

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LIMEHURST HIGH SCHOOL**

Loughborough

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique Reference Number: 120243

Headteacher: Mrs C S Thompson

Lead inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> September 2003

Inspection number: 259843

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

© Crown Copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-14
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	468
School address:	Bridge Street Loughborough Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE11 1NH
Telephone number:	(01509) 263444
Fax number:	(01509) 230755
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M A Allen
Date of previous inspection:	28 <sup>th</sup> September - 2 <sup>nd</sup> October 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This small comprehensive school educates about 468 boys and girls aged 11-14. Pupils' overall social and economic background is below average. Their attainment on entry at 11 is well below average overall. Just over three-fifths of pupils are white, whilst two-fifths come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (predominantly Bangladeshi or Indian). The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is a little above the national norm; the proportion with statements of such need is double the national average. About 15 per cent of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. In 2002-2003 about 11 per cent of pupils joined or left the school other than at the usual time at the beginning or end of the school year. The school gained Beacon status and a Schools Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2000. In 2003, it gained the Excellence in Mentoring, Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards. A new headteacher took up duty in September 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Lead inspector	
9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector	
13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector	
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; Drama
30576	Mr P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art; Design and technology
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography; Special educational needs
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History
4603	Mr A F Ryan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Citizenship; Music; English as an additional language
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
10448	Mr M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI  
 Barley House  
 Oakfield Grove  
 Bristol  
 BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet *‘Complaining about Ofsted Inspections’*, which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted’s website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

# REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>4 - 5</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>6 - 11</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11 - 18</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>18 - 19</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>20 - 21</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22 - 40</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 3</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>41</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This small, multi-ethnic school of some 468 boys and girls in the centre of Loughborough was inspected on 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September 2003 by an inspection team led by Dr D A W Biltcliffe.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very effective school.** It is a happy place and does most things very well. Pupils' overall attainment is average. Most pupils make very good progress as they move through the school. Teaching is good. Most pupils learn well and conscientiously. The school's leadership and management are very good, focusing very successfully on pupils' all-round development. On its average income and expenditure, the school offers very good value for money. It lives up to its motto, *Achievement in a Caring Environment*. It is a very good school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' average attainment (from a low starting-point on entry) is a very good achievement.
- Mathematics, art, history, modern foreign languages and religious education (RE) do very well.
- Provision in citizenship and in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory.
- Teaching is good overall – very good in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages and RE.
- Pupils work hard and are very punctual. Attendance is just satisfactory, but could be better.
- Apart from a few minor glitches, pupils are very well cared for. Relationships are very good.
- The headteacher's leadership and management are excellent.

Since its last inspection in 1998, the school has made good progress. For example, national test results at the end of Year 9 have improved. They are consistently better than most of those in a similar type of school. Mathematics is especially strong. Teaching and learning are better than the good standard last time. Management remains strong and effective.

The school has improved well the main weaknesses identified in 1998: science and literacy are good. Longer-term planning is now secure. There has been satisfactory improvement (but still more to do) in raising pupils' ICT capability and governors' strategic oversight.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	C	D	B
mathematics	C	B	C	A*
science	D	D	D	A*

Key: A\* - Very high; A - Well above average; B - Above average; C - Average; D - Below average; E - Well below average

*Similar schools are those whose pupils have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

**Pupils' achievement is very good.** Attainment by the end of Year 9 is average in nearly all subjects. It is above average in art and in design and technology. As a result of thorough teaching, most pupils make substantial progress from their well below average standard on entry. Over the 1999-2002 period, for instance, their overall rate of progress was amongst the top five per cent in the country – a considerable achievement. Pupils from ethnic minorities do at least as well as other pupils.

**Pupils' personal qualities are developed very well.** Their good moral, social and cultural development is vigorously but sensitively promoted. Spiritual growth is of a lower, but satisfactory, standard. Most pupils show very positive attitudes to the school and to one another. Nearly all behave

well. A few are difficult, but are corrected patiently. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are very punctual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of pupils' education is good. Teaching is good** in nearly all subjects – very well planned, thorough, encouraging and interesting. It is very good in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages and RE. As a result, most pupils show interest, work hard and progress very well. Support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is strong and effective; just a little more is needed.

The curriculum is generally broad and well balanced: it is high on personal, social and health education (PSHE), but light on dance and drama. Pupils are very well cared for and encouraged to aim high. A few health and safety issues need sorting out. Parental links are generally good; strong help is offered to any ethnic minority parents who wish to understand more about the education system.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school's **leadership and management are very good**, enlightened and effective. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Senior and middle management are very effective overall, varying from very good to satisfactory. Together they give a clear, principled sense of purpose and direction to the school, monitoring performance carefully. Governors are supportive, with a light touch; there are (very recent and necessary) plans to increase governors' involvement in the school's work.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents judge that the school does most things well. They commend highly the quality of teaching, expectations of hard work, settling-in arrangements and their children's progress. A significant minority are concerned about their voice being heard enough and about pupils' behaviour. Pupils hold the school in very high regard, although nearly half felt that there was sometimes bullying or racial abuse. They rate particularly highly the way they are taught, trusted and encouraged. Nearly all like being at school. Inspectors support very strongly the positive aspects recorded. A very small minority of pupils with recognised problems readily behave badly, but are well handled. No aggressive incidents or examples of harassment or racial abuse were observed during the inspection.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The school has many strengths and no major weaknesses. The most important things the school should do to improve further are:

- encourage deeper discussion amongst pupils and greater use of drafting work and note-taking;
- extend, monitor and evaluate the use of numeracy and ICT across all subjects;
- make more use of assessment data and marking to let pupils know how they can improve;
- improve pupils' attendance further;
- put right the few deficiencies in matters of health, safety and hygiene;
- extend dance and drama provision and seek to improve accommodation for music;  
and, to meet statutory requirements:
- ensure that all pupils experience a daily act of collective worship.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard of attainment is average in most subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Attainment is above average in art and in design and technology. This is a very good achievement by the school, because pupils' overall standard on entry is well below average. Girls and boys do equally well in most subjects. Most pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds progress at least as well as other pupils.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' overall attainment is at least average, a very good achievement.
- The highest standards are in art and in design and technology.
- Achievement is especially strong in mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education (RE).
- Pupils' literacy is now broadly average, an improvement since the last inspection.
- Most pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make good progress.
- Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) could be higher.

#### Commentary

##### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002*

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.1 (32.4)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	33.7 (35.1)	34.7 (34.4)
science	32.3 (31.9)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 141 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001.*

1. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment is well below the national average, but is slowly rising. It was at its highest, although still below average, in 2003. The school receives far fewer high attainers than most schools.
2. By the end of Year 9, the standard of attainment of pupils in the school varies widely, but is, overall, in line with that expected nationally of pupils. Pupils' level of attainment was a little below average in the Year 9 national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2002, but the results were consistent with the lower entry standard of pupils in 1999 (the lowest intake of the last six years). Results were broadly average in 2000 and 2001. The results in 2003 were higher than those of 2002 in English and mathematics, although a little lower in science. This level of result represents a very good achievement by pupils and teachers, in view of pupils' comparatively low overall academic standards on entry in Year 7 and the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
3. The overall standard reached in mathematics is at least average in most years. It is consistently slightly higher than that in the other two core subjects. This is the result of extremely thorough



planning and lively, well-focused teaching. English, too, generally performs well and improves substantially the low literacy level on entry of a significant minority of pupils. In both subjects, learning is made fun. Science standards have risen a little since 1998, although most pupils attain slightly less than they do in mathematics. Since the last inspection, the school's overall results have risen at a similar rate to the rise nationally. In 2003, the school met the targets it had set itself in the three core subjects and in information and communication technology (ICT).

4. When these Year 9 results are compared with those in schools that have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed above the group average in 2002 and well above it in 2001. Again, mathematics was the star performer, but science was not far behind. Performance continued to be good, too, in 2003.
5. Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Over 1999 to 2002 (the most recent period for which comparative national data are available) their rate of progress in the three core subjects was very good – and at a pace that puts the school (especially in mathematics and science) amongst the best performing five per cent in the country. These recent results represent a commendable achievement by the school. They have come about primarily as a result of very thorough and stimulating teaching, high expectations and the very careful evaluation of pupils' progress. This high quality of performance has brought the school national awards.
6. Girls tend to be ahead of boys in English and modern foreign languages by the end of Year 9, although the gap between the sexes in this school is generally similar to the case nationally. Girls and boys usually do equally well overall in mathematics and science. In other subjects, there is no significant difference in the academic performance of boys and girls.
7. Pupils with special educational needs usually progress well. Progress tends to be just satisfactory in a few classes when pupils are not supported by sufficient non-teaching assistance (and especially for pupils with behavioural difficulties). The most able pupils and those for whom English is an additional language generally make similarly good progress to other pupils. Overall, summer-born children tend to reach a similar standard to older pupils by the end of Year 9 and make greater progress than normal.
8. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 2002, teachers judged the overall attainment of their pupils to be close to average in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages, but to be below average in ICT – although this subject was (correctly) assessed as average in standard in 2003.
9. The evidence of pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection indicates that the overall standard of work by the end of Year 9 is broadly average in nearly all subjects, but above average in art and in design and technology. Pupils' progress and achievement in their studies over Years 7-9 are very good overall. Their achievement is particularly good in mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education (RE). It is satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT); wider use of ICT across the curriculum (and especially in English and mathematics) is required in order to raise standards further. In no subjects do pupils make unsatisfactory progress.
10. The most significant factors in this commendable rate of progress are careful curricular planning, thorough and interesting teaching, the school's ethos of care and encouragement and the very positive attitudes to learning engendered amongst most pupils. This strong rate of progress and achievement was seen in three out of every five lessons inspected. Progress is very rarely unsatisfactory; it normally occurs where one or two difficult pupils take teachers' full attention away from the majority of the class.

11. About one in seven pupils, a significant minority, have English as an additional language. Most ethnic minority pupils make good (and often very good) progress. The two largest ethnic minority groupings are of Bangladeshi and Indian heritage (at around 13 per cent each). Bangladeshi pupils have made very good progress in English over the last four years: a much greater proportion than usual, for example, move on from Level 4 to at least Level 5 over their three-year education in the school. In both mathematics and science, too, these pupils generally make good progress.
12. Pupils of Indian heritage make similarly good progress. Over their time in school, for example, all last academic year's pupils in Year 9 gained at least one National Curriculum level, a quarter gained two and one pupil gained three levels. Far smaller numbers of pupils come from other ethnic backgrounds. Pupils' records and inspection evidence indicate that the progress of these other pupils is at least satisfactory and that half progress very well, as a result of good teaching and pupils' commitment to hard work. Malaysian pupils, often here for just one or two years, make rapid progress.
13. The overall achievement of ethnic minority pupils (and particularly boys) is well illustrated by the history department. Over the last three years, for instance, Gujerati-speaking boys and girls have increased their Year 9 scores at a greater rate than white pupils. The same is true of Bengali-speaking pupils: girls have shown an increase, but boys have shown a significant increase, in attainment. In contrast, the overall attainment level of white boys has been stable, whilst that of white girls has declined a little.
14. In English, the overall attainment of pupils is a good average in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Most pupils read with fluency and accuracy. Writing standards in class are a little above average overall, but tend to fall to no higher than average in test situations. The standard of presentation of work is consistently high. Most pupils speak with fair clarity and audibility, but discussions tend to be brief. Pupils listen well.
15. In other subjects across the school, pupils' standards of language and literacy are average overall. Pupils read competently and understand their work. Their presentation of written work and handwriting are above average, as a result of determined teaching and preaching, but the drafting of work and notetaking are below average and infrequently practised. Pupils speak well in standard English. Most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to one another, within a classroom climate that is nearly always calm and respectful.
16. Numeracy across the curriculum is average overall. The mathematics department gives a strong lead, ensures that pupils have a good level of competence and provides a good role model to other departments. Arithmetic and graph work are strengths. Numerical work in other departments is, however, less than often seen. Attainment in ICT is close to average, but the standard of pupils' work in a range of ICT applications across the curriculum tends to be below average, because too few teachers incorporate it enough in their subject teaching.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory overall. Their attitudes to school and their punctuality for school and lessons are very good. Pupils behave well. They develop very good relationships with one another and with the adults in school, have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong and a substantial appreciation of their own and other people's cultures.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are eager to work hard in lessons and other activities.
- Very good relationships exist amongst pupils and with school staff.
- Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong.
- They keenly appreciate the very wide range of cultural traditions in school and the community.
- Punctuality is very good.
- A small minority of pupils behave unsatisfactorily in some classes.

## Commentary

17. Most pupils are keen to come to school and show clear enthusiasm in their lessons and other activities. The school has a well-established atmosphere of calm and orderliness, in which pupils enjoy working hard and achieving well. The school is a happy place.

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year, 2001-2002 (percentages):*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	1.0
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

18. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory overall. In the last academic year it was 91.2 per cent – in line with the pattern for 11-16 schools nationally. It is, however, a little lower than it was at the time of the last inspection. The weakest level of attendance is in Year 9: during the last academic year, for instance, it was just 88.7 per cent. Attendance in Years 7 and 8 was comfortably over 90 per cent.
19. Most pupils attend well, although only six per cent had full attendance in the last academic year. The unsatisfactory attendance of a significant minority of pupils, however, pulled down the overall sound picture. Nearly one third of pupils had less than 90 per cent attendance and around 13 per cent attended for fewer than four days out of five. Extended holidays were taken last year by 20 pupils to the Indian subcontinent, a considerable increase on the three pupils who did so the previous year.
20. Since the last inspection, the school has increased the steps it takes to promote good attendance – as, for example, through contacting home on the first day of a pupil's absence, tightening the administration of late arrival, strengthening its links with outside agencies (including truancy sweeps) and offering positive incentives. It can, however, do still more. The sketchiness of the attendance policy (with imprecise details of practices, targets and actions), few comments about the importance of good attendance in the school's publicity materials and infrequent printouts of absentees from the electronic registration system impede the school's thrust to achieve a higher overall level of attendance.
21. Pupils' punctuality to both school and individual lessons, in contrast, is very good. Only about one pupil in a hundred is late for school on a typical day.
22. Most pupils behave well. Many of them show very good examples of respect and care for one another. Teachers manage pupils well. They are very diligent in supervising pupils' movement

around the school and, especially, at arrival and departure times. They have high expectations of standards of work and behaviour and adopt generally effective strategies in accordance with well-considered school policies. Learning assistants, learning mentors and the home-school liaison worker all contribute very well to promoting a good standard in pupils' behaviour.

23. There is, however, a very small minority of pupils who are blatantly disobedient and do not pay proper attention to their teachers and to learning. These problems are often associated with pupils' special educational and emotional needs as well as the occasional lack of learning support assistance in a few lessons. In the last academic year, two pupils were permanently excluded – a number in line with the local authority's average for the size and type of school.
24. Pupils are well trained to take responsibility for classroom routines. Older pupils help, for example, with library duties, the school shop and lunchtime supervision. Overall, however, the school has a modest range of opportunities for pupils to experience responsibility. The recently re-formed school council is on the verge of developing further its practical activities in citizenship, so that pupils can have better opportunities for appropriate enterprise and responsibility.
25. Most pupils are confident. They express themselves very well in discussion and, noticeably, when meeting visitors. This confidence enables them both to enjoy success in their own work and to appreciate good work done by their peers. Pupils form strong friendships at school, sometimes as a result of working in pairs or groups in lessons – as, for example, when practising French or composing music.
26. No aggressive incidents or examples of harassment or racial abuse were observed during the inspection. This is, to a great extent, due to the very good examples of firmness, care, respect and cooperative vigilance shown by staff.
27. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is promoted satisfactorily overall. There are, however, substantial spiritual opportunities in the school's very good RE programme. In these lessons, pupils learn to relate religious ideas and issues very well to their own experience of life. They are encouraged to reflect on their own aspirations and behaviour and, through regular group work and discussion, learn directly about faiths and traditions that may be different from their own. A prayer room is provided for pupils of the Muslim faith.
28. The very diverse nature of pupils' backgrounds is regarded as a positive source of spiritual development; the sharing of information and ideas is encouraged. Pupils have moments for reflection in tutorials and assemblies, whilst in art they are strongly encouraged to identify and share their deeper feelings about their own and other people's work. Through practical collaborative school work, friendship groups and the discussion of social and religious issues, pupils develop a very good understanding of and respect for, other people's feelings, values and beliefs.
29. There are good opportunities in some lessons for pupils to understand the notion of citizenship. In history, for example, pupils learn about voting and civil rights. An early task of the school council is to decide how a designated sum of money is to be spent for the benefit of the school. The very good attitudes and relationships in school strengthen the programme of practical activities in citizenship and encourage pupils to contribute to the community in which they live and work.
30. The school's calm and orderly ethos, together with the firm, kindly and consistent approach of staff, contribute significantly to pupils' very clear sense of the principles that distinguish right

from wrong. Teachers and other staff serve as very good role models. The well-understood rules of conduct and respect are continually presented to pupils around the school.

31. Pupils very well appreciate their own and other people's cultural traditions. The school both encourages pupils to work within a wide range of friendship groups and provides a wide range of supporting activities, as, for example, a steel-pan band, jewellery club and sports activities. Pupils are taken regularly on school visits (including a visit to London, where they go to the theatre and stay in a hotel). They benefit from overseas trips that help their foreign language learning and from residential experience at an educational training centre.
32. The school does not, however, meet the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; the once-weekly assemblies for each year group comply with the requirement, but the alternative daily tutorial periods often do not.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	275	32	1
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	15	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	2	1
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	61	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	64	5	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	15	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	10	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	0	0

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The climate for learning in this school is very good. Teaching and learning are at least good throughout the school. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is nearly always well done.

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall and at least satisfactory in virtually all lessons. It is better than it was at the last inspection. Most pupils learn well and make good progress as a result of thorough, well-planned teaching. In just a few cases, pupils do not make the progress they could because of their misbehaviour. The quality of teaching and learning is similar throughout Years 7-9.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is at least good in every subject.
- The teaching of mathematics, art, modern foreign languages and RE is very good overall.
- The strongest aspects are teachers' planning, encouragement of pupils and high expectations.
- The weakest aspect is the teaching and use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Teaching is better than it was at the last inspection.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	21 (19%)	60 (56%)	23 (21%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; the figures in brackets show percentages.*

33. The quality of teaching is consistently good and has improved further since the last inspection. In 1998, 96 per cent per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better. Now just one per cent of the teaching seen fell below a satisfactory level. Just over two-thirds of the teaching was good (or better) at the last inspection, but that proportion has now increased to 78 per cent. The proportion of very good (or excellent) teaching has gone up from 16 to 22 per cent. Teaching quality, then as now, is evenly spread throughout the main school. Science teaching was judged to require improvement in 1998, but is now a good feature of the school's overall teaching. The weakness in effective ICT teaching noted in 1998 no longer remains, although there is not enough of it across non-specialist subjects.
34. Teaching is good in most subjects. It is very good in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages and RE. It is very rarely unsatisfactory either in whole lessons or parts of lessons. It is usually characterised by well-planned and stimulating presentations, interesting topics, a suitably brisk pace, warm encouragement and high expectations.
35. Teachers know their subjects well. They explain ideas clearly, answer queries accurately and deepen pupils' understanding cogently. Most lessons are very well planned. Most have a clear, well-sequenced structure that teachers share with pupils. In these, teachers often outline their aims and objectives (on a whiteboard or by an overhead projector, for example) and, in the best cases, refresh pupils' memories during the lesson, thereby enabling pupils to learn securely and confidently and to remember important issues. Many are enthusiasts for their subjects and relate issues to real life. Occasionally, teachers talk too much and give pupils little opportunity to examine issues for themselves.
36. Most teachers make lessons interesting and stimulating. Learning is often fun – a strong feature in English, mathematics and art. Teachers choose worthwhile topics that appeal to pupils and engage their attention. They usually sustain this interest by posing suitably demanding questions, keeping up a brisk pace and varying the learning activities.

37. In the best lessons, teachers extend pupils' thinking and knowledge significantly. They expect pupils to concentrate, to think carefully and to work hard. They do not allow pupils to give superficial answers, but require them to explore alternatives and give thoughtful replies. They expect oral or written explanations to use appropriate specialist language and, where appropriate, to be given at length. A very high emphasis on literacy and correct technical language is an outstanding feature of many mathematics lessons (and one reason for pupils' success in the subject), but such literacy support is not frequent enough in art and in design and technology. In a minority of lessons, teachers accept unnecessarily brief or vague answers and do not encourage pupils to give fully developed explanations. Teachers' high emphasis on careful handwriting and presentation results in the overall standard of these being higher than normally found.
38. A strength of teaching is that classes are usually managed very firmly but patiently, even where a few pupils (usually boys) are occasionally silly. Teachers correct misbehaviour clearly, but sensitively. They make sure that pupils stay on the tasks set. As a result of the trust that they have in their teachers, pupils learn confidently and usually explore new topics with interest. There is a high consistency throughout the school in pupils taking responsibility for organising materials and equipment. A notable feature of most lessons is the reassurance and encouragement given to pupils that they can succeed and do well – a major reason why pupils in this school work hard and make good progress.
39. Lessons normally begin promptly. A typical pattern is for a quick, engaging “starter” to be followed by a brisk review of the previous lesson and a careful explanation of the new lesson's shape. Most teachers then use a suitable variety of teaching methods and activities to cover the topics being studied, although note-taking and the drafting of work are infrequently used. More lessons than usual end with a suitable rounding off and review of class work. Occasionally, as sometimes happens in geography, lessons end inconclusively.
40. Teaching and support staff work very well together. They nearly always concentrate appropriately on worthwhile, complementary activities that ensure that most pupils who, for example, have special educational needs or at an early stage of learning English make good progress. Not enough use is made of ICT, especially in English and mathematics. Worthwhile homework is set and marked. It is used particularly effectively in mathematics, art and modern foreign languages.
41. As part of this good picture of teaching, the assessment of pupils' work is carefully done. It is very thorough in geography and modern foreign languages. Overall, it is a strength of the school. Most teachers evaluate the impact of their class teaching, helping pupils to understand how well they have done and what they need to do to improve further. Pupils are very familiar with the National Curriculum levels they have reached. The marking of work is soundly done and regularly undertaken. It usually provides clear guidance on standards reached and future targets, but could give more help to pupils to improve their work in science. The recording of individual pupils' progress is done thoroughly. Individual educational plans (IEPS) for pupils with special educational needs are readily available and widely used except in ICT.

## **The curriculum**

The school's curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities that mostly meet the needs of all pupils. There is equal access to the full curriculum for all pupils, with effective provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school provides good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has good breadth and balance.
- It is high on personal, social and health education, but light on dance and drama.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed and effective.
- The support for learning and activities outside the school day is wide-ranging.
- Pupils are well guided and prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The daily act of collective worship does not meet statutory requirements.

## Commentary

42. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are good overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are taught and pupils choose to study French or German as a modern foreign language. The time allocated to dance, however, is low and drama is not taught in Years 8 and 9. The statutory requirement for all pupils to experience a daily act of collective worship is not met.
43. A strong feature of the curriculum is the study of personal, social and health education (PSHE). This programme reflects the social needs of the pupils well and provides form tutors with considerable time for pastoral work. It is soundly based on comprehensive policies for education about sex, relationships and the misuse of alcohol and drugs and provides sound guidance on careers and citizenship.
44. The programme is taught effectively by form tutors. They plan their work carefully to provide a good variety of work, enhancing it with visits by professional members of the community. In one lesson, for instance, pupils engaged in a lively discussion with the community policeman about anti-social behaviour and bullying and made good progress in understanding these issues. The scheme of work is in outline only, however, leaving each head of year and the form tutors for each year to develop detailed themes. As a result, there is no detailed overview of the scheme's progression or structure, no systematic monitoring and no consistent evaluation to guide future planning.
45. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. It is underpinned by a comprehensive policy and is well administered. Pupils' good progress is charted by a thorough programme of regular assessment. The individual education plan for each pupil is clear, made available to all staff and reviewed three times each year. The school works hard to support these pupils in class. Effective support is given to pupils both through teachers' matching of work closely to the needs of individual pupils and through help from support teachers and assistants who work in lessons in close liaison with class teachers. There are, however, not enough support teachers and assistants, with the result that pupils in some subject areas do not receive the full support they require.
46. A small number of pupils with particular difficulties in literacy are withdrawn from lessons for intensive teaching, which is of good quality. Close links are maintained with parents, the majority of whom give good support by, for instance, attending the well-organised, annual review meetings.
47. The school has successfully identified its gifted and talented pupils. They are supported through an effective programme of in-school and extra-curricular activities, organised in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, the humanities and modern foreign languages. The school also arranges, for example, a visit to a local university and after-school Latin classes for these pupils.



48. All pupils experience all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils are grouped in classes that are organised on the basis of prior attainment. This arrangement is broadly successful, as teachers match work carefully to the differing needs of pupils. A range of funding and learning strategies is employed to support minority groups of pupils. These include successful mentoring and family learning schemes.
49. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of education. Careers education forms a major strand in the PSHE programme; close cooperation with the local upper school ensures that pupils are aware of the opportunities available. Pupils are carefully guided by teachers, the careers adviser, comprehensive information and parents' evenings, as they make their choice of subjects for Year 10. Pupils also have good access to a well-organised careers library and associated computer programs.
50. The curriculum is reviewed regularly. Such cross-curricular issues as literacy, numeracy, citizenship and (more recently and to a lesser degree) ICT are being effectively addressed. Subject schemes of work are well written in most subjects. They are very good in English, mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages. Effective curricular links with the local upper school have resulted in good continuity in most subjects.
51. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances the curriculum. Approximately half of the school's subjects provide support for pupils outside the school day with, for example, clubs for homework, general interest groups and for pupils who need help. Pupils participate fully in a good number of clubs, musical activities, fieldwork and theatre visits, including a residential trip to London. They enjoy a fairly wide range of sports and participate enthusiastically in a programme of inter-school fixtures, including a cricket tour for pupils in Year 9. There is (unusually), however, no opportunity provided for soccer for either boys or girls.
52. The school has a full complement of suitably qualified staff to teach the curriculum. There is a high match of qualifications and expertise to teach nearly all the subjects and courses of the curriculum. The exception is ICT, where one specialist teacher and five non-specialist teachers teach the subject and without a full-time technician to support their work. The support teachers who work with pupils with English as an additional language or special educational needs are well qualified. In contrast, the majority of support assistants have minimal qualifications and training, nor are there enough of them to provide support in all the places it is required.
53. Recent building has provided a first-rate sports hall and science block. A new library and design and technology areas are to follow shortly. Most classroom areas are adequate for teaching the curriculum, but the decor is generally poor and many are in need of refurbishment. The music room is too small and limits the activities that can be attempted. Accommodation for administrative staff is cramped and inadequate.
54. Overall, resources are adequate. The library is accessible throughout the day, with a full-time librarian, eight computers and an appropriate stock of books. There are sufficient textbooks and equipment to teach the subjects of the curriculum, except in ICT. There are not enough computers to support work in many subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art and design and technology. There are no publicised criteria by which money for books and equipment is allocated to subjects.

## Care, guidance and support

These aspects are well provided. The school has generally good procedures to ensure pupils' care and welfare. It provides very effective support and guidance to pupils and is increasingly involving them in making decisions about the work of the school.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know pupils very well and value the development of every individual highly.
- The school gives more lesson time than usual to promoting pupils' personal education.
- Induction and transfer procedures and the careers guidance programme are well planned.
- There is no systematic monitoring of how well the school is doing in PSHE.
- A variety of health and safety issues require improvement.

## Commentary

55. Child protection procedures are fully in place, with the headteacher as the named coordinator. The school has effective arrangements to prevent unsuitable Internet access. Risk assessment procedures are very good; all visits, for example, require very thorough research, including (where at all possible) a rehearsal visit by staff. All departments submit termly risk assessments; issues are subsequently prioritised and followed up, as necessary.
56. There are, however, some health and safety issues that do not conform to these generally high standards. The school has no medical room where pupils who become ill at school can rest in suitable surroundings. Soap is not provided in the boys' toilets. Girls have no drinking fountain and one play area has loose gravel. The low subway under the hall is inadequately marked and puts tall users at risk. The main entrance leads directly into a corridor and is not in the view of reception staff. Technical staff in science and in design and technology do not have recognised safety qualifications.
57. With these exceptions, however, the school works very hard and successfully to safeguard the welfare of pupils and has strong links with such agencies as social services. The school's home/school liaison officer is extremely effective in fostering and maintaining links where there have been difficulties for pupils, particularly those from ethnic minorities.
58. Pupils are highly valued as individuals. The system whereby each pupil has the same form tutor and head of year throughout their time in school allows very trusting relationships to develop. The school gives a significantly higher proportion of lesson time to promoting personal, social, health and citizenship education than schools do nationally. The programme is well taught overall and includes a good programme of careers guidance. It is not, however, formally monitored to determine its consistency and how much pupils benefit from it.
59. Form teachers have individual interviews with their pupils each year to discuss targets and progress. It is only very recently, however, that the tutorial system has begun to focus sharply on pupils' academic progress as well as their physical and emotional well-being. The heads of year are poised to have a much stronger role in coordinating the overall progress of individual pupils.
60. Professional people from local business effectively help selected pupils in Year 9 to improve aspects of their work at school. The thorough training that these mentors undergo has resulted in the school receiving accreditation for the programme under the *Excellence in Mentoring* scheme.

61. Induction procedures are good. Year 6 primary school pupils spend three activity-based days in school before the end of the summer term prior to transfer. As pupils themselves indicated, these days make settling into secondary schooling much easier. Music and PE have good links with primary schools, but other subjects have until recently had little.
62. Transfer arrangements to post-14 education are well established. Teachers from the upper school to which most pupils transfer, visit during Year 9 to help pupils to choose their future subjects and courses. There are good arrangements to learn about pupils' progress in their post-14 education.
63. The involvement of pupils in the development of the school's work is modest, but increasing. Pupils were, for example, involved informally in the recent headship appointment. The school council has now been given high priority for development. The new headteacher is firmly committed to seeking pupils' views on how the school works and listening carefully to their ideas; pupils chair and minute the meetings, with a teacher observer present and funds have been allocated to implement the most worthwhile ideas. Pupils' views are sometimes sought within subject departments – as, for example, in history, where pupils were asked to display their views on the usefulness of projects. Overall, however, pupils have played a modest part in fostering the operation of the school.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school is held in high regard by parents and the community. Good communications keep parents well informed about its activities and their children's progress, but written reports to parents and curricular information could be further improved. The parents of children with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority groups are also well supported by the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A generally good range of information is issued to parents, with many items translated into Bengali.
- The home-school liaison officer offers considerable help to parents, pupils and teachers.
- The school has an effective mentoring programme for pupils and supports family learning initiatives.
- Good links are maintained with the local community.
- The amount of curricular information provided to parents is low in Years 8 and 9.
- The exchange of information with primary schools requires improvement.

### **Commentary**

64. The school's links with parents are good. Parents and children like the school. They consider that its teaching is good. Parents are pleased with the progress their children make. The school has high expectations of attainment and conduct. It successfully expects pupils to work hard and to do their best. Many parents choose the school for their children, even though it is out of their normal catchment area. There is good attendance at parents' evenings.
65. Generally good communications keep parents well informed about the school's activities and their children's progress. The range of information provided is of good quality, interesting and helpful. It also emphasises the role of parents in supporting their children's learning. This is also done to great effect by the home-school liaison officer and particularly through her links with parents for whom English is an additional language. Some school documents are prepared in Bengali as well as English. She translates other school literature and letters home and is available to interpret at parents' evenings, meetings and reviews. This is a major strength of the

school and a key element in the school's effective links with parents. She also offers guidance to teachers in understanding the cultural issues of some of the community's ethnic groups.

66. Parents are informed of their children's progress through regular consultation evenings and written reports. A record of parental attendance is kept, so that the school can monitor its level of provision and ensure it communicates effectively with all parents. The written reports about children's progress are issued for each subject to a (largely) common format that meets statutory requirements. There is, however, some inconsistency in reporting across subjects, with a particular tendency to being light on pupils' attainment and subject-specific targets, whilst putting great emphasis on pupils' attitudes.
67. The school seeks the views of parents on issues that affect them. In particular, parents of the new Year 7 intake are invited to fill in a questionnaire to express their early impressions of the school. Parents were also consulted when citizenship and the National Curriculum for ICT were introduced to the timetable. To further encourage parents to contribute to their children's learning, the school makes good use of homework and the *Pupil Planner*. An informative subject booklet is sent home to all new Year 7 pupils, so that parents can share in their children's learning. No further information is, however, provided for Years 8 and 9.
68. The school recognises the important role it plays in the community. The new sports hall is used extensively by local clubs and groups and the assembly hall has been used for wedding receptions. Parents and friends help with some extra-curricular activities – such as the jewellery club, Mendhi hand-painting and fund-raising. The family learning programmes are well received and contribute to pupils' learning. In conjunction with The Leicestershire Education Business Company, the school runs a successful mentoring programme that is appreciated by pupils, staff and parents.
69. The induction process for new pupils is thorough and supportive. The mechanisms of transfer to the upper schools are good. Curricular links with primary schools are generally slight although, through a local group of schools, curricular issues are reviewed to help to sustain continuity and progression in pupils' education. These links also lead to the development of and guidance on, wider management issues that bring benefit to pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher is an excellent leader. Senior and middle management are effective. The role of the governing body has improved since the previous inspection; it is now broadly satisfactory, but has further to go.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the new headteacher is excellent.
- The senior management team is responsive to new ideas and developing fast.
- The previous headteacher produced a very successful and happy school.
- Middle management varies from very good to satisfactory and is very effective overall.
- Administrative staff are largely well deployed, but poorly co-ordinated.
- Governors have not fulfilled the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

### **Commentary**

70. The school has clearly stated aims and objectives that are widely publicised both within and outside the school. They are translated into action very effectively. Pupils not only achieve well academically, but also develop and mature rapidly as individuals.

71. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall. The recruitment and retention of governors have proved difficult in the past. The school now has a stable governing body. Under the previous headteacher, governors were supportive, but few played an active part in formulating policies for the development of the school. Newly formed plans to establish a suitable committee system promise to ensure the full involvement of governors in the future. The headteacher and chair of governors have quickly formed a productive partnership and a clear agenda for reviewing school policies. The governing body does not, however, fulfil its statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
72. The previous headteacher provided very effective leadership and the school has responded well to the key issues for improvement from the previous inspection. The highly experienced new headteacher is building on these firm foundations to take the school still further forward. She has quickly demonstrated excellent, strong and determined leadership qualities. She has the support of a dedicated and hard-working deputy, whose expertise and approach complement well those of the headteacher. The extension of the roles of the thoughtful and enthusiastic assistant headteachers into strategic management is a key part of the headteacher's plans for the future improvement of the leadership team as a whole.
73. The school has a strong team of middle managers. They have successfully motivated both staff and pupils and have played a central part in raising both the attainment and achievement of pupils. Although they are efficient and effective managers, they do not play a sufficiently large role in forming policies for the future development of the school.
74. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The headteacher has appropriately identified the need to involve senior and middle managers more actively in whole-school issues and to delegate more responsibility to them. Under the knowledgeable guidance of the deputy headteacher, the school monitors pupils' performance very carefully, tracking their progress precisely to identify and deal with any underachievement.
75. The performance management scheme has improved the standard of teaching. There are good opportunities for all staff to participate in training. This has enabled staff to implement successfully such strategies as that to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The staff training scheme is well organised, but the procedures for funding it are not clear to all staff involved. Although administrative staff are effective and largely well deployed, their management is poorly co-ordinated.
76. The school has a broadly average income and expenditure. The larger than usual surplus in the budget is a wise response to the need to keep a contingency fund during the current building programme. The school manages its funds well, both in the longer term and on a day-to-day basis. It keeps the principles of best value very much in mind. It has sought and used appropriately, additional funding – such as that for the pupil mentoring scheme. Bearing in mind its average income and its effectiveness in raising pupils' attainment and achievement, the school gives very good value for money.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,301,178
Total expenditure	1,124,560
Expenditure per pupil	2,434

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	122,463
Balance carried forward to the next	176,618

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

**The effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language.**

Provision of English as an additional language (EAL) is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Regular, good quality team-teaching is provided in the core subjects and humanities.
- The assessment of pupils' progress and the analysis of their performance are well done.
- The overall integration of EAL into the school's work and liaison with parents are good.
- Documentation is always carefully presented.

### Commentary

77. About one third of the school's 468 pupils are given additional support through the *Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant* (EMAG) funding. One hundred and eighty-one pupils are identified on the school's needs analysis of language levels: of these, 32 per cent have a level in English below Level 4, whilst six pupils are identified as being at or below Level 1. Pupils of Bengali background make up the largest number of pupils (76) who have English as an additional language; those whose first language is Gujarati number 50. Thirteen other languages (including Malay, Urdu and Marathi) feature as pupils' first or main language.
78. The school appropriately targets its main support on 65 pupils. There is, additionally, a strong emphasis on providing teaching support to pupils at "middle" level, as part of the school's policy to raise standards of attainment over the whole school. To this end, three EAL teachers and a support teacher work regularly in partnership with class teachers in English, mathematics science and humanities.
79. By the end of Year 9, the overall attainment of pupils for whom English is an additional language is average and thus broadly in line with that of most other pupils. Overall, these pupils achieve well and make good progress. A significant proportion make very good progress – as, for example, in the much increased proportions of Bangladeshi pupils who improved their capability in English at least one level (and reached at least Level 5) during their time in school. Many pupils who come into school with very low levels of English proficiency also make very good progress. This increase in capability is a considerable achievement by teachers and their pupils.
80. Of the three full lessons observed, two were judged as good and one as very good. Inspectors who observed EAL teachers as part of their inspection of subjects also judged most of the contributions of the EAL teachers to be in the good to very good range.
81. The teachers for EAL join subject teachers in the planning stage of lessons and agree on the strategies to be adopted – as, for example, in presenting mathematical games, in deciding on which parts of a lesson should be taught to the whole class by the EAL teacher (who might, for instance, emphasise a key word) or in suggesting how ideas can be expressed in different ways. These teachers also produce a good range of teaching materials. They make an important contribution to the literacy element of lessons, not only for "their" pupils but also for all pupils in the class. The work covered and pupils' progress in English are recorded and monitored well by the EAL teachers.

82. This specialist work is coordinated very well by a dedicated teacher. Teaching is very well deployed and carefully timetabled. Excellent records of pupils' progress are kept, analysed and presented; evidence of pupils' progress is presented, for instance, twice each year to the local authority's support service. The coordinator and other staff keep up to date with developments and are involved in research at national level. The school benefits, too, from the very valuable service of a home-school liaison worker, who also teaches part-time and helps significantly with bilingual matters.
83. The provision of EAL support makes a vital contribution to the good academic achievement of the whole school. It also contributes very well to the self-confidence of pupils and to the very positive inclusive ethos of the school.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 3

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils progress well in the subject.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are good.
- Teachers have a good level of knowledge of and enthusiasm for, the subject.
- Good use is made of data to track pupils' progress.
- The department has good leadership and management.
- There is no provision for drama in Years 8 and 9.
- There is no ICT provision in classrooms.

#### Commentary

84. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 over the period 1998-2002, the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5 has (with the exception of the average result of 2001) been below average. Results at Level 6 over the same period have varied widely, although they were close to the national average in 2001. Pupils' overall achievement in English is, however, good because of their low starting point in Year 7. The 2003 results are slightly higher overall than those of 2002.
85. The overall standard in lessons is broadly average. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils are keen and willing to learn. They take an active part in oral work, although they rarely give extended replies, largely because they have insufficient opportunities to do so. Pupils listen carefully and speak clearly and audibly in lessons. They read aloud with expression and confidence. In comprehension activities, pupils use an appropriately wide range of such strategies as skimming and scanning. They regularly identify key points, provide evidence and then give an explanation. The improved quality of pupils' writing reflects the attention that teachers give to planning, drafting and the key skills of spelling, handwriting and presentation.
86. Pupils' written work is slightly above average overall. It is generally prepared and drafted carefully. Year 7 pupils, for example, studying Michael Morpurgo's story, *My Father is a Polar Bear*, identified the setting, the significance of narration and the effectiveness of the author's language before applying those insights to the drafting of their own autobiographical accounts. In a Year 8 class that was drafting a formal letter of complaint, the pupils' use of a "writing frame" helped to ensure an effective structure and organisation to paragraphs. A Year 9 class studying W W Jacob's short story, *The Monkey's Paw*, focused on the creation of tension in the story. They found the author's use of language challenging, but coped, when describing, for example, how the father made a poor move in chess and is "amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it". In a lower-attaining Year 9 class, pupils used the teacher's modelling of joining phrases (such as "this shows that..." or "this suggests that...") to help them to structure their own written responses to a short story thriller called *The Arsonist*.



87. The quality of teaching is good. The majority of lessons are suitably planned, with three major parts to them. They also include lesson objectives which are shared with pupils. This thorough planning helps teachers to make the best use of the teaching strategies encouraged by the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Much of the teaching captures pupils' interest and attention. Assessment is used well to ensure that all pupils, of whatever background or ability, make good progress. Assessment information is particularly well shared by teachers and classroom support teachers to ensure that precise targets are set for pupils with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language.
88. Teachers have a good knowledge of and enthusiasm for, the subject. Resources are well chosen to support pupils in their learning. The absence of ICT in classrooms, however, limits the opportunities pupils have to work independently. Oral activities are regularly included in lessons, but do not stretch pupils' ideas and observations sufficiently. Subject-specific language, including literary vocabulary, is used regularly and accurately by pupils in both their written and oral work.
89. The quality of learning is good. Pupils make good progress in their studies, have positive attitudes towards the subject and behave well in lessons. They are attentive and eagerly answer questions, but are rarely encouraged to explore ideas or share opinions. Pupils collaborate well, when working in small groups.
90. The leadership and management of the department are good. Staff work well together and have specific responsibilities for curricular development in each year group. Assessment data are very well used to track pupils' progress and identify those pupils who would benefit from extra support. An initiative to target support on a number of boys improved their performance in 2003. Staff have successfully embedded the national Key Stage 3 Strategy into their teaching.
91. The curriculum is well planned. Recent excellent revisions to the schemes of work have effectively embraced citizenship and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum. Drama is taught on a rotational basis in Year 7. There is an urgent need to ensure that drama is planned, with suitable progression and continuity, across each age group and that appropriate assessment opportunities are incorporated.
92. The 1998 inspection noted deficiencies in the provision of book stock, particularly in books to enable pupils to exercise more initiative in their reading. These weaknesses have been successfully addressed. The department's monitoring of pupils' reading habits indicates improved levels of book borrowing from the library.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

93. The standard of literacy seen in other subjects is close to average overall. Pupils' writing is noticeable for careful handwriting and presentation. The planning of writing tasks is average in most subjects. Opportunities for the development of sustained writing are frequently inhibited by the overuse of worksheets in citizenship and music. Spelling is below the standard expected in geography, but broadly average in other subjects.
94. Most pupils read fluently, accurately and with expression. Comprehension skills, including skimming and scanning, are average in most subjects, but above average in design and technology and in RE. Better library stock and the use of "reading boxes" have contributed to these higher reading standards.
95. Pupils' skills in speaking are average overall. Most pupils speak clearly and audibly. Many enjoy class discussions, but are slightly below average in expressing an extended point of view.

The use of appropriate technical language is of a high standard in mathematics and good in science, art, design and technology, modern foreign languages, PE and RE.

96. The school's promotion of the National Literacy Strategy has been well managed and coordinated. Its impact is evident in the good rate of progress pupils make in improving their literacy. The 1998 inspection noted weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. These weaknesses have now been successfully addressed, although the school intends to improve pupils' standard of literacy still further.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very enthusiastic and challenging teaching promotes high standards and very good achievement.
- Teachers use assessment data effectively to monitor pupils' progress.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- The subject makes a substantial contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Too few pupils redraft their written work or complete corrections to improve accuracy.

### **Commentary**

97. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2002 suggested that the overall level of attainment in French and German was well in line with the national average. A similar standard was reached in 2003. Girls performed better than boys, but the difference was much lower than that seen nationally.
98. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French and German by the end of Year 9 is average. Pupils have a good understanding of the foreign languages, which teachers use extensively in class. In both languages they answer the register and general questions confidently. Pupils write at an appropriate level; lower-attaining pupils in Year 7, for instance, use spider-diagrams to write about themselves, whilst average-attaining pupils in Year 8 write at length about themselves or their daily routines. By the end of the year, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 show a sound knowledge of the past tense in each language.
99. The *Bridging Project*, during which Year 9 pupils produce a brochure, an essay and a formal letter, enables pupils to use different styles of writing. This work is a key factor in promoting consistency and secure progression into Year 10 at the upper schools and can serve as the first element of their GCSE coursework. One essay on *Mes Vacances*, written in faultless French, was an outstanding example of this kind of work.
100. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Over time, they acquire a very good knowledge of the vocabulary, relevant constructions and tenses of their topics. These are consolidated in regular assessment tests and exercises. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning help them to progress well.
101. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very high standards and expectations. They challenge pupils well – as, for example, in a Year 8 French lesson, when over half the lesson was devoted to effective oral work, or in a Year 9 German lesson, when pupils worked productively to build sentences with subordinate clauses. In a Year 7 lesson, however, the learning of the class was impeded by the silly behaviour of several boys with special educational

needs, who had no support and therefore took up too much of the teacher's time.

102. Teachers use visual aids and worksheets very effectively to introduce or consolidate new vocabulary and constructions. Pupils work at a good pace, sometimes independently and sometimes in pairs. They enjoy their lessons. Homework is used well to consolidate or to extend classwork. Pupils' written work is marked regularly, with corrections, but too few pupils redraft their written work or complete corrections to improve the accuracy of their work.
103. The department is very well led and managed. Very productive links have been established with the 14-18 upper schools to which pupils transfer. Teachers use assessment data and portfolios very well to monitor pupils' progress. The department makes a substantial contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Teachers celebrate the diversity of languages spoken in different classes. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Almost all pupils make very good progress.
- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers strongly focus on the use of correct vocabulary and the subject's relevance to real life.
- Pupils of all abilities enjoy mathematics and work very hard.
- Marking does not sufficiently inform pupils how they can improve.
- There is too little use of ICT.

### **Commentary**

104. National test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2002. This represented excellent achievement, when compared with their previous performance in primary schooling and a very good achievement when set alongside the attainment of pupils in most schools of a similar kind. In recent years results have always been at least in line with the national average. Pupils do better in mathematics than in English or science. Boys and girls do equally well. Test results in 2003 were as good as those of 2002.
105. Work seen during the inspection confirmed the high levels of progress made by pupils of all abilities by the end of Year 9. The lowest-attaining pupils worked well above what would normally be expected. For example, they showed great enthusiasm and a good understanding of negative numbers, when finding the shortest route through a maze. Pupils with considerable learning difficulties and with previously poor attendance records maintained their motivation, because teaching assistants worked with them and prompted them to think for themselves. In a very good lesson, the most able pupils in Year 9 used geometry to solve real-life problems on calculating distances; their skills were built up speedily and systematically and they ultimately gained deep understanding by attempting problems that used different starting information.
106. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons begin with starter activities that practise number skills and successfully gain pupils' interest. Teachers plan lessons imaginatively and very thoroughly. They focus strongly on involving pupils, keeping them learning actively and rarely expecting them to listen for too long. There is a strong emphasis on using correct vocabulary and having fun. The

result is that almost all pupils enjoy the subject and work very hard, whilst making very good progress throughout the school.

107. In a very good lesson with middle-ability pupils in Year 8, the teacher produced four playing cards at random, from ace to ten and one at a time, from behind her back. Pupils enjoyed deciding whether the “digit” should be placed in the units, tens, hundreds or thousands column to make the largest possible number. In the same lesson, pupils used the information in their personal planners to sort populations and areas of countries into order of size, thereby improving their knowledge of both geography and “place value”. Homework is often imaginative, with a strong focus on writing – such as the task of writing a story to match drawings of times on a 24-hour clock.
108. Teachers work very well with both support teachers and teaching assistants to focus on the needs of individual pupils. In a Year 7 class, for example, the well-focused work of a support teacher who specialised in helping pupils for whom English is an additional language enabled them to understand the basics of algebra by thinking of arithmetic operations as robots. Teachers assess pupils’ work well, using regular tests that give pupils the National Curriculum levels they have reached. They are very effective at spotting when pupils are ready to move forward, thus maintaining a brisk pace in lessons. Day-to-day marking is not, however, systematic and does not give pupils sufficient feedback on how to improve their work.
109. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department sets a very good example by her imaginative teaching and supports her colleagues well. Other teachers have been encouraged to help with data analysis and providing study opportunities for gifted pupils. Documentation, including schemes of work and policies, provides clear guidance. The department has a clear determination to ensure that all pupils experience learning of high quality. It puts a strong emphasis on planning, using correct vocabulary and relating work to real life, wherever possible.
110. Whilst most resources are used imaginatively and effectively, there is little use of ICT and insufficient textbooks for pupils to take home. Whilst the department copes with these issues successfully, time is sometimes wasted by the need to copy unnecessarily from a textbook. The department is very hard-working and has a strong corporate ethos. Improvement throughout the department has been good since the previous inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

111. Competence in numeracy across other subjects is broadly in line with the national average because of the standards inculcated by the mathematics department. Mathematics is, however, used less than usual by most subjects. There was no evidence seen of mathematics being used in citizenship, modern foreign languages, music or RE. In science, mathematical competency has improved since the previous inspection, but pupils still use mathematics less than would normally be expected. In art and in design and technology, good opportunities to improve number skills were not taken. In both geography and history, in contrast, pupils reach an average standard in drawing and interpreting graphs and in PE most pupils calculate accurately, when required.
112. The school has held training in numeracy for all teachers. The guidance documentation to promote ideas does not, however, focus on individual subjects, nor is there any tracking of how much mathematics is used across the curriculum.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress; in all three years their achievement is good.
- The national Key Stage 3 Strategy for teaching and learning has been successfully implemented.
- Good teaching is enhanced by new accommodation and a stimulating learning environment.
- Marking insufficiently tells pupils about their progress and how they can improve.
- Assessment data are insufficiently shared with pupils or used to agree realistic targets.

## Commentary

113. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 over the 2000-2002 period, results were just slightly below the national average. They were, however, well above those of most schools serving similar neighbourhoods and well above the average for pupils with comparable Year 6 results. When the well below average attainment on entry is taken into account, these results indicate that pupils' overall achievement is good. The results in science are below those in mathematics. They are usually slightly below those of English for the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5, but above English for the proportion reaching the higher Level 6. The results in 2003 were fractionally lower than those of 2002.
114. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is close to the standard expected nationally. This represents a good achievement. Boys and girls do equally well. Most pupils carry out well such fundamental procedures as the taring of top-pan balances to correctly measure out chemicals. The standard of work of lower-attaining pupils is at an acceptable level, bearing in mind their prior attainment. High-attaining pupils produce work that is of good quality and well presented, but it often lacks originality. These more able pupils are sometimes insufficiently stimulated by, for example, demanding questions or challenging learning materials.
115. There is now little difference between the attainment of ethnic minority pupils and that of other pupils. The detailed monitoring of the attainment and achievement of ethnic minority pupils shows, for example, that pupils of Bangladeshi heritage make good progress. In general, where teachers have high expectations of pupils, pupils participate well in lessons and achieve well.
116. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons are consistently good. Both higher- and lower-attaining pupils show a positive interest in their studies. Teachers and pupils cooperate well. Pupils work in an enthusiastic and safe manner, when carrying out practical work. They look after equipment and books carefully.
117. Overall, teaching and learning are good; two-thirds of lessons seen were taught well and none unsatisfactorily. The scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that teaching of a similar standard is maintained through the year – a contributory factor to pupils' good achievement. Planning is good. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and usually reviewed at the end of lessons. The recommendations of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy are being implemented systematically. Homework is set regularly and closely linked to class work.
118. Teachers mark books regularly, but their comments are often short, rarely commend achievement and seldom indicate what pupils need to do to improve. Marks for the end-of-module tests are recorded systematically, but insufficiently used to set pupils targets for further improvement.
119. Pupils with special educational needs or those having limited competence in English receive good additional support. They are well assisted by an additional teacher and learning support

assistants. As a result, these pupils make at least sound progress and many of them good or very good progress. Individual educational plans are thoughtfully used.

120. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their writing. Laboratories contain displays of key words, for example and time is spent in many lessons to check out the meanings of technical terms or to hold spelling tests for each module of work. No debates or extended discussions, however, were observed during the inspection. Pupils respond well to teachers' questions, offering answers that show understanding of the topic in hand. They readily seek clarification of the more difficult concepts, but seldom have the opportunity to explore their understanding of a topic at a deeper level or to discuss a range of alternative interpretations. Numeracy is promoted less than usual, although graphs are usually well constructed and data carefully plotted.
121. The department uses ICT frequently and appropriately. This practice has been facilitated by the installation of digital projectors in two of the three laboratories and by having four networked computers in each laboratory. Teachers exploit suitable software well. In a top set lesson in Year 9 on nutrition, for instance, pupils competently used databases to construct tables and pie charts that tested out a range of scenarios. The small quantity of datalogging equipment available, however, restricts pupils to observing demonstrations. The stock of textbooks is sufficient for use by pupils in school, but insufficient for home use. The satisfactory stock of science books in the library is well used.
122. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is a good team spirit. The head of department (who was appointed after the last inspection) has systematically addressed the many areas of concern that were highlighted in 1998. An efficient technician services well the needs of the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The three new laboratories are bright, contain interesting displays of pupils' work and attract pupils to the subject. The department has good links with the upper schools in the area, but not with primary schools.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching in the specialist ICT lessons is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attainment and behaviour.
- Good progress has been made in establishing the national ICT strategy.
- Teachers do not use assessment data enough to inform pupils of their progress.
- Pupils do not use ICT enough for designing, manufacturing and control.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is not effectively monitored and evaluated.

### **Commentary**

123. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment in ICT is broadly in line with the national average. Teachers assessed pupils' overall standard in the subject in 2002 as a little below average at Level 5, but slightly above average in 2003. This level of attainment represents a good achievement, since the attainment of many pupils on entry is low. Pupils make good progress and rapidly acquire the necessary subject skills and routines because of carefully planned, briskly paced and well-structured teaching.

124. In the lessons seen, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieved equally well. The achievement of pupils with English as an additional language is broadly similar to that of other pupils, owing to the carefully structured support and one-to-one help they are given by staff and support assistants. They are given lessons, for example, on how to use the network and learn how to use a digital camera to create images for importation into a slide-show presentation about themselves.
125. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are confident in the use of ICT applications, including word-processing, presentation software and spreadsheets. In Year 7, pupils quickly learn how to use the network, know about passwords and network conventions and access their work files. They learn to use and apply relevant ICT vocabulary in their lessons through the use of key words for each lesson or topic.
126. In Year 8, pupils extend their skills in word processing and desktop publishing. They learn, for instance, the most efficient and effective ways of using colour and layout techniques to enhance the appearance of their writing, when they produce attractive information leaflets, illustrated by suitable images. Year 9 pupils extend their ICT capability by making thoughtful evaluations of work in progress. They develop further skills in using ICT to analyse and present data. For example, they enter detailed data about the solar system into spreadsheets, effectively use a wider range of chart tools to create and analyse appropriately chosen graph types and demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between various characteristics of the planets.
127. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. They make much use of praise and humour to encourage pupils to work and to help them to a better level of understanding. Specialist lessons have a brisk pace and a clear structure and make the best use of time. Classes begin with "starters" that set out lesson objectives and teachers' expectations, which are shared with pupils. Pupils' understanding and progress are checked frequently throughout each lesson. Skilled questioning deepens pupils' understanding. Plenary sessions reinforce what has been learned.
128. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve. They insist on high standards of accuracy and layout in word-processed work or presentations. In most lessons, good use is made of the interactive whiteboards to stimulate and consolidate pupils' learning. Teachers intervene constructively and sensitively to help individual pupils to increase their progress, to correct misunderstandings or to encourage high-attaining pupils to work at even higher levels. Less able pupils are equally well supported by these methods.
129. A good classroom atmosphere is created by these approaches. For example, teacher intervention in one lesson enabled pupils to learn that image files may be edited to improve their clarity and file size and then added to a presentation to achieve a desired, visual effect. Very good use is made of homework; this enhances the work done in lessons to increase pupils' understanding of the applications of ICT in daily life. For example, in one task which contributes to Year 8 work on leaflet design, pupils analysed and reported on the design of a sample of advertising and information literature that comes to their homes.
130. In contrast, assessment practice is not strong or extensive enough to guide planning and teaching. Pupils are not made aware of the National Curriculum level at which they are working or the skills and techniques they need to move on to higher levels of attainment.
131. The subject is well led by an experienced and committed teacher who provides good leadership to the subject. She has a clear vision and realistic plans for the future. She is well supported by five other members of staff, drawn from several subject areas. This breadth of subject

experience is a strength of the department. The head of department has worked hard to produce a series of key documents, which successfully adapt and extend nationally produced teaching materials by making them more relevant for school use. Detailed guidance has also been produced for the departmental use of ICT.

132. The two ICT rooms have recently been re-equipped and refurbished with computers. Computers are also available in science and in design and technology rooms. The school's computer:pupil ratio of 1:7 falls below the national average figure of 1:5 for secondary schools, so slightly limiting subjects' access to ICT. Peripheral equipment, such as scanners and digital cameras, is limited and network printing facilities are inadequate. The management of specialist ICT is sound.
133. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, although some issues raised at the last inspection in 1998 have yet to be addressed. All staff have completed *New Opportunities Fund* (NOF) training in ICT to good effect. Most staff now have personal access to ICT, especially through the national *Computers for Teachers* scheme. The mapping of ICT to curriculum subjects has been completed. Subjects now have detailed guidance on the appropriate application of ICT. The weakness is that subjects' use of ICT is not consistently monitored or evaluated. Because of effective teaching and comprehensive schemes of work (which are based on the national ICT strategy), the standard of pupils' attainment is now broadly average. Pupils' experience of using ICT to control processes and systems in science and in design and technology is, however, not securely and routinely in place.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

134. The management of whole-school provision for the subject is unsatisfactory, since the contribution made by individual subjects is not yet effectively monitored or evaluated. As a result, ICT is unevenly used across the curriculum, although the overall standard of attainment, where ICT is used, is close to average.
135. Some subjects make imaginative use of ICT to enhance pupils' subject knowledge, whilst others do little. English teachers are confident ICT users and make good use of word processing, ICT presentations and the Internet, but have no ICT within the department. Pupils' learning in geography, history and RE is enriched by the effective use of word processing, data-handling and presentation software. Provision in modern foreign languages is good; pupils reach an average standard in using the Internet for research and both word processing and clip art to present their work attractively. In science, pupils gain some experience of the use of ICT to record physical process and changes through teachers' demonstrations and the powerful use of two interactive whiteboards to illustrate key concepts. Pupils do not have regular opportunities to use ICT in mathematics. The limited quantity and quality of ICT in art and in design and technology restricts pupils' use of such equipment and lowers their ICT capability.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in the subject.
- The leadership and management of the subject are of high quality.
- Teachers' planning is careful and detailed.



- Very good assessment procedures clearly inform pupils what they need to do to improve.
- A broad range of curricular opportunities is offered.

## Commentary

136. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2002 at the end of Year 9, their results suggested that the overall standard was average. The 2003 results were similar. Boys and girls achieve equally well. During the inspection, the overall standard of attainment was average.
137. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good knowledge of how landscapes are formed (as, for example, by ice and water) and know the principles of weather forecasting. They understand how such extreme circumstances as flooding may affect people's lives. They have a good understanding of some geographical issues in the world – as, for instance, the factors that affect the distribution of population and how populations may change. The majority of pupils understand the meaning of geographical terms satisfactorily, but only the higher-attaining pupils use them in their written work.
138. Overall, pupils' achievement over Years 7-9 is good. Pupils make good progress in gaining knowledge and understanding – as, for example, in increasing their knowledge of what places are like, from the local area to places in the wider world such as Bangladesh and the Central Massif in France.
139. By the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils make effective use of research and the understanding they acquire to discuss such geographical issues as Third World debt. Pupils at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs achieve well and complete work effectively. Teachers know them well and establish close working relationships with the support teachers and assistants working in class. As a result, work is matched closely to their needs and they receive both consistent explanations and well-coordinated support.
140. The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are always very well prepared. They begin promptly with a brisk “starter” activity (often recapping previous work) that quickly gains pupils' interest, curiosity and attention. Learning objectives are made clear to pupils at the start of lessons, but are not effectively reviewed at the end to assess the progress that has been made. Teachers quickly establish a purposeful and industrious atmosphere in class. They manage pupils skilfully, so that they listen carefully, maintain focus and are well behaved.
141. Teachers use their good command of the subject to provide a variety of well-structured, lively and stimulating activities that present a challenge to pupils. They involve all pupils in work in pairs, groups or as a whole class. In one Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils studied the reasons for Third World debt. Following a consideration of the objectives as a class, pupils worked in pairs on a brisk “starter” activity to match words and meanings and to sort cards into categories. They then discussed their findings as a class, before completing an exercise individually to consolidate what they had learned. As a result, pupils were fully involved in the lesson, formed constructive relationships with each other, completed work accurately at a brisk pace and made good progress.
142. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are very good. Marking is up to date and informative. Assessment is regular, varied and of high quality. Results are recorded and analysed effectively and then used to support individual pupils and, as necessary, to modify the curriculum and teaching. Teachers inform pupils clearly of the standards they reach, whilst pupils are involved in self-assessment and target-setting, so that they know exactly what they need to do to improve.

143. The department is very well led and managed. There is a clear sense of purpose and an appropriate focus on raising standards. The work of the department is regularly monitored and evaluated to influence forward planning effectively. The scheme of work is well written; it appropriately includes well-organised fieldwork visits, the promotion of literacy, numeracy and citizenship and well-integrated opportunities to use ICT. Resources are sufficient and of good quality. The good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and occasionally very good.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Information and communication technology is used very well.

### Commentary

144. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment overall is broadly in line with that expected nationally. In the past three years, teachers have assessed their pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as being in line with the national expectation; fewer pupils than nationally, however, are judged to reach the highest standards. These standards reflect those seen during the inspection.
145. The attainment of boys has risen over the past three years to about that of girls, largely due to the department's efforts to increase boys' interest and motivation. The attainment of pupils of Bangladeshi and Indian heritage is above the national average and above that of the white pupils in the school: the attainment of ethnic minority pupils in general has improved over the past three years, whilst that of Bangladeshi boys has improved significantly.
146. Pupils make good progress in lessons and throughout the school. Most work hard, persevere and show a desire to succeed. As a result, they achieve well. Many reach standards that are higher than would often be expected, given their starting point at the beginning of Year 7. Both their behaviour and attitude to work are very good. A very small minority, who have poorer attitudes and short concentration spans, do not achieve as well as they should, because they ignore their teachers' frequent reminders about working rather than chattering.
147. Most pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the past. They usually recall well work done in previous lessons. This means that teachers can quickly move on to new work. Pupils explain the reasons for events in the past well. They see and explain changes over time. High attainers in Year 9, for example, studying the history of Britain from 1750 to 1900, made valid links between the changes and understood different rates of change. High-attaining pupils evaluate and use sources well to describe and explain the past, producing extended writing of an above-average standard. Lower attainers use sources for information satisfactorily. Pupils usually present their work well and show pride in it.
148. A major reason for pupils' good achievement is the consistently good teaching, which has improved since the previous inspection. It is characterised by the very thorough planning of

lessons, which takes pupils' capabilities carefully into account and by effective strategies to stimulate interest and motivate pupils.

149. In a lesson about the different characteristics needed for a good ruler in the past and the present day, for instance, the teacher made very good use of a digital projector to show images of changes in warfare; these created much interest among pupils. An insistence on good behaviour and respect for others allows pupils to work effectively. Teachers set tasks that are manageable by all pupils, but at the same time offer appropriate challenge to the highest attainers. Pupils in an upper set in Year 9, for example, successfully cross-referenced information about four indigenous tribes in North America with descriptions of the geography of the continent and then placed the tribes in their correct location on a map, using their cross-referencing.
150. The leadership of the department is excellent and its management very good. The head of department's vision for improving the already successful department permeates all its work. She leads by example and is prepared to innovate, where it will benefit pupils. The contribution of the department to pupils' social and cultural development and to citizenship is strong. Both teachers and pupils in the department make very good use of ICT in their research and production of work.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils start from a low base, but soon make rapid progress.
- The high level of achievement is the direct result of very good teaching.
- Pupils leave the school well prepared to begin a GCSE course.
- New schemes of work have addressed the weaknesses identified in the previous report.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

### Commentary

151. By the end of Year 9, pupils are at the standard expected by the locally agreed syllabus. They leave the school with a solid basic knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. They understand and respect how religious beliefs and values affect ways of living. They have a reflective and caring approach to life and an awareness of its spiritual dimension. A significant minority of high-attaining pupils, when given the means and opportunity to write at length, exceed the expectations of the syllabus. All pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject and behave very well during lessons. The department's emphasis on the importance of pupils learning about themselves and about life through the study of religion enables them to gain sensitivity and maturity in all aspects of their personal development.
152. Pupils' achievement over their three years in school is very good. In the ability to speak and write competently about religion, pupils start from a low base, but from the start of Year 7 soon make rapid progress. Through listening attentively to the teacher and working in small groups they greatly develop their skilfulness in thinking and speaking. In Year 8, through their study of such topics as pilgrimage, pupils relate religious practice to their own experience and so deepen their understanding of religious ideas. In Year 9, pupils develop and broaden their skills and insight well – as, for example, when they study and compare the lives and teachings of such

people as Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Such very good progress ensures that pupils are well prepared to begin a GCSE course successfully.

153. The high level of achievement is the direct result of very good teaching. This is itself the result of teachers' clear understanding of the purpose of RE and of its value in pupils' personal development. Teachers plan lessons in detail, with clear learning objectives. Teaching methods and learning resources are very effective. They not only motivate and engage pupils, but also challenge them to give of their best. In lessons, teachers explicitly refer to human diversity and the need for inclusion and so promote equality of opportunity.
154. The content of lessons ensures that progress is very good, because the teaching keeps returning to the fundamental concepts of religion, thereby continually deepening pupils' understanding. Pupils rapidly become confident in and gain considerable insight into, the whole process of learning. Marking is helpful. It is appropriately matched to individuals' needs, so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
155. The leadership of the head of department is very good. The subject benefits from clear vision, a strong sense of purpose and high aspirations. It is further sustained by the network of mutual support within the humanities department. Since the last inspection, the head of department has introduced new schemes of work that address fully each of the specific issues identified for improvement in the report. They are exemplary in their precision about what pupils are to learn and understand and in their provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development.
156. The subject shows a rolling programme of improvements already made, together with future developments that are not only desirable but also realistic. The gradual introduction of levels of attainment as the means of measuring pupils' performance is the most significant innovation. This system of assessment is beginning to yield more objective information and offers the already effective management the opportunity to become even better. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average.
- Pupils achieve well in designing and making things.
- Teaching and learning are of good quality.
- The provision for and use of, computers is a weakness.

#### **Commentary**

157. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard of work in design and construction is above average. In 2002, teachers' formal assessments of pupils' work indicated that more pupils in this school reached the national benchmark of Level 5 than did so nationally. A below average proportion of pupils reached Level 6. The pattern was similar in 2003.

158. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils achieve well, as a result of the good learning opportunities offered. The rotational arrangements for different activities work well. Pupils respond very positively to the visual resources and practical activities provided. Boys tend to offer logical, practical solutions to problems, whilst girls show greater tenacity when concentrating on a research task such as product evaluation.
159. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are interested in the meaning of words and normally use technical words correctly. Handwriting and presentation are satisfactory, but basic spelling errors are not always corrected by teachers. Pupils' numeracy skills are adequate for the tasks set. Their attainment in ICT is modest, owing to a lack of sufficient, appropriate equipment.
160. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. The tasks set and the extensive use of group work ensure that pupils usually work cooperatively and take suitable responsibility for their actions. Not all pupils, however, answer teachers' questions confidently or sustain discussion in groups without the teacher's presence. In textiles, unusually, there is no difference between boys' and girls' motivation or eagerness to learn.
161. Teaching is good overall. Thorough lesson planning, high expectations and good assessment procedures ensure that most pupils understand the qualities aimed for in work. Both the visual and written aspects of worksheets are well planned. Pupils generally learn well. Learning is just satisfactory when pupils with identified behavioural problems do not have close support or when lower-attaining boys (in particular) do not have the skill to work productively in groups.
162. Leadership and management are good. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, particularly in design. Teachers have made the most of the temporary accommodation they have and have extended their expertise; good training has been provided, for example, in the use of computers. Insufficient access to suitable computers with Internet links, however, limits all pupils' progress in acquiring ICT skills. It also restricts the depth of coverage of important aspects of the curriculum, particularly in computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). There is no food technology provided. A health and safety issue relating to workshop certification needs to be addressed.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils reach an above average standard by the end of Year 9.
- Teaching and learning are of very good quality.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, particularly in drawing.
- Homework is extremely well used.
- Pupils' literacy is not enhanced enough through art.
- The provision for and use of, computers and audio-visual equipment are inadequate.

### **Commentary**

163. The overall standard of work is above average by the end of Year 9, as a result of the very good teaching that pupils receive. Teachers' assessments in 2002 also judged that the overall

standard of work was above average. Pupils' level of achievement, taking into account their average overall standard of work on entry to the school, is good in Years 7-9.

164. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a solid knowledge of the essentials of the subject. They know, for example, the names of the artists they have studied and are aware of the meanings of relevant technical words. Sketchbooks are very well used for homework and provide clear evidence of the good progress made by all pupils through the school. In lessons, they form an effective basis for regular conversations between the teacher and individual pupils; strengths and areas for improvement are highlighted and the next steps in learning identified. As a result, all pupils understand clearly what qualities they should strive for in their work. In Year 9, gifted and talented pupils with identified literacy difficulties are among the highest achievers. Their drawings show very good progress in the use of line, tone and texture. The opportunities for pupils to read, write and use computers are less than often seen.
165. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are generally very good. Pupils are very willing to try new techniques, such as printmaking based on fruit. They display confidence in their teachers' assurance that they will succeed. Very good levels of concentration and attention to detail were evident in the Year 9 mask project, where boys and girls achieved equally well.
166. Teaching ranges from good to outstanding and is very good overall. The strengths of the department lie in teachers' high expectations, very secure subject knowledge and their understanding of pupils' needs. Learning is fun; pupils enjoy what they are asked to do and want to succeed.
167. Assessment is a good feature of the department. Initial tasks undertaken in Year 7 (such as drawing a toothbrush) provide valuable diagnostic information from which to plan future teaching. Reports to parents communicate clear written messages about standards and progress, but the subject's report is unhelpfully intertwined with that for design and technology.
168. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a very clear vision for the subject. She has managed to raise standards, despite changes and uncertainties about accommodation and resources. The department celebrates and promotes all cultures. Liaison procedures with other schools in the area are good. The school benefits from contacts with a local arts group. Visits to galleries, however, are rare. The lack of audio-visual equipment and suitable computers limits further expansion of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world of art beyond the classroom.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching, including the assessment of pupils' work, is good.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided.
- Accommodation for the subject is inadequate.

### **Commentary**

169. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. In the teacher assessments at the end of the last school year, 34 per cent of pupils were judged to have achieved Level 4, whilst 57 per cent achieved Level 5 and above. No pupil achieved above

Level 6. There are no national norms as yet, however, to which these results can be reliably compared.

170. Pupils play keyboards with confidence by the end of Year 9. They know the keyboard layout and do not need the help of letter names. They have an intuitive understanding of some musical rudiments and such terms as *major*, *minor* and *ostinato* and are familiar with some scales and chords from which to select notes in their compositions. They acquire knowledge of a fair range of music – as, for example, the Paganini *Caprice*, the *1812 Overture* and the Javanese *lancaran*. In general, their practical capability is ahead of their background knowledge and their precision in using musical terms.
171. The quality of learning throughout their time in school is good overall. Pupils enter the school with an overall educational attainment that is below average and with very varied experience in the subject. Early lessons focus on the elements of music, especially through “circle” games, in which they explore beat and rhythm. They learn about note values and musical notation, using simple musical forms to help them to compose short pieces.
172. Almost all pupils are interested in their lessons. They listen well to their teacher and get down to set tasks quickly and willingly. Most pupils persevere very well with their tasks, even when the teacher is not directly observing them. They complete most tasks in the allotted time and are very willing to share their performances and compositions with the rest of the class. Pupils with special educational needs are well involved on equal terms with their peers. Pupils for whom English is an additional language rarely have difficulties following instructions in music lessons. Pupils who have a natural inclination for music are encouraged to perform and compose at a level appropriate to their capability.
173. Pupils’ attitudes to the subject are good overall and in some lessons very good. Almost all pupils behave well in class and show a good level of respect for equipment and instruments. Pupils listen respectfully to one another, when sharing their performances.
174. Teaching is consistently good. Lessons are well planned and prepared. The organisation of resources and time is always efficient and effective. Literacy is taught satisfactorily; suitable emphasis is placed on musical terminology. Appropriate attention is given to pupils with special educational needs or to those who find their tasks difficult. Because of the limitations of the accommodation, however, teaching methods are sometimes restricted. For example, pupils cannot easily find spaces where they can try out group compositions without distraction. Pupils’ work is assessed well. A team of visiting instrumental teachers enables both individuals and groups to progress on a variety of instruments, including steel drums.
175. The department is well led and managed. Instrumental lessons are effectively timetabled. The head of department works in the contributory primary schools and the local upper school. He is also involved in meetings with other music teachers – as when, for example, moderating the standards of pupils’ work. Extra-curricular activities include a choir, an orchestra and handchimes. Pupils have good opportunities to perform at school concerts and in the wider community.
176. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, because the main teaching room and practice rooms are too small and ill-proportioned; permanent work stations cannot be set up. Music makes a good contribution to the social and cultural life of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is generally good.
- Boys and girls have positive attitudes to the subject and participate well.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are effectively integrated into lessons.
- In a few lessons more support is needed for pupils with recognised behavioural problems.
- The department's development plan is weak.
- Some important aspects of usual extra-curricular provision are missing.

### Commentary

177. All lessons seen during the inspection were games lessons. By the end of Year 9, boys' and girls' standards of performance are average. Most pupils answer questions soundly about techniques and strategies and perform well in badminton, basketball and netball. In boys' basketball and girls' netball pupils have effective passing and shooting skills. A small proportion of boys have a high level of skill in basketball and consistently score, using a range of techniques. Pupils are generally aware about how and when, to employ the different skills and tactics in games. The sports records available suggest that boys play cricket very effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons; most participate fully and exhibit good skills.
178. Most boys and girls achieve well. In lessons where teachers have high expectations, pupils make very clear gains in both acquiring and using a range of skills. This was particularly evident in a Year 8 badminton lesson where, for example, boys and girls made very good progress in executing the high clear. Occasionally, when expectations are not high enough, pupils achieve and learn less than they could. Pupils are articulate and enthusiastically discuss different aspects of the subject. No pupils, however, gave any indication of understanding about the effects of exercise on their level of fitness.
179. Overall, the standard of teaching is good, although teachers' expectations are sometimes not high enough. Lesson preparation is detailed. This ensures that there are clear learning objectives that teachers specifically share with pupils at the outset of lessons. This practice adds purpose and pace to lessons and raises pupils' motivation. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and, in most lessons, appropriate expectations, to which pupils always respond well.
180. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Both boys and girls listen attentively, when required to do so, making sustained efforts to improve. They concentrate well in lessons. Very few fail to take part in lessons without acceptable reasons. A few occasions arise where more support is required for a small minority of boys with special educational needs. Where this support is not provided, teachers are required to spend too much time dealing with the behavioural problems of a very small minority. All pupils cooperate and collaborate well, when they are required to do so by teachers.
181. The leadership of the subject is broadly satisfactory. Two specialist teachers work well together. The development plan for the subject, however, lacks sufficient vision for the future. Whilst there is very good support in some extra-curricular activities (particularly boys' cricket and



rugby), there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience competitive sport in other major games – and most notably in soccer. The management of the department is good and ensures that the department functions efficiently. The respective performances of girls, boys and pupils with English as a second language have recently been monitored. Several good wall displays provide useful information for pupils; a few of them celebrate a range of achievements.

182. Since the last inspection, a fine new sports hall has been provided. This has given impetus and stability to the games curriculum. There are no other significant improvements since the previous inspection.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have good attitudes and self-confidence in speaking their views, when given the opportunity.
- The school successfully provides an “inclusive” ethos.
- Good links exist with the school’s local and wider community.
- The assessment of pupils’ attainment and progress is not precise enough.
- Provision and management are not fully coordinated.

### **Commentary**

183. There are no national norms available for this subject, against which pupils’ attainment and experience can be measured. The evidence from lessons, pupils’ written work and oral accounts of activities undertaken, however, indicates that pupils’ attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 9. Pupils’ good attitudes and the clear intentions of senior staff suggest that the subject has the potential in future years to reach an above average standard in all the aspects required by the National Curriculum.
184. The quality of learning is good overall. Pupils think and speak with confidence. Most clarify carefully their knowledge of a fair range of relevant issues – such as the law and the employment of young people, antisocial behaviour, the characteristics of parliamentary government and the issues of crime and punishment. Pupils have had talks with the representatives of a nearby animal research unit and have undertaken useful work on their own school environment. Some were involved in the selection process for the new headteacher for their school during the last academic year.
185. Pupils have a limited voice in aspects of running the school. The school council was relaunched during inspection week. The 16 very keen pupils who attended the meeting learned about representation and began to consider how a designated sum of money could be best used for the overall benefit of the school. At present, however, pupils have limited opportunities to exercise responsibility and enterprise. They undertake library duties and older pupils help with lunchtime supervision. There is a litter rota for all year groups.
186. Teaching in the classroom lessons varies from satisfactory to very good, but is good overall. In the best lessons, teachers set a brisk pace and ensure that pupils complete tasks quickly and well. They also arrange the placing of desks to enable as many pupils as possible to voice their views with clarity. Where possible, teachers invite pupils’ opinions about real issues – as, for

example, in an art lesson in which special arrangements had to be made for a pupil experiencing difficulties with the neon lighting. In less effective lessons, teachers do not enable all pupils to express their views and sometimes override pupils' views with their own. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are given good opportunities to express their views.

187. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. In most lessons they work in pairs and groups and, when given the opportunity, voice their opinions with clarity and sincerity. Many of them show profound care and respect for the opinions of others.
188. The subject has been coordinated jointly by three teachers, with the result that the various strands have not been fully coordinated. The assessment of pupils' progress is at a rudimentary stage, partly because there is inadequate recording and plotting of the various lesson topics (including those covered in subject departments) and of pupils' engagements in practical activities.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*