

INSPECTION REPORT

WINGFIELD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Rotherham

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106951

Headteacher: Mr P. Linney

Reporting inspector: Val Lynch
1475

Dates of inspection: 25th - 28th November 2002

Inspection number: 249127

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wingfield Road Rotherham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Kevin Robinson
Date of previous inspection:	May 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wingfield is an 11-16 comprehensive school to the north west of Rotherham. There are 738 students in the school. This number has increased over the last two years. The percentage of students who take free school meals is broadly in line with the national average, although the figure does not accurately reflect the higher number entitled to free school meals shown by local statistics. The attainment of students currently in Year 7 was below the national average when they joined the school. The attainment of other years when they joined the school was well below the national average. This is because there are only a few students in each year who were working at standards that were above what is expected by the age of 11 years. In addition, the school has a high proportion of students in each year with low levels of reading and writing skills. The proportion of students on the special educational needs register is slightly above the national average and the proportion of students with Statements of Special Educational Need is just below the national average. Students have a wide range of needs. A very small proportion of students comes from ethnic minority groups. Although they do not have English as their home language, none are at the early stages of learning English. The school has recently welcomed the arrival of some refugees. The school is part of the national Excellence in Cities initiative, a project focused on raising standards of all students across the ability range. Plans are well on the way for a new school to be built to replace the current buildings through a private finance initiative.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is not as effective as it should be. Standards remain too low. Teaching has improved, but does not meet the needs of all students. The senior management team has not ensured that the priorities identified after the inspection in 2000 have been tackled quickly enough. The school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The proportion of students who gain five or more GCSE passes with grades A* - G is much better than in similar schools.
- Students benefit from good provision in design and technology, history and physical education.
- Most heads of department make increasingly make better use of data.
- Relationships between students and between students and their teachers are good.
- Arrangements for careers education and guidance ensure that students know what they want to do when they leave the school.
- The work done by some teachers, many support staff and external agencies is having a very positive effect on students who experience difficulties.

What could be improved

- Standards, overall, are below those in similar schools.
- The school does not place enough importance on developing students' personal and social skills.
- Teachers do not provide enough support in all subjects for students experiencing difficulties in literacy.
- The school does not effectively co-ordinate the provision for the very wide range of special educational needs.
- The leadership and management team has not secured the necessary improvements in some key aspects of the school.
- The school has insufficient permanent teachers in the school with the skills and experiences to meet the needs of students.

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

It is the judgement of the inspection team that the school has serious weaknesses.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been good improvement in the accommodation and resources for learning, particularly in the number of computers in the school. The curriculum has been improved to provide more time for mathematics and science and to provide time for information and communication technology to be taught as a subject. There have been some improvements in the provision for special educational needs, but not enough. Progress is too slow on three key issues from the previous full inspection in 2000 related to improving attainment. There have been some improvements in teaching, but standards have not risen. The senior management team have not focused sufficiently on raising standards. In 2001, test results at the end of Year 9 declined. In 2002 there is evidence of a very slight improvement. GCSE examination results are very slowly improving.

STANDARDS

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

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

Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below the national average and well below the average in similar schools. However, students' achievements are satisfactory given the standards they had reached by the age of 11 years. Although GCSE results are below the national average, they are in line with results in similar schools. The percentage of students gaining five or more A* - G grades is above the national average. On the basis of the standards these students reached when they were in Year 9 in 2000, their achievement is very good. The percentage of students gaining A* - C grades was very low compared with what was expected on the basis of the test results at the end of Year 9. Test results at the end of Year 9 are not improving fast enough. GCSE results are improving, but not enough students are gaining grades higher than a D. The school sets challenging targets, but without rigorous procedures for checking students' progress it will never be certain that the targets will be reached. The work seen in all years is slightly better than test and examination results indicate.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: most students are enthusiastic about their lessons and work hard. Some older boys can be uncooperative, particularly when teaching is not good enough.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory: behaviour in lessons is only unsatisfactory when teaching is unsatisfactory; otherwise it is good. Students move around the school in an orderly fashion. They do not show much care for their environment and too often leave litter around.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory: students get on well together and enjoy working in pairs or groups. Good relationships also exist between students and adults. Students enjoy taking on responsibilities, but there are not enough opportunities for this.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: attendance, although improving slightly, is still below the national average. Too many students are late to school in the morning.

Although students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are satisfactory, there are not enough opportunities for the development of students' self-confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy being given responsibilities and respond positively when they can be involved in practical work.

Irregular attendance, particularly in Year 11, limits students' opportunities to succeed in their examinations.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching, overall, is satisfactory, but there are too many unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 3. Teaching is only very good or better in a relatively small proportion of lessons. Too many lessons are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics and science, although there was also some good or very good teaching in all these subjects. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory. Departments have not identified how they can contribute to the development of students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. This failure is having a negative impact on students' learning because without these skills they will continue to experience difficulties in learning. Teaching of numeracy is done effectively in mathematics. However, teachers in other subjects do not provide students with the opportunities to develop these skills further. Teaching is good for students with special educational needs in some withdrawal groups. In other lessons, teachers do not always take enough account of these students' needs when they plan their lessons. Teaching is very good in art, design and technology and physical education. It is good in history, information and communication technology and in music in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was unsatisfactory in too many religious education lessons. In all other subjects, teaching is satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, despite being satisfactory overall, in some lessons teaching was very good and in others it was unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: although there are some good features, the curriculum has not been designed to meet the requirements and needs of all students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory: staff working in the school are doing their best to meet the needs of students. Without leadership in this area the provision lacks co-ordination and staff do not feel part of a team.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory: all students whose home language is not English enjoy the full range of activities at the school. Their language skills are such that they do not need additional support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Unsatisfactory, although there are some positive aspects such as the developing personal, social and health education programme. The school has not given enough thought to how all experiences at the school can contribute to personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory: staff are very caring in their work with individual students. The weakness is that care is not sufficiently linked to making sure that students achieve their best.

The school wants to work closely with parents, but has no strategies in place to do so. There are aspects of the curriculum that do not meet statutory requirements. Not all students can study design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Not enough time is given to music in Years 7 to 9. Although the curriculum is satisfactory, it is not designed specifically to meet the needs of students at the school. There are aspects of care that are unsatisfactory, the most important being the lack of systems for tracking students' progress in order to identify and tackle underachievement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Unsatisfactory: the senior management team has not been sufficiently focused on activities that will improve standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: recent additional governors have strengthened the governing body and governors are now beginning to understand and fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: not enough use is made of data and information to identify where the school has strengths and where there are areas that need improving.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: the school has spent money wisely to improve accommodation and resources for learning, particularly computers.

The school has difficulty recruiting good teachers and getting them to stay at the school. This means that students and parents have to cope with frequent changes of teachers. Accommodation is much improved and is satisfactory, but litter is a problem. Learning resources have also improved and are satisfactory. The senior management team, particularly the headteacher, has worked hard to improve the school. However, they have not ensured that whole school systems and procedures have been put in place and monitored to make sure that they are bringing about improvement. The school has a good understanding of the principles of best value, but is not yet consulting enough with staff, students and parents about its work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress at the school. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school has high expectations for their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of students. • The amount and frequency of homework. • The information they get on how well their children are progressing. • The way the school works with parents. • The leadership and management of the school. • The range of activities that students can do outside of lessons.

Ten parents attended the parents' meeting and there was a 16 per cent return on the parents' questionnaire. The inspection team found that parents had different and sometimes extreme views of the school. Many parents of the younger students feel very positive about the school. However, parents at the formal meeting and those responding to the questionnaire, many of whom have older children, expressed concern about a range of aspects of the school. During the inspection the team found that behaviour was satisfactory. but where teaching was unsatisfactory so was behaviour. Some concerns are because parents have little information from the school. More could be done to improve the way the school works with parents. There is a homework timetable, but staff use the timetable inconsistently and some students fail to record their homework. There are a number of activities available to students outside of lessons. These are mainly of a sporting nature or are related to expressive arts. Overall, there is not enough variety in these activities. The inspection team shares the concerns of some parents about the leadership and management of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of students currently in Year 7 was below the national average when they joined the school in September. Only a few were working at levels above what is expected by the age of 11 years. The overall attainment of all other years when they joined the school was well below the national average. By the time students are 14 their results are still well below the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement on the basis of their attainment when they joined the school. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average. Overall, students did not do as well as expected on the basis of the standards they had reached by the age of 14 years.

Test results at the end of Year 9

2. In 2001 results fell significantly. In 2002, results in English, mathematics and science improved very slightly. Overall results were well below the national average and were well below similar schools. Results in English, mathematics and science were all well below the national average. English results were very low when compared with similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were well below those in similar schools. Although these results do not compare well with the national picture, they represent good achievement in mathematics and science based on the standards students had reached when they came in Year 7. In English, students did not achieve as well as they should. Over the last two years the standards reached by boys and girls have been very similar. Girls have always done better than boys in English, as they do nationally. A higher than average proportion of students still do not reach Level 3 in English. This has a serious impact on their work in other subjects that require at least average levels of literacy. The proportion of students reaching the higher levels in English, mathematics and science is well below the national average and reflects their attainment when they joined the school. Teacher assessments in all other subjects indicate that standards are below the national average.

GCSE results

3. GCSE results were well below the national average in 2001. In 2002 they improved, but were still below the national average. This is because, although the proportion of students who gained five or more A* – C grades declined, the proportion who gained A* - G grades improved slightly. The trend towards improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. In 2002 overall results were below similar schools, but the percentage of students gaining A* - G was well above similar schools. Over the last three years girls have done better than boys. In 2001 their results were very similar because boys' results improved considerably and girls' results declined. In 2002 girls' results once again improved. In 2001 too many students left with no qualifications, but this situation improved in 2002. In all subjects results are below the national average for grades A* - C. The difference is less marked for A* - G grades. Students did relatively well in science, drama, history and humanities. Although students achieve very well to gain their five or more A* - G grades, not enough students make sufficient progress by the end of Year 11 to achieve their expected five or more GCSE grades A* - C.

Progress from results and towards targets

4. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 indicate that students do as well as might be expected on the basis of their standards when they joined the school, but the school does not enable them to do better. This is because the school does not do enough to make sure that students continue to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. At the end of Year 11 many students make very good progress to achieve five or more GCSE grades A* - G. However, not enough higher and average ability students gain five or more A* - C grades. The school set a challenging target for the proportion of students gaining these grades last year, but did not achieve it. The school has also set challenging targets for next year. Teachers and students are going to have to work hard to achieve these as the current Year 11 did not do as well when they were aged 14 as the Year 11 that left last year.

Standards of work seen in lessons

5. The quality of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is slightly better than the test results indicate, although it is still below the national expected standard. Standards are well below what is expected in English, science, art, music and religious education. Standards in physical education are in line with what is expected. However, in most subjects students achieve in line with what would be expected on the basis of what they could do when they joined the school at age 11. In physical education, students' achievement is good. In music and religious education, achievement is unsatisfactory. In music this is because there is not enough time given to the subject within expressive arts.
6. In Years 10 and 11 the work seen in English, art, design and technology, history and religious education was well below the nationally expected standard. Again, however, students generally achieve in line with what is expected based on what they could do when they were 14 years. Achievement is not as good as it should be in mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. In music, students' achievement is good.
7. In all subjects and in all years there is little difference between the work of boys and girls in lessons. Throughout the school, where teaching is not as good as it should be, boys tend to be the ones who get involved in poor behaviour. Students whose home language is not English make similar progress to other students.

Standards achieved by students with special educational needs

8. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* - G grades is good and many of these are students with special educational needs. When in small withdrawal groups or working on a one-to-one basis, students make good progress towards their targets. However, not all individual education plans have been completed and some teachers do not use these plans in order to plan their lessons. While they make satisfactory progress overall they make slow progress in English because of their continuing difficulties with language. Their progress in music and religious education is unsatisfactory, as it is for other students. When there is a learning support assistant present, students make good progress in subject lessons.

Standards in literacy

9. Students generally have low standards in literacy when they join the school. Nearly one third of the current Year 7 had not reached expected standards by the age of 11 years. In other years the proportion of students with reading ages below what they should be at the age of 11 was even higher. Speaking skills are poorly developed and many

students lack confidence. They rely on colloquial expression and often use one word or short sentences. This restricts their ability to explore ideas and concepts and limits attainment across a wide range of subjects. Often when given opportunities to discuss ideas they prefer to write them down. Many find it difficult to listen to teachers and to other students. Writing skills are also limited and few write in complex sentences with accurate punctuation. Consequently, they struggle to express their ideas on paper. This is slowing their learning in subjects such as geography and history. In design and technology their practical skills far exceed their skills in planning and explaining their work. In Years 10 and 11 too many lower attaining students have not developed their use of Standard English. Many have not mastered techniques for explaining and illustrating what they know, so their performance in examinations is undermined.

Standards of numeracy

10. Most students are able to carry out basic numerical calculations because the mathematics department emphasises this skill in its teaching. The use of calculators is encouraged and students are able to use them with confidence. In design and technology, students could measure, weigh and use ratio accurately. However, because there has not been a whole school policy students do not experience the wider use of numeracy in other subjects.

Standards in information and communication technology

11. Attainment in information and communication technology is currently below the national average by the end of both Years 9 and 11. This is because until recently students did not have enough lessons in the subject. There is now one lesson a week for all students and this is helping them to develop and use a wide range of skills. Standards are improving. The introduction of a key skills course for students in Years 10 and 11 means that students can apply the skills developed in earlier work. Good use is made of information and communication technology in some subjects, such as science and design and technology. However, its use is not effectively monitored or sufficiently high in all subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

Students' attitudes to school

12. Most students enjoy school and most have good attitudes, a feature applauded by many parents. Students talk loyally about their school. They describe recent improvements to the building. They relish the residential visits, for instance to Spain and France, and the visitors who come to school to work with students, for instance, in health education.
13. Although they are reticent at times, students are clear about the lessons they like. They talk animatedly about personal, social and health education lessons because they enjoy the discussions. They enjoy active sessions and making things so look forward to physical education, performing arts and design and technology lessons. Here they work hard and remain focused throughout the lesson. All students in a Year 9 design and technology lesson were totally absorbed cutting joints for a clock case. Girls and boys were eager to show their finished product to others.
14. Some students, particularly older and often boys, can be subdued and even uncooperative in a few lessons. They know when the teaching is not going to keep them interested and involved. They expect not to work from the moment they go into the classroom. They settle reluctantly and do not work hard enough. These unconstructive

attitudes sometimes influence others and adversely affect progress. Both students and some parents commented upon this.

Behaviour

15. As at the time of the previous inspection, students' behaviour is good in lessons when the teacher sets and reinforces clear expectations. Students are normally polite and respectful and lessons continue without interruption. A few students, mostly boys but including some girls, disrupt lessons when tasks are not suitable or interesting. The teachers generally manage the interruptions well, but occasionally the interruptions hinder the learning of others. Students are eventually removed from class for persistent misbehaviour. Fixed term exclusion is regularly used as the penultimate sanction and the figures are, therefore, high. The school successfully helps these students return to school life and only permanently excludes a few students each year. Students are confident that the school deals promptly with incidents of bullying.
16. Movement around the school is reasonably orderly. Most students make allowances for the needs of others as they move around. Students behave well in the playground and particularly well when indoors in large groups. Assemblies are dignified and quiet occasions. Students enjoy eating together and happy chatting characterises both the breakfast club and lunchtime in the dining hall.
17. Students do not care particularly well for their environment and leave litter around the building. Most do not recognise their role in taking responsibility for school life. This lack is more significant than at the time of the previous inspection. There is a one way system to ensure safe movement around the school. This needs constant policing by staff to ensure the system is followed, but not all teachers do this. Few students could describe any tasks they perform that involve taking responsibility. They enjoy helping at the party for elderly people from the community at Christmas and several older girls are learning how to support primary school children with their reading. They welcome these responsibilities, but need help and support in taking initiatives forward. The school has a fledgling school council. Students talk knowledgeably about the purpose and function of the council when the head of year actively promotes this activity, but not otherwise. Many students - particularly older boys and girls – have little self-confidence and low self-esteem.

Relationships

18. Students get on well together. They help each other in lessons and like working in groups. Year 8 girls observed each other carefully and showed respect for the performance, ability and feelings of others as they worked on apparatus in the gym. Some students experience difficulty behaving well and their peers are usually understanding and tolerant. Good relationships also exist between students and adults. Students enjoy attention and respond eagerly to interest taken in them. They feel secure with most members of staff and respond appropriately. Some students occasionally challenge and disobey adults. These students do not respond well to a confrontational approach.

Attendance

19. Attendance at the school is still below average, although it is improving slightly. The school works well with the recently appointed education welfare officer to try and stop non-attendance becoming a big problem for some students. Although the majority of students attend regularly, too many students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, do not commit to regular attendance. The trend for parents to take students away on holidays

during term-time continues to increase, although the school discourages the practice. Some parents condone their children's absence and some are unaware their children are not at school until the school telephones or sends follow up letters. The school now takes a firm line with families, encouraging parents to take greater responsibility. Unauthorised absence figures fluctuate and were higher than average for last year. Poor attendance by a small minority of students adversely affects their own and the school's performance in national tests, particularly at GCSE level. A programme specifically designed to meet the needs of students who are reluctant to come to school and to learn has been introduced in Years 10 and 11. It is already improving the attendance of some students who would otherwise not be at school at all.

20. Too many students are late to school in the morning. This lateness occupies significant staff time and hinders the purposeful start to the day. Students arrive at individual lessons on time.

HOW WELL ARE OUR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. Teaching overall is satisfactory, but there are too many unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 3. Teaching is very good or better in only a relatively small proportion of lessons. Most, but not all, unsatisfactory lessons are taken by supply teachers who give students work that is not challenging and does not gain the attention of boys. Because students have low levels of literacy they need teaching that is consistently good and supports the development of their literacy skills.
22. Teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory by HMI when they visited the school in January 2002, so the fact that teaching is satisfactory now is an improvement. Since January there has been some very focused work on improving the basics of teaching. All teachers are expected to use a lesson planning sheet that has been introduced. Lessons have also been observed and senior and middle managers have developed their skills in lesson observation. However, observations have focused on teaching and not sufficiently on learning. As a result, the school thinks that teaching is better than it is. Although observations have taken place there are only a few departments where middle managers are taking responsibility for teaching and learning in their area. Good examples of where this is happening successfully are in design and technology and history.
23. Teaching is very good in art, design and technology and physical education. It is good in history, information and communication technology and in music in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was unsatisfactory in too many lessons in mathematics, science and religious education. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, despite being satisfactory overall, in some lessons teaching was very good and in others it was unsatisfactory.
24. In the best lessons, for example in design technology, the purpose of the lesson was made clear, students work was used to recap the previous lesson and there were high expectations from the start. There were good relationships and plenty of encouragement. Students knew their target grade and the standard that they were currently working at. In a physical education lesson students responded to quick fire questions from the teacher. Students behaved well because the lesson had pace and one activity quickly led to another. In some lessons, in English for example, learning objectives were very clear. It was good to hear a teacher identify what students had to be able to do by the end of the lesson. This reflects the concentrated work that has been done recently to improve the quality of teaching.

25. Teaching is also good in some withdrawal groups for students with special educational needs. In other lessons teachers do not always take enough account of these needs when they plan their lessons. Students then struggle to understand what they need to do and make little progress. In lessons where teachers are used to working closely with learning support assistants there is good support for students. A particularly good example of this was seen in mathematics. The learning support assistant attached to the department knows what is expected and is seen as part of the mathematics team.
26. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the teacher talked too much, there was no planning to meet the needs of different students and the teacher ignored the fact that students were not working. In a modern foreign languages lesson there was little challenge for higher attaining students. In another lesson in the same subject the teacher did not gain the interest of boys. There was too much use of a textbook and no opportunities for students to take responsibility for what they were doing.
27. The school has identified a group of students who are very able. The co-ordinator leading on this work has ensured that staff know who these students are and that resources are provided to meet their needs. Too many teachers are not willing to adapt and adjust their teaching to take account of the rapid progress that these students can and should make.
28. Teaching of literacy is not adequately developed to cater for the serious needs within the school. Subject teachers have made progress identifying key words that students need to read and write. In several subject areas, notably physical education and English, teachers display these words prominently to help students to use them. This is not done consistently across all subject areas. Few subjects plan sufficient opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills. This failure to support students in learning how to discuss ideas is holding back the development of their ability to explore and understand their ideas through discussion. There is insufficient emphasis on students listening when others – students or teachers – are talking.
29. Teaching of numeracy is very much the responsibility of the mathematics department and it is done effectively. However, without a whole school policy that is agreed and understood, opportunities are missed for teachers in other subjects to develop students' skills and to demonstrate the use of numeracy skills in other contexts.
30. There is a homework timetable and students have planners to write down their homework. Both some parents and some students are concerned that this timetable is not adhered to and can result in excessive homework on some nights. Some teachers use homework well to extend the learning in the classroom, but some do not set and mark homework regularly. Students are not always given time to write down their homework in their planners.

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

31. The curriculum the school provides is unsatisfactory because it does not meet the requirements and needs of all students. There are also some aspects that do not meet statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11 all students should take design and technology but do not. In music, the school is not delivering the full National Curriculum programme in Years 7 to 9 and, therefore, is not in a position to report the levels achieved by students at the end of Year 9. The curriculum is reviewed and monitored by the senior management team and heads of department. However, the outcomes are not used sufficiently to develop the curriculum so that it meets the needs of students at the school.

32. The school has increased the time available for mathematics and science, an issue from the previous full inspection. The problem the school now has is over-long lessons in physical education and modern foreign languages. These long lessons have a negative impact on students' learning because they cannot sustain their efforts for that length of time. The school has developed a range of GNVQ and vocational GCSE courses for older students in partnership with the local further education college. These are proving to be worthwhile, as is business studies. In Years 10 and 11 some students can follow courses that better meet their needs because they are preparing them for the world of work. These courses have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour of students, with improved attendance and punctuality.
33. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. There is very little co-ordination and monitoring of the overall provision. There are no records of intervention that show how each student is benefiting from what the school provides. Arrangements for using individual education plans are ineffective. The provision outlined in Statements of Special Educational Need is now in place. Temporary staff have been recruited to put support programmes into action. The learning mentors and staff in the learning support centre provide very good help to those students who need it.
34. The school has a student support centre for students at the risk of exclusion and is very successful at maintaining students in education. There is an isolation area where students go if they have difficulties in lessons and disturb the learning of others.
35. Strategies for developing literacy are not yet adequate. Some progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations of the National Strategy for developing literacy, but these developments are not consistent across all subjects. Progress has been undermined because teachers have been absent. Senior managers did not ensure that, despite this, the work continued. The need for the programme has not been fully appreciated because the school did not begin with an initial audit of needs. In addition there has been insufficient liaison with primary schools to ensure that literacy skills were developed coherently across Years 6 and 7.
36. In English the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been merged into existing schemes of work. Students make satisfactory gains in the progress units designed to help them reach the standards needed for secondary school work. Strategies for teaching basic skills in English are integral to all new teaching units. Strategies for teaching literacy to students with special educational needs are very good.
37. There is now a draft whole-school policy for numeracy. Students have not experienced the wider applications of this important key skill because in the past there was no policy. In mathematics the department has fully integrated the teaching of numeracy into its schemes of work. Considerable emphasis is placed upon this aspect of mathematics in the teaching.
38. The arrangements for information and communication technology are satisfactory. This represents an improvement since the last inspection as a result of the introduction of one lesson per week for all students. The introduction of a key skills course in the subject enables all students to gain a recognised qualification in the subject. Good opportunities exist in a most subjects for students to use the skills they have acquired. The variable quality of individual subject planning and the limited knowledge teachers have of the students' computer skills often limit the way computers are used in other subjects. There is insufficient monitoring of the planning for and of the actual use of computers in lessons.

39. Careers education is good. There are some good initiatives for raising students' career aspirations such as links with colleges and universities. The work experience programme is good. The school benefits from working with the Connexions service, the local company that provides support for careers education and guidance. The school's adviser gives particularly good help to students with special educational needs. The role of the tutor is under developed in providing personal support for careers guidance.
40. The provision for gifted and talented students is good. There is a very detailed policy and the school evaluates how well it is succeeding with the students both in school and beyond. The school uses funding from the Excellence in Cities project to support the curriculum in meeting the needs of these students. There are strong collaborative arrangements and joint activities between five schools. There is not enough recognition that departments in the school need to provide experiences for higher attaining students in addition to these extras.
41. The provision for activities outside lessons is adequate. There is a good range of sporting activities. Productions are also much appreciated by students. Breakfast club is a very positive experience for students who attend. There is very little extra-curricular provision in music, although the Saturday music school does help in this respect. There is not enough variety in the activities offered to meet the needs of students.
42. The school has good links with the community, which contribute to students' learning. Links with local businesses support the business studies project. Science uses the local community and the community pond. Students and staff organised a senior citizens party with entertainment by the expressive arts department. The Saturday morning music school is for younger students and pupils from local primary schools. There are good, supportive links through the careers programme.
43. Links have been successfully established with local colleges through drama in English. However, links with partner primary schools are under developed. There is no framework for regular established curriculum links. In the past, the school has not drawn on and used information from primary schools on students' literacy and numeracy levels. There is a limited induction programme to familiarise students and parents before students come to the school.

The provision for students' personal development

44. The school's arrangements for promoting students' personal development are unsatisfactory. This represents a deterioration in recent years and is a result of a focus only on issues identified during the previous inspection. These issues did not include personal development. The school has not considered carefully enough exactly what each student requires from each activity in school. For instance, the lack of appropriate medical facilities impinges on students' sense of well being. Further, the school reduces the break to five minutes during wet weather, limiting students' opportunity to relax and socialise.
45. Students like their personal, social and health education lessons and talk positively about what they learn. The programme taught in separate lessons and by a skilled team successfully supports students' personal development. Social, personal and citizenship education has too low a profile in the school. It is neither consistently nor successfully taught in tutor time. The programme is new and the school has not reviewed the content and delivery. It is not yet seen as a crucial part of personal development within the school. It is also not clear how personal, social and health education and social, personal and citizenship education relate to each other.

46. Spiritual development is weak in the school. It is rare even in departments that traditionally provide for spiritual development well in other schools. Religious education lessons, for instance, fail to help students consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Assemblies focus mainly on moral and social issues. The school fails to comply with the daily act of collective worship. The environment and displays make little contribution to spiritual development.
47. The school has successfully improved the environment both in terms of appearance and use to celebrate students' achievements. New notice boards display photographs, letters and articles. These draw students' attention to moral, social and cultural issues in particular. Moral and social development is satisfactory in the school. Some staff encourage debate about moral issues in their lessons. Year 7 English students thought carefully about the morality of persuasion. Support staff and teachers working with individuals and small groups constantly and successfully encourage students to reflect upon moral considerations. Students work happily in groups. Working with others helps to develop speaking and listening skills and encourages physical and creative effort.
48. Some lessons and arrangements in the school restrict moral and social development. Opportunities are missed to encourage students to take responsibility for classroom routines. Teachers often hand out the books and papers themselves. The school locks classroom doors at break and lunchtime so students are discouraged from taking ownership of their form rooms. The learning mentors' room heaves with activity at break because the students have nowhere else to go indoors. The school council is active in some years, but not uniformly throughout the school.
49. The school recognises that it does not pay enough attention to students' cultural development. Aspects of local culture are relatively unexplored. Students recall with pleasure the performances of visiting actors and relish these additional activities when the school arranges them. The school is not preparing students for life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. Students feel safe and secure in school and say they have someone to go to for help, often the year head or support staff. However, the school has unsatisfactory arrangements for the overall care of students. Senior management fails to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place and that these are monitored and reviewed regularly. Provision for sick and injured children, for instance, is unsatisfactory. The school has neither a named first aid person nor a medical room. Staff complete regular health and safety inspections and risk assessments, but little overall monitoring is done by senior management.
51. Many staff show tremendous care for individual students' needs as they arise. They give assistance to those who are injured or ill and comfort to those who are troubled. Staff recognise child protection issues and sensitively and sensibly support students and their families. No systematic training programme exists, however, for staff in the school on child protection issues. A few refugee students attend the school and are well integrated into school life.

Procedures for managing behaviour

52. Most staff manage behaviour well. Staff, including support staff, provide good help and understanding for those students who have difficulty conforming to expectations. The very good work of the study support unit is enhanced by the work of the behaviour support teachers. Students benefit from the school's involvement in the Excellence in

Cities project. The impact of the work of the re-engagement officer is evident in the improved attendance, attitude and career prospects of those students who might otherwise be excluded or disaffected. Learning mentors provide very good help and support for particular students.

53. The school has a wide range of different strategies for managing behaviour. Current arrangements lack cohesion and consistency. Staff are unsure of the role of others involved in student support. The behaviour for learning policy that identifies many of the strategies is relatively new and has not yet been reviewed. Despite some parents' concerns about bullying, students are nevertheless confident that bullying is addressed quickly. The school uses exclusion carefully to ensure that students learn that the school does not tolerate violence or harassment.

Procedures for improving attendance

54. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school has good procedures for promoting regular attendance. Staff complete registers correctly and the attendance clerk quickly follows up absence. The recently appointed education welfare officer works very closely with the school and takes an increasingly firm line with students and their families. The school alerts families when their child's attendance falls below an acceptable level. The school tracks individual, class and year attendance carefully. It does not yet monitor attendance by different groups such as boys and girls or different ability levels.

Assessment

55. The school now has good assessment procedures, an improvement since the previous inspection. Some departments assess students' work regularly and keep track of progress as students move through the school. Marking is still inconsistent. Good use is made of national assessment results and other tests and these are analysed carefully to identify areas of weakness. Practice is still variable, however. The model used in design and technology is outstanding because it is regular, comprehensive and totally involves students in assessing their own work. Some departments have significantly improved the use of assessment to guide the curriculum. Consequently, teachers plan lessons with greater care and knowledge.
56. Some departments track students' progress successfully and use the information skilfully to support the students. Most staff know the students well and carefully encourage them to try harder in areas of weakness. Some departments use target-setting techniques well to identify areas for improvement.
57. Overall, the school provides satisfactory academic and personal support and guidance for students. While tracking is good in some departments, the school lacks a whole school system for tracking individual students. This prevents form tutors offering informed guidance to students. Tutors encourage students to set themselves termly targets during tutor periods. This is an under-developed system because students and tutors lack sufficient detailed knowledge to make targets precise.
58. Tutors give good personal guidance informally. Most know their students well. Students and tutors benefit from the daily sessions, although these sometimes lack focus and value. Staff turnover and absence is high. This adversely affects the constancy of the support. Some tutor annual reports were incomplete because the tutor had left during the year. The school communicates information about particular behaviour incidents or attendance issues to tutors, but lacks a system for tracking and reviewing all students' personal development. Annual reports and half-yearly interim grade reports are helpful. They lack precise guidance about future improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

59. Parents have different views about the school. Many parents of the younger students, particularly those that were spoken with during the inspection week, feel very positive about the school. They comment that their children have settled well and the school, so far, keeps them well informed. However, parents at the formal meeting and those responding to the questionnaire, many of whom have older children, expressed concern about a range of aspects of the school.
60. Some concerns arise because parents have little information from the school about school life. The school provides sparse information about the curriculum and no regular newsletters. Annual reports have improved slightly since the previous inspection, but are still not good enough. The current format is good and when used well provides teachers with ample opportunity for sharing a wealth of information. Only a few departments or staff make full and good use of the format. Too often reports contain descriptions of attitudes and effort and little detail about areas for improvement. The grading system on annual reports is confusing. The interim grade reports are helpful. Staff work hard encouraging parents to attend parent interview evenings. They consult parents about timings, but still only attract about half the parents.
61. The school works well with parents of children experiencing social difficulty at school. The support staff and teachers commit significant time and energy to supporting these children and their parents. They make home visits and even offer to drive students to work placements in order to ensure they get there. Staff send letters of congratulation home to parents in order to recognise and share success.
62. Parents do not contribute significantly to the life of the school. They do, however, attend functions and support school concerts and performances. Few parents get involved in the Parent-Teacher Association. Recently the school organised computer classes for parents. These are increasingly popular and two classrooms full of parents relished their beginner or advanced lessons one evening during the inspection week. This has the potential to improve the school-home partnership if the school can take the opportunity it offers.
63. The school produces good planners for the students to record their homework and a homework timetable for each class. This system has the potential to support students' learning at home. However, staff use the timetable inconsistently and some students fail to record their homework. There is some justification for the concerns of some parents about the use of homework.
64. The partnership with parents is still unsatisfactory despite the recent improvements.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

65. The headteacher has worked hard and successfully to tackle issues related to staffing, accommodation and resources for learning. However, the leadership of the school at all levels is not sufficiently focused on what needs to be done to raise attainment. Management is unsatisfactory because roles and responsibilities and accountabilities are unclear. There is good practice in the school, but it is not being used to develop consistent and coherent procedures to support students' learning.
66. The aims of the school were reviewed in 1999, but there have been many changes in staff since then. These aims are not high profile in the school and are, therefore, not used to guide decisions and evaluation.

67. The senior management team shares a number of responsibilities for what is happening across the school. Since the previous full inspection and the monitoring visit by HMI, the team has been required to bring about rapid improvement. Although they have set about improving the quality of teaching, there is no whole school approach to monitoring teaching and learning. There has been some work done on using data to plan teaching and learning, but again this approach is not consistent across the school. There is little analysis of test and examination results to identify where improvements need to be made. There are a number of key areas where the senior team has not exercised enough leadership in identifying good practice and ensuring that this informed what everybody was doing across the school.
68. There is good leadership and good management in most departments. In English the acting head of department is developing a new and effective team, but the department is still short of teachers. The head of mathematics is making a significant difference to what is taught and standards are improving. In science a well-established head of department is working hard with the team to improve standards. The work in expressive arts, design and technology, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and physical education is also improving because of the commitment of the heads of these departments. The leadership and management of music, special educational needs and religious education are unsatisfactory. In the latter there is a new head of department who knows what needs to be done. A new manager has been appointed to lead the developments in special educational needs. Within the middle management team there is a commitment and the capacity to improve.
69. The appointment of some additional governors has strengthened the governing body. With this additional experience and expertise, the governing body is beginning to understand its role and its responsibilities. Currently, governors are very reliant on these additional governors for leadership.
70. The school does not have an up-to-date plan for how it is going to improve. The long-term plan introduced in September 2001 identified appropriate priorities and targets and built on the previous OFSTED action plan from May 2000. Because the school does not have robust procedures for monitoring the implementation of these plans, HMI identified only limited progress in January 2002. Since HMI's visit the school has rightly focused on improving teaching, but has neglected some other areas that needed developing to support the work on teaching and learning. A good example of this is the work that needed to be done to ensure that the progress of all students is tracked in all departments. The lack of a coherent strategy to develop literacy and numeracy is another example.
71. Decisions to improve staffing, accommodation and learning resources have been supported by good financial management. Financial monitoring is good and money is always spent where it should be. The headteacher plays a significant role in monitoring expenditure. Administrative staff would more appropriately do this work.

Staffing

72. Despite considerable efforts to recruit staff, the school is still experiencing difficulties in this area. In almost half of the subjects students study there are often changes in staffing. There have been significant changes at middle management level and some good appointments have been made. Without effective whole school systems and procedures in place, the impact of any changes in staff are significant because teachers then have to establish their own systems. This is limiting the progress that the school is making to improve standards. The uncertainty about the management of English and

the subject's dependence on temporary teachers limits the progress that some students make and the development of literacy throughout the school. Support for students with special educational needs is not secure because of the unsatisfactory level of co-ordination of learning support, despite the very best efforts of the deputy headteacher to fulfil this role. The number of learning support assistants is insufficient to fully support the learning of students with special educational needs in all subjects. The school has yet to reassess the level of appropriate support provided in information and communication technology as the level of use increases. In the subjects that have stable staffing, such as history and mathematics, students' make good progress.

73. There is a good induction system in place for newly qualified staff and recently appointed qualified teachers. The induction process is well documented and mentors are provided to give additional professional guidance. There is a need for more in-depth monitoring by senior management to ensure that all newly qualified teachers receive the same level of support. There has not been enough work done to support supply staff.
74. The school's arrangements for performance management are good. Most teachers have completed the current cycle of observation, review and target setting. However, there is an inconsistent approach to the review of targets by the senior management team. Staff development is well planned and provides an appropriate focus on issues such as the use of data, behaviour and literacy. However, there is no strategy in place to check that teachers are implementing new approaches or to assess the impact that different approaches have on students learning, behaviour or attainment.

Accommodation

75. Accommodation is satisfactory. This represents an improvement from the unsatisfactory state of the accommodation at the time of the last full inspection. The headteacher has put in much time and effort to bring about an improvement in the quality of the accommodation. Most classrooms have been refurbished and now provide a more appropriate environment for learning to take place. The entrance area has been improved and together with displays of students' work provides a more welcoming atmosphere for visitors to the school. A meeting room for parents enables discussions to take place in a pleasant environment. However, there is no medical room. This is a serious problem when students are ill or injured. Students' toilets have been improved and they appreciate this. The external fabric of many of the school buildings has been renovated and problems with leaking roofs been corrected. The quality of cleaning is satisfactory, but the time available is insufficient for in-depth cleaning of a number of areas. Litter is a problem in the school grounds and there is no planned strategy to deal with it. The improvements have resulted in the majority of students showing respect for the school buildings with few instances of damage or graffiti.

Resources for learning

76. Resources for learning have improved since the previous inspection. This improvement has been achieved, in spite of original budget deficits, through good management that has identified clear priorities for development. The application of value for money principles and resourceful use of Excellence in Cities funding has made very effective use of relatively limited money. As a consequence, the number of computers in the school has increased significantly and most departments have sufficient books and materials to support students' learning. There is still a need in some departments for computers that will support teaching. There is a continuing call for books and reading materials suitable for students who still find reading difficult.

77. There have been very good recent improvements in the school's library facilities. The enthusiastic and skilled librarian has discussed reading needs widely with teachers and with students. The result has been that money has been very wisely spent on increasing the range of attractive modern fiction and non-fiction books. Recent developments have extended the range of materials to include CD-ROMs, book-tapes and videos. In addition to the City Learning Centre computer suite, the library houses additional computers that are supervised by the librarian and that are used to provide controlled access to the Internet. There are plans to increase the number of sets of books that can be used for independent study by gifted and talented students. The library is increasingly popular with students and now makes a very positive contribution to the quality of learning, especially in Years 7 to 9.
78. Because of the additional money that comes with various initiatives that the school is involved in, unit costs are high. Despite hard work by a number of staff, the standards that students reach are still too low. There are still a number of issues to deal with to improve teaching and learning and the curriculum. The school does not yet provide satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. The school has not made sufficient and rapid enough progress since the previous full inspection and the HMI monitoring visit. In order to speed up the rate of improvement and to concentrate on the essentials the governors, the senior management team and staff need to address the following key issues:
- (1) improve the attainment of all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, by:
 - developing a school wide system for tracking students' progress;
 - involving tutors in looking at students' progress across all subjects;
 - making use of data and assessment to plan the curriculum and lessons;
 (paragraphs 57, 58, 67, 76, 166, 170)

 - (2) develop a curriculum that supports the development of students' personal and social skills by:
 - identifying and improving aspects of school life that do not help students' personal development;
 - improving the use of the time students spend with their tutor;
 - identifying how all subjects will contribute to students' personal and citizenship development and ensuring that they do;
 (paragraphs 17, 44, 45, 90, 118, 120)

 - (3) improve the teaching of literacy in all subjects by:
 - auditing current practice;
 - training all staff to develop literacy skills in their subject;
 - monitoring the implementation of the literacy strategy;
 (paragraphs 9, 23, 28, 35, 36, 43, 70, 72, 74, 88, 103, 104, 126, 129, 137, 143, 145, 147, 150, 178)

 - (4) improve the co-ordination of the provision for the wide range of special educational needs by:
 - identifying the contribution that different staff make to the overall provision;
 - building a strong team that can support each other in their work;
 - establishing procedures to monitor what is happening for students with special educational needs across the curriculum;
 (paragraphs 8, 33, 68, 72, 85, 145, 177)

- (5) ensure that leadership and management at all levels - governors, the headteacher, the senior management team, heads of department and heads of year - are focused on raising standards by:
- analysing and using data and information to identify strengths and areas for improvement;
 - establishing systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning;
 - establishing and implementing whole school systems and procedures that support raising attainment and greater consistency in practice;
- (paragraphs 33, 38, 50, 67, 70, 73, 120, 141, 159, 166, 183)
- (6) ensure that the school has sufficient permanent teachers in the school by:
- exploring flexible arrangements with other schools;
 - making sure that systems and procedures are in place for new teachers to use when they join the school;
 - providing consistent management support that helps them in their work.
- (paragraphs 33, 58, 72, 73, 101, 105, 111, 123, 160, 163)

In addition the school needs to:

- improve attendance;
- provide a daily act of collective worship;
- ensure statutory requirements are met for design and technology in Years 10 and 11 and for music in Years 7 to 9.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	134
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	77

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	3	25	52	40	14	0	0
Percentage	2	19	40	29	10	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	738
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	132

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	159

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	89.4
National comparative data	91.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.9
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	81	59	140

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	22	39	37
	Girls	31	31	24
	Total	53	70	61
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	38 (40)	50 (50)	44 (44)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	8 (11)	27 (23)	13 (13)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	38	50	27
	Girls	36	38	26
	Total	74	88	53
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	53 (49)	64 (50)	39 (58)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	11 (12)	23 (18)	9 (11)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	77	61	138

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	17	69	72
	Girls	15	59	60
	Total	32	128	132
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	23 (28)	93 (92)	96 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32.3 (31.5)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

16.1%

Number of questionnaires sent out

715

Number of questionnaires returned

115

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	43	13	8	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	53	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	35	17	15	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	41	23	9	2
The teaching is good.	23	53	9	6	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	37	25	10	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	45	8	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	43	8	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	46	19	11	5
The school is well led and managed.	20	46	13	12	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	54	14	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	41	15	8	13

Other issues raised by parents

80. Only 10 parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. They expressed considerable concerns about the school. They thought that the standards the school was achieving were low. They attributed these low standards to poor behaviour and the difficulties some teachers have, particularly supply teachers, in managing this poor behaviour. They were concerned about homework and gave examples of where homework was not set or not marked. They were very concerned about behaviour both in lessons and around the school. They also felt that the school did not communicate well with parents and gave examples such as the timing of reports and the lack of a newsletter.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The teaching provided by the permanent teachers is good.
- The progress made by higher and average attainers in classes taught by permanent teachers is good.
- There have been recent improvements to the schemes of work and strategies introduced to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Too many students are taught by teachers who lack the expertise and experience to meet their needs.
- Boys continue to fall behind girls by more than the national average.
- Low attainers and students with special educational needs do not make sufficient progress.

81. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been well below the national average and well below the standards in similar schools over the last three years. Standards improved very slightly in 2002. Boys have consistently fallen behind girls, to a greater extent than is the case nationally. In the GCSE examinations, standards have declined over the last three years and been well below national expectations. In 2002, results improved on the previous year and represented slightly better progress based on students' attainment at the end of Year 9. In these examinations, girls again do better than boys. Boys continue to reach better standards in their other subjects than they do in English.
82. Standards have remained too low because of repeated long-term absence of teachers. The school has not managed to recruit replacements with the necessary experience and expertise who would stay long enough to make an impact. Consequently, important issues from the last inspection have remained unresolved. Temporary teachers during the inspection worked very hard. They used plans that were prepared or guided by the permanent team and a range of carefully prepared resources. However, they did not have a secure grasp of recent national strategies to raise attainment and to excite the interest of underachieving boys. Nor were they familiar with developments in assessment and target setting which can challenge and stretch higher attainers. Other temporary teachers have not stayed long enough to get to know individuals and to identify how they can help them improve. These are skills that the permanent teachers use well and, in several instances, very well.
83. Work seen during the inspection confirmed the damaging effects of those periods when up to two thirds of the classes relied on temporary teachers. Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall, but there was a wide difference in the way classes had learned over time and those taught by temporary teachers had not made satisfactory progress.
84. In Years 7 to 9, higher and average attainers are reaching appropriate standards in classes taught by permanent teachers. They understand how well they are doing, set themselves appropriate targets and work hard to reach them. In one Year 8 class students had read *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. One girl relocated the story in

Rotherham, adapting the style and expression very skilfully. During their lesson on the style of press reviews, a group of average attaining boys made good use of evidence from the text in their discussion to clarify a writer's intention. In effect, average attainers are progressing satisfactorily throughout because they benefit from the planning and resources and are least affected by non-specialist teaching.

85. Lower attainers are not making adequate progress. It is difficult to meet the needs of all students in mixed ability groups. It requires specialist skills and even the permanent teachers find it challenging. Students with special educational needs do not make satisfactory progress. There is insufficient liaison between teachers and support staff. Work is not effectively adapted to help the students to focus on the central ideas in each lesson.
86. In Years 10 and 11, higher attainers are well taught to reach appropriate standards. In a Year 11 class the teacher led students through a well-structured discussion of a poem about cruelty in the Vietnam war. They made clear links between the writer's technique and the way they had been affected by the poem. When left to work independently they made less progress.
87. Average and lower attainers are well taught so that they gain a good understanding of the texts that they study. When they answer questions about characters in *Of Mice and Men* they show appreciation of the writer's intention. However, they do not have a firm grounding in planning and developing their longer pieces of writing to demonstrate their understanding.
88. Standards of literacy are too low. In a Year 11 lesson where students read a poem about old age, a few boys tentatively discussed their ideas with the teacher. Other students did not listen actively. When offered the chance to discuss the poem in pairs, they lacked the confidence to do so and preferred to make individual notes. Writing skills are also restricted.
89. Students use computers regularly to redraft written work. They adapt their writing for different purposes, such as producing a newsletter in Year 10. Here, again, access and the chance to develop these skills has not been sufficiently available to students taught by a succession of temporary teachers.
90. Since the previous inspection, management of the subject has fallen to other hard-pressed permanent teachers who were themselves new to the school. Consequently, improvement has not been satisfactory. Recently there has been significant progress. The team is gradually revising the schemes of work. Teachers have begun to use data effectively to track progress and set targets. They have a clear vision of what needs improving and have set in place sensible strategies to put right what they can. They are not yet monitoring the subject's contribution to social and personal development and citizenship to ensure that all students have equal access. Nor are they identifying the very good practice which needs to be shared more effectively across the whole team.

MATHEMATICS

91. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The head of department provides strong and determined leadership.
- There is an experienced and stable team of teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Procedures for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils are good.
- The teaching environment is attractive.

Areas for improvement

- There is no marking policy to support assessment.
- Some aspects of the curriculum are not covered well enough.
- **Computers are ICT is** not used sufficiently to promote learning in mathematics.
- There is inadequate managerial support for the head of department.

92. Standards of attainment of students when they join the school are well below the national average. At the age of 14, standards are still well below those in schools nationally. Most recent results show a small improvement on those of the past two years. The gap between the school's results and the national results has narrowed slightly. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls. When compared to similar schools, the results are broadly in line. Students achieve well from a relatively low base in Year 7.

93. From the work seen, the standards of students currently in Years 7, 8 and 9, although below average nationally, are better than those expected based on their prior attainment. This is as a result of improved schemes of work and monitoring procedures within the department. Despite well below average attainment, more able students are working towards achieving the higher levels in their Year 9 tests. For example, a high attaining student in Year 8 was able to conclude after completing a piece of work using statistical methods that *'My hypothesis was correct, the results are all over the place. The scatter graph does not show correlation'*. This piece of work illustrates that this student fully understands the statistical concept being taught and demonstrates good skills in literacy. This and other evidence during the inspection confirmed that students are appropriately prepared for attainment at the higher levels of assessment at the end of Year 9. The proportion of students at these levels is lower than that nationally, as would be expected from the profile of attainment on entry to the school.

94. Overall, the GCSE results of students at the age of 16 are well below the national averages for all schools and below those attained by students in similar schools. The proportion attaining grades A* - G is only slightly below the results nationally, but the number attaining the higher grades A* - C is well below the national results. Results for students in the 2002 GCSE examinations were marginally lower than those attained in 2001 and in both years the attainments of students in mathematics were relatively worse than their attainments in other subjects. Boys achieve slightly better than girls at this stage, suggesting a decline in girls' attainment during the final two years of their time at school.

95. Standards of students' work seen in Year 11 confirm that students are being well prepared for their final examinations. The teaching emphasises number and statistics effectively. The course work of an above average student in Year 11 made good use of her knowledge of statistics by carrying out calculations of standard deviation. The

teaching of higher-level skills in algebra and knowledge of shape was not emphasised sufficiently well to allow the more able students to attain grades at the higher levels.

96. Most students are grouped according to ability for teaching purposes. This means that teaching can be targeted at the level the students are working at. It also ensures the effective use of the learning support assistant to work closely with students in the lower ability groups. This teaching arrangement continues throughout the school. The attitude of most students towards mathematics is good. Their good attitudes are particularly apparent in those lessons that are lively, stimulating and are pitched at the right level for the abilities of the students.
97. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. When it is good it is a result of good planning and preparation by the teacher. It recognises also that a successful lesson must be well structured to take account of the limited concentration spans of those students who find difficulty with the subject. For example, a Year 10 lesson on the addition and subtraction of fractions with a low-ability group was particularly successful. This was because it was organised in activity units of approximately 15 minutes each, taking account of the concentration spans of students who, consequently, made good progress and enjoyed the lesson. Another factor that ensured successful teaching and learning was the recognition by the teacher of the wide range of abilities within a teaching group. This was achieved particularly successfully in a lesson on estimation with a group of Year 7 mixed-ability students. The teacher chose to take advantage of the school's computer facilities to reinforce students' understanding of numerical estimation. Students were grouped in pairs by ability. The most able progressed to work of a relatively high standard. The least able made good progress at a much lower level. In this lesson students were making good progress in their understanding of the concept of estimation. Computers were used effectively in the teaching, demonstrating the benefit of using information and communication technology more widely within the department.
98. Teaching is less successful when there is poor classroom management and the teacher takes little or no account of the ability range or the concentration spans of the students. This was evident in those few lessons that were seen where the teacher did not structure the lesson into separate, distinct and varied learning opportunities for students. There is no clear or consistent policy within the department for the marking of students' work. Each teacher marks in an individual way. Since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the allocation of teaching time in Years 10 and 11. The number of textbooks available for use by students has increased to the position that each student now has a textbook in each lesson.
99. The leadership of the department is very good. The new head of department has been in post for less than one year and has introduced significant changes and developments that are designed to bring about improvement in the standards of attainment of the students. A particularly impressive initiative is a comprehensive system for tracking and monitoring the progress of students in mathematics as they progress from Year 7 through to Year 11. This system takes account of prior abilities and sets targets for attainment. It is designed to trigger action where students are not achieving their potential and to set targets for improvement. A full-time learning support assistant works effectively in the classroom with those students who have learning difficulties. This person proves to be a valuable colleague and is held in high regard by the students who welcome her assistance. The teaching staff in the department are experienced and the staffing position is stable; this is a significantly important factor in this school. There is inadequate managerial support for the head of department if the improvements he plans to bring about are to be implemented successfully.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 has several strong features.
- Assessment is effective and provides a good basis for improving standards.
- The department knows what changes need to be made to improve results.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are not high enough.
- The overall quality of teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 requires improvement.
- Students' scientific literacy, speaking and listening are weak and hinder effective learning.
- Students' recording of homework in planners and in their books is unclear and does not reinforce learning.

100. The performance of 14-year-olds in 2001 national tests declined to well below the national average. Results in 2002 show a slight improvement. Attainment in comparison with similar schools is also well below average. Students enter the school with results that are well below average. Their progress is limited by their difficulty with written work. Boys and girls attain similarly. Students with special educational needs benefit from group work and make satisfactory progress.

101. Recent GCSE results for grades A* - C are well below the national average. However, students perform better in science than they do in English and mathematics. In science, boys do marginally better than girls. Analysis of work in students' books and lesson observations indicate below average standards, which are similar to the standards observed in the previous inspection. The school's overall lower standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are partly due to staffing instability, weaknesses in the quality of teaching and to below average attendance.

102. By Year 9, average attaining students are achieving the expected standards. For example, they are beginning to use symbols to write chemical equations. They are beginning to recognise whether a simple chemical equation is balanced or not. Higher attaining students have a clearer understanding of chemical symbols and equations. The schools' results are well below average because the number of average and higher attaining students is much smaller than expected. By the end of Year 11, average attaining students achieve average standards. For example, they correctly describe the function of the kidneys. They understand the structure of atoms and how ions are formed. They carry out repeated accurate measurements and work out mathematical relationship between the angle of a ramp and the distance a car travels. However, their skills at drawing and interpreting graphs are weak. Higher attaining students have a better grasp of processes such as how the human body regulates its water balance. The work of average and higher attaining students show expected standards, but because there are not many such students the A* to C results remain well below the national average.

103. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teachers use questioning effectively to assess students' skills, knowledge and understanding and motivate them. Teachers explain and demonstrate science processes confidently. These are effective in promoting students' knowledge and understanding. However, the slow pace in some lessons reduces the productivity of

learning. Occasionally, teachers deviate from the main point they had planned for teaching. This affects students' progress. In some lessons, weaknesses in the management of students lead to poor relationships and ineffective learning. Strategies for improving reading are not effective enough to promote students' scientific literacy. Weaknesses in students' speaking and listening also hinder their progress.

104. Learning in Years 10 and 11 is better because teaching is better than in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers structure and organise their lessons well. This leads to a good pace of learning. They cultivate good relationships with students and this, together with effective management, creates a good atmosphere for learning in most lessons. Teachers explain tasks clearly. They make effective use of questioning to assess students' prior and new learning. In one lesson a teacher provided a quick mental warm up activity. This also established students' prior knowledge of the topic. The teacher then gave the students an opportunity to investigate the use of bromine water to distinguish between some closely related named chemicals. The teacher then extended their learning by asking them to apply this newly acquired knowledge to identify similar unknown chemicals. All students were equally involved in the investigation. Students behaved very well throughout the lesson. They worked productively and acquired substantial new knowledge. Learning in some lessons is not as productive as it could be because of students' weaker literacy, speaking and listening skills. In one lesson they found it difficult to read information for a role-play. This diminished their participation in a group discussion on the ethics of testing new drugs. Expectations are not always high enough. The tasks are not tailored to match students' needs within the banded groups in Years 9, 10 and 11. The situation is no different in mixed ability groups in Years 7 and 8.

105. Leadership and management of science are good. Despite staffing difficulties, the department has continued to maintain satisfactory achievement. Teaching is monitored and evaluated regularly. However, sharing of good practice is not as effective as it could be. As a result, the quality of teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Recently qualified teachers are as committed to raise standards as are the more experienced teachers. Use of computers is developing. The quality of chalkboards in all the laboratories is poor and makes writing and reading difficult. No specialist support for students with special educational needs was seen in any of the lessons. This affected the quality of learning in some lessons, especially those where the behaviour of some students was more challenging.

106. The school has started the National Strategy for science. One teacher has been given the responsibility to co-ordinate it. The department has carried out a thorough audit. This is to form the basis of the science development plan for 2002-03. Training for teachers is well underway. The teachers have started to modify their teaching styles and lesson structures to make learning more effective. So far the impact of the strategy is modest.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory in both key stages.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to art and design are good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are too low.
- There is not enough use of information and communication technology for teaching and learning.
- Opportunities for three-dimensional work and gallery visits are limited.
- The leadership of art and design is unsatisfactory.

107. When students join the school their standards are well below average. Standards remain well below the national average as they progress through the school. One reason for this is the difficulties the school has faced in ensuring that there is a qualified art teacher in school to develop the subject. A new teacher is now in place and the subject is moving forward.

108. GCSE examination results are well below the national average for grades A*-C and below average for grades A*-G. Girls gain slightly better results than boys. These results show a significant decline in standards since the last report when standards in art were slightly better than in other subjects. Standards for 14-year-olds are well below average, again a decline from average standards overall at the last inspection.

109. Standards in lessons for students up to Year 9 are unsatisfactory because students do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of art and design for their age. The skills of investigating and researching are not sufficiently developed and the use of sketchbooks is poor. Students are not adventurous enough when expressing their ideas on paper and their skill development, although improving, is below what is expected for students of their age and ability. This term a new teacher to the department is having a good impact on standards, especially of younger students, through better planning.

110. Standards seen in lessons in Year 11 are unsatisfactory. Students' knowledge and understanding of artists and art-related ideas are limited. Their knowledge of materials and the skills to manipulate and combine images and materials are weak. They do not have enough knowledge and experience of drawing and other processes to develop sufficient control of tools and techniques. The content and use of sketchbooks have improved, but are still not developed enough to support and inform learning and classwork.

111. Teaching has been affected by a considerable number of staffing changes since the previous inspection. The situation this term is better, so that teaching and learning have improved to be satisfactory in all years. Very good teaching was seen in a lesson in Year 9 and good teaching was seen in a Year 10 lesson. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of art and design are good. Teaching is planned for the full range of abilities, but expectations are not consistently high enough, especially for the students who are more able. Methods used are generally effective especially when teaching the basic skills. Time is well used, but, even in the best lessons, too much time can be spent on explanations leaving less time for practical work. The management of students is good especially those who have more challenging behaviour, an

improvement on the previous inspection. For older students there is still not enough emphasis on developing research skills and producing practical examples. This is being addressed in the work of the youngest students. Teachers still do not place enough emphasis on the use of sketchbooks and students are not sufficiently skilled in using them to support and inform their class-work. Students know how well they are doing, but only know how to improve their work in the better lessons. The evidence from records and assessments is that teachers know their students well and have a clear view of the progress the students are making. They do not, however, always use the information to plan their lessons. In the best lesson the teacher constantly monitored progress and focused questions on individual students to encourage them to think more deeply about their work.

112. Behaviour and attitudes are good. Students enjoy their lessons and take pride in their work and how it is presented. They spend time improving their work, especially when they know the teacher values their efforts. They show respect and listen to advice. Working relationships with one another and with teachers are good. Students help one another and work productively in pairs and groups. Teachers do not always take full advantage of these good relationships and opportunities for independent learning are missed.
113. Homework is used to build on classwork. However, in spite of teachers' best efforts the regularity with which it is completed and its quality vary. Information and communication technology is not used in lessons or in the students' own work. This has not improved since the previous inspection.
114. The art curriculum is now satisfactory and the experiences now offered are having a positive impact on the standards of younger students. All policies are in place and used in teachers' planning. Key words have been introduced to support the development of students' literacy skills. There are opportunities for speaking and listening and for group discussions, but the department does not plan systematically to address language in relation to art and design. There are opportunities, through Excellence in Cities, for students to attend workshops to work on large-scale, three-dimensional projects and to attend a neighbouring school for three days to work with an artist in residence. However, there are few planned opportunities for three-dimensional work and for gallery visits. The lack of suitable software for using information and communication technology limits students' enrichment opportunities.
115. Currently, there is no subject head of department until the spring term. The management of the department is satisfactory because of the work done by the teachers of the subject. The line manager was helpful in the beginning, providing an initial induction programme for the newly qualified teacher. This support has not continued at the same level as it should have done. A development plan is used effectively to guide the work of the department. The newly qualified teacher, who is leading the department at present, works hard and has a clear sense of how she wants art to develop at the school. Accommodation is adequate. The area has been recently decorated, but the condition of the fixtures and fittings is tired and worn surfaces are not helpful to producing quality artwork. Resources are barely adequate. The lack of sufficient, accessible computer hardware and software inhibits the development of students' research skills and their knowledge of art. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The recently appointed co-ordinator is committed to improving the current arrangements in the school.
- There is some good teaching within personal, social and health education.

Areas for improvement

- There are no policies for the whole school or for departments to provide guidance for teachers on how they can develop citizenship.
- There is not enough involvement of all students in discussion and enquiry work.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to participate in community work nor to take on responsibility.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored in order to tackle areas of weakness.
- Students' work is not assessed so it is not possible to report to parents on the subject.

116. Citizenship is an integral part of personal, social and health education and was only introduced this term with the appointment of a co-ordinator. It is at a very early stage of development and during the inspection lessons were not clearly identified and separated from the main programme for personal, social and health education.

117. Overall, levels of attainment are below average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Students are mostly interested in their work and achievement by all abilities is satisfactory.

118. Year 8 students learn how young people are affected by the law. The oral communication skills of Year 9 students are being effectively developed in well-planned lessons where they listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. However, lower attaining Year 10 students studying homelessness showed poor listening skills and were reluctant to offer ideas. The results of their enquiries are not being recorded or filed in separate citizenship folders as required in order to assess their work. Students are, therefore, not aware of the topics that make up the citizenship course. Year 10 students, for example, effectively learned about their rights and responsibilities as part of their humanities course without knowing that it was an essential part of citizenship. Opportunities for encouraging skills of participation and responsible action through the community, one of the three strands of citizenship, are very limited. A number of students are involved in the newly formed Year Councils, the annual Christmas party for senior citizens and improving the environment of a local Rest Home. However, wider systematic provision of opportunities is not yet developed.

119. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have a sound subject knowledge, which they use to plan well, although there are no textbooks to help learning. Their enthusiasm, promoted by good relationships with the students, encourages an interest in the topics. In the best lessons, imaginative and varied activities engage all students and enhance their skills of oral expression. However, not all students benefit from discussion, nor are they fully involved in effective enquiry tasks when the teacher targets questioning too narrowly or provides too many answers. Oral and listening skills of quieter, less confident students are consequently less well developed.

120. The citizenship programme in Years 7 to 11 is at a very early stage of development and there are weaknesses in the way it is organised. The broad outline of topics meets statutory requirements. Responsibility lies with a very recently appointed and

committed subject co-ordinator, who as a head of department has the authority to take the subject forward. However, there is no whole school policy, nor policies in all subjects. Not all subjects have responded to the audit to initially identify gaps in the programme and to avoid duplication in the personal, social and health education course. Although procedures for monitoring and evaluating topics are in place, teaching is inadequately evaluated on an ongoing basis in order to bring about improvement in areas of weakness. Arrangements to assess students' work in preparation for the first statutory assessment for Year 9 in 2004 are inadequate.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management give a clear direction to the subject.
- Teaching is good and motivates students to learn.
- Students' behaviour and their positive attitudes to work result in good achievement.
- Assessment enables teachers and students to know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Visits extend students' understanding.

Areas for improvement

- Some students do not study the design and technology subject as they should in Years 10 and 11.
- There is insufficient technical support in food technology.
- Boys consistently underachieve.
- Links with primary schools are not established.
- There is not enough work done to support the development of students' literacy skills.

122. All students do design and technology in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 students can take food technology, textiles, graphics, resistant materials or manufacturing. Test and examination results have gone down over recent years, but the work seen during the inspection is better than these results indicate.

123. Standards overall are well below national averages. In 2001, the percentage of students who gained A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations was well below the national average. The proportion of students who gained A* to G grades was just above the national average, which is good. Results in 2002 declined, which follows the pattern over the past three years. Over the last three years there have been difficulties in staffing which have impacted on standards. Some students in Years 10 and 11 lack motivation and do very little work. They therefore gain very low grades. Standards in teacher assessments in Year 9 have also fallen over the last three years. In 2000, these assessments were at the national average; in 2002 they were well below. Staffing problems also affected the standards reached. Boys do consistently less well than girls, both in Year 9 and in the GCSE examinations.

124. Standards in the work seen are still well below national expectations in Year 11, but most students achieve well. This is due to the good teaching. For example, one student who had very low attainment on entry to the school gained a grade B at GCSE. There are still students who are underachieving, but the numbers are far fewer than in 2002, when almost half of the students did not achieve their target grade.

125. Standards seen have risen to be below national averages in Year 9, which is an improvement on standards over recent years. This is the result of the good teaching and the recent introduction of a basic skills course, introduced to redress the very low standards students have when they come to the school at 11 years. Most students have had limited experience of the subject in their primary schools. All students, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well.
126. Students' levels of attainment depend to a great extent upon their literacy skills. Their design and making skills are far better than their skills in planning and evaluation where there is a need to write down their ideas. In Years 10 and 11 the written element is often minimal. As an example of their good practical skills, lower attaining students made models of playground equipment, which required a high degree of accuracy in designing and making. Students understand the importance of research, which was evident, for example, in the photographic evidence used to show the variety of cafeterias. The 'Meals on Wheels' investigation showed a high degree of independent investigation. In Year 9, those with poor literacy skills produce written work that is of a very low standard. For example, when evaluating a finished product, a student wrote 'I tried to make a chulip shape it dint work'. This indicates that the student not only had poor literacy skills, but also did not understand the concept of evaluation. Students produce clear specifications; for example, several designs were considered for a pull along toy and this was followed by a clear step by step plan. Students' making skills are good and they use equipment such as power machines safely and with confidence.
127. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and show enthusiasm for the subject, which transfers to the students. Lessons are well planned and no time is wasted. In a lesson the task of building a model bridge and tower from limited materials in a tight time allowance motivated students to work as a team and to work hard. High expectations of behaviour and outcome result in orderly lessons. This is seen, for example, when students are in the workshop. They know the procedures and move from bench to equipment quietly and purposefully. Good questioning extends students' understanding. For example, students were asked to explain the main details of industrial practice, which led to a discussion about quality control and assurance. Teachers use time wisely and stop students to ensure that they understand. Teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory when students made very little progress because the task they had been set was not set out clearly enough for them. They were a lower attaining group and there was no additional support for them.
128. Overall, most students behave well in lessons. They listen carefully and want to learn. They concentrate and take tremendous care with their practical work. They work together extremely well. Not all students have a positive attitude. A Year 11 class, for example, demonstrated its poor attitudes in the way they dealt with homework. Although the students were well behaved in the lesson, many boys had done no work outside the class and if they had taken work home they had lost it.
129. The leadership and management of design and technology are very good. There is a clear direction to the subject, which is reflected in the development plan. The arrangements for teaching design and technology in Years 10 and 11 do not meet legal requirements. The subject is included as an option whereas all students should follow a design and technology course unless it has been formally agreed that they do not. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching within the department are effective and good practice is shared effectively. Assessment is excellent. Continuous checking of students' progress shows the underachiever and those that achieve well. Action is then taken, either with commendations or parents informed. All students know the level at

which they are working and how to improve. There are very good links with the local college, which has led to initiatives in food technology, such as students making and serving a meal in the college restaurant. Visits, such as to the Manchester science and technology museum, are valuable in bringing technology alive to students. The accommodation is good, although dispersed around the school. Staffing is now more stable and this has contributed to the higher standards. The technician's support is very good and contributes to the smooth running of the department, but is insufficient in food technology. The teacher has to do much of the basic maintenance in the department, which is an inefficient use of her time and expertise. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. However, the low levels of literacy still affects students' work and they achieve better in a practical situation. The department has not done enough to contribute to the improvement of literacy across the school.

DRAMA

Provision for drama in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

Strengths

- Students make good progress because there is very good teaching.
- The course provides some very good opportunities to explore personal issues.

Areas for improvement

- None.

130. A small number of students choose this option each year and their previous attainment varies widely. They make consistently good progress so that they have attained at least a grade higher in their GCSE drama examinations than they have done in other subjects. Results have, however, remained well below the national average for the subject.

131. The good progress is a direct result of some very good and sometimes excellent teaching. Lessons are carefully planned and activities build gradually on students' previous experiences and skills. In a low attaining Year 10 group several students with special educational needs were initially awkward and reluctant to develop the work they had begun in the previous lesson. The teacher moved them forward gently but firmly, demanding from each student a little more. Over the period of the lesson each student became more involved, more confident and more prepared to use and to talk about the skills they had learned. By the end of their lesson they were pleased with their work and had gained a very positive boost to their self-esteem. A higher attaining group in Year 11 were even more sensitively guided to develop powerful portrayals of characters from *Blood Brothers*. They had impressive mastery of a range of techniques and they evaluated each other's work with great maturity.

132. The subject is very well managed in a small but suitable studio and there is a very popular lunchtime drama club. A particular strength is the contribution the subject makes to students' personal development. Much of the practical work focuses on challenging personal issues – loyalty, disadvantage or relationships. Beyond this there are well-established community links which help to develop the subject in local schools and bring students into contact with professional performers. For several years students have contributed very effectively to a local police project aimed at raising safety awareness in younger students.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The teachers' knowledge of the subject and the locality is good and results in careful planning and well paced lessons.
- Classrooms are bright and display students' work and key vocabulary clearly.
- The quality and range of resources are good, focus on current world issues and make a positive contribution to learning.
- Some examples of marking provide very clear descriptions of the strengths and weaknesses of work and guide students to areas for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to build up confidence in talking about geographical issues.
- The lack of monitoring of teaching and marking does not provide information on where there are significant variations and prevents the sharing of the best approaches.
- The use of computers is not yet effectively supporting learning and teaching.
- Poor attendance in Years 10 and 11 continues to reduce the progress made by some students.

133. Students come to the school with very different experiences of geography in their primary schools. Overall, their attainment at the start of Year 7 is well below average. They make good progress, especially in Year 7, and by the end of Year 9 standards have improved, although they are generally still below national expectations.

134. GCSE results in 2001 were better than for the previous year, but were still well below the national average. The results for 2002 continued the trend of slow improvement, but are likely to be well below national averages, with girls performing less well than boys. This was because several girls failed to complete their course work.

135. All teaching seen was satisfactory or better. Teachers make good use of their knowledge of the subject and the locality to prepare lessons thoroughly. They choose teaching materials carefully and start lessons with a clear statement of learning aims. This means that students know what they are expected to do and are attentive and work effectively.

136. Teachers make good use of challenging questions and this encourages students to think about causes and effects. For instance, they explain why developers chose to build Euro Disney near Paris rather than London. When teachers make the relevance of theories clear, students concentrate particularly well. Details of recent flooding in Rotherham and York made graph work on flood hydrographs more relevant. Classroom displays and teaching points encourage students to recognise and remember specialist vocabulary.

137. Weakness in the use of number and literacy holds students back. Teachers have to stop lessons in order to teach simple mathematics so that students can make sense of scale or simple graphs. Even more important is the difficulty that many students have in talking or writing about the implications of events or processes. Most prefer to give single word or short answers and their written work reflects this. Answers do not include the detailed summaries or discussions that earn higher marks. This extends into GCSE work. Students in Year 11 had completed detailed fieldwork in Rotherham. They

understood how the nearby Meadowhall development had influenced the town centre, but could not describe in writing how these processes worked. Their inability to write fluently and confidently is preventing students from demonstrating their understanding and accounts for the poor exam results that do not match their achievement. Teaching does not take sufficient account of the need to provide students with more frequent and substantial opportunities to discuss geographical topics. There is a heavy use of worksheets that further limits the quality of descriptive or explanatory writing.

138. Students with special educational needs make good progress. In the few lessons where there is additional support, the help provided encourages confidence and independence. Teachers meet students' different needs by planning different activities within most lessons. More difficult extension tasks cater for higher achieving students, but too many students, particularly boys, avoid these challenges by working more slowly in lessons. Accordingly, there is a core of able students who achieve below their potential.
139. In the best lessons, well-chosen modern textbooks and extra teacher-prepared materials improve the quality of learning. A teacher-edited video and resource sheet supported Year 11 students' understanding of the impact of oil tanker disasters on wildlife and the local economies. Teachers mark books regularly. There are good examples of comments that help students to understand their strengths and point the way to improvements. However, this practice is not sufficiently widespread, especially in Years 7 to 9, where effort stamps take the place of written comments. Too frequent a use of worksheet-based activities does not reflect current knowledge about learning styles. There is no planned fieldwork in Years 7, 8 and 9, which reduces the range of practical investigation skills that students experience. There is insufficient use of computers to support teaching and learning, although individual students do use school and home facilities to conduct research and prepare project work.
140. Teachers and students treat each other with respect and behaviour in classrooms is good. Students take care with the presentation of their work. They generally enjoy geography, especially project work such as that on Amazon forests or tourism. It is still a popular choice for GCSE, but attendance is an issue with some students, mostly boys, missing work on a regular basis. This is lowering the proportion of A* - C grades achieved.
141. Progress since the last inspection has been limited, but the newly appointed head of department has a clear vision for the subjects and understands its development needs. Information on students is used to predict targets and GCSE grades, but is not yet used to analyse the effect of different teaching approaches. There is not enough monitoring of teaching and marking so as to share the most effective ways of teaching.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Students' learning is helped by their positive attitudes to work and their good relationships with their teachers.
- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved and students achieve well.
- There is good leadership and management of the department.
- Students' progress is monitored and individual targets for improvement set.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE examinations, especially of boys, are low because students have underdeveloped analytical skills.
- The strategy to progressively develop students' literacy skills is under-developed.
- There is not enough challenge for more able students in Years 7 to 9.
- Not enough use is made of computers to enrich lessons and develop history skills.

142. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are below the national average. This broadly matches the teachers' assessments for 2001 and 2002. Boys perform as well as girls. Students' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the school is good because they begin Year 7 with skills and understanding in history that are well below average. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

143. In Years 7 to 9 students develop sound knowledge of chronology and skills of simple note-making. Less able students and those with special educational needs make good progress in developing these skills as they are well supported by the teachers. For example, Year 9 students effectively described Davy's Safety Lamp as they were provided with three levels of materials to match their different abilities. However, these particular students have weak factual recall. Many students have weak literacy skills. They find it difficult to select and record evidence from a variety of sources or to speak about it confidently. This was seen when Year 7 students successfully downloaded information on Hadrian's Wall from computers, but had problems summarising the information. More able students develop satisfactory skills of writing at length and in a variety of forms, such as letters or newspaper reports. Their skills of organisation and enquiry are beginning to improve with more topics studied in depth. Analytical skills of evaluation and interpretation of evidence are undeveloped because students are not adequately challenged by rigorous tasks or questioning.

144. Results in GCSE history have slowly improved in the last three years. In 2001 they were poor at A* to C grades, although all students passed. Students did less well in history than in many of their other subjects, with girls doing significantly better than boys. However, results in 2002, although well below average, were some of the best in the school with more students attaining higher grades than were above expectations. Boys performed nearly as well as girls.

145. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are well below the national average. This reflects the GCSE results for 2002. Students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Students have a sound understanding of the key events, though recall is less sure with a small number. More able students confidently select relevant evidence from a variety of sources. They write well descriptively, as in Year 11 when they attributed blame for the Cold War. However, skills of writing at length, critically and

analytically with strong evidence to support, are less well developed. Enquiry and recording skills of less able students and those with special educational needs are also low. This is due to weaknesses in literacy and enquiry skills not being tackled earlier in the way that they are now in Years 7 to 9.

146. Teaching and learning are good overall, an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most use it well to teach at a good pace and with a variety of activities which involve students in stimulating enquiry work and problem solving. Year 8 students studying a Moslem market were fully engaged in making deductions about market regulations from a picture and then explaining them at length. The well prepared support materials and the learning assistant helped students of all abilities to achieve well. However, more able students in Years 7 to 9 are not always sufficiently challenged by demanding extension work as teachers do not have consistently high expectations. Monitoring of progress at the end of lessons is now common practice. Marking is done frequently and clear targets set for improvement, though advice on essay structures is not always given. As students in Years 7 to 9 know their National Curriculum levels and are usually set individual targets relating to these, their progress can be measured by the teachers and students. Year 11 students know their current progress and predicted grades and are, therefore, helped in their learning.

147. Students make good progress in lessons as a result of the teaching they receive. Students acquire knowledge and are learning important new skills of enquiry and organisation. Progress is helped by the students' interest in the work and their good behaviour, seen in nearly all lessons. A loss of concentration only occasionally occurs when the lessons lack pace or are insufficiently planned to allow for the weak literacy skills. These are beginning to be tackled by the use of glossaries and materials for supporting writing produced by the department or learning support assistant.

148. Leadership and management are good. There is clear direction through the department's development plans that reflect the school's priorities. Teaching and learning are effectively evaluated through more regular classroom observation to promote and share good practice. The department is strongly committed to improvement and is well placed to move forward with teachers working well together. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Teaching, overall, and standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved, as have book resources in all years. Assessment procedures are good with individual target setting and monitoring of students' progress. The use of computers is not yet systematically happening in all classes to enrich the subject and provide students with their entitlement in history.

Humanities

Provision in humanities is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' achievement is satisfactory and they often do better in humanities than in other Subjects.
- Teachers have good relationships with the students which supports good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Many students find studying by themselves difficult.
- When teachers' expectations are not high, learning is limited.
- Computers are not used systematically enough to encourage research skills.

149. Until 2002 all students in Years 10 and 11 followed a humanities course. Standards in 2001 were well below average at grades A* to C and above average at A* to G. Students did better in humanities than in most of their other GCSE subjects. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. These standards were repeated in 2002, with the average GCSE points score in the subject the best in the school. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to the students' ability on entry to the course.

150. In the two lessons seen, standards of attainment were well below average. Students of all abilities achieve satisfactorily. Students have competent note-making skills when they receive resources that match their weak literacy skills and when teachers provide careful guidance. Skills in information and communication technology of Year 11 students are inadequately developed. In researching into Rotherham's leisure facilities, few had word processed their questionnaires or gone onto the local website for information. Students lack the confidence to work purposefully by themselves, especially when tasks and concepts are difficult. For example, many Year 11 students had made little progress on their coursework after five weeks. Year 10 students examining rights and responsibilities finally made good progress in learning. This happened only after the teacher noticed them struggling with the notion of taking responsibility and intervened effectively.

151. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan effectively and to answer questions well. Where the teaching is good, there is a lively pace, materials match the abilities of all students and good relationships between teacher and students encourage a good learning atmosphere. Progress within the lesson is carefully monitored and problems quickly responded to. Teaching is far less effective when teachers do not have high enough expectations or do not set clear, individual targets to help lower attaining students to meet deadlines. This was seen when Year 11 students fell behind with coursework.

152. The faculty co-ordinator is aware of the need to review the position of humanities in relation to other subjects now being taught. The cross-curricular nature of the subject means that repetition can occur with topics in sociology, personal, social and health education and citizenship without a careful overview of the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Learning activities are well-planned to ensure that students make maximum use of computers.
- There is a good number of computers in the school.
- The involvement in computer training and national projects has ensured rapid improvements in this area.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to work independently.
- Not enough work is provided for the most able students.
- Assessment of students' work does not include detailed comments or targets for improvement.
- The planned use of students' computer skills in all subjects is not monitored.

153. Standards of attainment in information and communication technology are below those expected of students in Year 9. However, the introduction of one lesson per week for all students means that students are now acquiring and using a wide range of computer skills. Girls do better than boys. Some boys make good progress in Year 7, but a significant number underachieve by the end of Year 9. There is little difference between the standards of girls and boys. Students in Year 10 achieve appropriate standards in level 1 of the key skills course because more time is provided for them to complete the full range of learning activities. The progress of students with special needs is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good by Year 11 because teachers include them fully in all lessons.
154. The wide range of opportunities to use computers enables students to acquire an appropriate range of skills. As a result, they use computers effectively both within information and communication technology lessons and in a number of other subjects. Many use computers at home to gather, refine and present information. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when the curriculum was not effectively planned and limited time was provided. In Year 7 all students record and display information about themselves through the development of a sequence of animated slides. In Year 8, students make use of the skills they have developed as well as acquiring new skills. For example, students in a Year 8 lesson located appropriate internet sites and extracted information to support the development of their own web page. They show good keyboard skills when word-processing information or using desktop publishing software. Students of all abilities use their knowledge of the effect of colour, fonts and text layout to produce a newspaper targeted at their own age group.
155. There is good support for the development of students' use and understanding of number. Students are shown how to inset a formula into a spreadsheet in order to complete a sequence of calculations. However, during this and other activities, students do not record the sequence of activities in their own computer files so that they can be recalled for future reference. Students learn how to construct a database about information they have collected and present their results in graphs and charts. There is insufficient opportunity for students to choose their own method to collect and display information. By the end of Year 9, students develop the ability to enter instructions in sequence in order to control equipment. This represents an improvement since the last inspection because all students now have the basic skills necessary to support learning activities in science and design and technology.
156. The introduction of a key skills course in the subject for Years 10 and 11 students is improving standards because students are able to apply the skills developed in earlier work in-order to complete a range of examination tasks. Most students are interested in the learning activities and want to do well. Year 10 students, challenged to set up a video rental shop, demonstrate the ability to use desktop publishing techniques to provide visual information for potential customers as well as a spreadsheet to simulate the finances of the company. This approach is contributing to the improving standards of the coursework component of the key skills course.
157. The school's involvement in several computer-learning projects has resulted in major improvements in the numbers and quality of computers. Together with well-planned training for teachers, the increase in the number of computers provides a sound base for improving the use of information and communication technology in all areas of the curriculum. A number of subjects already make effective use of the computing skills students are now developing. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson all students use a computer design programme to plan and design a product. With good technician support, groups of students are guided through a simple manufacturing process and learn how to control the machine that turns their designs into a finished

plastic product. Subjects such as mathematics and science also provide good opportunities for students to support their learning through the use of computers. However, in many subjects planning is not sufficiently advanced to fully integrate the use of information and communication technology into the learning activities.

158. The quality of teaching is good. Specialist teachers show good subject knowledge that enables them to answer students' questions and to cope effectively with technical problems. Teachers make good use of resources and break down tasks into easily managed units and this enables students to understand and make good progress in their learning. Few lessons encourage students to learn independently because the structure of the lesson and the sequence of activities are the same for all students. Most lessons start with a whole class activity, but there is insufficient opportunity for students to contribute their own ideas, information or opinions. In all lessons students with a special educational need are fully involved in all activities because teachers are aware of their learning needs. Students' work is assessed regularly. However, teachers do not provide enough information about what it is that students have done well or how they reach the target grades they have been set.

159. The head of department provides good leadership and management of the subject. Since the last inspection his improved planning ensures that lessons provide well-planned activities and statutory requirements are met. Students have good access to computers outside lessons. The network manager has developed a reliable computer network and within the time he has available supports the use of computers in different subjects. The head of department provides good quality, informal support for teachers using computers in individual subjects. However, he is not provided with time to give in-depth subject support. This shortage of time, together with the lack of senior management monitoring, results in uncoordinated planning and development across the curriculum. Wrong as it is in his job description but no time.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers and their assistants have very good subject knowledge.
- The image and status of languages in the curriculum have improved in recent years.
- The department is very well led and well managed, with a strong desire to improve.

Areas for improvement

- The most recent French and Spanish GCSE results were well below average.
- Boys attain at a lower level than girls in both languages.
- Problems of staff recruitment and retention have badly affected standards.

160. In 2001, GCSE results in French at A*-C were below average, but higher than in the previous year. Results in the range A*-G were average. Girls attained higher grades than boys. All students entering gained higher grades than in other school subjects. In 2001, GCSE results in Spanish at A*-C were well below average and lower than in the previous year, as were results at A*-G. The grades were similar to those the same students gained in other subjects. The most recent French and Spanish results showed a marked decline, reflecting the changes that there have been in staffing. In the most recent teacher assessments, Year 9 students attained lower levels than the national expectation. These standards are reflected in the standards observed in lessons and in students' written work.

161. Students enter the school in Year 7 with little or no knowledge of either French or Spanish, one of which they study. Students understand instructions in lessons taught in French and Spanish and lower attainers benefit from their teachers' judicious use of English. Students soon understand tape recordings of native speakers and short captions and statements in their textbooks. From exchanging everyday greetings, most students, including those with special educational needs, progress in Years 7 and 8 to talking and writing about themselves and giving opinions on aspects of teenage life. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds work hard and achieve well. Most students master simple grammar and by Year 9 many use infinitive constructions or past tenses to report recent events such as family holidays. Students adopt different styles to write dialogues, or short letters describing their home, school or pastimes. They use number, usually accurately, for dates, times and simple calculations.
162. In Years 10 and 11 most students prepare satisfactorily for GCSE examinations. Progress is less good in lengthy double lessons. Students' attitudes to language learning are mainly positive. A minority, mainly boys, find the work unappealing and achieve little. Most students' work is at the foundation level GCSE, but a minority work towards the higher level. In mixed ability classes, many students reinforce basic language dealing with everyday situations in French and Spanish speaking countries, such as finding the way or arranging to go out. Students have good listening skills, particularly if teachers use French or Spanish continuously. Many acquire the vocabulary and idioms needed for extended writing about famous people or healthy living. Higher attainers express their personal opinions in a detailed and polished fashion. A few students produce their coursework using computers.
163. Teaching in both French and Spanish is mostly satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge of both languages and are ably supported by language and classroom assistants. Standards are recovering after recent staffing difficulties and higher attainers now achieve satisfactory levels. Teachers plan lessons carefully, exercising students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in turn and building on previous learning. Most lessons have a busy, productive atmosphere, especially where short varied activities and paired work provide a frequent change of focus. Students of all ages enjoy watching their classmates perform and many willingly join in the presentation and summary of lessons. In a few lessons teachers dwell too intensively on grammar, so students have insufficient time to practise using the language. Teachers encourage students to work co-operatively, often in mixed-gender pairs or groups. They make effective use of conventional materials and some are gaining confidence in using computers for teaching. They make worksheets and materials that add a practical dimension to learning. Lower attainers and some students with special educational needs appreciate the slower pace and firm management of lessons adapted to their abilities. Occasionally, teachers expect too little of their classes. Teachers join with their students in predicting their performance in external examinations. They use homework regularly to prepare and extend the work done in class. The content of exercise books is often slight, reflecting many students' difficulties with writing.
164. The department is currently very well led and well managed, making strong efforts to stabilise its staffing, increase the status of languages and raise attainment. Bright displays celebrate students' achievement and record study visits abroad. The department has a good improvement plan and has benefited from external consultancy and support from senior management. Teachers are largely newcomers to the school who have quickly made good contributions to the department's provision. They share responsibilities and hold regular meetings to contribute and share ideas. The department supports whole school policies such as the development of literacy. Talented linguists do not have enough opportunities to meet native speakers or to use

email to make other contacts in Europe. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all students.
- The music teacher makes sure that students in Years 10 and 11 work hard and receive extra support.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not cover all parts of the music curriculum.
- There are no systems to assess and monitor students work in Years 7 to 9.
- The school does not report National Curriculum levels for students at the age of 14 years.
- There is insufficient development of students' musical skills and their use of musical language.
- Leadership and management are ineffective.

165. Music is a separate GCSE option for students in Years 10 and 11, but in Years 7 to 9 it forms part of the expressive arts course together with dance and drama. As a result of this arrangement there is not enough time to cover the full music curriculum.

166. Students have irregular music lessons during Years 7 to 9, so their musical skills, knowledge and understanding are not developed systematically. At present there is no system for assessing and monitoring the progress of students by the age of 14 so there is no data available to compare with national figures. However, the evidence from inspection is that the attainment of students, including those with special educational needs, is well below average. They are unable to recall and discuss previous learning. Although students can mention key words related to current learning, they are unable to place these in context and show a clear understanding of their meaning. Students do not have sufficient depth of understanding in order to make improvements to their work and are satisfied with low standards. Students have made poor progress in music by the end of Year 9.

167. Students achieve standards that are below average in their GCSE examinations. Only a small number of students choose music. However, results in 2002, although none are higher than a D grade, indicate that from a low starting point progress for these students is good. For two students in the current Year 11 group their instrumental ability enhances their attainment. Another student receives extra curricular keyboard lessons after school to enable this area of study to improve.

168. There are no national comparison figures for expressive arts. In lessons and from video evidence students work well in groups, creating improvisations and dramatic scenes that sometimes also include dance and singing. They become confident performers by the end of Year 9, although their written and oral work is less well developed. This means they find it difficult to discuss and evaluate their work in depth. Expressive arts is a popular option for GCSE. In 2002, 50 per cent of those entered achieved A*-C grades. Students' results in this subject are often one and a half grades higher than that achieved in other subjects. The regular use of high quality video recordings to monitor students' work in progress is an asset. Students appreciate the opportunity to see their work and to consider the dramatic effect. After watching their work, Year 11 students

added a backdrop featuring a passage from *Saving Private Ryan* as they wanted to add an extra dimension to their dramatic tableaux reflecting war.

169. Music teaching seen during the inspection was never less than satisfactory with some good teaching. Despite the very careful planning, the irregularity of music lessons means that students do not develop their skills successfully. Students in Year 9 worked well in pairs exploring and using a music programme. They manipulated pre-recorded sound samples to produce a dance piece. Their lack of previous learning meant that they were more concerned with making colourful patterns rather than mixing the different textures and instruments. Management of students is good. Students in Years 10 and 11 are keen to do well and because of the small numbers teachers often give considerable individual attention. For example, Year 11 students practised a part of *Pachelbel's Canon*, each one arranged individually by the teacher. After a short time they combined their parts into an ensemble performance. Teachers review learning regularly and give students opportunities to listen to and evaluate their own and others' work. Two teachers often take expressive arts lessons, giving teachers the chance to share their skills. They also explore moral and social issues in lessons. For example, Year 8 students worked on a dramatic scene from *Smike*. Students in this lesson sang with enthusiasm, but without clarity of diction. Despite working hard to co-ordinate a movement routine during the song, teachers missed opportunities to practise strategies in order to improve the quality of students singing.

170. The leadership and management of the expressive arts department are good. The head of department gives clear direction for the subject. Documentation is very thorough and the schemes of work are being revised. There is a very good system for monitoring and recording students' progress, including the department's own graded expectations for students' achievement. However, this good practice does not extend to the music department and here leadership and management are poor. Since the previous inspection there has been poor improvement. New music resources have been bought, but there is a lack of clear monitoring and no statutory assessments are done of students' progress. A small number of students receive instrumental lessons. The instrumental teachers teach several lessons in the drama studio, which is not a suitable venue for lessons because the low ceiling makes it acoustically poor and there is no piano to use.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching ensures that students learn well and make progress.
- Good leadership gives clear direction towards improvement.
- There is a strong focus on raising standards of literacy.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment is not used sufficiently in Years 10 and 11 to help students improve.
- Information about results is not analysed sufficiently to check underachievement by groups of students.
- The organisation of time in Years 7 to 9 results in lessons that are too long.

171. At the end of Year 9 standards are average. In 2001, assessments by teachers show that attainment is slightly below average. Students enter the school with average attainment in a narrow range of activities, but they achieve well, make good progress and reach the expected standard in the full range of activities. This is because teachers

set clear standards for behaviour and participation and establish good attitudes to learning.

172. In 2001 GCSE results were below the national average for higher grade passes (A*-C) and at the national average for passes overall. Results have improved steadily since the previous inspection. Students, including those from minority ethnic groups, did as well in physical education as in their other examinations. The very small number of girls who took the course did not do as well as the boys. In 2002, unconfirmed results fell well below the national average for A*-C grades, although A*-G grades remained near the national average. There was some underachievement by more able students and boys, particularly in the theory papers. A small number of boys had extended study leave towards the end of the course, but achieved passes mainly because of their practical assessments. Grouping by ability, introduced in theory lessons in the current Year 11, is a positive move to tackle this underachievement. In general, physical education lessons students reach average standards as they build on the skills, knowledge and understanding learned in Years 7 to 9. These standards represent satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.
173. At the end of Year 9, students have a satisfactory level of performance. This is because teachers plan tasks to carefully build up the necessary skills. In gymnastics, students can select from a range of balancing and travelling movements to create sequences that have control and fluency. In basketball they can play small-sided games to a satisfactory level showing sound knowledge of the rules. They have a sound understanding of how to prepare safely before activity. Students have a good understanding of their own levels of attainment and can say what they need to do next to improve. Teachers help this understanding by making good use of assessment tasks. In gymnastics, particularly, students have to make judgements about their own and others' performances. In this way their skills of observation and evaluation are encouraged.
174. At the end of Year 11, standards are average. In football, team play is satisfactory and students have sufficient knowledge of the rules to act as officials. They understand the effects of exercise on the body and can plan programmes of activities to improve fitness using exercise equipment or routines to music. In Years 10 and 11, students are not as knowledgeable about their levels of performance as those lower down the school. This is because teachers do not set assessment tasks and share results with students in the same way as in Years 7 to 9. Students achieve better in practical GCSE work than in theory lessons. Folders of written work show standards are held back by poor writing skills. Boys' work, especially that of lower attainers, is poorly organised and often has incomplete class and homework. Folders of these students are not helpful as revision material.
175. Teaching across the school is consistently good. Teachers explain what is to be covered, then use a wide range of methods to develop the required skills, knowledge and understanding. Finally a clear review is made with the class to check progress. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan activities that challenge and motivate students. They have high expectations for good behaviour and participation. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Teachers manage students very well, including the few who misbehave. Students with identified learning needs benefit from good individual support and encouragement. Students enjoy physical education and they are keen to take part and work hard in lessons. Teaching maintains a good pace, but students in Years 7 to 9 lose concentration at the end of long double lessons. Teachers use questions that make students think and talk about their work. In badminton, for example, they were asked to explain why they used the tactic of playing the shuttle to the back of the court. The use of correct technical terms is encouraged.

Written work for GCSE is marked regularly with attention to spelling and grammar. Comments on work support students, but do not suggest how to improve. Neither are students given targets to encourage them to achieve as well as possible.

176. Good management and leadership have ensured good improvement since the previous inspection. Results in GCSE have risen and the unsatisfactory organisation of teaching for GCSE theory lessons has been resolved. Better use is now made of computers. An experienced team of teachers is committed to raising standards. Teachers use information well to track progress, but do not check rigorously that students are doing as well as might be expected in GCSE examinations. Accommodation for indoor activities is heavily used, but satisfactory overall. Provision for outdoor work is unsatisfactory. The poor condition and heavy use of the pitches means they are out of use for long periods of time. This limits the programme of activities in winter.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is new purposeful, enthusiastic and committed management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE short course are too low.
- Detailed targets against which students' progress can be identified have not been identified and shared with students.
- The subject does not contribute enough to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality of teaching in all years is unsatisfactory.
- There are no procedures for monitoring the work of staff and students.

177. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well below the expectations in the local authority's agreed syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is well below expectations in the GCSE short course. Overall, students' progress and achievement are unsatisfactory. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by students of different gender or ethnic background. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented do not make enough progress.

178. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is well below expected levels. Students generally make sense of what they study and demonstrate a sound knowledge of various religions. There are few opportunities for them to relate this knowledge to their experiences of life. The teaching tends to concentrate on imparting information. It does not challenge students sufficiently to develop attitudes and form their own views about religious principles and concepts. In Year 7, students develop a sound knowledge and some understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs about God. In one lesson the teacher used a piece of reflective music to help students explore their attitudes and opinions. In Year 8, students make gains in knowledge and understanding of special teachings, places, actions and people in relation to a number of religions. Through a good question and answer session, they developed clear views about special aspects of religious belief. In Year 9, students examine the importance of the Muslim place of worship. However, a mixture of poor behaviour and insufficient challenge meant that students did not make enough progress. Key words and religious language are used well in some lessons, but there is no overall approach to developing students' literacy skills.

179. In lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11, attainment is well below expected levels in relation to the GCSE short course examination. In Year 10, students gain knowledge and some understanding of religious and moral aspects. They demonstrate their understanding of the issues relating to abortion from a range of religious standpoints. However, their progress is impaired by a mixture of poor behaviour and lack of sufficient challenge. In Year 11, students examine a range of views about family life and make some gains in knowledge and understanding. However, students do not demonstrate the necessary skills of investigation, the ability to analyse information and develop balanced arguments.
180. Teaching varies from unsatisfactory to good and overall is unsatisfactory. Teaching lacks sufficient variety and challenge and is uninspiring. This contributes significantly to the negative attitudes towards religion from a number of students especially in Years 10 and 11. Lesson aims were shared with students in most cases. Teachers make some use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. The use of a suitable range of styles that enables students to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion was rather limited. Because of this lack of variety in teaching, students lose interest. In some lessons this lack of interest leads to poor behaviour. The inadequate resources also limit what students can achieve.
181. Assessment of students' work is generally unsatisfactory, although some helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures in place provide a sound basis for assessing what students know and understand. There is, however, inconsistency and inaccuracy in grading students' work by different teachers. Assessment does not inform future planning of new work. The department does not set detailed targets against which it can assess students' progress. Consequently, students are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.
182. The religious education curriculum contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. In lessons, however, the opportunities for students to develop moral attitudes and explore aspects of beliefs are somewhat limited. There is too little time for students to reflect on the work.
183. A new head of department has been in post since September. She is approaching the job with purpose, enthusiasm and commitment. She is aware of what needs to be done to move the subject forward. There is clear support from other departmental staff. The monitoring of the work of the department is recognised as an important area for development.
184. Since the time of the previous inspection, standards have declined and staffing difficulties have been a major factor in the lack of progress. Progress is now being made in the subject to address many of the issues raised in the previous report. However, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.