fifth of the lessons were very good or excellent, and in Years 10 and 11 almost a third of the teaching was very good or excellent. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen; during the inspection it was four per cent, while in the last inspection it was over 20 per cent. Teaching was good overall in most subjects. It was satisfactory in modern languages and religious education and in music in Year 11. However, in music in Years 7 to 9 it was unsatisfactory.

22. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching. It has done this despite a significant staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting qualified staff in some subject areas. The considerable efforts to recruit appropriate staff are having beneficial effects on teaching and learning across the school. However, teaching shortages remain. New staff, including supply teachers, are given good guidance and support. Teaching improvements have had a positive impact on examination results in a number of subjects, for example in English, science and GNVQ ICT.

23. The lessons in which teaching was good or better were characterised by teachers planning activities that met the needs of all and ensuring lessons were varied and interesting. For example in a number of English lessons, brisk starter activities and a variety of tasks motivated boys and ensured that their interest was maintained throughout the lesson. This led to effective learning. In the best science lessons, considerable skill was shown in ensuring all boys actively took part. In one Year 11

lesson, the enthusiastic approach and skilful questioning from the teacher, during a review session on rates of reaction, led to boys consolidating their understanding. The most effective design and technology lessons were well planned to provide boys with first-hand experiences. Good demonstrations were given, using a range of resources, which gained boys' interest. This, together with clear explanations about the quality and quantity of work that was expected, motivated boys and enabled them to develop skills and learn efficiently. In physical education, a strength of the teaching was the consistently high expectations of participation, behaviour and attitudes. Teachers encouraged boys to take responsibility for their learning and created a learning environment which was supportive. Teachers set extended tasks for higher-attaining boys and ensured that those with special educational needs were given additional help. Boys who had good levels of skill in certain activities were encouraged to help others. Strong features in a number of geography lessons included teachers setting a challenging pace with timed deadlines for the completion of tasks, and high expectations of the quality of work to be produced. These features enabled boys to work efficiently and make the best use of the time available.

24. A number of strengths were seen in the teaching and learning in the many lessons that were satisfactory or better. Teachers' good subject knowledge, understanding of GCSE requirements and careful examination preparation are particular strengths of teaching in many subjects. This enables boys to gain the skills and knowledge required for examination success. A strength of teaching in many subjects was teachers' positive strategies for planning and managing class activities. For example in specialist ICT lessons, class work was structured well and a range of teaching methods used to capture boys' interest. This helped boys concentrate and work conscientiously on the tasks set. In geography teachers' detailed planning ensured that boys learned effectively. Tasks were planned to meet the needs of all boys, for example, with the use of writing frames to help them write essay answers. Positive relationships were a feature of many lessons, for example in history, and teachers encouraged boys to ask questions to develop their understanding. Teachers set homework regularly to consolidate what had been learned and to provide a link with what was to be covered next lesson. Scrutiny of boys' books and practical work showed that teaching over time is good and this enables boys to make consistent progress.

25. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor it was often due to teachers' lack of experience and subject knowledge. This was the case in music where, in order to ensure pupils were being taught, teachers have been employed who are not fully aware of the requirements of the National Curriculum or who are not subject specialists. Other lessons with weaknesses lacked pace and challenge. Teachers had not planned the work to meet the needs of all boys and some boys lost concentration and did not make enough progress. In others, expectations of what was to be achieved were not made sufficiently clear. This was true for a small number of lessons in several subjects, for example in English and design and technology. Most marking of boys' work and on-going assessment is regular, helpful and of good quality, with clear indications of what boys need to do to improve. However, some teachers do not mark work quickly enough or explain the criteria for marking in sufficient detail.

26. The quality of teaching and learning for boys with special educational needs is good. An experienced team of learning support assistants provides effective help to ensure boys achieve good outcomes from their lessons. Most departments make good provision in their planning for these boys. Good communication between learning support team members and teaching staff was evident. The most successful outcomes were seen when teachers' planning took note of the needs of individuals, and provided clear structures for learning. However, in a small number of lessons, teachers did not adapt their materials sufficiently well for some boys in their teaching group. Learning support assistants plan, and teach effectively, spelling, reading and numeracy programmes for individual boys. With the support of an enthusiastic group of parents they manage a successful reading scheme.

27. The Key Stage 3 National Strategies in English and science have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. In English, there has been a good response to the strategy and teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and have relevant learning objectives. Teachers are careful to stress objectives at the beginning of the lesson. In most lessons they are referred back to as the lesson unfolds and in about half of the lessons observed, good teacher questioning at the end of the lesson re-emphasised for boys what should have been learnt. Homework is very well integrated into lessons, and is often given at the start of, or during, the lesson so that boys can see how lesson tasks and homework complement each other. In general, teachers effectively convey what skills or approaches in a particular piece of work will result in good marks. It is very rare for time to drag in the relatively long lessons because teachers are skilled in changing tasks without losing the direction of the learning. Most boys respond very well to moving from one activity or approach to another with little fuss or loss of concentration. Teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory across other subjects.

28. In science teaching has improved significantly, especially over the past few years. Raising the quality of teaching and learning was a major issue for the department and staff have welcomed the methods outlined in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. All lessons are well planned, each lesson being divided into discrete sections that enable boys to understand what they need to achieve while maintaining interest and pace. The strategy of beginning each lesson with a starter activity ensures that all boys are involved in an active manner. The summary section is used in a constructive manner to ensure understanding, normally linked to relevant and extending homework. All the teachers within the department, even the temporary supply staff, follow the strategies adopted by the department.

29. The strong foundations of numeracy developed in the mathematics department are being applied well in many subjects. Modern Languages were applying numeric skills in work on European currency; science was using formula and developing work in graphs and timelines. Concepts, involving shape and space, were being developed in art through studies of perspective and the use of scale and proportion. Work in ICT included the development of statistical skills. In design and technology teachers' planning effectively incorporated the use of ICT skills into lessons. However, overall there is insufficient planning for the use of ICT to support work in other subjects.

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

30. The curriculum is satisfactory overall and is being developed to meet boys' needs and aspirations. This is in line with the school's commitment to social inclusion.

31. In Years 7 to 9, boys study the full National Curriculum and religious education. Time allocations are broadly average for most subjects allowing balanced coverage. However, there is no drama provision in Year 9, and this is having a negative effect on continuity to the GCSE drama option in Years 10 and 11. The introduction of specialist, structured ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 is helping to raise standards. In order to provide targeted support to some boys with special educational needs the withdrawal of a number of boys into small discrete classes takes place in Year 8. However, in some of these lessons the poor behavior of a few boys limited the progress of others and some boys mentioned that they felt their progress was being hampered.

32. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance overall. All boys follow a combination of academic, technical and creative subjects, which is increasingly being tailored to individuals' needs. GNVQ ICT, media studies and drama options have been added to the range of subjects since the last inspection. More boys are now taking double rather than single option science,

which is an improvement since the last inspection. The increased provision of GNVQ ICT has, however, been at the expense of GCSE French, where there has been an increasing incidence of boys being disappplied from the National Curriculum. Generally however, the process of disapplication from National Curriculum requirements is being used sparingly.

33. In its aim to meet the needs of all boys, the school has provided alternative opportunities for a small number who for various reasons might not complete examination courses. A 60 hour, part-time, off-site link course in building crafts has been established with a neighbouring college of further education. The course is well taught, however, the participation rate of boys has been poor, due to transport difficulties. The school is planning to run the course in order to ensure that alternative opportunities continue to be available for potentially disaffected boys.

34. Initiatives, following staff training on literacy, are beginning to improve literacy across the curriculum. However, the school is aware that more still needs to be done. Numeracy across the curriculum is promoted well.

35. Curriculum planning is satisfactory in most subjects. It is good in English, design and technology, French and geography. It is unsatisfactory in religious education in Years 10 and 11 where it does not meet all of the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and the statutory requirement to provide boys with opportunities to develop their ICT skills across subjects throughout the school, is not met.

36. Regular homework and subject workshops, including booster and catch-up sessions provide sustained help that is greatly valued by the boys and is helping to raise standards. Boys frequently reported the high level of encouragement provided by individual staff. Overall, provision for activities outside of lessons is satisfactory. A considerable expansion in the range of extra-curricular activities has taken place since the last inspection. These are well attended by boys. In addition to homework and subject workshops, there is a good range of foreign and residential visits as well as class and tutor group outings. A wide range of sporting activities provides ample opportunity for boys to take part, as well as catering for excellence within the borough, regionally and nationally. Good links have been developed with local professional football clubs where some boys are academy members. Due to staffing difficulties, formal musical activities have been discontinued. However, staff have worked with a group of boys in order to ensure that a Christmas concert will take place. Those with high performance skills play in groups and bands outside school. The annual Transition Summer School has a good level of take up by incoming Year 7 boys, with high levels of satisfaction recorded in parental feedback. Plans are being made to extend the sporting provision next summer. A further audit of activities is currently being made to find areas of pupil interest for future extra-curricular provision.

37. Overall, there is good provision for equality of opportunity and the school works hard to remove the barriers to learning. School policies reinforce expectations of respect and equality and a race equality policy is in place. The school's policy of inclusion ensures that boys with special educational needs receive their curriculum entitlement. Appropriate action is taken to ensure that boys who are new to the school settle in quickly, and a detailed assessment of their particular needs is undertaken. Learning programmes are drawn up and, where these require boys to be withdrawn from lessons, are designed to help them catch up and so manage better in their mainstream classes. Where appropriate, the school has created opportunities for some older boys to have an amended curriculum.

38. Provision for careers education and PSHE is unsatisfactory. Each day starts with a fifteen minute tutorial period for all boys. This is largely informal and unstructured, once homework has been checked. Little use is made of this valuable hour and a quarter each week to support careers education, citizenship and PSHE across the school. Careers education is taught in Years 10 and 11, as part of the PSHE programme. Whilst senior managers are committed to its delivery by a trained team

of staff, this approach is currently not in operation due to staffing shortages. This has had a negative effect on the coherence of provision. The teacher responsible for careers education is supported by an outside adviser. Together, they deliver a structured programme, and work with boys to produce individual action plans. Year 9 boys are offered one day's experience working for the school office. At present, Year 10 boys are seeking their own one-week work experience placements for July 2003, which will be checked by the school. Following a year assembly to launch work experience, one Year 10 class was observed participating in a useful practical introduction by a visiting theatre group, exploring what should and should not be done on work experience. The school acknowledges the need for a review of PSHE provision, including careers education. At present, there is no careers room where boys can freely access an increased range of information, and pursue research on websites and CD-rooms. The planned programme needs improvement in order to be coherent and relevant to the boys' needs.

39. Considerable emphasis is placed upon links with the community, which are good. Parents are very active in supporting fieldwork trips and other visits, and the reading support programme is very good. Good links exist with the local grammar school, which is collaborating in the preparation of a bid for specialist sports college status. Strong links have also been developed with the local schools that provide sixth form opportunities. Links with the main feeder primary schools are good, so that transition from primary to secondary school can be supportive, and efficiently managed. The school has taken a pro-active approach to developing active links with initial teacher training providers, with a number of existing teachers having been recruited following teaching practice at the school.

40. When the school was inspected previously, its provision for boys' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was described as satisfactory, in general, although spiritual and cultural aspects were judged to be unsatisfactory. These weaknesses remain. However, improvement is satisfactory because of the influence of a more positive ethos, where boys are expected to do well and to feel part of the school's success story.

41. The school makes inadequate provision for boys' spiritual development, partly because it has no coherent framework within which spiritual awareness is explained fully, planned for and monitored. Uneven delivery of religious education, citizenship, and PSHE mars provision. Meaningful opportunities for boys to respond to music, reflect on their experiences, listen to unfamiliar ideas and accounts of lives different from their own and discuss their feelings, are too limited. Assemblies often lack a sense of occasion or chances for boys to participate fully by singing, listening to well-chosen music or talking about special events in their lives. In teachers' planning, very few examples of activities that might trigger inspiring moments are evident. On occasion, teachers seize their chances well, as in a science lesson where the teacher paused for a moment of stillness as Year 9 boys reflected on the differences between identical and non-identical twins that they knew. In the very best lessons, where boys' ideas and experiences are valued fully, they have every chance of learning to think for themselves, to consider different points of view and to take an interest in ideas and feelings different from their own. In a Year 10 drama lesson on the pressures of fame, boys had excellent opportunities to think about, generate and explore a fascinating range of ideas sensitively.

42. Provision for boys' moral development is good. The school has a strong tradition of good order and has sustained its focus on promoting a clear understanding of the difference between acceptable and unacceptable conduct. More recently, it has tried to encourage not just obedience to authority, but social responsibility and politeness. The increasing emphasis on civilised social interaction is evident in the way most adults in the school treat boys. For example, office staff are courteous and helpful even with boys who are in trouble, giving a very good example of how to treat others. In English the range of literature studied, and the way in which moral issues such as prejudice, individual rights and media influence are studied also make a good contribution to boys moral development. The tracking and

commendation system promotes a clear understanding of the merits of trying to do one's best.

43. The school provides a good range of opportunities for collaborative and team work, particularly in sport. As yet, these are not matched consistently with high-quality chances for boys to use initiative in planning and carrying out their work. Outside the classroom, boys have scope for contributing to the school community as players in school sports teams and as members of the school council. Older boys have fewer chances than usual to shoulder responsibilities. Experience of rights, responsibilities, teamwork and fair play is limited to the sports field in most cases, except for those able to work on specific projects or go on school trips. Participation in activities, such as the competition for designing a potential Olympic stadium, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Year 7 outdoor pursuits week at Mersea Island, develop social skills well.

44. The school does not do enough to teach boys about their own cultural heritage, nor actively develop their knowledge and experience of other traditions. They do not know enough about the contribution of other cultures to the arts, science, design and technology, and most subjects they study. Their view of what they need to know to cope with life as adults is narrow, and ignores the reality of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Britain today. For example, a boy who hopes to play professional football one day had never thought about the advantages of learning other languages, until asked to think about how someone like Steve Macmanaman copes in Spain, or Thierry Henry copes in England. The contribution of art, music, religious education and other subjects is less powerful than might be expected. The school's policy on racial equality is in place but the school does not actively promote acceptance and understanding of other people, through clear teaching and discussion about cultural differences. Whilst some opportunities are taken to widen boys' experiences, for example by inviting drama groups from other cultural traditions to perform in school, overall boys' cultural development is not promoted sufficiently.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. They comply with locally-agreed procedures and are published in the staff handbook. However, there has been little recent training in the issues surrounding this subject either for managers who are about to take on more responsibility, for teachers or for ancillary staff.

46. Health and safety procedures are good. A senior teacher with this as a particular responsibility has regular meetings with the caretaker and other staff and any problems are recorded and dealt with. Regular, appropriate checks and risk assessments are carried out and records kept. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and the school works effectively with local agencies in encouraging boys to attend school.

47. Form tutors and heads of year move through the school with their classes, so they know them very well. The role of the tutors and year heads has recently been enhanced through the use of the tracking system. This has led to much closer links between academic progress and pastoral care. Form tutors play an important role in setting targets with individual boys every half term. This co-ordinated approach, where everyone is now involved in monitoring the overall progress of the boys, has played a vital part in the improvement in results.

48. Mentoring is offered to some boys in Years 10 and 11 and has had a positive impact on raising achievement. However, there are no clear criteria or systems for deciding which boys would benefit from mentoring, and various strategies are employed with different year groups.

49. The school has a good system of reward certificates which is effective in motivating boys in Years 7 to 9 to do well. A recently introduced system of credits for quality work is proving to be very effective in re-kindling motivation in Year 10. Parents spoke positively about how the reward system had motivated their sons.

50. The school employs a counsellor to work on a one-to-one basis with individual boys when necessary. This system is providing very effective, individual targeted support and guidance. It is a good example of the school's effort to ensure that boys experiencing difficulties are enabled to continue taking a full part in school life.

51. The anti-bullying policy is very effective and plays a major role in eliminating oppressive behaviour and bullying. Boys are comfortable in talking over issues of this nature with a teacher, and they and their parents are confident that any issues will be dealt with and resolved quickly. This aspect of care is good.

52. The school works very hard to make it clear to parents and their sons that regular, punctual attendance makes a crucial difference to achievement. It has efficient and effective systems for checking on absences and ensuring that families know when a boy is late or missing from lessons. Truancy is highlighted in registers so that it is easy for form tutors and office staff to check up on boys who fail to come to school. The school recognises that it has to be vigilant in monitoring and doing all it can to reduce truancy levels of boys who are educated off site. Its efforts to raise attendance are good and generally successful.

53. The PSHE programme does not make a satisfactory contribution to the boys' personal development. Monitoring of the teaching of the programme does not take place. In some year groups, for example in Year 7, some aspects of PSHE are delivered in tutor time and some in timetabled lessons. This results in a lack of coherence. As a result, PSHE is not valued by all boys and many feel it has little to offer in terms of their development.

54. Overall, the school looks after the boys well and some aspects of the care it takes are very good. Since the last inspection, the management structure for pastoral care has been reorganised and the role of the pastoral team enhanced to include monitoring all aspects of development. This has been very effective in helping to raise achievement.

55. The school has developed a good range of strategies for assessing and monitoring boys' progress. The results of nationally validated tests, taken in Year 7, are used to indicate boys' potential attainment. Regular testing allows boys' progress to be monitored and for teachers to take appropriate action if this progress is not as great as expected. This approach motivates the boys and gives them self-belief that they can achieve.

56. The assessment procedures used in Year 7 to identify boys with special educational needs are very good. The learning support team ensure that all boys are assessed, for attainment in reading, spelling and mathematics, on entry to the school. This allows the team to establish priorities for supporting boys who are diagnosed as behind their chronological age in any one or more of these three areas. The boys' overall progress is monitored through regular re-testing each term. The success of this support is measured by the large proportion of boys who reach scores in line with their chronological age, and so return to mainstream lessons. For the small number of boys in Years 10 and 11 who remain on the register, detailed records are available through the special educational needs co-ordinator. These trace their progress and attainment through the school, from entry to taking GCSEs. Statutory reviews for boys who have formal statements of special educational needs are carried out as required, and

individual education plans are in place. Information on boys with special educational needs is made available to all teachers. The parents of boys who are not on the special needs register receive regular progress sheets which include targets for reading, spelling, and mathematics, and information about the “Successmaker” and reading programmes. Under the new Code of Practice, there is an expectation that all boys on school action, and school action plus, have an individual education plan agreed by parents and boys, against which to measure their provision and progress. Currently, parents’ and boys’ are not receiving this entitlement.

57. The school makes little use of the results of the national tests at the end of Years 6 and 9, and is now developing existing systems so that these results become a more important part of the assessment process. Some subject departments are using the results of the national tests at the end of Years 6 and Year 9 effectively. For example, mathematics uses the information to establish the Year 7 teaching groups, and physical education uses data from end of Year 9 tests to predict future GCSE results.

58. The school has also developed an internal progress tracking system. This was first used in Year 7 and then progressively through the school, and has recently been introduced into Year 11. Once every half term, each teacher grades homework and effort in class, for each boy in every subject. This information is used by year heads and tutors to monitor boys’ progress. Parents and boys report that they value the scheme and the way in which it motivates. In some subjects, boys have a departmental tracking sheet, which summaries progress and also provides subject specific targets. This good extension to the system is in the earlier stages of development.

59. Marking and assessment in some departments is detailed, and fully involves and motivates the boys. For example, science has a good system providing effective feedback to the boys and design technology uses a system of sheets in individual folders so that boys are fully aware of what has been completed. In some departments, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, marking is less well developed.

60. Overall, the school has some good assessment and recording systems. These systems are not yet integrated. Further development of staff expertise in the use of assessment information, for example to guide teachers’ planning is now required.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. The previous inspection judged that links with parents were good, in general, apart from the use of contact diaries. Boys, parents and teachers use these well now. Links with parents have improved greatly because the school has built on the existing strengths and established a genuine partnership with parents in order to raise standards. As a result, parents think well of the school. They are particularly pleased with the school’s expectation that their sons should work hard and achieve their best. They believe that the school is helping boys to make good progress and become mature because they are well taught and it is well led.

62. The school has effective links with parents as a result of good efforts to keep them informed. It sends home information about progress regularly, not just at the end of the year. It contacts parents promptly if progress is too slow or when tracking shows that performance has dropped below the target level grade. Annual written reports are detailed and usually give good information about what boys need to do to improve. They do not always give a clear idea of whether the standards achieved are what might be expected of someone the same age.

63. As a result of great efforts to involve parents as real partners in their sons' education, the school has ensured that they support the drive for success. Their impact on the school's work is very strong because the vast majority of them want their sons to do as well as they can in national tests and public examinations. Aspirations and expectations are high so parents challenge boys who are not working hard enough. The contribution of parents to their sons' learning is good, overall. Several parents make an invaluable contribution to boys' progress through their involvement in the reading scheme, which supports those who need more practice. The buzz of enthusiasm in the library shows how much most boys enjoy seeing their reading skills improve. Communication with parents is a regular feature of the work of the special educational needs team during the statutory annual reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The headteacher is a very effective leader. He shares a very clear educational vision and sense of direction for the school, with the staff, governors and the local community. Under his leadership, a number of important strategic plans have been put into action and several key appointments have been made. These have begun to tackle the key weaknesses in teaching and management that were identified in the last report and standards have risen considerably, particularly in the last two years. The headteacher has the confidence and the support of the staff, and the partnership has successfully ensured that examination targets have been met. Teachers are gaining in confidence, pleased with what has been achieved so far and aware of what can be achieved the future. Morale is high, there is shared sense of purpose and a powerful commitment to future developments and the possibility of specialist school status. The school's clear commitment to the fulfilment of individual potential together with encouraging the high achievement of all are evident in its work. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good.

65. Delegated responsibilities are clearly set out and work well. Performance management is now in place and very effective. To support his vision for the school, the headteacher has built an effective team of staff who hold key management responsibilities. The deputy headteachers, year leaders and leaders of core subjects have secured substantial improvements across the school. The senior team has the important task of maintaining or improving the work of departments, setting out the plans for specialist status and other high profile developments. Their highest priority, however, is to continue the improvements in teaching and learning.

66. There is a good balance of experienced, male and female staff holding positions of responsibility. Some are new to senior management positions but have brought some important qualities to the team. Year heads have a quiet but authoritative manner that the boys and parents respect. They have helped manage improvements in boys' behaviour and social development by taking a firm but fair approach to discipline, teaching boys to take more responsibility for their actions. Their monitoring of achievements and attendance has further helped to strengthen the links between the school and parents. The school has the respect of the local community and now enjoys a higher level of parental involvement and support for its work.

67. Some line management responsibilities of the senior staff have been less effectively followed through than other aspects of school improvement. This has led to weaknesses in the management of some school-wide initiatives, contributing to differences of quality, impact and provision. For example, the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been successfully embraced within the English department but the good

practice has not been shared widely across the school. Whilst several subjects contribute to the curriculum for citizenship, it is not made explicit to the boys and the coverage is incidental rather than planned. Also, whilst results in the ICT course have significantly improved and the school has spent a considerable amount of its budget on new computers, several departments cannot get access to them or cannot afford the software to support learning.

68. Management and leadership of subjects are good overall. There are notable strengths in the core subjects and in other subjects such as, physical education and geography. The heads of these departments model very good leadership qualities, in their approach to monitoring, improving teaching and learning, curriculum planning and organisation of the learning environment. In contrast, there are some weaknesses, for example in music where despite the school's best efforts, the school has been unable to appoint a head of department.

69. Heads of department have access to good quality information and data about performance in their subject. Some use it well, especially in Years 10 and 11, to set examination targets and guide teaching and curriculum planning. Most use it, once the examination results are known to compare performance across subjects, and monitor and analyse teaching. It is comparatively less well used in Years 7 to 9. With few exceptions, there has not been a high enough priority placed on developing teaching and learning, given the number of staff who have recently been appointed. However, the school as a whole, and some department leaders in particular, have been very effective in their support for teachers in training and supporting student teachers in the final year of their studies. This arrangement has had very positive outcomes for the school in terms of recruitment.

70. Overall, the management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The assessment of boys and diagnosis of their needs, as they enter the school, is effectively managed by an experienced and well-qualified team of learning support assistants. Each major subject area has links with one learning support assistant, to make communication and continuity easier. The members of the learning support team have a strong record of professional development and qualifications to inform their work. As a result of this, boys make good progress. However, there remains a need for all concerned with the management of provision for boys identified with special educational needs to ensure that the requirements of the Code of Practice for parents, guardians, and boys, is properly organised through individual education plans. There is an expectation that all boys on school action, and school action plus, have an IEP agreed by parents and boys, against which to measure their provision and progress.

71. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies have been managed well. In English good progress has been achieved. The audit was completed by the head of English and the strategy manager, and issues such as weaker writing and listening skills, drafting and proof reading were identified. Issues relating to particular attainment levels and/or year groups were also noted. The scheme of work for Years 7 and 8 has been rewritten; that for Year 9 is developing. Much greater emphasis is being given to considering the suitability of texts to classes, and units of work have particular skills built in and articulated for boys. Termly moderation of formal written pieces takes place, and assessment systems are thorough, useful and well used. At present there is too little opportunity for teachers to watch each other at work, and checking the quality of marking is not carried out regularly enough.

72. In science, the head of department and the Key Stage 3 co-ordinator have only recently been appointed to their posts. They have used the Key Stage 3 strategy effectively, to review and modify many of the different aspects of teaching science. The department has undertaken a full audit to identify the major issues needing to be tackled. The outcomes of this audit have been linked into the departmental development plan. Effective links with their feeder schools have helped the department become fully aware of the topics and approaches the boys have experienced before joining the school.

This has helped in the transition into secondary school science. The monitoring of teaching, attainment, homework and marking by the head of department has helped ensure that all staff are aware of the expected standard within the subject.

73. The governing body is effective in carrying out its responsibilities. It has a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Some governors are very active. They visit the school on a regular basis, observe day-to-day work and meet with teachers. They have established very constructive relationships with staff, whose skills and expertise they value highly, and because they are 'attached' to a department they are very familiar with issues that might have an impact on their decision-making. They are known by staff and they meet regularly with senior and middle managers. Governors give generously of their time.

74. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They share a very good understanding of the school's circumstances, the community it serves and the locality. The progress of neighbouring schools, and information on local initiatives and national issues are well known to them. They are well aware of teacher shortages in mathematics, science and music, and the various steps taken by the school to improve recruitment. They wholeheartedly support and encourage the steps taken to train graduates, and recognise the advantages it gives them for recruiting teachers. A few governors are able to attend staff training days and several have joined externally run governor training programmes. Governors also have an annual training day during which school-wide strategic planning and target setting are discussed. These experiences are put to very good use and enable governors to make a strong contribution to long-term decisions. For example, they are very supportive and actively involved in the school's application for specialist status. In fulfilling the full range of responsibilities there are, however, some weaker aspects. Governors have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met for the teaching of religious education and ICT across the curriculum. In addition, as at the time of the last inspection, the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

75. The steps to monitor performance and take appropriate action are satisfactory, with some major strengths as well as some weaker aspects. Data from central government and the local authority helps the school compare its performance with other schools, and to set challenging targets for public examinations. The headteacher, senior team and governors closely analyse, interpret and evaluate boys' achievement. This aspect of monitoring is a strength. Information on attainment prior to joining the school has been less well used in the past to plan work, set goals in foundation subjects and to track and compare performance across the school at the end of Year 9. Recent teacher assessments of performance in foundation subjects, when compared with those reported nationally and the results of statutory tests in the core subjects, have highlighted some anomalies. The school is aware of the need to be more analytical and to use all the information available as a means of accurately assessing progress and raising standards in all subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

76. As a way of improving teaching and learning, some very effective subject leaders complete a detailed analysis of boys' performance year on year. This information, as part of a whole raft of other information discussed in department meetings, has helped them monitor boys' work, target specific staff training programmes and acted as a focus for regular classroom observations. The result has been a significant rise in attainment that has boosted boys' self esteem and enthusiasm for learning. This very good and rigorous approach to monitoring now needs to be shared more widely, as part of the school's efforts to improve teaching and learning across the school. Initiatives that cross over several subjects, for example boys' spiritual and cultural development, ICT, literacy, numeracy and citizenship, require closer monitoring. More support by senior and middle managers is needed to ensure that there are maximum gains from the time spent on staff training and the money spent on computers.

77. The strategic planning of the school's finances is very good. It has improved significantly since the

last inspection. The budget is very well planned and managed, with spending priorities well aligned to the school development plan. Although spending on educational resources is towards the lower end of the national average, the school has clear policies for their allocation to departments, and a development reserve fund is maintained. The school recognises, however, that heads of department need to develop their ability to plan strategically in relation to costing the curriculum. The school has very good systems for tracking and monitoring expenditure. This is notably the case with the spending of specific grant money such as the Standards Fund. Financial administration is very competently handled by the finance office. Auditors' and accountants' reports have been positive. The governors bring significant expertise to bear in their role in monitoring the school's finances: they have a very good understanding of the processes, procedures and current issues related to the budget, and monitor it regularly and with considerable insight.

78. The school is able to show that it applies best value principles in arriving at decisions by consulting about proposed changes and making changes to the curriculum to meet the needs of all boys. It is rigorous in its pursuit of best value for its expenditure. The headteacher provides a strong lead through his management and monitoring of finance issues and, together with the governors, ensures that best value principles are routinely applied. The tendering and selection process used to award the catering contract is a good example. Budget surplus is carefully used.

79. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology. Increasing use is made of ICT, for example, to track boys' progress and the office staff produce information sheets and newsletters for staff and parents. Good use is made of ICT for all aspects of school administration. However, many departments still have difficulties in gaining access to computers and this limits their use across the curriculum.

80. The school has made the best use of available resources in maintaining its staff at full strength. It has taken a positive and pro-active line on recruitment, with its involvement in initial teacher training proving a good source of new staff. In recent years, the profile of the staff has changed so that there are now larger numbers of young teachers and women, including heads of department. This, combined with a core of experienced teachers, has enriched the overall quality of the staff. Teachers are almost entirely specialists in the subjects they teach. Where this is not the case, inspectors did not find any negative impact on standards. Temporary teachers replacing absent teachers are generally specialists in the subjects they cover. The overall picture on teaching staff is satisfactory, though the school is aware of issues to be dealt with in music and science. The quality of the PSHE and citizenship programme is being adversely affected by the large number of staff involved, which is unwieldy for the purposes of training and monitoring. The school has invested in an above-average number of learning support staff who make a very good contribution to the quality of education provided. The administrative and clerical staff similarly provide very good support: they are very clear as to their role in supporting teaching and learning. The governors are actively involved in recruitment and monitoring the quality of staffing, through their personnel committee. This includes the management of staff health issues.

81. Arrangements for both the induction of new staff and the professional development of existing staff, are very good. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. There is a welcome and induction programme for newly-qualified teachers, supported with good documentation. Heads of department are also clear as to their role in managing new staff. The school's strategies for performance management are well organised, with a clear policy and good documentation. Teachers' continuing professional development is very well managed: training priorities are closely aligned to the school development plan, but departmental and individual needs are fairly catered for. The school has plans to exploit the improved cost-effectiveness of targeted "in-house" training. The well-established and successful links with several initial training institutions have proved a source of professional

enrichment to the school.

82. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in developing the school as a learning environment, and this is seen as an important factor in its drive to raise standards. A major programme of refurbishment and development has been completed in science, design and technology and ICT. A much-needed new sports hall, with extra office and classroom space, is almost complete. Accommodation in most subject areas is good, though one drama room is unsatisfactory and the special educational needs and careers departments lack proper bases. The library is unsatisfactory, and some toilets need refurbishment. The outside environment is pleasant, and playground space has been well organised to separate younger and older boys. The governors take an active interest in the quality of the premises, both through regular visits and through their fabric committee.

83. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. There are strengths in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and geography. The “Successmaker” programme has proved very successful in supporting boys with special educational needs. Resources in art and design are unsatisfactory and in music they are inadequate, with a lack of small percussion instruments and general teaching resources. Many departments have inadequate provision of, and access to, computers, though this has improved considerably in mathematics, science and design and technology. The overall number and quality of computers in the school has improved since the last inspection. The library has too few books.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. Building on the very good improvement made over the last two years, and to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) improve standards in ICT across the curriculum, by:
 - improving the leadership by senior managers to ensure that the co-ordination and management of ICT across the curriculum is effective;
 - ensuring that subject teachers have access to, and use computers to support boys’ learning as required by the National Curriculum for each subject;
(4, 7, 8, 11, 29, 35, 67, 74, 76, 96, 112, 121, 131, 151, 157, 162-4, 171, 177, 185, 191)

- (2) ensure that boys are prepared fully to take their place as well educated members of a culturally diverse society, by:
 - improving provision and standards in religious education in Years 10 and 11;
 - improving provision and standards in music;
 - improving provision for PSHE, including citizenship and careers education;
 - providing more opportunities for boys to use initiative and take responsibility;
 - planning systematically to develop boys’ spiritual awareness through the taught curriculum and assemblies;
 - increasing the contribution of subjects to boys’ cultural development;
 - planning systematically to teach boys about their own cultural heritage and other traditions;
 - providing planned opportunities for boys to discuss about cultural differences.
(4, 7, 19, 22,25, 35-6, 38, 41, 43-4, 53, 68, 74, 76, 80, 82, 112, 132-5, 143, 174-7, 183, 187-191)

- (3) ensure that all aspects of the school’s work are monitored and evaluated

systematically so that where necessary, improvements can be made to provision.
(33, 45, 48, 56-7, 60, 67, 69-71, 74-6)

(The numbers in italics show the main paragraphs in which these issues are discussed in the report)

85. The report also identifies some other issues which governors may wish to include in the action plan to be developed following this inspection. They include:

- extending the strategies for improving boys skills in literacy across the curriculum (as planned) (*11, 27, 34, 67,71, 100-105*);
- improving aspects of accommodation (*82, 97, 179*);
- improving resources for art and design and music (*83, 131, 177*);
- improving library accommodation and the number of books available (*82-3, 104, 112, 131, 157, 171, 177, 191*);
- ensuring that action is taken to comply with legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship (*74*);
- increasing the planned opportunities for extending the learning of gifted and talented boys (*14*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	131
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	24	54	42	4	1	0
Percentage	5	18	41	32	3	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	973
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	72

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	199

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.8

School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	185	n/a	185

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	111	120	127
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	111	120	127
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (73)	65 (73)	69 (63)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (26)	38 (31)	21 (19)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	139	99	143
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	139	99	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (74)	54 (73)	77 (73)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (26)	23 (31)	26 (24)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	146	n/a	146

GCSE/GNVQ 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	76	142	145
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	76	142	145
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52 (35)	98 (91)	100 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.9 (32.9)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
911	49	2
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
6	2	0
20	1	0
4	0	0
7	0	0
2	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
7	0	0
3	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)	59
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	417

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	21

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2,820,906
Total expenditure	2,814,323
Expenditure per pupil	3076
Balance brought forward from previous year	109,455
Balance carried forward to next year	116,038

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	9
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	973
Number of questionnaires returned	210

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	54	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	56	8	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	55	14	4	0
The teaching is good.	37	55	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	42	11	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	3	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	49	10	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	42	50	1	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	54	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	46	9	1	14

* figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' meeting, parents were very positive about all aspects of the school. They commented that the school had worked hard to resolve staffing difficulties and had kept them fully informed.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching over a period of time that has led to a significant improvement in results.
- Teachers organise and manage classes well.
- The department benefits from good leadership and is well managed.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Agreed systems for planning lessons, setting learning objectives, and marking work are not consistently applied by all teachers.
- Teaching does not yet focus sufficiently on younger boys learning close listening skills, and how to write at length in a variety of appropriate styles.
- The ICT element of the National Curriculum for English is not being covered adequately.

86. Boys join the school with skills in English which are below, and in some years well below, average. They are weaker in listening, speaking at length, reading, and writing accurate extended English.

87. Following a rising trend, results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 declined in 2002. Nonetheless they were equal to the national average for boys, and boys in the school did as well in English as they did in mathematics and science. The school requested re-marking of some English papers because of the discrepancy between test results and the previously accurate teacher assessments. Seven boys achieved a high level 7 result.

88. The standard of work of boys currently in Year 9 is close to average. They learn the good habit of checking and re-drafting written work. Higher-attaining boys create effects, for instance in using short sentences and paragraphs to build tension. Average-attaining boys make many spelling errors, but can structure essays. Their ideas outstrip their expression, but personal and descriptive writing are well done. Lower-attaining boys attempt formal style and language in reports. Almost all boys can understand what they read but only half are able to see into and link ideas within the text. They are lively and confident in discussion, the higher-attainers being able to comfortably explain ideas, for instance how an advertisement works. Too many boys look to answer quickly rather than thoughtfully and accurately, and over-colloquial phrasing is the result. Numeracy skills are good: boys in a lower-attaining Year 8 class made efficient use of clapping to accurately work out syllables and the consequent rhythm in a poem.

89. GCSE results have risen consistently and significantly since the last inspection, and reached the national average for boys in 2001. The school enters a greater proportion of boys, for both English language and English literature, than most schools, yet it is very rare for a boy not to gain pass grades in both subjects. In 2002, the percentage of boys gaining grades A*-C in language was above the national figure for boys. Whilst that in literature was below, adjustment made for the school's high entry proportion show results to be at the average. Boys did better in English language than in many other subjects. Results were well above the average achieved by boys in comparable schools

nationally in 2001. For the first time, a small group of boys took GCSE media studies: all achieved a pass grade, half gaining grades A*-C.

90. The evidence of completed work and lessons observed showed that the attainment of boys currently in Year 11 is close to national average. Coursework files are in good order, many showing an extensive range of assignments. Higher-attaining boys write confident and powerful English of sustained quality, but there are surprising levels of spelling inaccuracy. They are capable of original interpretation of literature. Average-attaining boys have good summary and analysis skills, but promising work on literature texts too often deteriorates into plot summary. Lower-attaining boys can rarely write impersonally, but show some skill in re-writing literature from a character's viewpoint. Whilst many boys show good oral skills, there remains a tendency to rely on superficial attention and quick, often guessed, answers so that quality whole class debate is rare.

91. When compared to their earlier attainment, boys' achievement is good in all years. Boys with special educational needs make good progress. This is because they are supported to feel capable of tackling the work, but expected to accept responsibility for learning. 'Spoon feeding' and over-simple exercises are avoided. Gifted and talented boys make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 because they are taught in 'express' sets where the level of academic challenge and demand is high, and they respond accordingly.

92. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. A detailed scrutiny of samples of boys' books and files showed that teaching over time is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present ideas and issues in a well-ordered yet interesting way. As a result most boys pay attention and work hard. They learn skills because teachers carefully model correct terminology for them and break down techniques into understandable components. An outstanding example was a Year 11 media studies lesson where the teacher probed boys' understanding and expression by precise and demanding questions which were well matched to the boys' potential. Whilst all lessons are well planned, in some the teacher does not make clear enough the precise skills to be used and what progress is expected. When linked with vague question and answer sessions, boys are not encouraged to listen closely and strive for understanding. Some experienced teachers mistake quietness for attention.

93. Teachers use a good variety of methods well. Brisk starter activities featured in over half of all lessons, and there were some good lesson summaries. Boys concentrate and work willingly, being motivated by the inter-changing of reading, pair/group/class discussion, and crisp writing activities. The teacher of a Year 8 class studying 'Well, you shouldn't have' by Sue Cowling used precise questioning to get boys to understand how written language techniques gave clues to the reader. Good performances of the poem, and their own versions, resulted. A strength is the regularity and quality of the homework set. This extends work done in class and increases boys' study skills. Much marking is very good, but some teachers do not return marked work quickly enough. The level of correction and advice about improvement given by some teachers, is insufficient. This tends to happen in a minority of classes in Years 7 to 9 and results in boys writing at length but with insufficient attention to accuracy and appropriateness of style.

94. The boys' attitudes and behaviour are good. They have good relationships with teachers and each other, and are willing to learn and work. They work sensibly in groups or pairs when the opportunity arises. A minority of socially immature older boys can show brash, sometimes challenging behaviour. Some average-attaining boys will willingly write in lessons but try to avoid completing homework, or do it in a lazy and limited fashion. In contrast, the majority of boys work neatly and diligently, and this is an important factor in their success.

95. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, as demonstrated in considerably improved results, much better teaching, and the fact that both teachers and boys expect, and work towards, higher standards. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of English, and other staff with departmental responsibilities, have created an atmosphere where teamwork and a strong and shared desire to succeed permeate teachers' thinking and practice. Morale is very good. The literacy strategy has been effectively introduced and is having a positive impact on standards and attitudes in Years 7 and 8, and in other classes to which its principles are being applied.

96. Valuable and common schemes of work, and systems for lesson planning and assessment have been introduced. Boys in some classes would benefit from the last two being more regularly and precisely applied by a minority of teachers. A general weakness is that boys in Years 7 to 9 are insufficiently aware of how the grades they receive relate to the skills and levels of National Curriculum English. A further weakness in these years is the lack of planned opportunity for boys to develop and apply ICT skills as part of their work in English. Accommodation and resources are good and well looked after. The curriculum for boys in Years 10 and 11 is a strength. All boys are encouraged and enabled to take both language and literature to GCSE level, the vast majority passing both. GCSE drama and the recently-introduced media studies course are increasingly popular.

97. Provision in drama is satisfactory. It is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 8 and a small group of boys take it as a GCSE option each year. In the past two years all boys gained a GCSE pass but the proportion achieving a Grade A*-C is variable. Numbers are too small to make national comparisons. Boys achieve well in drama, but their standards are below the national average by the end of Year 9. This is because there is no Year 9 drama provision, so that skills learnt previously are not fully developed. The ideas which many boys have for drama remain, therefore, too based on action rather than effect. A further impeding factor is the unsatisfactory accommodation for the subject. Some lessons are restricted by taking place in ordinary classrooms. The drama studio is a converted laboratory. Whilst imaginative attempts have been made to provide staging, the space is too small for classes to work in groups. Blackout, sound and lighting cannot be used effectively so that valuable opportunities to investigate communication technology cannot be taken. There is no space or facility for written work.

98. The standards of boys in the present Year 11 drama option group are at the national average, and they have good skills in working in groups to present or evaluate practical work. In an outstanding Year 11 lesson, boys quickly created very good group still images which they were able to criticise effectively because of the teacher's emphasis on what skills needed to be shown. Across all years, boys learn the importance of co-operation and self-discipline. They balance enthusiasm for performance with some awareness of the need to convey ideas and impressions to an audience. Teaching is consistently good. Classes are very well managed and lessons are stimulating. Boys respond well to the imaginative tasks which they are set, but would benefit from being given more precise objectives, and an earlier introduction to theory and written evaluation.

99. There has been good improvement. The head of drama has a clear vision for developing the subject, and this is conveyed with intelligence and energy to boys and staff alike. Boys benefit from a drama club and various opportunities to take part in performances.

Key skills across the curriculum: Literacy

100. Teaching of literacy skills is good within English and satisfactory across other subjects. Following training, teachers identified three areas for a literacy focus across the school. An emphasis on specialist vocabulary was agreed. Many boys have sound understanding of an increasing range of

precise terms, such as 'emotional portrait' and 'mood' in Art and the correct names for muscle groups in physical education, and are becoming more confident in using them. There are impressive banks of subject specialist terms in almost all classrooms, but they are often ignored by teachers and boys alike.

101. Increased use of class and group discussion is enabling boys to become more confident in expressing their views. In the best lessons teachers listen closely to what boys say, phrase supplementary questions carefully and match the question's difficulty to a boy's ability. In science boys are confident in discussion or seeking more information as a result. In many subjects such as art, religious education, design technology, and ICT listening skills remain weaker. Here teachers tend to ask general questions and accept answers which are superficial or vague.

102. There has been good progress in teaching reading skills and most boys can now understand what they read and summarise the main points in a text. Tests are used to identify weaker readers, who receive extra support from a reading scheme and a computer-based booster programme. A strength of the support is the involvement of about twenty parents and friends of the school who give at least an hour each week to hear boys read on a rotational basis. The regularity of this allows relationships and confidence to be built, and good progress to be made. Younger boys are expected to carry a private reading book each day, and there are silent reading sessions in many registration periods which help stimulate boys' appreciation of the value and pleasure of books.

103. Almost all written work is presented well. There is satisfactory but very variable practice across and sometimes within subject departments. Subjects like science are aware of the need to explain and use a range of writing styles, for instance investigative reports. In art spelling, grammar and technical vocabulary are corrected but there is insufficient attention to paragraphing and structure. In religious education there is no consistent strategy to support extended writing, and spelling errors are ignored, as they are in mathematics. There is a good focus on accuracy, structure and form in most modern language lessons.

104. The library is well organised and run. It is appreciated by the boys and is often full at lunchtime. The room housing the library is small, and there are further limitations caused by its use as a corridor, and for reading support sessions. The book stock is half that recommended for a school of this size. Funding is insufficient to replace and develop stock. Borrowing rates are low, but the library is a good support to research and homework and includes three computers with Internet access.

105. There is good awareness in the school of the principles and importance of cross-curricular literacy. Whilst good plans have been made they are behind schedule and leave too much to the initiative and energy of individual teachers. A key management task will be to accelerate the pace of development and the consistency of application.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The achievement of boys in Year 9 is good, and there are improving standards in Year 10.
- Good teaching in all years is leading to improved achievement.
- Good leadership and management of the department are resulting in overall improvement.
- Numeracy skills are well developed in all year groups.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' results at the end of Year 11 which are well below average
- Teachers' comments on work in exercise books are not sufficiently linked to the achievement targets set in mathematics.

106. Boys join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding, which are below the national average. In particular, the number of boys who enter the school at the higher National Curriculum level five is well below the national figure. At the end of Year 9 in 2002, attainment is just below the national average for boys. Since the last inspection, results have steadily improved.

107. The standard of work seen during the inspection, by boys currently in Year 9, is average overall. Higher-attaining boys in Year 9 were able to make rapid progress on the use and presentation of data. The effective use of the three-part lesson is impacting on learning and raising standards. Work in exercise books is well presented and boys obviously take great care and pride in their work. There is appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum and boys achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

108. The school does well in ensuring that nearly all boys obtain a GCSE grade, but 2002 results in the A *-C range are well below the national average. Since the last inspection, results have improved slowly but there is still considerable improvement to be made.

109. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are improving because of the strong foundations being established in Years 7 to 9. Current standards in Year 11 are below average. The standard of work seen during the inspection in Year 10 was generally higher than in Year 11. Some boys in Year 11 were successfully applying standard form in a range of calculations. A well-structured teaching approach resulted in boys making good progress in their learning. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of work in exercise books was better than would usually be seen for boys of this age group. Boys were proficient in numeracy and were developing good skills. Overall standards are improving, and considering their attainment on entry to the school boys are achieving well.

110. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The use of the three-part lesson in Years 7 to 9, in line with the National Numeracy Strategy, is giving the boys good practice in basic skills and is leading to increasingly effective learning. A strength of the teaching is the high expectation, in terms of behaviour, quality of work and outcome set by the staff. The lessons where learning is most effective have clear learning objectives which are explained to the boys. They have good pace and a series of carefully 'stepped' activities. Boys are fully aware of the expectations of staff in terms of behaviour and outcomes. A group of low-attaining pupils in Year 9 were working on areas of compound shapes, having completed a starter activity providing basic number practice. The teacher had set clear standards for behaviour and the starter was stimulating and provided immediate motivation for the boys. The main task, required the boys to complete work within a specified time interval. In this lesson, all aspects of the numeracy strategy were used effectively. As a result, the pupils improved their basic number skills and they were quickly able to calculate the areas of compound shapes. Given the fact that the class contained pupils with statements of educational need, they made very good progress. Similar progress was seen in all those lessons where similar teaching approaches were applied. For example, boys in a higher-attaining group in Year 10 were just starting work on trigonometry. An effective practical introduction was followed by a lesson where boys were taught the techniques of trigonometrical calculation in a series of short precise steps. This approach resulted in rapid learning. At present there is less emphasis on re-visiting the learning objectives stated at the beginning of the lesson, and opportunities for boys to review their own learning and raise their level of personal self-esteem are missed. Some of these teaching strategies, which are so effective in Years 7 to 9, are being used in the most effective lessons in Years 10 and 11. In lessons, the behaviour of boys is good overall and they show positive attitudes to the work. This has a positive impact on their learning.

111. Leadership of the department is good. Good schemes of work and effective policies are in place. Staff have been provided with appropriate support to help them develop their teaching skills, and there is a positive collegiate approach in the department. The development programme for the department is effective.

112. Little development has occurred so far in the work on citizenship, which is intended to be taught through the departmental schemes of work. Literacy and the use of library resources are also relatively undeveloped. The department has a new ICT suite. Because of its newness, the use of the suite has not yet been integrated into the schemes of work and staff are not familiar with the contents of the range of software, which is available. This is a good facility and contains some useful software to support the mathematics teaching.

113. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory, and the department is now well placed to continue to improve more rapidly. Most of the department are relatively new to the school and over the past year there have been significant changes to staffing. As a result, nearly three quarters of the mathematics team have been at the school for just over one year and they are having an increasingly positive impact on boys' learning.

Key skills across the curriculum: Numeracy

114. Numeracy is well taught in mathematics. Most boys are capable in basic calculation with integers, fractions and decimals. Staff are effective in developing confidence in the boys in applying these, and other numerical skills in a variety of situations. Modern languages were applying numeric skills in work on European Currency; science was using formula and developing work in graphs and timelines. Concepts involving shape and space were being developed in art through studies of perspective and the use of scale and proportion. Work in ICT included the development of statistical skills. The strong foundations of numeracy developed in the mathematics department are being well applied in many subjects across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The subject is well led and managed.
- Lessons are well planned.
- Boys' progress and achievement are good.
- Assessment and the use of this data to monitor boys' progress is good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of very good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Extension of the use of computers and other associated equipment to meet statutory requirements.
- The recruitment of permanent, qualified teachers.

115. In tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 standards were at the national level. The trend has been upwards over the past few years. However, the number of boys who gained a level 6 or above was well below the national figure.

116. Overall the standards seen were similar to those expected nationally at the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement as the school's extensive data indicates that boys join the school in Year 7 below the national expected level. In Year 9 the higher-attaining boys were producing work of standards above the expected levels and were able to calculate speed from data collected.

117. The number of boys obtaining a GCSE grade of A*-C is below the national level. Overall the number of A*-C grades in science examinations was 42 percent compared to the national figure of 52 percent. This was slightly below the 2001 results and a disappointment for the department as the trend had been dramatically upwards over the past six years, from a low of around ten per cent.

118. The standard of work seen, at the start of Year 11, was at the expected national level. Boys in Year 11 are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 10. The lower-attaining boys were confident when discussing such topics as rates of reaction but demonstrated a low level of attainment in investigations. Higher-attaining boys were able to understand the structure of leaves and the process of photosynthesis.

119. The attitudes and behaviour of boys are good. Boys behave very well and work hard in science in lessons where there is good classroom control linked to well-planned lessons. There was, in these lessons, a friendly co-operative atmosphere between teachers and boys leading to a very pleasant working atmosphere. However, the attitudes and behaviour of boys were less than satisfactory in those lessons where classroom control was weaker, regardless of the lesson content. Boys, of all abilities, work in an enthusiastic and safe manner when carrying out practical work when the classroom control is strong. A good example of this was in a Year 9 class, where the boys were calculating speeds from data collected from "air rockets". The boys have complete notes and, overall, a good standard of presentation.

120. The quality of teaching and learning in science are good overall. In a third of the lessons the teaching was very good. There were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching in the lessons observed. Scrutiny of boys' books indicate that teaching over time is of a similar standard. A strength of teaching is the quality of lesson planning. The best teaching was seen when the lessons had good pace, there was good classroom control and were taught by a suitably qualified and enthusiastic teachers. One very effective lesson on rates of reaction with a lower-attaining Year 11 class involved a review session, the use of relevant and suitable resources linked to an enthusiastic manner from the teacher. Homework is structured and an integral part of the lesson plans and is used as an effective means of reinforcing learning. Teachers mark books and tests in great detail and add extensive narrative comments and praise. They set targets in a constructive manner and these are usually followed up. The monitoring of marking and assessment has ensured that a high standard is maintained throughout the department. The stock of books in the library is limited, however, all boys have their own text books. The department does encourage boys to use the library for independent learning and research.

121. Boys are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. Boys who have special educational needs are well supported in science and make good progress overall. Staff are aware of their needs and make some use of the individual education plans. The department is able to organise the group sizes in Years 8 to 11 so that the lower-attaining boys are in smaller classes. This allows the teachers to give greater support. Higher-attaining boys also make good progress. There is a wide range of opportunities for boys to use their literacy and numeracy skills, both in written work and class discussions. The department has introduced the National Literacy Strategy using key words in a range of writing styles and other support materials well and this has been of benefit to boys. A similar positive approach has been made with numeracy that has enabled boys to make good progress. The use of computers is not widespread in science and is unsatisfactory. The use of data-logging in science is restricted by the lack

of sufficient equipment.

122. The leadership and management of the department are good. Very good improvement has been made by the department since the last inspection. Attainment and the quality of teaching are now much higher. The head of department has worked closely with the team of teachers to introduce many new initiatives based on the school development plans. These include the review of all the science courses and linking the units of work to a very effective assessment process. The review was also used to highlight social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues within lessons. The assessment of boys' attainment is being used effectively to set targets for boys and to monitor the progress of individuals. The departmental system of monitoring teaching and learning has played a major part in the process of raising the quality of these, and the standard of attainment. The department has appropriate development plans. The one major issue that has been tackled, but not resolved, is the need to recruit suitably qualified teachers.

123. The accommodation for the science department is good although some laboratories need redecoration. The department has sufficient resources and a team of support staff, who are efficient and very well organised, to ensure the equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- Improving standards and good achievement.
- The management of behaviour through a range of teaching and learning styles.
- Boys' positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers long and short term planning – making explicit reference to learning and assessment and sharing them with the boys.
- The information boys receive about their progress towards meeting National Curriculum and GCSE targets.
- Resources; access to computers, use of digital cameras and software, a wider range of suitable materials and opportunities to support boys' awareness of artists' work.

124. Teacher assessments of boys' attainment at the end of Year 9 were close to the combined results for boys and girls that were reported nationally. The assessments compare very favourably with national statistics for boys. Positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning combined with good teaching contributes to their progress in lessons and across Years 7 to 9. These assessments show good achievement because, when boys came to the school, the standard of their artwork was below expectation for their age.

125. The standard of work seen during the inspection, by boys currently in Year 9, is broadly in line with expected standards for all 14 year old pupils and above the standards for boys. Boys work with clay and use a range of different techniques and art materials. Where standards are higher teachers settle and calm the class, then quietly and authoritatively lead demonstrations and discussions. Boys learn about the work of artists and in some lessons teachers successfully get them to look closely, think deeply and consider several explanations for why the artist has chosen a particular subject or style of

working. In one class boys made very sensitive and perceptive comments about Picasso's Crying Woman and used words like jagged, shattered glass and trembling lip, to describe the style and emotion in the portrait. Where these literacy skills are well taught boys are more thoughtful about the decisions they make in their own artwork and standards are higher as a consequence. In other lessons boys struggled to use a specialist vocabulary and to explain the reasons why they chose one material or viewpoint in preference to another. The development of literacy skills and standard of their practical work, varies from class to class, as do teachers' skills, to lead class discussions, ask extended questions and set appropriate written tasks. Boys are often impatient to begin practical tasks and sometimes the quality of their practical work suffers as a consequence. Boys making clay ocarinas, based on animals benefited from an explanation and demonstration by the class teacher showing them how to modify and improve their work and not to abandon their initial ideas. Attention to developing ideas and improving the quality of finished work was effective in several lessons. Boys were pleased with what they had achieved and their motivation and enthusiasm for learning improved. Boys achieve well overall relative to their starting points.

126. The percentage of boys gaining A*-C grades in the 2001 and 2002 GCSE examinations was broadly average. The percentage of boys gaining the highest A* and A grades was below average. When compared with boys' attainment nationally they performed very well. They did significantly better in art than in many of their other subjects. Sketch books and design sheets by some previous Year 11 boys, showed practical and research tasks carried out to good standard.

127. From the evidence of the boys' work, seen in the sample provided by the school and in lessons, standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Standards in Year 10 are higher. A bigger proportion of boys is on track for higher grades. They have produced some high quality drawing and colour work that shows very good concentration and effort, and an ability to modify and improve their work. In Years 10 and 11 overall, the quality of research and annotations in sketchbooks are generally not to the same standard as their practical work. In some books there is too much unfinished, unresolved work.

128. Most boys, including those with special talents and learning needs, achieve well and make good progress. They could make even better progress if, as a way of underpinning the whole school ethos for learning, boys had explicit information about the planned learning in the curriculum and in the lesson and what is to be assessed. This would help them monitor their progress towards meeting their National Curriculum goals.

129. Teaching and learning are good overall and have led to good examination results in the recent past. All teachers have secure subject knowledge but their expectations of standards, work rate and behaviour, vary. Where teachers demonstrate or provide good examples of skills and techniques, they are very effective in helping boys achieve higher standards. A minority of boys do not learn well because they are not fully committed, have poor attendance or incomplete and poorly presented homework. For the most part behaviour is managed well, and the different teaching and learning styles work well for most boys. Teachers give praise when boys do well, and one-to-one discussions on how they can improve their work are particularly effective.

130. The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of boys' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Boys on examination courses have the benefit of visiting national galleries and museums, but no such opportunities are available in Years 7 to 9.

131. Leadership and management are sound overall, with some strengths and areas for development. Standards, and success in examinations, have been maintained and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Some aspects of management are underdeveloped, notably ways of improving teaching and learning by reflecting on what is working well and what needs to be

improved. The teaching of numeracy, to support boys' work in the subject, is satisfactory. Resources are inadequate. Computers are used effectively as a teaching aid but there is no regular access for the boys. Too few books and other published materials are available in the library and in the department. There are no paper towels and insufficient funding to buy them. All have a detrimental impact on the learning.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The school council encourages participation and shared responsibility within the community.
- Boys are able to discuss controversial and topical issues.
- An audit carried out across subjects identifies the possibilities of coverage within other areas of the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The management of the subject; to monitor provision, coverage and the quality of teaching.

132. Currently there is no examination in this new subject. Boys may be required to collect evidence to form a portfolio initially within the PSHE programme.

133. PSHE lessons were seen where lesson plans contained specific reference to citizenship. In some subjects, for example science, citizenship is an integral part of the course. In other lessons, for example in art and physical education, boys were encouraged to co-operate and to work together. Curriculum plans, in several subjects, outlined some of the content of the course. In most lessons, objectives and the contribution to the learning in citizenship were not made clear, so coverage of the key components were mainly incidental. Boys did not recognise they were learning about citizenship, only about the subject they were studying. At this very early stage, there is insufficient evidence to comment on the standards in citizenship and boys' achievements.

134. The quality of teaching and learning, in specific PSHE lessons where citizenship was the focus, varied widely. Where teaching was enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and allowed well led discussion, learning was good. Good questioning, to include all boys, was a feature of these lessons. In lessons where citizenship was implicit but not a clear focus, teaching was satisfactory overall. Some effective lessons included a Year 7 geography lesson, a PSHE lesson in Year 10, a Year 10 business education lesson and in art in Year 9. The key factors that made these lessons successful were that teachers managed boys behaviour well, gave them the space to reflect and ask questions and the teacher spoke from a position of authority and knowledge of the subject. Good equality of opportunity underpinned teachers' work.

135. Overall the leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. A scheme of work has been developed which contains citizenship modules. Subjects have been audited to identify possible areas of citizenship coverage. The school council has been established so that boys can experience the responsibilities and equality of opportunity offered by a democratic system of representation within an

open and shared decision-making body. Boys have the strong support and examples offered through the pastoral team, assemblies and tutor group time, to encourage them to become responsible citizens. At present, too little is done to train teachers in this subject, to plan for the actual input from departments and to monitor teaching, to bring about improvement. Further support will be needed to establish a cohesive, well-trained team of teachers, with specific responsibility and time to deliver the requirements of this course, especially if the school decides that this will become an accredited subject. A start has been made but work has to be done to draw the various components of contribution into a valuable entity.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Consistently improving standards.
- Good teaching and learning leading to good achievement by all groups of boys.
- Increased provision and use of computer facilities.
- Good quality examination coursework.
- Good quality accommodation.
- The very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Greater clarity in identifying the learning objectives to be achieved and the assessment criteria to be used for each project.
- The clarity of marking criteria for individual learning tasks.
- More guidance for staff on planning for the development of boys' skills in whole-school initiatives such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship.

136. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below the national average for the proportion of boys gaining level five and above. However, results have improved considerably from the very low base in 2000. Current work indicates that standards are close to the national average and that boys are achieving well compared to their attainment on entry to the school.

137. By the end of Year 9, boys are developing a suitable range of knowledge and skills through a good range of projects. These enable them to work to design briefs, carry out research, make choices about some aspects of their work and evaluate their finished models. They use good recording skills such as flow charts, different types of drawing skills, and include a significant amount of computer-generated work. Boys work with a range of resistant materials and electronic components to produce working models, packaging, games, and electronic devices, and these are made to a good standard. Because projects are well taught, and planned to include well-structured designing and making experiences, boys of different levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make at least good progress.

138. In 2002, GCSE examination results were in line with the national average for all pupils and above those results achieved by boys. Boys are therefore continuing to achieve well compared to their earlier attainment. Results show an upward trend in each of the three design and technology subjects. The proportion of boys gaining A* and A grades is above the national average for boys, and overall, boys do comparatively better in design and technology than in the other subjects they take.

139. The standard of work of boys, currently in Year 11 continues to be in line with national expectation for all pupils. This reflects the good teaching of well-structured course work, which continues to take place. Boys carry out research, analyse existing products, develop their own solutions through to working drawings and evaluate their work. Standards of presentation in examination folder work are high and boys often use computers very effectively to enhance their design work. Boys use a range of resistant materials and components in their practical work and overall the standards of finished products are satisfactory. All boys, including those with special needs, make good progress. Overall, all boys in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.

140. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good. Evidence from scrutiny of coursework indicates that teaching over time is of a similar standard. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well, and teach the skills of the subject effectively. However, in some lessons expectations of boys' performance could be higher. The management of classes is a strength in most lessons and time and resources are used well. However, in some lessons boys do not make as much progress as they might because the expected outcomes of learning tasks are not always explained sufficiently and the marking criteria for boys work is not made sufficiently clear.

141. As a result of good teaching boys' learning is good. Boys are good at following instructions and carrying out guided activities, and this enables skills to be learnt and applied. Most boys work at a good pace, and because they enjoy their design and technology work they show interest and concentration when carrying out set tasks. All boys are supported well by the structured nature of the tasks set and, as they gain experience, there are opportunities for more independent learning and creative thinking. As a result all make good progress and higher-attaining boys often develop very well presented and original ideas. Assessing boys' work, as part of individual support in lessons, allows effective guidance to be given and provides very good opportunities for older boys to review and improve their coursework. Boys enjoy using computers and they use their developing skills in various aspects of their work. Homework is used effectively to enhance coursework.

142. Overall, boys' attitudes and behaviour are good. Good working relationships exist in most lessons because teachers know and care about boys, and their work. As boys get more proficient they learn more independently and this makes a very positive contribution to their personal development.

143. The curriculum for design and technology is good and time is used well. There is good coverage of required computer-related work for design and technology, and this also makes a valued contribution to the National Curriculum requirements for ICT across the school. However, although aspects of literacy, numeracy, citizenship and moral, social and cultural development are being included in projects, these areas would benefit from more detailed planning for their progressive development as boys move through the school.

144. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Development priorities are appropriate. A strong team of qualified and committed teachers is well led and supported by departmental documentation although this could be developed to provide further support in interpreting policies into practice. The quality of accommodation is good. Overall, the range of learning resources is satisfactory, although computer resources are good and used well.

145. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with many of the strengths identified in the last report being maintained and some, for example, examination standards, accommodation and use of computers considerably improved.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- Regular assessment together with a tightly structured learning programme ensures good achievement.
- Boys' presentation skills are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and to raise standards.
- To share understanding of the very good practice which exists in some lessons with all subject teachers.

146. Boys enter the school in Year 7 with below average levels of literacy, writing skills being particularly weak. They have limited subject knowledge and understanding and few geographical skills. Teacher assessments in 2002 show that standards of work at the end of Year 9 were just below national averages for boys in all maintained schools. This is an improvement from the last inspection when standards were judged to be in line with the average for boys' modern schools. In work seen, standards of attainment in Year 9 are still below average. Standards are broadly in line with national averages in Year 8, reflecting the improving attainment at entry to the school. Most boys acquire basic geographical skills in Year 7. For example, they can locate places on maps, and draw sketch maps and diagrams using the correct symbols. Fieldwork and investigation skills are taught well, using the local area as a resource, and all boys learn to collect and process data using simple graphs. All have a basic knowledge and some understanding of the patterns, places, and processes they have studied because teachers constantly reinforce learning. Most can write in sentences to explain or describe geographical processes, for example, rocks and coasts, with appropriate diagrams, though many have problems with spelling and punctuation. Higher-attaining boys can write more extensively using appropriate vocabulary as was seen in a Year 8 essay explaining why we should be concerned about the environment. Boys have very good presentation skills and take a pride in their exercise books. ICT skills are underdeveloped though, because computers are not used in the teaching of geography though some boys use ICT for researched homework tasks.

147. Boys make good progress in geography in the first three years at the school. Learning is tightly

structured and boys achieve well. Lower-attaining boys and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as their peers because of appropriate challenge and well-focused support using materials that have been developed to meet the needs of boys of all abilities. They are also well supported in their learning by a learning support assistant who specialises in supporting humanities subjects.

148. In 2002 GCSE results were below the national average and showed a drop from the previous year when they were close to the national average. This was largely due to problems with staffing, when two groups were taught by temporary teachers before getting a permanent specialist allocated, at a crucial stage in Year 11. Even so, these results were a great improvement on those reported in the last inspection and were in line with those for boys in secondary modern schools in 2001, (the latest year for which we have national figures). In work seen in the current Year 11, standards are similar to the results gained in 2002. Geography is a very popular subject with a substantial proportion of the whole year group now studying the subject. However, they do not represent the whole range of attainment within the year being skewed towards the lower-attainers. On this basis, boys' achievement is good when compared with their attainment at the start of the course, and is the result of good teaching over time. Achievement is very good in the case of the highest-attaining boys.

149. The Year 11 coursework study of Seven Sisters County Park shows boys' ability to carry out fieldwork and enquiry tasks. Higher-attaining boys demonstrate very high standards with impeccable presentation. They demonstrate, through extended written work using appropriate diagrams, maps and data, a thorough knowledge and understanding of why Seven Sisters is so popular with tourists. They have well developed skills of analysis and evaluation. All boys, including those with special educational needs, can locate the study area and use a range of basic techniques to carry out the enquiry, with some attempt at evaluation. The lowest attaining boys still have problems with written English, their spelling and sentence construction is weak, as are their higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. A minority of boys, with negative attitudes to the subject, are underachieving and not keeping up with their coursework.

150. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the department is good. Detailed planning and preparation by knowledgeable, experienced teachers ensures that boys learn effectively. Tasks are planned and structured to meet the needs of all boys. For instance, writing frames are used to construct essay answers and support literacy. Appropriate, stimulating resources are used to aid learning. Teachers generally handle challenging boys very well and relationships are good. Some very good and excellent teaching was seen where a challenging pace with timed deadlines, together with high expectations of outcomes, led to very good learning. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 lesson on development and aid where boys produced their own song illustrating the sufferings experienced by those in extreme poverty. However, a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning was also seen. The major cause was the mismanagement of time and the slow pace of the lesson, resulting in some boys losing concentration and "switching off".

151. Geography is a strong department. Leadership and management are good. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the geography curriculum leads to effective action to improve standards. A good deal has already been accomplished by the head of department who only took up post in January. Schemes of work have been re-written, assessment strengthened and team building is evident. However, evaluation of teaching has not yet resulted in the spreading of the very good practice that exists within the department to all geography lessons. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the issues raised then have been dealt with, with the exception of the development of the use of ICT.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Boys achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment
- Boys have good attitudes to the study of history and they respond well to their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Tasks are insufficiently planned and structured to allow all boys in mixed ability classes to successfully complete written tasks.
- The use of ICT to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and raise standards.
- The efficient management of resources and effective monitoring of teaching across the split accommodation.

152. Boys enter the school with below average levels of literacy and few skills in the subject. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 confirm that standards are below the average for all secondary schools. In work seen, standards of attainment in Year 9 are below average, though standards are broadly in line with nationally expected levels in Year 8, reflecting the improving attainment at entry into the school.

153. Boys have a basic knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities of the periods they have studied, and they can place these in a chronological framework. Higher-attaining boys have a more detailed knowledge and a better understanding of historical concepts, such as cause and consequence. Almost all, including those boys with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial material, including the Internet, to answer simple historical questions. However, ICT skills are underdeveloped because boys do not have access to computers in history, though some use ICT for researched homework tasks. Boys know that history is based on evidence, and their ability to evaluate this evidence is being well developed. For example, Year 9 boys wrote an essay evaluating the usefulness of letters from the trenches as a source of evidence for events in the First World War. The majority of boys have satisfactory oral and listening skills but most have poorer writing skills. Spelling is weak and sentence construction is poor, although boys are encouraged to write in a variety of ways, for example as diarists, using appropriate historical vocabulary.

154. Boys make good progress in history in the first three years at school due to the good teaching they experience during that time. Achievement is good based on prior attainment. Lower-attaining boys and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as their peers because of the support they get from the class teacher and a learning support assistant attached to the humanities departments.

155. In 2002 GCSE results were above the national average for boys in all secondary schools. This is very good improvement from the last inspection and confirms the rising trend in results over the past four years. Boys did better in history than in all their other subjects in 2002 and achievement in relation to their prior attainment was very good. In work seen in the current Year 11, standards are broadly similar. Boys' knowledge and understanding of history has deepened and evidence evaluation skills continue to improve. All, including those with special educational needs are achieving well, though some still have weak literacy skills and find it difficult to write extensively. Higher-attaining boys show

very good achievement. They write fluently using specialist vocabulary in extended analytical essays, as was seen in coursework on Nazi Germany. They have highly-developed skills in evaluating evidence which they use to explain why “Kristallnacht” took place, for instance.

156. Teaching and learning are good. Confident lesson management and good relationships are evident, and create a purposeful learning environment. Lessons get off to a prompt start, enabling boys to focus quickly on their learning, and teachers constantly reinforce previous learning. Skilful questioning involves boys in their own learning. Teachers encourage and use boys’ contributions to lessons, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson on war poetry. Teachers mark books carefully, giving guidance on how to improve. However, some written tasks are insufficiently structured to allow those with poorer literacy skills to record their learning adequately, and since some boys also have poor recall, this lack of a written record affects standards.

157. History is satisfactorily managed. A commitment to raising standards is reflected in the history development plan. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the raising of standards, and some of the issues raised then have been dealt with. However, the use of ICT remains to be developed in the teaching of history and teaching and learning strategies still do not meet the needs of all boys well enough. The library stock of history books is unsatisfactory and is not well used by the department to support boys’ learning. Teaching history in two separate areas of the school leads to the inefficient use of resources and makes the evaluation of teaching and learning, and departmental team building, more difficult.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Results at the end of Year 11.
- Improved standards across all year groups.
- Boys achieve well as a result of good teaching in specialist ICT lessons.
- Improvement in the quality and quantity of ICT resources.

Areas for improvement

- Sufficient access to computers to enable all subjects to meet their National Curriculum requirements.
- Sufficient monitoring to ensure that all boys receive their full entitlement.

158. The results of teacher assessments have been well below those reported nationally in recent years. In 2002, they improved significantly and were close to those reported nationally. This improvement is reflected in the work currently taking place. Boys are developing good skills in planning their responses to set tasks, and then using a range of computer skills well to prepare and present their solutions. They are developing a good range of knowledge about computers and the functions they can perform, and are good at remembering procedures in set tasks. Boys of all levels of attainment, use a good range of computer skills well, in both ICT lessons and in the applications of computers in design and technology lessons. They experience a range of computer programs covering word processing, desk top publishing, data handling, use of the Internet, research, computer aided design and measurement and control. All National Curriculum requirements for ICT are covered to a good standard. Standards attained vary with ability and commitment to the subject, and this variation is often more distinguishable when boys evaluate and annotate their work. However, all boys benefit from the

well structured programmes of work and, because they feel well supported by this style of learning, achieve well and make good progress.

159. Results for the GNVQ ICT course have been well above the national average for A* -C grades for the two years since the course started in the school. However, the proportion gaining A* -G grades has been well below the national figure because a significant number of boys do not complete their coursework. Boys meet the requirements of the examination very well, and because coursework is well structured and well taught, if they complete their coursework, they do well. Current standards are similar, with evidence of more boys completing coursework assignments. Research and planning for a purpose is thorough and this enables boys to use their good range of knowledge and understanding in the focussed tasks set. Boys are good at using the functions of computer programmes in a range of circumstances and extend their opportunities to cover National Curriculum requirements through the application of computer-aided design and manufacturing in their work in design and technology. Boys remember procedures for accessing features of computer programmes very well, and evaluation and annotation of work are major strengths. All boys, achieve very well and make good progress in lessons. A significant number of boys with recorded low verbal reasoning scores achieve very well because they enjoy the work set and are very well supported by good teaching and the structured approaches to learning used in lessons.

160. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Most boys like using computers and show both positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Boys follow instructions well and most show good levels of concentration. Relationships with teachers and fellow boys are good. As boys develop their skills and confidence they become more independent learners, and this has a positive effect on their personal development.

161. The quality of teaching and learning in specialist ICT is good overall, and includes mostly good and some very good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they plan their lessons well and have suitably high expectations of behaviour and performance. Boys are managed very well, courses are very well structured, and a good range of teaching methods is used effectively. Good use is made of time, and a strong feature of most lessons is the individual help given to boys in class. However, more use could be made of more regular annotations in marking of work and more substantial homework in Years 7 to 9. Boys show good level of concentration and interest in all ICT work and because they are well supported individually in lessons, know what they have to do to improve their work. Boys are good at using computers. They remember procedures well, they plan work before using the computer, they annotate their work and these learning skills play a significant part in improving their personal development.

162. The use of computers in ICT lessons and design and technology lessons is good in all years, but in most other subjects it is limited. Their use of ICT is not monitored to ensure that all boys actually have sufficient access the use of computers or to all aspects of the ICT National Curriculum.

163. Very good improvement in increasing computer resources within the school has been made, and this has resulted in significant improvement in the teaching of specialist ICT lessons. Teachers' computer skills have also been improved through a programme of training. These developments have not yet had time to impact on developing the use of computers in other subjects. As a result, most other subjects are not currently using computers sufficiently to cover their subject requirements as set out in the National Curriculum.

164. Leadership and management are good. The school has made a very significant commitment to improve the provision for, and the impact of, ICT within the school. Very substantial improvements have been made in resources and accommodation recently. These are resulting in improvements in the

standards attained and the achievement of all boys. Accommodation is very good and the number of computers is in line with the national average. However, many developments are relatively recent and the school has yet to deal with some important issues with regard to all boys receiving their National Curriculum entitlement for ICT. At present, there is not sufficient monitoring and management of current practice.

165. Although the school has yet to deal with some important issues, there have been very substantial improvements in the standards attained, the achievement of all boys and the provision of resources and therefore the improvement in ICT, since the last inspection, is very good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed.
- Boys have positive attitudes in lessons.
- The curriculum is very well planned.
- The curriculum is enriched by the annual school study visit to Paris.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards, especially in Years 9 and 11.
- Use assessment to show boys how to progress and improve the consistency of marking.
- Improve access to ICT facilities to enable National Curriculum requirements for the subject to be met.
- Raise the profile of language study in the curriculum.

166. Results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below those reported nationally for boys. The standard of work of boys in the current Year 9 is also below national expectation. Their performance in all skill areas is still at a level normally associated with Year 8. They are not yet producing extended speech or writing using past or future tenses.

167. GCSE results, in 2002, were below the national average for boys. This was an improvement from previous years when results were well below the national average. However, only a small proportion of the Year 11 cohort took the examination, so the improvement was less significant than the figures would suggest. Nevertheless, all boys achieved a pass grade G or above, and the proportion gaining grade G and above has been above the national average for the last four years. Given boys' attainment on entry, they achieved satisfactorily. Overall, however, boys did less well in French than in most other subjects. In the current Year 11, boys' attainment is below the nationally expected level. Higher-

attaining boys are producing written work of good GCSE standard, but boys' overall confidence in understanding and expressing themselves in French is below average. A number of boys of lower attainment are disapplied from French.

168. When compared to their earlier attainment, boys' achievement is satisfactory, particularly in the current Years 8 and 10. One Year 8 class, for example, showed a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary in sharing personal and family information. Year 10 classes developed their listening and reading skills, working with challenging material of good GCSE standard. Year 7 boys are making good progress with listening and speaking and higher-attaining boys in Years 7 and 8 can write coherent paragraphs on topics of personal interest. Boys with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teachers understand and plan for their needs and the active nature of much of the work, especially in Years 7 to 9, helps build their confidence. Support for the few gifted and talented linguists is made available through the setting system and extra study sessions.

169. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In just under half the lessons seen it was good or very good. Lesson planning is sound, with good variety of skill and activity – though the desired learning outcomes are not always explicitly identified. Teachers use French extensively and skilfully as the teaching medium, and there is good emphasis on active learning through dialogue, games, song and the involvement of boys in evaluating each other's work. In addition to promoting effective learning through a lively, interactive approach, teachers give due recognition to the importance of linguistic features such as grammar and pronunciation. Specific skills such as reading and listening are well taught. Boys are taught strategies for extracting meaning from text. The few unsatisfactory features of teaching include occasional failure to manage and control groups of older boys, the lack of a clear, progressive structure to a lesson and, particularly in Year 9, work which is insufficiently challenging to push boys on to the target National Curriculum levels 5 and 6. At the time of the inspection, two experienced full-time members of the department were on maternity leave, with cover provided by subject-specialist supply teachers. Evidence of work seen suggests that, with the full departmental team in place, teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

170. The sound teaching promotes satisfactory learning. Boys benefit from a communicative approach combined with emphasis on memory work, reinforcement through repetition, understanding the workings of French and a range of topics which engages and motivates them. Their positive attitude in lessons is a strong feature of the improving picture in French. They respond well to the subject, listening attentively, speaking enthusiastically and often using these skills in combination with reading and writing. They are particularly motivated by games and song. In GCSE classes, they respond willingly to more challenging work. Relationships with teachers are generally good and, when appropriate, they support and help each other.

171. The French curriculum is very well planned. Recently revised schemes of work are of high quality and the department shows a willingness to engage with national strategies such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship. However, problems of access to specialist rooms and the very low level of computer equipment in the department have made it impossible to teach the ICT strands of the National Curriculum in French. Library stock is appropriate but too small. The annual study visit to Paris, by a large group of Year 8, boys enriches the curriculum. Nevertheless, the position of French in the school curriculum has been somewhat precarious in the last two years. The department needs support in its bid to raise the profile of the subject and ensure that the largest possible number of boys benefit from the opportunity to study a language to GCSE level.

172. Assessment is well integrated in schemes of work, and the department is building a database to record and monitor boys' progress. However, day-to-day marking is of inconsistent quality and insufficient use is made of National Curriculum levels to give boys a clearer sense of their progress

and personal targets.

173. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the department has consolidated its progress and has made satisfactory improvement. The team of teachers is skilled, enthusiastic and committed. Development planning has identified the next key steps to further improvement. The department has the capacity to respond to the challenge.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Boys are generally well-behaved with a positive attitude to the subject.
- Good teaching leads to effective learning in the Year 11 GCSE option group.

Areas for improvement

- Boys in Years 7 to 9 are not achieving well enough because teachers' knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum are inadequate.
- Opportunities for boys to participate in group music-making activities outside the classroom.
- Singing is under-represented in classroom activities.
- Opportunities for boys to use ICT.

174. Despite considerable efforts the school has been unable to recruit permanent specialist music teachers. This has resulted in the department not being managed at present, due to these extreme staffing difficulties. Four supply teachers, only one of whom is a qualified music teacher, have been working together for a matter of weeks to stabilise the situation. They have been hampered by lack of access to detailed schemes of work and assessment data of boys' previous progress and attainment. Due to these circumstances, the teaching observed during the inspection, in Years 7 to 9, was unsatisfactory. However, the teachers are collaborating effectively – in their own time – to produce appropriate detailed lesson plans for Years 7 to 9 to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. They have just been allocated a modest budget to support their work.

175. At the last inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 were reported to be satisfactory or good, with most boys working at National Curriculum level 4 or towards level 5. Teacher assessments for 2002 indicated a similar picture. However, standards are now below national expectations because teachers' knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum are inadequate. Neither do the teachers have the necessary assessment data on boys' attainment from previous years to set appropriately challenging targets for their individual improvement in singing and playing, composing, appraising and listening skills. Consequently, boys do not know how well they are doing, nor what they have to do to improve. There is an over-reliance on undemanding assignments using electronic keyboards, due in part to the lack of alternative resources identified at the last inspection, together with a reluctance to teach singing. Nevertheless, the boys are generally well behaved with a positive attitude. Outside the classroom, where good instrumental tuition is available by visiting peripatetic teachers – on a fee-paying basis - individuals make very good progress. Overall boys' achievement is unsatisfactory.

176. In Years 10 and 11, music is a GCSE option. No boys have opted for music in Year 10. In Year 11, nine boys are continuing with their GCSE course, and this has been changed to a more practical syllabus for their second year, with a view to optimising their progress and attainment. None of them

has any finished work, preserved from Year 10, to include in the portfolios of work that will be required to satisfy examination requirements at the end of their course. At the last inspection, GCSE results were below national expectations, although the small number of entries makes national comparisons difficult. Currently, Year 11 boys are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment, when taught by a qualified music teacher. In one lesson, boys were being introduced to the topic of “ground bass”. They listened actively to a wide-range of musical excerpts, applying technical vocabulary to the new setting. They worked their way through a sheet of 21 questions designed to interrogate any piece of music encountered in a listening examination, purposefully. They quickly developed an effective technique for analysing different elements on each of four repetitions, relating to key, rhythm, instrumentation, repetition, contrast, texture and dynamics. Class work is supported by individual instrumental lessons, but these have not been taken up by all boys in the group. One trumpet player was effectively rehearsing a piece by Telemann with his instrumental teacher, reinforcing his class work experience of the Baroque era.

177. The department has recently been re-located into the mathematics block. Only one of the teaching rooms is adequately equipped. There are no computers, and the limited stock of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments, noted at the last inspection, has not been enhanced. The two practice rooms are now separated from the classrooms, and this presents management difficulties when boys are engaged in small group activities requiring separate spaces. A piano, which is in good condition and is a valuable resource, has yet to be moved into the new music area. There is a very small, inadequate collection of reference and lending books in the library.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- A high proportion of boys achieve at the nationally expected level and above.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers to fostering the potential of the boys motivates the boys to work hard and with equal enthusiasm.
- Teachers make very good use of assessment data to keep boys informed of their progress, and provide constant motivation to improve.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Boys’ understanding of the requirements of different National Curriculum levels.
- Identification of opportunities for physical education teaching to contribute to cross-curricular issues.
- Broadening of opportunities once the new facilities are available.

178. Boys join the school with physical skills which are generally at the nationally expected level for their age. However, there is a wide divergence of the experience of a variety of sports at this stage, and therefore a difference in the competency and understanding in a number of specific sports, for example rugby. In 2002, results of teacher assessments were above those reported nationally. Observations during the inspection confirm the accuracy of these assessments. This is due to good teaching in the intervening years, despite the unsatisfactory facilities.

179. Current standards are broadly similar, and a significant number of boys reach above average standards in a number of different activities. For example, a Year 9 class in a football lesson, showed a good level of spatial awareness and were able to select appropriate tactics, which combined with good ball control and accurate passing, resulted in a mature game. In other activities, progress is hindered by the poor facilities. For example, the cramped conditions and lack of space in which to move properly to the flight of the shuttle, inhibit further progress in badminton with the result that some boys are below average in this activity.

180. Despite these difficulties in some activities, boys generally achieve well in their lessons. Boys in Year 7 achieved well in a rugby lesson, an activity which only four in the class had experienced before, so that by the end of the session they were all able to take part successfully in small-sided games of touch rugby. In Year 8, boys were able to build on previous knowledge and experience to design their own interval training sequences in a fitness lesson.

181. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average for boys. This was a significant improvement from the previous two years of well below average results. Results are now as they were at the time of the previous inspection.

182. The standard attained by boys, overall, at the end of Year 11 is generally above average, and this has been helped considerably by the increase in time allocated to core physical education since the last inspection. There is a significant number of boys who play different sports at a higher level than school, for example, district, county and club football, cricket and badminton. These boys become skilled enough to move on to these levels because of the good teaching and support, despite the lack of facilities. Boys with lower attainment are frequently individually tutored by teachers or, under the teacher's direction, by higher-attaining boys, to enable them to make progress in acquiring suitable skills and understanding. For example, boys who had a low skill level in table tennis were helped by a support teacher and, by the end of the lesson, were able to sustain a competent game. Boys with above-average skills were given extended or more rigorous tasks to challenge their level of competence. Therefore, boys with special needs and those who are more talented are all helped appropriately to make good progress alongside each other. This is an improvement since the last inspection since all boys are now challenged with tasks which match their experience and abilities.

183. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some very good and excellent teaching. There are consistently high expectations of participation, behaviour and attitudes across the whole department. This has created a very good learning environment where boys feel encouraged to learn and make progress, become involved in their learning and take some responsibility for it. All of these factors, together with sensitive and supportive teacher interventions during lessons, are strengths which lead to good and very good learning by boys and which in turn leads to good progress and improving attainment. Assessment procedures are very good. Data from end of Year 9 national tests, together with teacher assessments of practical performance is used very effectively to predict future GCSE results. Assessments in Years 10 and 11 are monitored constantly, and used to help motivate the boys to improve. However, boys in Years 7 to 9 are not aware of the requirements needed to reach each National Curriculum level in different activities. Schemes of work have been rewritten and developed since the previous inspection and planning is good. However, schemes of work do not identify opportunities to develop boys' literacy, numeracy or understanding of citizenship, although examples were seen where both literacy and citizenship were being taught.

184. The enthusiastic response and attitude of the boys to their physical education is another key factor in their successes in this subject. They were willing to listen and to work hard at skills tasks. Relationships between boys were very good and many examples were seen of them helping each

other, as in a fitness lesson where two boys worked tirelessly with a third to help him succeed in a difficult exercise.

185. The very good leadership and management of the department are a major strength, and a key factor in its present success. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Monitoring of the work of team members is regular and thorough, providing both verbal and written feedbacks. This system has been very effective in promoting teamwork and a consistent approach across the department and this aspect, in turn, has provided the boys with a good role model of a team approach. ICT is not used extensively as access to facilities is limited. However, the department has planned for a greater use of ICT, as soon as the new sports facilities are available, where they will have access to their own computers.

186. The very good staffing ratio has played a key part in the department's success and has, in part, counteracted the effect of the poor accommodation and facilities. The new accommodation, due to come into use in January 2003, will provide the opportunity to widen the curriculum and bring about even greater improvements in learning and attainment. If the bid at present being made for Sports College status is successful, this department has a very solid foundation on which to build and is well on the way towards achieving some high aspirations.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Enthusiasm and motivation of the head of department.
- Relationships are good.
- A small and committed team of teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- The use of agreed criteria in the assessment of boys' work to encourage their self awareness and hence higher achievement.
- Teaching strategies to meet boys' identified learning needs.
- The use of ICT to enrich the religious education curriculum

187. Standards of work of boys in Year 9 are below national expectations. For example, in a lesson seen on Judaism and the significance of the Torah, a few higher-attaining boys were able to write what they thought was the difference between laws rooted in God's authority, and those that simply are part of our own daily customs. However, the great majority in the class failed to rise to this

challenge. Standards of work of Year 7 boys are below national expectations. For example, in a lesson about God, as seen through significant Bible stories, the boys showed much enthusiasm and good past learning as they discussed the attributes of the God of the stories of Adam and Eve, and Noah and the flood. Only a few, however, were able to rise to the challenge of writing examples of the different interpretations of God when directed to do so. Taking into account boys' attainment on entry to the school, their achievement is satisfactory.

188. Results for the GCSE examination in 2002, for the small group of boys who chose to study religious education as a full GCSE option were well below national expectation. The examination results were in line with results from recent years, when larger numbers of boys opted for religious education. Overall, their progress failed to meet expectations.

189. There is currently no examination group. The standard of work of boys currently in Year 11 is well below the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. However, in one lesson, higher-attaining boys were reaching appropriate standards because their observations and evaluations of discrimination and prejudice in racism were articulated confidently in discussion and subsequent writing. The school does not provide enough time in Years 10 and 11 for boys to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Although much of the required content is covered, boys are not able to go into sufficient depth to reach the anticipated standards and their achievement is unsatisfactory.

190. In observed lessons, teaching was at least satisfactory. Teaching was good in a class in Year 11. The teacher's confidence and enthusiasm for the subject allowed good management of learning activities and enabled the development of boys' knowledge and understanding of the moral issues involved in society's attitude to racism. Through a stimulating selection of poetry the teacher engaged the boys' enthusiasm and interest. The subsequent writing tasks reinforced this. Where teaching was only satisfactory, so was the learning. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on Sikh temples and symbols, the extended drawing exercise prevented a large number of boys reaching the lesson objectives. The wider needs of the mixed ability class were not all met. Boys in Years 7 to 9 have little understanding of the standard at which they are working because teachers have yet to agree, and share with the boys, assessment criteria.

191. The library stock is insufficient to provide for individual research and learning. Currently, the department makes insufficient use of ICT to enrich the curriculum. Since the last inspection, long-term sickness and other staffing difficulties have resulted in an inability to bring in planned improvements. The recent appointment of a new, although inexperienced, head of department provides the opportunity to stabilise staffing and to tackle the much-needed and clearly recognised issues for development.