

INSPECTION REPORT

CUMBERLAND SCHOOL

Canning Town, London

LEA area: Newham

Unique reference number: 102783

Headteacher: Ms J Noble

Reporting inspector: Mr A Byrne
2561

Dates of inspection: 25 February - 1 March 2002

Inspection number: 180750

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Barking Road Newham London
Postcode:	E16 4DD
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Sharon Higgins
Date of previous inspection:	20 October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2561	Tony Byrne	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9472	John Edmond	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
27411	Heather Butensky	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
1249	Joesph Edge	Team inspector	Science	
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	
20055	Sheila Entwistle	Team inspector	Mathematics	
8185	Peter Kendall	Team inspector	Art	
28106	Michele Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
12276	Terence Payne	Team inspector	Music	
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
27983	Mary Sewell	Team inspector	English	
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Geography Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?

10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cumberland School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 – 16 in the London Borough of Newham. The 894 pupils on roll make it slightly smaller than average for a secondary school, with an even balance of boys and girls, except in Year 8, where there is a majority of boys; the roll has been stable around 900 for some time. The school serves an area of multiple challenges. A very wide range of ethnic groups attends the school, reflecting the diversity of the community. Nearly six in ten are of white UK heritage, after which pupils of African heritage form the largest group (15%), with seven other ethnic groups represented. Some pupils are recent arrivals in this country and some have refugee status; these pupils often have a disrupted pattern of education and three in ten have English as an additional language - a very high figure compared to other schools. Another factor, linked with arrivals from abroad, but also associated with other groups in the community, is a very high rate of pupils joining or leaving at various times. There was a change representing about one in ten of the roll last year and over 20 per cent of Year 11 did not join Cumberland's roll at the start of Year 7. The area is supported by Single Regeneration Budget funding and more than half the school population is entitled to free school meals, which is very high compared to average schools. Attainment of pupils on entry is low, particularly in literacy and numeracy, though there are some indications of a recent rise. This low attainment is compounded by the subsequent arrival of pupils whose education has been disrupted. The LEA has a policy of securing mainstream places for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and this results in a very high proportion of pupils (36 per cent) on the register of SEN. Just under half of those are at the advanced stages of need (Stages 3 – 5). The school participates in many grant-funded initiatives, including Excellence in Cities. The school has experienced difficulties of recruitment and retention of staff common in London and nearly half of the current staff were trained overseas. The school gained Achievement Awards from the DfEE this year and the previous year in recognition of the improving results obtained by pupils and during the week of this inspection was confirmed as having Investor in People accreditation for its management of staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school is improving at a good rate and offers its pupils very good educational opportunities. Whilst standards are below national expectations and attendance is unsatisfactory, most pupils make good progress over time and achieve well. Teaching is good. Leadership is first class and management is good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Creates an inclusive atmosphere, giving all pupils confidence to succeed and a good deal of respect for each other.
- Achieves standards that represent good progress by the end of Year 11.
- Offers good opportunities in new vocational courses.
- Helps pupils to behave well and to think about what is important in life.
- Provides excellent leadership and support for staff.

What could be improved

- Literacy and the rate at which pupils progress in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Involvement of pupils, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, in understanding the process of learning in lessons and how well they are doing.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Accommodation, especially sports facilities.
- Further strengthening of partnership with parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in October 1997. Strengths reported then have been built on and improvement is very good, except in respect of attendance and punctuality. Standards are improving generally and, although still below national averages in some areas, in others they match or exceed national averages.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	A

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

It is important to understand the challenging context of the community that the school serves in arriving at a judgement on standards. Standards are generally below the national average, except in drama and physical education, and standards are lower in Years 7, 8 and 9 than in Years 10 and 11. However, standards achieved in tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 9 are average compared to schools serving similar communities. Some of the results obtained at the end of Year 11 show that the school has in some areas raised standards to match or surpass national averages and to be well above similar schools. Every pupil gained at least one pass at GCSE in 2001. The proportion gaining five or more passes (A*-G) was above the national average in 2000 and only just below in 2001; in both years it was very high compared with schools where pupils have reached similar standards in Year 9. In subjects such as science and ICT, where standards have recently been particularly low, and indeed in all subject areas, standards are rising. For some time standards in all subjects have been rising faster in Years 10 and 11, whilst remaining static in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve well. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils and on the whole their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress and achieve well, some being amongst the school's highest achievers. Overall, pupils achieve very well given their starting points. Pupils enter with low standards of literacy and numeracy, and reading is a particular weakness. The national strategies are in place but have not had time to significantly improve these skills. ICT skills are below average, except for pupils currently engaged in GNVQ courses, where they match national expectations, but recent specialist teaching is improving standards. There are no strong patterns to indicate that any particular group is seriously underachieving. Whilst target setting is difficult because of so many changes occurring in each cohort of pupils, the ambitious targets set are mainly achieved.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are good in almost all lessons and pupils participate enthusiastically in other activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in class is good and sometimes excellent. It is rarely unsatisfactory. Behaviour around the school is usually calm; there are isolated incidents of poor behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	This is good and a strength of the school. The warm support of teachers helps pupils to have faith in themselves and to respect others. A few pupils are not considerate.
Attendance	Although there is a trend of improvement, attendance is persistently well below average. Lateness is also a problem.

Behaviour is almost always at least satisfactory in lessons and often good or excellent. This is particularly creditable given the high proportion of pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. In a few lessons the behaviour of a minority is unsatisfactory. Conduct around the school is generally good, with occasional incidents of inconsiderate behaviour and isolated incidents of poor behaviour.

Some pupils' behaviour leads to exclusions but there are signs that this is reducing and that pupils are coming back into line following compulsory time spent in the new "Inclusion Unit". With the support of each other and of staff, pupils overcome the bullying that occurs from time to time. Attitudes of pupils are outstandingly positive towards school, staff and each other, with the exception of those who persist in not attending. The warmth of relationships and pupils' response to opportunities to reflect about ideas and experiences lead to a high quality of opportunity for spiritual and personal development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is often of high quality, though the best teaching occurs most consistently in Years 10 and 11, where teachers continuously make the direction of learning and purpose of activities clear to pupils. In Years 7, 8 and 9, where the very few instances of unsatisfactory teaching occur, teachers do not always involve the pupils so deeply in understanding the lesson but the clear structure of the literacy and numeracy strategies is beginning to improve clarity. Literacy and numeracy are being taught well but there is insufficient emphasis on reading. Teachers' relationships with pupils are a particular strength. They make pupils feel that great things are within their capabilities, as when one teacher commented, with justice, "Now you're working like university students!" Behaviour is usually managed firmly. Teachers make good use of information about the needs of pupils with SEN or EAL, and of resources available to support them. This is less consistently so in terms of the challenge presented to gifted and talented pupils, which could, at times, be sharper. Teaching is good in English where some teachers place no limits on drawing out pupils' insights into a wide range of ideas. It is consistently strong in mathematics, based on a combination of expertise and knowledge of pupils. A period of discontinuity caused by staffing difficulties in science has contributed to low standards but the new team in place is steadfastly addressing challenges and making significant improvement. The same is true in other subjects that are emerging from periods of difficulty with staffing: - ICT, music and religious education. There is a great deal of effective teaching in other subjects and staff in drama and physical education are particularly successful in helping pupils achieve national expectations. The very good work of teachers and learning support staff, based on expertise and exceptionally good relationships, makes a strong contribution to raising standards.

Whilst teachers make good use of assessment data collected over time to track progress, assessment is not used consistently and frequently to make clear to all pupils where they stand and what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good in both key stages, even though a few aspects of the National Curriculum are not covered. Extra-curricular opportunities and community links are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision is made in both key stages.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Support is very well focused for all pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Personal development is supported well and spiritual development, through expression, reflection and relationships, is a strength of the school.

development	
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well, although there are concerns about pupils' well-being and care when they are off-site during the school day, which the school is seeking to address.

The curriculum is broad and there are good opportunities for extra study and other activities, notably in sport and drama. There are strong links with the local community and business. The personal, social and health programme is good and careers guidance is particularly strong. The school offers an inclusive curriculum, ensuring all have full access. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well and appropriate arrangements are in place to supervise pupils' welfare.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership by the headteacher and senior managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed and involved. They communicate clearly to this very diverse community but acknowledge that methods of obtaining responses from the community should be broader.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses results and monitors teaching very well to improve the quality of education. External partners are brought in to assure quality. Appropriate targets are set for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	There is high involvement in a wide range of initiatives and grants, subsumed in a coherent plan for development. Resources are deployed effectively.

Whilst the school experiences difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, it has actively pursued innovative strategies to ensure continuity in quality and learning. Accommodation is mainly satisfactory but only able to afford a stimulating environment in a few areas. Accommodation and resources for physical education are inadequate. There is a well-stocked library with books and other information media. The site is well managed and maintained. The budget is controlled efficiently to support the well-organised development plan. The school achieves good value for money but, to achieve the principles of "best value", wider consultation is required.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school makes pupils feel they can achieve well. Teaching is good in some subjects, particularly English. The school is well managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about pupils' progress. Security of pupils on and off-site. Problems when notifying absence. Concerns about science provision.

Inspectors agreed with the positive views. The school is seeking to improve arrangements for pupils to stay on-site. Pupils were not unduly concerned about bullying. Concern about science is justified but improvement is under way. Summaries of progress are clear but younger pupils and their parents do not sufficiently understand progress in daily lessons and homework. Many parents do not take up the offer to be active partners in their children's education. Whilst the school may not have made clear that the morning answer phone is for efficiency, it is not the case that messages about absence are ignored; some parents are condoning absence and do not like it when the school makes further contact to challenge them about it.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In order to get a clear perspective on standards it is essential to understand the community context of Cumberland School. A large proportion of pupils comes from a disadvantaged background. A large proportion has special educational needs. This unusually high level partly arises from the LEA's policy of directing most pupils to be educated in mainstream schools. The pupil population is highly mobile; more than one in five pupils now in Year 11 did not enter the school at the beginning of Year 7. This factor is further complicated by the arrival of many pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), some of whom are refugees.
2. All of the above factors make it difficult to trace trends in achievements, or to set targets accurately, since year groups change substantially over their time in school. What is clear is that many pupils enter with low attainment in literacy and numeracy, though there are some indications of recent improvement. Nationally standardised tests confirm this.
3. Standards attained are well below average at the end of Year 9. However, when comparison is made with schools with a similar number of disadvantaged pupils (entitled to free school meals), performance is average in English and mathematics, though below average in science. Pupils clearly make good progress over time, because, by the end of Year 11, the proportion gaining at least one pass (A*-G) at GCSE is very high in comparison with the national figure. Every pupil did so in 2001. The proportion gaining at least five A*-G passes was above the national average in 2000 and only just below in 2001. The proportion achieving five or more passes A* - G is very high compared with schools where attainment is similar at the end of Year 9 and well above schools which have similar numbers entitled to free school meals. With regard to numbers gaining five or more higher grade (A* - C) passes, the school is below the national average, but above or well above similar schools.
4. Pupils with SEN make good progress in both key stages, achieving well in a number of subjects and improving strongly in literacy and numeracy. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils and their attainment is satisfactory for their ability. Pupils with EAL make very good progress as a result of encouraging and well-targeted teaching. Some pupils with EAL have been amongst the highest attaining at the end of Year 11.
5. Boys appear to do better than girls at the end of Year 9 but the numbers reaching higher levels are not significant. The school has concerns about the achievement of some groups, for example white boys, but there are no strong patterns that indicate that any particular group is underachieving.
6. Pupils following GNVQ courses leading to GCSE equivalent grades tend to do very well. Some pupils with SEN gain a range of worthwhile accreditation in qualifications other than GCSE.
7. Pupils enter with low standards of literacy and numeracy, though there are signs of improvement in Year 7 this year. Progress is sound and the recently introduced National Strategies in Years 7, 8 and 9 are raising standards. Reading is a particular weakness. Standards in ICT are below average but improving under specialist teaching and particularly in GNVQ courses.
8. Overall, in the core subjects, pupils attain better in English and mathematics than in science. Standards in English and mathematics are below average but comparable with similar schools. Science results are well below average and below the attainment of similar schools. This reflects a period of instability, following staffing difficulties in science; the situation has stabilised and standards are improving. Standards are below average in English at the end of both key stages. Results in English were lower than expected in 2001 but some grades have been raised and none have been lowered, following a request for re-marking of papers, and the results represent good achievement, given levels obtained earlier in the pupils' education. Results in mathematics GCSE are below average, as are standards at the end of Year 9, but represent good progress from the pupils' starting point. Standards in science are below average but improved provision is raising

standards, more rapidly and effectively, at the time of inspection, in Years 7, 8 and 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Standards are below average generally, except in drama and physical education, where pupils reach the national standards expected, but there is strong evidence of improvement in all subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Behaviour is good and often very good or excellent. This has built upon the position at the last inspection when pupils' attitudes to learning were satisfactory.
10. Attitudes to learning are now positive in almost all lessons. Most pupils and parents agree that teachers maintain high standards of behaviour in lessons and the inspection findings support this view. The overall standard of behaviour in class is good, with pupils responding positively to firm management. The quality of behaviour in two-thirds of lessons is at least good and it is very good or excellent in over a quarter. Behaviour is unsatisfactory or poor in only a tenth of lessons seen. Usually, pupils co-operate well and concentrate hard and many can learn independently. Pupils' attitudes make a good contribution to their learning. A small number of pupils, not necessarily those of lower ability, display negative attitudes at times. The pace at which pupils, including the less able, work is usually good in all subjects. Occasionally, however, response is weak, for example, in some science lessons. Pupils have a desire to improve their work and take pride in the finished product. This was evident in many lessons, notably a Year 11 leisure and tourism lesson, where pupils were preparing a customer service handbook, and in a Year 10 English lesson, where pupils were seen to be buzzing with anticipation. Pupils' capacity to work co-operatively and to persevere is often high and many examples of pupils taking responsibility for their own work were seen, notably in a Year 11 drama lesson, where the atmosphere was mature and businesslike and pupils concentrated hard.
11. Behaviour around the school is mostly calm; arrival, departure and waiting at class are generally orderly. Pupils negotiate the staircases between lessons without major incident. Pupils behave reasonably at break time and when queuing for and eating lunch, though some minor incidents of rowdiness were seen and some isolated incidents of poor behaviour in one corner of the site. Respect for property is generally satisfactory but too much litter is dropped, incurring considerable unnecessary cost and effort. No graffiti were seen on buildings or furniture but most of the taps in the boys' main washroom had been vandalised.
12. The behaviour of some pupils leads to exclusion. Last year there were six permanent exclusions and fifty-one fixed term ones. The more common fixed term exclusions are down from seventy-three at the time of the last inspection, though permanent ones have risen from the three recorded at that time. The school has introduced effective measures, such as the inclusion unit and full-time behavioural support staff, to do everything possible to prevent exclusion. Most exclusions are at maximum five days and pupils are re-integrated unobtrusively through the pastoral support programme. The school maintains proper records of exclusions and complies with the LEA reporting system.
13. The school impresses on new pupils and their parents the need to consider others and most pupils react very positively. There is some bullying, but most of the pupils interviewed are confident that, if bullying is reported, the school deals with it speedily. Respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs is satisfactory and most pupils are sensitive to the needs of others.
14. Many pupils take an active part in the day-to-day life of the school, as seen in the enthusiastic support for the School Council, whose advice is welcomed by senior management. There are opportunities throughout the school for pupils to take responsibility, but particularly in Years 10 and 11, such as the Year 10 peer mentors, who help younger pupils, lending assistance in running the learning resource base and helping senior citizens in the community. Pupils take up the school's popular extra-curricular activities with enthusiasm.
15. Relationships amongst pupils and between staff and pupils are good, as they were during the last inspection. Most pupils are courteous to each other and friendly to staff. Pupils relate positively to each other and work well together in lessons, particularly in pairs, as, for example, in a Year 9 history lesson, where they responded well to the teacher. Most react politely when addressed and are friendly and helpful to visitors. However, a small proportion of pupils, usually boys, have little

regard for the school's strong emphasis on caring for others. There were a few examples of self-centred behaviour, such as barging inconsiderately through doors, or distracting others in lessons. One or two appear arrogant or display an unattractive 'laddishness', which detracts from the tolerant and supportive society that the school overwhelmingly manages to promote.

16. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attendance was reported to be poor, though showing a slow but steady rise, and unauthorised absence was high and rising. Since then attendance has continued to rise a little. During this year only Year 7 pupils have achieved more than 90 per cent attendance, though at least one tutor group in all the other years has reached that level. However, attendance remains well below the national average and unauthorised absence this year is well above, particularly in Year 10. This is despite strong advice to parents not to take children on holidays during term-time. The legal requirements for recording and reporting attendance are fully met. The daily registration and tutor periods start on time and most pupils display a responsible attitude to punctuality. However, during the current year a third of pupils have been late for more than 20 sessions. Levels of truanting from individual lessons are too high and some groups of pupils take too long to reach the next lesson. Poor attendance and punctuality have a very negative effect on the attainment and progress of pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is good. More than a quarter of lessons are very good or excellent. Teachers' relationships with pupils are a particular strength: they raise pupils' expectations of what they can aspire to and do, making them feel valued and worthwhile. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson, after an initial briefing at a demanding level about volcanoes, pupils were discussing in small groups and the teacher commented "Now you're working like university students". This approach is a firm basis for managing behaviour and for supporting pupils with SEN or those who have EAL. Alongside this clear commitment to pupils, teachers have readily available data about pupils' previous attainment, special needs, stage of language acquisition, gifts and talents. This often leads to tasks being tailored to individual needs but in some lessons, which are satisfactory on the whole, there is not enough variation in the demands made, so that some find tasks too difficult to finish, whilst others are not challenged and complete too quickly. From inspection evidence, very few lessons are unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 or 9 and no lessons are less than satisfactory in Years 10 or 11. Pupils with SEN are taught well, when there is support, or when, as is the case in English, pupils with the most severe needs work in a separate class. However, in some subjects, such as history, the high demand for literacy is not entirely catered for by the extent of support available.
18. The teaching of pupils with EAL is good, based on effective liaison about the lesson topic between the class teacher and the teacher in the support role.
19. In general, teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils' knowledge and control of their own learning is more limited in the early years of secondary school. This is partly because of limitations in literacy on arrival and pupils' low expectations of how far they can succeed – although there are signs, from results in end of Key Stage 2 tests, that attainment on entry is improving. However, it is also the case that teachers make aims and objectives more prominent as they lead older pupils towards external examinations. In lessons in Years 10 and 11 there is continuous reference to the purpose and direction of study. There are, however, signs that the widespread adoption of the National Strategies' three part lesson approach is helping teachers to emphasise objectives and review what has been learned and the impact of starter activities and of focused reflection at the end of the lesson is beneficial.
20. The management of pupils' behaviour by teachers is very good. This is particularly important, as a relatively high number of pupils have registered emotional and behavioural difficulties.
21. A good example of the school's determination for pupils to succeed is that the teacher of the GNVQ Business Studies (at intermediate level, where pupils have to pass at a minimum equivalent of 2 GCSEs Grade C) is offering Saturday morning tuition to guarantee access to ICT facilities so that coursework may be completed to the highest standard. Last year this course achieved 100% pass rate.

22. Good progress has been made in teaching pupils to develop independent learning skills since the time of the last inspection. The resources centre is well provided with books and ICT material and is used well. There are well-equipped computer suites, which teachers use effectively. Not all areas have good access to ICT but there are plans to improve this. A very special feature that the school has developed to support learning is its nationally known web site "Kevin's Playroom". Up-to-date reference material is stored on the web site, which is jointly managed, by pupils and teachers. The incorporation of this facility into teaching and learning was highly commended in a visit by HMI in 2000.
23. Homework is used effectively for the most part and pupils are encouraged to maintain their diary/planners as a support to study.
24. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been introduced and are contributing well to effective teaching. To support literacy there is good use of writing frames and key words. There is a well-stocked library with good data on pupils' borrowing and the school promotes reading in a number of ways, for instance by inviting writers to talk about their work. There is a good programme of acquiring textbooks to support home study. It is appropriate here to recall an incident from the inspection week. One pupil approached inspectors as they left the site one evening, when there was no possibility of gaining credit by impressing teaching staff, to point out forcefully and proudly that, having attended several schools, at this one, though she was quite often in trouble, she had learned to read. Nevertheless, weakness in reading remains a barrier to learning for many, calling for even greater effort on the part of the school.
25. Teaching is good in English, with the National Literacy Strategy being incorporated effectively into the structure of lessons. Teachers draw out pupils' thinking in oral sessions, such as in a lesson on "Educating Rita" where many pupils contributed to the impressive idea, summed up by one pupil, that "language is power". In a few lessons where teaching is less than good there is reliance on unsuitable worksheets that pupils do not complete. There is scope to improve the consistency of assessment and use of data. In mathematics the teaching is consistently strong. The National Numeracy Strategy has been incorporated effectively. Science teaching is satisfactory, with a particularly commendable emphasis on literacy. There is a little inconsistency in quality, however. Sometimes, in lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 clarity of structure and delivery is variable and in Years 10 and 11, at times, the challenge is pitched too low. Teaching of ICT is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and often very good in Years 10 and 11. The incorporation of ICT opportunities in other lessons is not always satisfactory. Religious education is taught well in Years 10 and 11 where there is challenge and expectations are high but there are some weaknesses arising from inaccuracy and low expectations in Years 7, 8 and 9.
26. Teaching is very good in art, drama, geography and physical education. The enthusiasm of teachers drives the pupils over a challenging range of work and obtains a commitment to high performance. There is good teaching in modern foreign languages, with lively pace leading to engagement with all the key skills in every lesson. Teaching is sound in design and technology and music and this represents considerable progress and improvement after periods of difficulty.

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

27. The school provides a broad curriculum that is adapted to pupils' needs. English is given extra curriculum time in order to support literacy. Most subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. Some subjects prefer to use setting of pupils at different levels of attainment. Pupils are taught in sets for mathematics from Year 7, for French from Year 8 and for science from Year 9. All pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are supported and have access to the full curriculum. The school has strong links with the local community through vocational education and pupils benefit from the extra opportunities. As well as homework clubs, there are opportunities for additional GCSE study, when the number of pupils opting to study a subject within curriculum time is too small to be viable.
28. The breadth of the curriculum is good overall in Years 7, 8 and 9, as it includes all subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education, together with a programme of personal and social education and drama lessons. There are effective strategies for the development of literacy within subjects. A programme for similar developments in numeracy is due to start. Intensive work on

'Catch-up' programmes with lower-attaining pupils is designed to equip pupils with the skills in literacy and numeracy that they need in most subjects. This is offered initially as an extra-curricular activity but is also available through extraction from lessons for those who do not take the extra-curricular opportunity.

29. ICT is delivered as a discrete subject within the technology carousel in Years 7, 8 and 9. In other subjects, word processing is used widely for the presentation of work and desktop publishing for posters and newspaper reports. Spreadsheets are used in geography. The Internet is used widely. In physical education, it is used to find out rules, regulations, study guides, results and fixtures. There is good use of the Internet in art, when it is used to research and collect images. In geography, it is used in topics such as "Tourism" and "Hazards". In history, it is used extensively for research. The English department recommend sites to be added to the school's education site. Most curriculum areas used the Library and Resource Base at some time during the year but there was more significant use by the English, special educational needs and religious education departments. There is very good use of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 GNVQ Business Studies and Leisure and Tourism. The digital camera and the video are used by pupils to record their visits, for instance to West Ham United Football Club and Disneyland Paris. Pupils are encouraged to e-mail companies for information. In some subjects, such as design and technology and science, there is too little use of ICT.
30. The school is aware of the variable quality of application of information and communication technology across the curriculum. Improvements are being made as some teachers make progress on the New Opportunities Fund training. The projected purchase of interactive whiteboards will enhance the use of information and communication technology in other subject areas.
31. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is less broad, although there are some innovative elements. It does not ensure that all pupils follow a modern foreign language or design and technology; thus statutory requirements are not fully met. Pupils receive their curriculum entitlement to ICT in Year 11 through a discrete course. Year 10 has begun a new programme to deliver ICT entitlement through subjects. This programme is not yet satisfactory for all. However, there is good use of ICT within the vocational education courses. GNVQ courses in Business and Leisure and Tourism lead to the equivalent of two GCSE passes in either subject. Religious education lessons lead to at least short course GCSE. The curriculum time allocated to courses is in proportion to requirements.
32. Provision for personal, social and health education within the school is broad, dealing with self-esteem, schoolwork, jobs, health, morals and values, spiritual development, and tolerance. The programme is well managed and the content is kept under review. Issues of drugs, alcohol and sex education are all fully covered within the programme whilst issues of citizenship, bullying and peer pressures are being integrated into the content. The programme is taught by form tutors, monitored and supported by a co-ordinator.
33. Extra-curricular activities, notably in sport and drama, enrich the curriculum very well. Pupils have access to homework clubs and study support. The library and ICT rooms are open to pupils and there are a number of subject and interest clubs, such as studio and workshop sessions in art and design and technology.
34. Provision for careers and vocational education, within PSHE, is very good. It starts in Year 9, prior to pupils choosing their options; the careers adviser supports. A further programme is taught in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10, good use is made of local business links to raise awareness of opportunities. All pupils complete work experience in Year 10.
35. The school has strong links with its local community and constructive relationships with partner institutions. It is involved in teacher training for students from the universities. The school has also made good use of the graduate and overseas teacher programmes to train and develop teachers. Trainees benefit from monitoring and support provided within the school. Pupils benefit from the school's links with local industry and commerce, and from its involvement with the Education and Business Partnership.

36. The school promotes pupils' personal development through very good provision for spiritual growth and good opportunities for moral, social and cultural development. Teachers in charge of subjects have audited these aspects in schemes of work and teaching since the last inspection and have modified the curriculum appropriately. At whole-school level, assemblies and reflection opportunities in form time have been given prominence and extra-curricular opportunities have been extended. Above all, the relationships between all staff and pupils provide a very firm basis of support for these aspects of personal growth.
37. Pupils are frequently made to feel that they are valued and that all individuals have unique qualities. Opportunities are created for pupils to shine and inspire others, as did the girls who sang "Amazing Grace " so movingly in assemblies, and as did teachers in lessons, when they celebrated the perceptiveness of an answer, or the extent of progress being made. In this atmosphere, the achievements of writers, artists and scientists can be readily set out for admiration and inspiration. Respect for individuals extends to respect for the many cultures and faiths represented in the school community. Pupils from Year 11 who were interviewed felt strongly that their education and personal growth had been significantly enhanced by contact with so many different cultures.
38. Very good support for spiritual development occurred in a Year 7 religious education lesson about the use of food as a symbol in religion. Some pupils were given chocolate, others were denied it; then groups were asked to compare feelings. The discussion encouraged reflection about greed, rejection and sharing. Spiritual development is promoted in other subjects; for example, in Year 11 drama based on the events of 11th September, in Year 9 art studying attitudes to death by comparing Hallowe'en with the Mexican Day of the Dead and in geography, Year 8 pupils reflecting on aspects of the world development global resources.
39. In providing for pupils' moral development, there is an emphasis on attitudes to learning and behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to take a responsible attitude to the impact their conduct has on others. In lessons, in parallel with spiritual development, pupils of all ages and abilities are invited to give serious consideration to a wide range of issues related to personal, local and global matters. For example, moral issues are central to the PSHE curriculum throughout the school. Pupils are being educated in a community where the values of what is right and wrong are being reinforced through the day-to-day conduct of all members. The school has strong policies concerning behaviour and the need to promote positive attitudes in the school. There is a good pastoral support system that encourages good behaviour and addresses very positively any issues concerning poor, anti-social behaviour. The emphasis in the inclusion unit and the re-integration unit is always on the capability of the individual to make a positive contribution.
40. Moral development then links to social development because the school stresses that all members of its community have mutual obligations, and this attitude is emphasised in the behaviour policy. Throughout the school day, in classes, in transit from room to room, in social areas at break-times and in the dining areas, pupils have scope to mix freely and easily. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are constantly encouraged to interact with other pupils and adults. Pupils who were interviewed commented on the absence of barriers between groups. Pupils have a range of opportunities to comport themselves well in the world outside school, through work experience and outings related to the curriculum. Particularly good social development is occurring for a group of Year 10 pupils who, as part of their GNVQ course are being trained by West Ham Football Club as guides for primary school children who will visit the stadium. Pupils collaborate well in lessons such as drama and ICT. The good relationships between pupils and adults in lessons and throughout the school make a strong contribution to social development.
41. Pupils' cultural development is good. They have good opportunities to enjoy music and to appreciate art and literature. The library is quite successful in promoting recreational reading in pupils' leisure time but deserves more planned support. In most subjects, pupils have some opportunities to understand and appreciate the faiths, culture and lifestyle of other cultures. In particular, in English, there are theatre visits and visits to the school by drama workshops and many pupils take part in extra-curricular drama and dance activities. The art curriculum provides gallery visits. The school promotes an understanding of the issues raised by the diversity of different communities in Britain today.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. At the time of the last inspection health and safety arrangements were judged to be satisfactory and the child protection policy to be effective. Health and safety arrangements are now very good and the school has developed a very comprehensive system for ensuring it complies with legal requirements for health and safety and risk assessment, and for bringing concerns about health and safety to the notice of appropriate staff and governors. The school has eliminated the earlier health and safety risks in the science laboratories and is currently refurbishing the unpleasant main lavatories for boys. The school responded quickly during inspection when notified of a hazard in the kiln room. However, goggles are still not being used properly in design and technology lessons, a weakness noted in the last report. The provision for medical care and first aid are good and sick pupils have a medical room where they can receive treatment. Regular tests are carried out on all equipment. Pupils questioned all know the evacuation procedure in the event of fire. The school is aware of a degree of risk when pupils leave the site at lunchtime, or go to lessons at the leisure centre; the governing body is actively seeking to reduce this risk.
43. The school complies fully with child protection guidelines and liaison arrangements with most external agencies are very good, though, through no fault of its own, the school experiences difficulties at times in maintaining links with social services. A strength of the school is that new staff receive training in both child protection and health and safety within a week of their arrival.
44. Pastoral care is delivered very effectively by Year Coordinators, backed up by teachers in charge of each key stage. In order to maintain continuity of pupils' care and to develop positive relationships with parents, tutors and teachers in charge of year groups continue with their groups through the school, while teachers in charge of key stages retain their positions. This allows the teacher in charge of Years 7, 8 and 9, for example, to build long-term contacts with the primary schools. Appropriate standards of support and guidance to pupils and of provision for their welfare make a positive contribution to educational standards and help pupils to feel happy and secure. The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Pastoral staff know their pupils very well and pupils confidently turn to them or other members of staff for help. The high quality of co-operation and liaison between all staff on pastoral matters is an important feature of the school. Pupils appreciate both the academic and personal support given. Parents welcome the school's comprehensive arrangements for introducing new pupils in Year 7 and the school pays special attention to the induction of the many new, older pupils arriving at times other than the start of Year 7. The good arrangements for transfer to further education or for training for employment ensure that most pupils move on with confidence. The school takes extra care to support pupils with special educational needs.
45. The school operates firm, sensitive measures for monitoring and improving attendance; for example, the highly successful reintegration unit for vulnerable pupils. However, systems for reducing lateness to acceptable levels, or for eliminating internal truancy are not yet fully effective. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour work very well and pupils consider them fair. Recent measures for addressing unacceptable behaviour, which include several full-time behavioural support staff, an inclusion unit and the 'access project', are starting to work. Staff have high expectations of good behaviour and promote an orderly and cheerful atmosphere throughout the school. The procedures for dealing with bullying and oppressive behaviour are very effective. The anti-bullying measures are very good and pupils feel secure; for example, Year 7 pupils reported that their concerns at primary school about possible bullying were unfounded and Year 9 pupils felt that bullying is dealt with effectively. The strong stance against racism is shared by pupils. Younger pupils needing support can also turn to trained Year 10 mentors.
46. At the previous inspection the assessment, recording and reporting policy was judged to be satisfactory but there was a need to develop further the recording of day-to-day assessment to plan further learning. The school has developed procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. However, there is variation in practice not only between subjects but, sometimes, within the same department. This does not effectively support the school's intention to help pupils to take responsibility for their learning. Subject teachers know their pupils well. There is now a tracking system, which includes an interview with the form tutor, at which targets are agreed and recorded for a pupil in three priority areas. These are reviewed with the pupil three times a year,

so that the pupil is well aware of what is required. Copies of the system record are included with the annual report to keep parents up to date with progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The last inspection report noted that, though the school had worked hard to improve communications with parents and involve them more, many were reluctant to give active support. Little has changed.
48. The comments that follow on parents' attitudes to the school must be treated with caution, as only just over a quarter of parents replied to the questionnaire. Of responses received, almost all the questions resulted in a negative element exceeding ten per cent. On the other hand, there was a reasonable turnout of about fifty at the parents' meeting at which the tone was quite positive.
49. Pupils interviewed confirmed the views of parents that their children enjoy coming to school and are made to feel welcome. Most parents consider that their children make good progress and feel comfortable about approaching the school. They recognise that the school expects their child to work hard and to mature. They consider that the school is well led and managed and that the teaching is good, particularly in the English department. They welcome the interesting range of activities provided outside lessons. However, nearly a quarter do not feel they are kept well informed, nor do they think that the school promotes good behaviour, though they welcome both the pastoral help and guidance offered to their children and the peer monitoring system. Again, about a quarter do not feel the school works closely with parents. Those at the meeting generally find the school responsive and helpful but are irritated by the school's systems for dealing with messages about absence by answerphone and with the response to notification of absence. Inspectors noted that the answerphone is switched on for efficient collection of calls and that staff do take note of them. When the calls are followed up, it is because the school wishes to check that the absence is really necessary, as there is evidence that some parents condone absenteeism. Nearly a third of parents are not content with the amount of homework set; this varies between those who think there is too much and those who think there is too little. It is probable that parents are not fully cognisant of exactly what homework is set and what its purpose is. The inspection broadly confirms the positive views of the majority of parents, though there are areas where the school still needs to improve, and the senior managers and governors are aware of what needs to be done.
50. The school keeps parents well informed. The prospectus and the annual governors' report meet statutory requirements. The induction documentation for new parents is clear and helpful and the pupil planner contains much useful basic information about the school as well as about homework. The school now has a very informative Internet web site, which includes its philosophy and key policies, and it has developed a prize-winning revision web site, in which pupils play a key role. Pupils also help edit the twice-termly newsletter. Pupils receive helpful information on choosing subject options at the end of Year 9.
51. The quality of the annual written report to parents on pupils' progress is good, though it could be more explicit about its provision for pupils with special educational needs. However, some parents have complained that they are not given enough time for mature consideration of the report before discussing it at the only formal meeting in the year. The layout is well tailored to specific year groups and meets statutory requirements, though it does not include a section for recording parental comment. Parents of those with Statements of Special Educational Needs or with Individual Education Plans are fully involved in the review of progress.
52. The contribution of some parents to children's learning at home and at school is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Parents are given the opportunity to keep themselves informed of their children's homework and to support day-to-day progress through the pupil planner. They are encouraged to use it to maintain a dialogue with the school and tutors check if they do. However, very many do not bother. Attendance at the parents' evening and the school's social and cultural events is satisfactory, though there are no parent volunteers at present and the Parents' and Friends' Association has been dissolved.

53. It is not the habit of all sections of this complex community to involve themselves with school matters; moreover, a few parents have unreasonably high expectations. Consequently, it is difficult to obtain broad parental consensus on such matters as homework, uniform or discipline. In spite of the school's efforts, its links with parents are not especially strong. There has recently been an independent survey of all sections of the school community, but the use of regular and detailed consultation is not yet firmly embedded in the school-parent relationship. Lack of support has forced the school to give up its occasional information meetings for parents on specific work-related subjects but it continues actively to encourage them to make informal contact at any time. Parents are invited to a wide range of musical and dramatic productions, sporting events, and other activities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The headteacher is an excellent leader. She is dedicated and determined and has a sureness of touch which enables her to move smoothly from one aspect of management to another. She is supportive to staff, whilst not tolerating deficiencies. She insists on high standards in pupils' attitudes and achievements. She adjusts from strategic management to dealing with minor, or sometimes quite serious, crises in pupils' lives. Even though the school has robust systems, challenges crop up with a frequency that is potentially draining but there is no evidence of details left unattended. The effectiveness of leadership is secured by the exceptionally good contribution of senior management colleagues. Each team member is very much in control of his or her brief and ready to assist beyond that sphere. The team spends time together, reviewing and deciding strategy, in order to ensure aims are achieved and values are lived out. The SEN co-ordinator is included in the senior management team, giving significant and appropriate weighting to this major factor.
55. Middle managers have every opportunity to play a full part in implementing plans and policy. Monitoring, review and target setting are firmly established. Some middle managers are still developing their grasp of some aspects of the role, such as deriving management information from data, but all of them hold to the principles of school policy and carry out their duties thoroughly.
56. The contribution of the governing body is good. They fulfil statutory duties adequately. The headteacher's termly reports are a very good basis for an open partnership based on full information. This enables governors to understand strengths and weaknesses very well. The contribution they make in supporting the development of the school is good. An area in which governors could be stronger is in playing their part in ensuring that a coherent agenda is maintained in dealing with the multiple challenges the school faces. It is also the case that governors should be more innovative in finding ways to involve parents in working in partnership with the school. Governors do not play a sufficiently strong role as advocates for all elements of the community.
57. The school offers very good support, in depth, for teaching through monitoring and review: this is particularly important in view of the need to induct the high proportion of new and overseas trained teachers. Additional support is available through initiatives such as the taught behaviour management course, franchised from the University of Liverpool, offered after school. The school has persisted in helping graduates to qualify via school-based training. Some very effective teachers have fully qualified with the support of the school. Thorough performance management, linked to the development plan, underpins the school's support system: there is evidence that poor performance is challenged rigorously. The school's supportive and thorough approach to staff management has been recognised this year by the award of **Investors in People (IIP)**.
58. The whole-school development plan is a very effective document. Staff and governors are thoroughly conversant with the priorities and targets – the whole plan is displayed on the staffroom wall. It is revised at appropriate intervals, with key staff attending weekend residential conferences to review it thoroughly. The plan has coherence derived from progressive continuity, building on good practice and previous achievement whilst taking account of new developments. Targets are appropriate and ambitious, despite the complications caused by pupil mobility. Monitoring arrangements are thorough. The plan is efficiently costed. A weakness arises in the precision of success criteria, to assist evaluation, both internal and external.

59. Staff respond strongly to the aims, values and plans of the school; new teachers at all levels feel strongly supported and the entire staff, including classroom assistants and others, are committed to the school's success.
60. Financial planning is thorough and focused on priorities. Governors are effectively involved through the Finance Committee. Grants are used effectively. For example, a decision as to how to use the recent grant to support recruitment and retention was targeted mainly at middle managers, the reasons being explained to all staff. The generous staffing for SEN is funded from earmarked grants. The governors do have concerns about how much of the school's income is based on temporary grants (approximately one quarter).
61. Use of new technology is good and is being upgraded.
62. Difficulties in recruitment and retention have been tackled with vigour and imagination, for example combining with other heads to interview and recruit staff abroad. The programme of support is making the situation satisfactory in terms of the match of staff to the curriculum. Accommodation is adequate, being very good in dedicated computer areas and the resource base, but poor in terms of sports accommodation. The school does its best to keep the building tidy and, though there is little that is gracious and attractive in the built environment, this does not appear to detract from pupils' learning. Best value terms and principles are used and applied in discussions and decisions. The investigation and purchase of a new telephone system was especially commended in a recent external evaluation for IIP. However, consultation with stakeholders such as parents is not yet entirely effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. To build on the good work being done at the school the governors and staff should give priority to the following issues:
 - a) Improve pupils' literacy and the rate at which progress is made through Years 7,8 and 9, particularly concentrating on:
 - further support for pupils' reading;
 - disseminating the best practices in teaching across all subjects;
 - greater challenge to gifted and talented pupils.

(Paragraphs 4, 7, 17, 24, 73, 76, 93, 94)
 - b) Involve pupils more, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, in understanding the process of their learning in lessons and units of work and how to improve by:
 - pursuing the national strategy for Years 7, 8 and 9 to make lesson structure clear and encourage reflection on what has been learned;
 - making pupils aware of the general outline of a unit of study;
 - improving the frequency and consistency of feedback, from teacher to pupil, in all its forms.

(Paragraphs 19, 46)
 - c) Continue strenuous efforts to improve attendance and punctuality, emphasising punctuality during the school day.

(Paragraphs 16, 45)
 - d) Continue to improve facilities and the appearance of the school, seeking particularly to:
 - improve sports facilities on-site;
 - create areas which will encourage pupils to stay on-site at breaks and avoid the risks of being on the street.

(Paragraphs 42, 62, 196)
 - e) Build on good relationships with pupils and with some elements of the community to improve relationships with parents and community groups by:

- communicating in a wider variety of ways about school policy and success;
- trying to encourage dialogue via the pupil planner, supported by subject teachers and form teachers;
- approaching groups or organisations to which parents belong to provide a forum for meeting;
- continuing to stage events which give opportunities for informal contact.

(Paragraphs 47, 49, 52,53,56)

THE PROVISION FOR, AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY, PUPILS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

64. The school has a very high percentage of pupils who have English as an additional language. They number about 280 pupils, with around 17 being at the earliest stage of acquisition, and 70 being at the next stage, stage 2. The provision for these pupils is good and the department works hard to raise their language skills as well as to make them feel settled and welcome in the school. The staff of the department have a particular ability to make the pupils feel valued and in this respect the department makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in the school. There is a very large amount of work for the small number of staff to do. There is one full time EAL teacher, with input from a learning support assistant and a refugee education team teacher. They cover the work very well but it means that they are extremely stretched in terms of both time and teachers. The department is well organised and has well-developed documentation and it plans its affairs efficiently. There are detailed policies on assessment, monitoring, external exams, the pastoral, and use and deployment of staff. The school and department uses the information from linked primary schools in Year 7 to plan for their needs, and pupils who arrive at other times are assessed on arrival and then at regular intervals during their time in the school. Information about the pupils who have English as an additional language is made available to staff so that they are aware of their needs and can plan accordingly. The progress of pupils is monitored informally throughout the year by a system which includes general observation of progress and referrals by the subject and pastoral staff. Detailed assessment sheets are also completed. These include information on how the individuals are developing in terms of all the major linguistic skills and they also indicate if the progress is sufficiently rapid or not.
65. Overall, the teaching of pupils with EAL is good. The lessons are well planned and consequently the teachers know what the topic of the lesson will be if they are in a supporting role. At times, more reference could be made to the key words that are introduced by the class teacher, such as in preparing a simple explanatory sheet before the lesson starts so that the pupils have both something to refer to in the lesson and something to revise from when they get home. Attention is not drawn frequently enough to the blackboard/whiteboard to simultaneously define and explain any new and difficult words introduced by the class teacher, without interrupting the flow of the lesson. Otherwise, the teachers are very supportive and active in the lesson, moving around the room as and when necessary. Consequently, the learning of the pupils is good and overall the progress of the pupils is very good. About 50 per cent of the pupils who are bilingual gained 5 A* to C GCSE's in the public examinations in year 2001. There is a rising trend in the results as it was about 23 per cent in 1999 and about 30 per cent in year 2000. The pupils are well behaved in all lessons and they apply themselves well to their work. They are keen to learn and they make the most of the materials and support given to them by the EAL teachers and support assistants.

SEN ASSESSMENT

66. The staged process of assessment of pupils who have special educational needs is an effective one. Pupils' needs are initially identified through good liaison with primary schools.
67. National Curriculum results and standardised tests applied by the school are used to determine need at point of entry. The process is also applied to pupils entering at times other than the start of Year 7 and appropriate arrangements are made for pupils with English as an additional language who may have special needs. All parents are informed and invited to discuss any

concerns at parents' evening in the first half term. Testing is undertaken annually to monitor spelling and reading levels. SEN specialist staff use evidence from National Curriculum tests and Teacher Assessments when assessing, reviewing and monitoring progress of pupils with SEN. Parameters are set in partnership with the LEA in order to determine appropriate SEN stages.

68. The school draws up a home programme in conjunction with parents of pupils with SEN. Profiles in Individual Education Plans and practical strategies are given to all faculties. Further concerns are discussed with the Educational Psychologist. Targets are set, but they are not always sufficiently precise (SMART) targets. Useful data about pupils are circulated to all staff who teach them. Pupils with Statements of SEN make good progress towards targets set. Pupils at stages 1-4 make good progress. Overall, pupils with SEN make good progress.
69. Pupils with Statements of SEN have a key caseworker teacher allocated to them. Information regarding the needs and targets for each student is given to each department and reviewed when necessary. Support staff keep regular records detailing their method of intervention, which provides effective monitoring of their progress. GCSE results are analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of support by the end of secondary education.

YEARS 7, 8 AND 9 LITERACY STRATEGY

70. The school had strategies in place for the raising of standards in literacy before the launch of the National Literacy Strategy. This was as a result of staff recognising that low levels of achievement in literacy were affecting progress in their subject areas. One of the assistant headteachers is Years 7, 8 and 9 strategy manager; he oversees both literacy and numeracy and will embrace ICT and science next year. There was provision for a summer school last year which catered for literacy and numeracy. The school has been well supported by the local education authority and a whole day's staff training has taken place. Further support is being provided by consultants, who will work alongside teachers in school.
71. The school has developed an Action Plan, in which specific departments are committed to various areas of the strategy. Departments are monitored by the senior management team to ensure continuity. In addition, all teachers of pupils aged up to 14 years display, teach and test the spellings and the understanding of specialist vocabulary. They also focus on speaking and listening skills and are developing the regular use of small group work as an integral part of their lessons.
72. The National Literacy Strategy Audit has not been used by all departments to identify literacy needs, but all subject areas are following the school's Action Plan for literacy. Core departments have responded particularly well and there is already strong evidence of rising standards. Many subject areas use a short 'starter' activity then share the learning expectations with the pupils and review these during the plenary sessions. Most subject areas use the three-part lesson model. Pupils are encouraged to identify what they have learned and many are able to express an understanding of their own learning.
73. Standards in literacy on entry are well below national standards. Various strategies are in place to raise achievement. Pupils working at levels well below national expectations at the age of 11 are targeted for extra support using the National Literacy Strategy 'progress' or 'catch-up' units. These pupils are currently removed from geography, mathematics and English, which is having a disruptive effect on main course teaching. Older pupils are given intensive support in small groups or offered a vocational course as an alternative to a GCSE. In addition, the English department has a vigorous reading programme for the first term for pupils aged 11 years. This reading strategy requires further development to involve the whole of Years 7, 8 and 9. This strategy should incorporate further use of the learning resource base as the rates of borrowing indicate that regular reading needs to become an important feature of the work in the school.
74. Inspection evidence suggests that standards in speaking and listening are generally below national standards. Pupils who have English as a first language communicate effectively in groups and with their teachers. The best examples of good standards of oral work are in English, drama, physical education and geography. The weakest examples were found in music and design and technology where technical vocabulary was reported to be poor.
75. Standards in writing are below national standards. However, there were many good examples which demonstrated a range of writing for a variety of purposes in English. In history pupils' knowledge and understanding are recorded using a range of techniques: note-taking, newspaper reports, etc. However, there is a weakness in spelling across the curriculum. It is weakest in ICT, English and history. There are too few opportunities for extended pieces of writing beyond English and history. A particularly good example of an extended piece of writing in history was work on the Battle of Hastings. Presentation is enhanced in many subjects by the use of information and communication technology.
76. Standards in reading are well below average. More able pupils read a range of literary and non-literary texts and are able to select and retrieve information. Reading in lessons is supported by good quality guidance sheets, excellent examples of which were seen in English, music and information and communication technology. Pupils are also confidently interrogating Internet websites. The school's own website 'Kevin's Playroom' is used regularly; it provides a range of support for all curriculum areas. There should be more focus on reading and the promotion of good reading habits as a means of developing language skills.

77. The National Literacy Strategy last term launched the 'progress' units and started with the spelling unit. Learning Support Assistants have been trained to assist in the delivery of these units. Teaching is very good and much progress is being made as a result. Already there is evidence that lower-attaining pupils have a secure knowledge of spelling rules and are using them. Pupils in these groups are also more able to express views on their own learning and have become more confident with language.
78. The introduction of the strategy has been helped by very good management, good primary liaison, extra resourcing and support by the local education authority literacy consultancy team. The school is identified for early intervention because of the low levels of literacy shown by its pupils.
79. The introduction has been hindered by the timetable – which had already been set for 2001 / 2002 before the launch of the Literacy Strategy. Staff training, some of which has been provided by the local education authority, is comprehensive but requires further follow-up sessions to ensure confidence in delivering the units.

YEARS 7, 8 AND 9 NUMERACY STRATEGY

82. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced across Years 7,8 and 9. Following an audit last year, an action plan has been implemented. Organisation of lessons on the three-part model has been the main plank. Senior managers are actively involved and the strategy is incorporated into the whole-school development plan.
83. However, prior to implementation of the strategy, the department experienced a major change of staff. A deputy headteacher took on acting responsibility for leading the department. Three graduates, now following the Graduate Teacher Training Programme, were also recruited. Thus the action plan was able to go ahead.
84. Medium-term planning was reviewed and schemes of work from the recommended framework were introduced. Sample lesson plans and visits from the LEA consultant and a locally based advanced skills teacher supported the new staff. Team teaching was also used to good effect. Good teaching is now a strong feature of the department.
85. The lesson plan pro-forma used is a good guide and leads to good lessons with the recommended features of structure, key words and different levels of challenge. Pupils know the lesson objectives and become familiar with the key words. Teachers insist on the use of correct mathematical language and this reinforces pupils' grasp of the subject.
86. On entry pupils are well below attainment expected nationally. Now higher-attaining pupils are making good progress in all aspects to be in line with the national average, or better. Whilst lower-attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress in algebra and handling data, and good progress in shape, space and measurement, they are working below national average.
87. The introduction of the strategy has been very well organised and is effective in raising the quality of teaching and standards achieved by pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	151
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	28	70	42	5	1	0
Percentage	3%	19%	46%	28%	3%	0.6%	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	894
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	464

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	64
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	326

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	272

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	98
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	108

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.19%
National comparative data	8.1%

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.56%
National comparative data	1.1%

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

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

Number of registered pupils in Year 9 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	106	93	199

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	42	40
	Girls	44	26	22
	Total	83	68	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	42 (41)	34 (27)	31 (18)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (12)	17 (13)	6 (5)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	44	40
	Girls	40	25	29
	Total	81	69	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	41 (37)	35 (28)	35 (15)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (13)	14 (14)	12 (3)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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
	2001	76	52	128

GCSE/GNVQ 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	20	68	78
	Girls	12	49	54
	Total	32	117	132
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	26 (23)	88 (95)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	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	28.5
	National	39

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	38
Black – African heritage	135
Black – other	24
Indian	29
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	31
Chinese	13
White	559
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	5	1
Black – African heritage	12	2
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	533

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.4%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Years 7, 8 and 9	20.5
Years 10 and 11	23.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3326192
Total expenditure	3176307
Expenditure per pupil	3526
Balance brought forward from previous year	-36469
Balance carried forward to next year	113416

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	9
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

Number of questionnaires sent out	893
Number of questionnaires returned	238

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	41	10	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	35	46	11	3	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	37	11	11	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	37	19	12	6
The teaching is good.	24	51	7	5	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	39	15	9	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	40	7	5	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	35	3	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	27	37	18	9	9
The school is well led and managed.	26	39	6	9	21
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	45	11	7	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	37	14	5	15

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and a strength of the department.
- Strong leadership and a shared commitment by the department to improve.
- Inclusion of those who have a first language other than English, have learning difficulties, or who are especially talented.
- Planning in Years 7,8 and 9.

Areas for improvement

- Development of strategy to promote reading.
- Use of assessment information to monitor and track pupils' progress, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Further development of strategies to promote independent learning.

88. Standards on entry are well below national expectations but are rising steadily. Standards at the age of 14 in national tests are well below average when compared to schools nationally and average when compared to similar schools. In general, the position has not changed significantly between 1998 and 2001. Inspection evidence confirms that, although standards are below national expectations at the age of 14, there is evidence of improvement. Achievement at age 14 is satisfactory.
89. Standards in English language and English literature at the age of 16 in 2001 are well below average compared to results nationally, but average when compared to similar schools. Despite a decrease in 2001 in the proportion of pupils who obtained Grades A*-C, pupils achieved much better than would be expected from their levels of attainment at the age of 14. In particular, pupils obtained more grades at the higher levels compared to similar schools. Overall achievement at the age of 16 is average compared to similar schools.
90. At the ages of 14 and 16 pupils with special educational needs are attaining well and reach standards that are good in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils who have English as a second language are attaining very well.
91. During the inspection, attainment in speaking and listening at the age of 14 was below average overall. However, more able pupils reached national expectations and occasionally better. In a Year 9 lesson on 'Macbeth', pupils developed their understanding by presenting fluent alternative versions of the witches' exchanges.
92. Attainment in speaking and listening at the age of 16 is good. In a Year 10 lesson linking 'Educating Rita' to 'Pygmalion', more able pupils' contributions were cogent and lucid. Lower-attaining pupils confidently offered quite difficult vocabulary such as 'passionate' and 'disillusioned'.
93. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in reading is well below average at the age of 14. The range of texts used is limited. There is no rigorous programme of carefully monitored reading across Years 7, 8 and 9. The absence of a wider reading strategy is hindering pupils' progress.
94. At the age of 16, attainment in reading is still below average. More able pupils are able to read with sensitivity and understanding.

95. Attainment in writing is well below average at age 14, with pupils still having difficulty with basic spelling and grammatical structures. All pupils have regular spelling tests and personal vocabularies in their planners; as a result standards are improving.
96. At the age of 16 pupils' attainment in writing is still below the national average overall. However, higher attaining pupils are producing creative pieces of work of exceptionally high quality. A good example of this was a Year 11 pupil writing about inspiration:
 'But it doesn't fade like the colours of the rainbow,
 That deceives the rich, striving for gold,
 But inspires the poor, striving for life.'
- However, some lower-attaining pupils and pupils who have English as a second language are still experiencing difficulty with accuracy in spelling and grammar, which frequently affects the clarity of their writing and hinders understanding. This is worse in some teaching groups where marking is less effective and improvement is slow. Presentation is often excellent and shows a high level of commitment to the subject. There is evidence of pupils of all abilities drafting and redrafting their work and using information technology as a tool for improving presentation.
97. Pupils have very good relationships with their teachers and each other. This is a strength in English teaching. Pupils with English as a second language and pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by learning assistants. In lessons pupils who have English as a second language are supported by pupils who speak the same first language. Lower-achieving pupils develop confidence in all aspects of their work and higher-achieving pupils are provided with opportunities to extend their learning further. Pupils who are exceptionally talented are encouraged in two extra classes after school to develop oral and writing skills and this is working well.
98. Teaching seen was good overall, with nearly one third of lessons very good or excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they set challenging and stimulating lessons. However, there was evidence in pupils' books that this was not always the case, and one or two teachers rely too heavily on commercially produced worksheets, which pupils frequently left unfinished. Planning is excellent for Years 7, 8 and 9. The National Literacy Strategy has been incorporated into the teaching. Plans support new teachers, some of whom are from overseas, and provide a cohesive framework for learning. Good questioning techniques and oral feedback allow pupils to make very good gains in understanding. All contributions from pupils are valued and an ethos of shared learning is developing. Excellent use is also made of peer group support. Lower-achieving pupils develop confidence in their work and higher-achieving pupils have opportunities to extend their work further. Although there is a clear policy for assessment, it is not satisfactory because not all members of the department are interpreting it in the same way. There is no cohesive framework for assessment where marking is focused and is linked directly with planning. Pupils do not have enough detailed information about their progress and individual learning targets. Although the department has an abundance of performance data available, there is a lack of interpretation and analysis.
99. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. The department is well led and managed. This is an enthusiastic and energetic department, which is now well staffed and well resourced. It is now in a position to implement more frequent monitoring and consistent assessment to ensure a cohesive approach and the sharing of good practice. The team's commitment to improvement and its capacity to succeed is excellent.

DRAMA

Overall the quality of provision in drama is very good.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- A wealth of enhancement opportunities with extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- The excellent practice is shared across the department.
- Improve standards of the written component.

101. Standards are good at the ages of 14 and 16, with pupils achieving in line with national expectations at GCSE. The trend since 1998 has been steadily upwards. Achievement is good at the age of 14 and very good at the age of 16. This demonstrates exceptional progress for some pupils, many of whom have English as an additional language or learning difficulties. The written aspect of GCSE is proving very challenging for some pupils and the department is putting strategies in place to support their writing.
102. Pupils at the age of 14 learn a variety of techniques to improve improvisation. In a Year 8 lesson on 'slavery', pupils developed a sense of empathy with the slaves as they performed small cameos of slaves being auctioned. In a Year 7 lesson on myths and legends, very good teaching enabled pupils to produce high quality freeze frames which depicted scenes from the legend of 'Beth Gelert'. In this lesson pupils learned how to use their bodies and facial expressions to create imaginative interpretations of the legend.
103. Pupils at the age of 16 produce sensitive and empathetic interpretations of current affairs. In an excellent Year 10 lesson the drama studio was tense with expectations as pupils performed to professional standards. In this lesson, sharply focused improvisations, one depicting a train stopping suddenly and the other workers at a factory being made redundant, were performed with empathy and enthusiasm. These improvisations became 'real' situations for the pupils, clear evidence that these performances were the result of consistently excellent teaching. In a Year 11 lesson pupils sustained very complex and difficult roles as they re-enacted some scenes from 'September 11th'. In these improvisations the audience were affected considerably by the sense of anguish and despair.
104. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers displayed sound subject knowledge, which is enriched by a wealth of experience beyond the classroom. The link with the professional group 'Chicken Shed' is particularly valuable and many pupils are taking up drama beyond school as a result. The department's planning is very good and provides a coherent framework in which drama skills are developed.
105. Accommodation for drama is good, with two drama studios. However, acoustics are not good and this is being addressed by the installation of new sound equipment. Staging is not good and costumes also need developing but these factors are not impeding the teaching of drama, only the motivational factors in presenting final performances.
106. A wide range of theatrical experiences enriches the work of the drama department. The drama department links with primary schools and local authority initiatives.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good or better.
- The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy within the subject at Years 7, 8 and 9.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of accurate data about attainment on entry.
- Regular and consistent use of ICT to support learning.

107. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels well below the national average, although most pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum test results are well below the national average but there is evidence of improvement in the last three years. The boys make better improvement than the girls. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results are also well below the national average. However, results are at least average compared to similar schools. In an effort to raise standards, several initiatives have been introduced. These include the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy across Years 7, 8 and 9, booster classes for Year 9 and Year 11 pupils and a specially targeted 'catch-up' group in Year 7. In Year 10 there are two higher level GCSE groups this year.

108. By age 14, pupils use various methods to represent data, solve equations with one unknown, understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages and understand the concept of probability. They know how to collect data, represent it on a bar chart and interpret data from a given graph. Higher-attaining pupils represent data on a pie chart, can solve equations with brackets and are familiar with standard form. Most pupils know how to find the area of a square and rectangle and the volume of a cube and cuboids. Higher-attaining pupils can find the area of a circle and the volume of a cylinder.
109. By age 16, differences in attainment become more apparent. Higher-attaining pupils, working towards higher level GCSE, are achieving in line at least with national expectations. In lessons, some were achieving above average standards. Most pupils are able to solve equations graphically, can use sine, cosine and tangent to solve problems and they are able to apply circle theorems to geometrical problems. Pupils working towards the intermediate level examination know how to use percentage increase and decrease, can solve fractional equations and are able to work with formulae. Pupils at the foundation level collect data, know how to plot a tally chart and represent the results on a bar graph. They know how to find a percentage of a quantity and have done some social arithmetic including topics on shopping and travelling by bus or train. Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve appropriately in line with their prior attainment.
110. Good teaching is a strength of the department. Staff are committed to the subject and expectations of achievement and good behaviour are high. Lesson planning is good, with appropriate activities for different levels of attainment. Teachers insist on correct use of mathematical language, which helps in the development of understanding in the subject. Targeting questions to individual pupils ensures that all fully participate in the lesson. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, especially for those who find the subject difficult. Pupils are usually well managed at both key stages and little disruption of lessons occurs. Regular homework is set to consolidate learning.
111. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced across Years 7, 8 and 9. The three-part lesson, also used in some lessons at Years 10 and 11, is successful in helping to engage pupils more directly in their learning. The short mental arithmetic session at the start of lessons is used to improve basic number skills, or is an introduction to the main topic of the lesson. In the main activity, teachers make explicit references to their teaching objectives. In most lessons, there is direct teaching, with practice and consolidation through work from a worksheet or textbook. The plenary session mostly at the end of lessons gives pupils the opportunity to discuss what they have learned which helps them to have a clearer understanding of their own learning and progress.
112. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils respond well in lessons. They listen attentively and follow instructions about methodology. They work individually or in pairs and, in most lessons, produce a commendable amount of work. In one lesson, pupils in the "catch-up" group were very enthusiastic because they recognised that they were achieving at a higher level. In the review sessions, pupils contribute well when discussing what they have learned. They are happy to discuss their work at any time and the majority have a good recall of work previously learned. In Years 10 and 11, lower-attaining pupils are less responsive orally in class but they usually settle well to written work and show good concentration. Higher-attaining pupils have a good attitude to both oral and written work.
113. Social inclusion in the subject is very good. All pupils are supported in accessing the same curricular opportunities and are treated equally by staff. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good, with extension work and worksheets available in each lesson. There are booster lessons in Years 9 and 11 and study support groups after school. Pupils with English as an additional language are assisted by the key word system in each lesson and supported by the teacher or learning support assistant. The practice of placing pupils with a low standard of English next to a pupil with a higher level is beneficial. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and pupils with learning difficulties receive effective support from learning support assistants. The well-focused, intensive support given to the "catch-up" group in Year 7 has resulted in good progress for these lower-attaining pupils.

114. The subject makes a contribution to basic skills with strategies for the development of numeracy skills in place. However, the lack of policy for numeracy across the curriculum causes problems in other subject areas, mostly in science and design and technology. This is to be remedied with the introduction of a scheme of work in the next school year. Basic numeracy skills are used in English where Year 8 pupils planned an essay by using pie charts, and rhyming couplets were introduced in a Year 9 lesson on Shakespeare.
115. The mathematics schemes of work reflect the literacy needs of the pupils. In each lesson, key words are clearly displayed and discussed, and teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills. There is a departmental policy for literacy and a plan of suggestions to assist teachers in developing literacy during lessons. Although there is a policy for information and communication technology and the use of technology to support learning, computer use was not seen during the inspection. Calculators were used appropriately in many lessons.
116. The subject is very well managed by one of the deputy headteachers, acting as teacher in charge. The action plan effectively identified priorities for action and much thought and effort has gone into devising strategies to improve standards of attainment. Evaluation is used for future planning and pupils' progress is closely monitored.
117. Despite recent major changes in staffing, the subject has shown very good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is consistently good, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good overall and an assessment and marking policy is in place. Assessment information is used to inform planning. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has provided variety in teaching methods and the use of resources. More use should be made of information and communication technology to support learning. The appointment of a new teacher in charge is a priority.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is unsatisfactory, though improving.

Strengths

- Improvement in attainment.
- Progress of pupils with special educational need.
- Progress of pupils with English as an additional language.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency in quality of teaching.
- Stability of staffing with effective managers and teachers.
- Clarity and detail in improvement plans.
- Provision and use of information and communication technology.

118. Standards of attainment in science are well below national averages at the end of both key stages.
119. The results for Year 9 in the National Curriculum tests in 2001, the most recent year, are very low compared to national averages and well below the average point scores of similar schools. The results are better than those in the previous year. The context of the school is a key factor contributing to the low attainment. Even so, the attainment, by the end of Year 9, in science was below the attainment of the same pupils in English and mathematics. There has been no consistent difference between the relative attainments of boys and girls in recent years.
120. The results at GCSE in 2001 were well below the national averages for science. The results are significantly better than the results of the previous year. A main strength in the results is the proportion who attained at least Grade B, compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9 in 1999. A weakness is the high proportion of pupils awarded an unclassified GCSE. Overall, the average point score from the 2001 GCSE is low. Attainment of boys in GCSE exceeded that of girls for both 2000 and 2001.

121. The overall progress achieved by pupils is satisfactory, for all age groups. Progress is good for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Progress of a significant number of pupils is hampered by inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Sometimes, too little is asked of pupils and sometimes, pupils are allowed to lose concentration. This factor is balanced by lessons where the work is sufficiently hard and where pupils' learning is focused well by the teachers.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is mainly satisfactory, with classes of all ages. A strength in teaching is the consistent focus on key words. Pupils gain familiarity and understanding about scientific terms. For example, the key word focus is used by some staff, though not all, to direct Year 7 pupils to use complex vocabulary accurately. This is important because there is an opportunity to capitalise on the sound attainment scores in science attained at the end of Key Stage 2 by the current Year 7. A further strength is the effective use of support staff. This aspect of teaching, alongside the good support for basic literacy, sustains the good progress of pupils with special educational needs, and of pupils who have English as an additional and unfamiliar language.
123. However, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent, varying from unsatisfactory to very good. For example, the methods used with pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 sometimes create strong interest because of their variety and clarity. At other times the use of time is inefficient and the points made by the teacher include errors and omissions. Also, again with Years 7, 8 and 9, noise levels are sometimes too high. The keener pupils do not always hear good points from the teacher, whilst other pupils exploit the relatively weak control to misbehave. Learning is impaired for all pupils. In contrast, in well-taught lessons pupils' behaviour is managed well and pupils make a good effort. Each teacher has accurate and detailed information about each pupil. This information is already used to a satisfactory extent.
124. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are sometimes offered work which is too easy. In addition, too many pupils lack interest and do not concentrate enough. For some pupils this is attributable lack of continuity in previous teaching. For example, a Year 10 class included a mix of middle- and high-attaining pupils. The task set was too easy. Thus, gifted and talented pupils lacked opportunities to gain understanding. Most of the others made unsatisfactory efforts. Some showed off and gossiped rather than working steadily, and others worked in spurts but only if reminded. In contrast, the work rate and intellectual effort in a class of top set Year 11 pupils was very impressive. The teacher provided plenty of suitably hard work. Overall, pupils learnt new ideas and made substantial gains in understanding.
125. The changes since the previous inspection, in 1997, are satisfactory. Attainment is much the same now as then. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is now better. Double Award Science at GCSE is now an option, rather than being provided for all pupils. Information and communication technology is still under used. The previous health and safety risks are overcome.
126. Other factors with a bearing on what is achieved relate to the context of the school and to the management of the subject. Science provision has suffered in recent years because the school has not been able to recruit and retain effective staff. The current situation is more secure. The effect of temporary teachers shows in the wide variation seen in pupils' work over time, according to who taught the class. For example, a Year 11 class worked badly with a previous teacher. Overall, they have improved greatly with the current teacher. One pupil's work exemplifies the general improvement. She now completes all work, with extraordinary care and good understanding of the detail, whereas her work previously was messy and topics had not been understood.
127. The leadership of science is once more in new hands, after a period of instability. Significant changes are proposed for the next two years. Even so, too little is in place as yet. For example, science staff are only just beginning to consider how to apply school policies which target school improvement. These include the new teaching and learning policy, the enhancement of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and proposals to enhance the experiences of gifted and talented pupils. A further improvement awaited is that new information and communication technology is to be installed and used very soon. At present access to ICT is unsatisfactory. A key strength already in place is the extensive, well-organised

and effective provision of study support classes for Years 9 and 11. The current new leadership has good systems for assessing and monitoring.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good and very good teaching with plenty of individual attention enabling all pupils to achieve well.
- Effective subject leadership, resulting in rapid improvements in art since the last Ofsted inspection.
- Good use of computers to generate expressive art work.
- Good provision of opportunities for pupils to consider spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through art activities.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' critical and historical knowledge and understanding about art and design in the past and in present times.
- Clarification of schemes of work to improve progression, learning objectives and assessment.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop literacy skills in art, especially writing.

128. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, 38.9 per cent of pupils entered for examination gained A*- C grades. This was low compared to the national average, but for almost every pupil who sat the art examination in the school, art grade was one of their best grades. The overall trend of A*- C percentages gained by pupils in the school in recent years has been rising, and attainment observed in Years 10 and 11 during this inspection suggests that this rising trend will continue. Attainment seen in these year groups is in line with national expectations for GCSE, with some work exceeding these. Attainment of pupils by Year 9 is in line with expectations for the age group.
129. In the lower years there is a focus on acquiring good skills, with time allowed in 'the month of looking', at the beginning of each year, to develop good observational drawing skills. As a result, in all years there are many examples of fluent, confident drawings, showing pupils' ability to use their eyes accurately and analytically, and their ability to handle a range of art materials and processes with good control. This develops into good visual research and investigation skills, with many journals filled with good quality studies that help pupils to develop their own ideas and responses to the set themes. Good drawing skills underpin the quality of much of the work seen.
130. Another strength of attainment in art is that pupils' work develops in individually creative and expressive ways. By Years 10 and 11 pupils can generate expressive imagery in response to significant themes such as poverty, injustice, or issues related to cultural identity. For example, several pupils have produced compellingly expressive images about September 11th, in which their own ideas and feelings are powerfully and eloquently expressed. Exploring ideas about significant themes through art provides pupils with good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural reflection and development.
131. Another strength of attainment is the way pupils have used computers and the Internet to research, collect and generate imagery, which they have then manipulated and combined through good use of software, for the development of their expressive work.
132. Pupils' work is often inspired by the work of other artists and designers, with good visual influences enhancing their ideas. However, pupils' critical and historical knowledge and understanding about art are a weak feature of attainment, and currently there are few opportunities for pupils to write about art.
133. The quality of teaching in all year groups is good, with some very good teaching seen in Year 11. Lessons are thoroughly planned and prepared, so that the limited time available for art is used to best advantage. Work is organised into a well-constructed sequence of projects and themes, so that a good range of art processes and ideas can be covered, with all National Curriculum requirements met; although there are few opportunities to develop three-dimensional work.

134. The great majority of pupils come to art lessons with keen interest and enthusiasm, wanting to work productively and achieve the best they can. These high expectations are met by good and very good art teaching, where pupils receive plenty of evaluative, detailed individual attention to push their techniques and ideas forward. This strong feature of good art teaching enables pupils to develop their own individually expressive responses and ideas. The individual attention provided enables boys and girls of all cultural backgrounds and of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, gifted and talented pupils, and those with English as an additional language, to achieve well.
135. In recent years the art department has benefited from very good leadership and has rapidly and effectively recovered from a period of decline to be a strong subject in the school. Attainment is improving and pupils now have good expectations of art, which the subject can meet. All of the concerns raised in the last Ofsted report have been resolved. To continue this very good progress, the next phase of development should define learning objectives and assessment and criteria more sharply for each project in the scheme of work, so that clearer coverage and progression of work can be achieved and more accurate performance data can be made available to help in planning the development of the art curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, whilst the quality of provision in design and technology is unsatisfactory, leadership is good and provision is improving.

Strengths

- The leadership of the teacher in charge and teamwork of teachers and support staff.
- Inclusion and relationships.

Areas for improvement

- Compliance with Years 10 and 11 National Curriculum.
- Accommodation, allowing a comfortable and efficient learning environment and full integration of the subject area.
- Sharing of good practice throughout the subject area, including in the use of ICT.

136. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below average, but when account is taken of low standards on entry, progress is being made, albeit not quickly enough. There are particular signs of improvement in work in Year 7. Progress is hampered by poor literacy, leading to pupils' failing to fully grasp the implications of ideas. Pupils with English as an additional language often fail to make as much progress as they should because of their limited English. Gifted and talented pupils are not yet achieving as highly as they should, as the department is only beginning to raise pupils' expectations of what can be achieved in the subject.
137. A limited number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 study design and technology; in this respect the school does not fulfil the requirement of the National Curriculum for all pupils to study the subject. Results are well below average. Inspection evidence shows that under the new regime, standards are improving.
138. As is the case with the younger pupils, the success levels of the girls and of the boys in Years 10 and 11 do not differ significantly. It is a strength of the school that many girls work on graphics and resistant materials and many boys choose food studies. Pupils with special educational needs achieve better than expected and higher attainers do better than in the earlier years.
139. On the whole, the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is better than in Years 7, 8 and 9. Very few lessons were unsatisfactory. More often, but especially with Years 10 and 11, teaching is good or very good. The best lessons are marked by high pace, a good variety of activities and resources, and a clear focus.
140. Pupils succeed best in work when they understand a given challenge, research in a variety of ways and develop, implement and evaluate effective solutions.

141. When teaching is occasionally unsatisfactory, lessons do not begin with learning objectives clearly stated and fully understood by pupils. The extent to which the pupils have learned the key points is not adequately assessed and the assessment is not made clear to pupils to enable them to improve.
142. The teacher in charge took up post at the start of this academic year. He is very knowledgeable about the subject and has encouraged much progress since arriving. Thus documentation is helpful, up to date and appropriate; the staff work well together and do their best to provide good learning environments and standards are improving. There is also good support of the work in the subject from senior management.
143. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because the food area is separate from the rest of the department. The main area suffers from being acoustically poor.
144. Though much remains to be done, there has been good progress since the last inspection. In particular, the quality of teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 has much improved; standards of work are better. The quality of work with food is now a strength, whereas before it was a weakness; and the range of learning resources is less restricted, although there is insufficient use of ICT in the design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The department is well led.
- Pupils make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Planned use of ICT throughout the subject.
- Making it clear to pupils what level they are achieving.

145. At the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is below national expectations. The figures for 2001 show a fall from attainment in 2000 but were above the attainment in 1999. Work seen in lessons and elsewhere shows that pupils are developing geographical skills, knowledge of places and understanding of the processes of human and physical geography. Year 9 pupils can describe and explain geographical pattern; higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 can also explain how the interaction between different processes can lead to different patterns on global, national and local scales. This represents good progress made by these pupils during Years 7 to 9. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, also make good progress and begin to explain the geographical patterns and processes.
146. At the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment at GCSE is below national expectations in terms of A*-C grades, but is much closer to national expectations than it was at the last inspection. Attainment at A*-G grades is slightly above national expectations: again this is an improvement upon the position at the last inspection. Attainment at A*/A grades is in line with national expectations. The great majority of pupils has made good progress. Work seen during lessons and elsewhere during the inspection shows that Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of geographical processes, make good use of fieldwork and other case study materials in their description and explanation of geographical processes and patterns. They can analyse and evaluate work and can draw conclusions from given information as was seen in their work on flooding in Bangladesh and the Mississippi Basin.
147. Teaching is good overall. Some teaching is very good and some is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use regular assessments to check pupils' learning and progress. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject: this is contagious and pupils enjoy lessons. Pupils' work is assessed regularly against National Curriculum levels (or GCSE mark schemes in Years

10 and 11) and the results of these assessments are used to track pupils' progress. Work is marked regularly and teachers' comments are used to good effect to show pupils how to improve.

148. Pupils generally have a good attitude to learning and are well behaved. They respond well, participating in tasks set in lessons and sustaining concentration throughout the tasks. Pupils' good attitudes mean they respond well when encouraged to work independently using presentation skills, researching teacher-selected texts, or the internet, extracting information from graphs and diagrams, or using writing frames to produce extended written answers. In these lessons teachers can devote time to pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language, knowing that all pupils are making good progress. Some Year 7 pupils have not yet developed these skills, or the confidence to work without constant teacher support. Time was wasted in one lesson as the teacher employed strategies to involve pupils who had a negative attitude to learning in their work. Other pupils' concentration on their tasks was thus delayed and their learning suffered. In other lessons, pupils display the high level of maturity that is encouraged by the school's ethos and sustain concentration on the tasks set throughout the lesson
149. The department is well led. The teacher in charge has a clear vision of how to improve the department. Management of the department is not easy, as many teachers contribute a small amount of teaching time. There are also three members of senior management teaching the subject, who have whole-school responsibilities. The teacher in charge makes good use of informal daily contact and other means of communication to impart information relevant to the running of the subject. As a result, the department has a cohesive style. Resources are shared effectively. Individual teachers contribute their own subject knowledge and enthusiasm and work together with a shared commitment to the subject. Accommodation in geography classrooms is good. Each room has a word wall consisting of key words relevant to the subject and in each lesson the pertinent keywords are displayed upon the board.
150. Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement in attainment and in resources to support teaching, of purchased text and atlas resources, and teacher prepared (differentiated) resources that are sensible for all pupils. There has been an increase in the use of ICT within the department and this includes Year 7's use of word processing to display and present their work, Year 8's use of ICT and the Internet for research and the use of mathematical modelling using spreadsheets in Year 9. There has also been an increase in the tasks involving extended writing and enquiry methods are now well used to support learning and throughout Years 7 to 11.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Improvement in standards at GCSE.
- Development of autonomous learning using information technology.

Areas for improvement

- Development of strategies to allow all pupils in mixed ability classes to successfully complete written tasks.
- The use of profiles of National Curriculum levels at KS3 to aid assessment.

151. Although still below national averages, GCSE results in history have improved considerably since the last inspection. In the past two years 40 per cent of pupils attained grades A*-C and this figure is likely to improve slightly this year. Boys did considerably better than girls in the 2001 examination.
152. Inspection evidence shows attainment at the age of 14 is below average. Pupils have a basic knowledge and some understanding of the major historical events and personalities of the periods they have studied and they can place these in a chronological framework. Higher-attaining pupils have more detailed knowledge and some understanding of historical concepts such as cause and

consequence. Almost all, including those pupils with special educational needs and English as a second language, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial material to answer simple historical questions. They can use information and communication technology to carry out simple research tasks to add to their knowledge, though only the most able can organise their findings appropriately. Pupils know that history is based on evidence, but their ability to analyse this evidence is weak and underdeveloped at this stage. The majority of pupils have satisfactory oral and listening skills but most have poor writing skills. Spelling is weak and sentence construction is poor. However, by the end of Year 9, most can write in simple sentences, using appropriate historical vocabulary to describe events. A few higher-attaining pupils can write analytically, as was seen in a Year 9 essay on the causes of the First World War.

153. At the age of 16 attainment remains below the national average. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of history has deepened. Higher attainers, including some with EAL, can use their own judgements to support their arguments using appropriately selected knowledge in extended essays, as was seen in coursework about Northern Ireland in the nineteen seventies. Skills in evaluation of evidence have also improved for most pupils and many can interpret events during the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, using primary and secondary sources to support their conclusions. Some pupils, though, still find difficulty in writing more than simple statements showing the sequence of events and their ability to analyse historical evidence remains weak. However, by this stage, most pupils have become independent learners and use the Internet with confidence to carry out their research.
154. Pupils arrive at the school with very low levels of literacy and few skills in the subject. In Years 7, 8 and 9 most make at least satisfactory progress over time largely due to the focused teaching of basic skills and of appropriate historical topics. Higher-attaining pupils, including those with English as an additional language, make better progress because they are challenged to ensure they do as well as they can. Some with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English do not do as well as they could, partly because of a lack of specialist support and partly because tasks are not sufficiently tailored for them to allow them to make similar rates of progress as their peers. Pupils who continue to study history to GCSE make good progress in terms of their prior attainment.
155. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Confident lesson management and good relationships promote a positive interest in pupils and a purposeful learning environment. Lessons get off to a prompt start, enabling pupils to focus quickly on their learning. Teachers develop the basic skills of literacy very well and they emphasise the development of oral skills, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson preparing for an oral presentation on propaganda. Pupils are encouraged to become familiar with historical vocabulary and given opportunities to extend their writing using structured help sheets. However, many pupils have exercise books that lack content. These pupils, mainly lower-attaining pupils, have a considerable amount of unfinished work in their books because they do not have written tasks set which are appropriate for their needs. Since these are also pupils with poor recall, this lack of a written record hinders their progress.
156. The department consists of experienced and well-qualified staff and the quality of leadership is good. There is a commitment to raise standards, which is reflected in the development plan and in the department ethos. There are regular departmental meetings where the history team work together on new courses and the evaluation of the curriculum. The history area has attractive displays, designed to celebrate pupils' achievement and to enhance the learning environment. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and almost all of the many issues raised then have been addressed. However, assessment portfolios are still not in place and the development of assessment based on National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 needs to be undertaken.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is good, due to recent improvements.

Strengths

- Good schemes of work set suitable challenges to the pupils.
- Extensive extra-curricular provision, including involvement in "Kevin's Playroom".
- Very good management of the subject, resulting in recent improvements.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum offered to Years 7 to 9, including use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Control technology as part of the information and communication technology curriculum.
- Accreditation for less able pupils.

157. The subject is greatly benefiting from new leadership and reorganisation. The impact of this has not yet had time to influence results.
158. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is below national expectations, with the results of teacher assessments indicating that only one pupil in three is achieving Level 5 or above. This, however, is an improvement on the last report where very few pupils reached the level expected. Since September, the introduction of a new scheme of work based on the QCA recommendations is improving pupils' progress. At present ICT is offered to years 7 to 9 on a carousel with design and technology, but it is planned to initiate improvements in September 2002 by offering the subject throughout the year to Year 7.
159. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils make good progress. All the courses in years 7 to 9 are based on project work, to enable the pupils to make their own decisions and become independent learners. By year 9, most pupils are able to follow the worksheets and are confident in asking for help if needed. At the end of year 9, most pupils are confident in the use and application of the basic skills of word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and databases, thus achieving very good skills in using powerful business-standard computer programs to organise and present information. They are also able to search the Internet appropriately for information and illustrations. There is progression from Year 7 to Year 9 with increased depth of understanding and independence, as they use a growing repertoire of software applications and gain knowledge and skills. It is not possible to identify progress in individual pupils, as there is no work available for scrutiny before September of last year.
160. Examination results last year were very poor and well below the national average with only one pupil in ten obtaining A* to C grades. There was no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. The school's new schemes of work and curriculum arrangements are addressing this and the projected grades for this year's group are improved. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are now making good progress and achievement is good and sometimes very good. At the beginning of the year, all pupils are given a revision course in the basic skills, which is valuable for those who are relatively new to the school and those who have special educational needs. This is followed by project work, which forms the coursework element of their examination course. Year 11 is continuing to follow the short course and Year 10 is working on the full course. Those following GNVQ courses will be obtaining certification in Information Technology Key Skills levels 1 or 2.
161. All Year 10 classes settle down immediately and work on their projects. In one lesson where pupils were working on a "Sports Club" project, more able pupils were confidently using webpage software to create web pages. One pupil was able to explain how he created links and said that he had been helped by a short course in the school on web design. The teacher withdrew a group of pupils, the less able and those who were relatively new to the school, and explained the basics of using desktop publishing software. By the end of the lesson, all pupils had made good progress, using appropriate software to produce either a questionnaire, a presentation or a web site according to ability. Year 11 pupils are following the GCSE short course. Scrutiny of work showed that in the "Handling Data" project, for example, pupils had achieved the first target, the design and production of a data capture sheet, and there was evidence of checking and re-drafting. Good use of literacy skills was encouraged, with one pupil explaining that a logo was "simple and effective, but also clever, as the image is ambiguous". Pupils were able to explain why they were using a particular program, for instance choosing a desktop publishing program rather than a word processor because "it is easier to design the page". The pupils are benefiting from being responsible for their own learning and becoming independent users of information and communication technology.

162. The provision for special educational needs in information and communication technology is very good. All pupils are given equal access and individual support where necessary. The needs of more able pupils are recognised with suitable extension work. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into lessons and their achievement is very good. Pupils with language and learning needs all make very good progress. For example, one new pupil used a computer next to another who spoke the same language and helped him with his work, enhancing the achievement of both.
163. There is provision for pupils to use the computer out of lesson time. There are lunchtime clubs and Year 7 is given access to a computer room at lunchtime. There is an excellent club run every morning at 08.00 for the gifted and talented. The school, under the direction of the teacher in charge, has not only its own website, but also runs an educational site, "www. Kevin's Playroom". Pupils are involved from each year group. The site has resources for children from pre-school through to GCSE, together with a good range of revision sites. It was nominated "Top Homework Site" by viewers of Children's ITV and is an approved content provider for the National Grid for Learning. The education section of a leading newspaper described it as "a brilliant and eminently usable web guide". The pupils update the site continually, checking other websites for interest and suitability. If they like the content, they add a link in the appropriate section. They are gaining expertise in web design and finding out information on a variety of subjects. For example, there was an email from the Webmaster of a site which sells UV detectors to protect children and adults from dangerous ultra violet rays. One pupil was checking the site to see if it was suitable and thought it should be linked to their own website. Another was researching a site on repetitive strain injuries, as it was Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. When a pupil has approved a site, s/he creates the link and writes a short commentary for visitors. This is an excellent provision and is a major strength of the subject in the school.
164. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching is often good and very good. This is due to the very good subject knowledge of staff, good use of questions and clear explanations. Teachers have high expectations and therefore the pupils produce a good standard of work. The teacher in charge has built very strong relationships with the pupils and this is reflected in the approach of the other staff. These good relationships lead to confidence and high motivation. The clear behaviour guidelines lead to generally very good behaviour and an appreciation and respect for the equipment and the environment. Planning is very good. The teacher in charge has prepared helpful guidance booklets to help pupils master new computer programs. However, the area of control technology is inadequately covered, as pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers to control equipment and to measure and monitor events, and so their understanding and skills are weak in this area. Literacy skills are part of the short term planning, with a stress on correct spelling, good use of grammar and presentation. There are key words for each lesson. More specific targets would improve the short-term planning.
165. Most of the information and communication technology development plan has been achieved. For example, the network rooms are operating satisfactorily and the new schemes of work are in place. There are plans to introduce data logging, the "wireless school" and interactive whiteboards in all classrooms, which will enable computers to be used more widely across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is good, with the exception of non-compliance with National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

Strengths

- Good quality of teaching.
- Attainment in GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures to assess pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9.

166. The percentage of candidates gaining A*-C grades at GCSE in French in both 2000 and 2001 was well above the national average, but the number of pupils entered for the examination was very

low. Results based on Teacher Assessment at the end of Year 9 are well below the national average.

167. In work seen during the inspection, pupils, by the age of fourteen, reach standards that are below the national average. Taking into account their level of attainment when they enter the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This represents an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils have a good understanding of short extracts of speech. They write accurate, short sentences. Higher-attaining pupils express opinions with good pronunciation. These pupils, who include many pupils for whom English is not the first language, speak confidently and engage in short conversations about themselves and their interests. However, the majority of pupils lack confidence in speaking individually and have difficulty in using French outside of the topic being studied in the lesson. Knowledge of tenses other than the present tense is insecure.
168. By the age of sixteen, the small numbers of pupils who study French make good progress and in their lessons reach standards that are at least in line with the national average. Pupils understand a good range of vocabulary. Knowledge of grammar is good and listening skills are well developed, as are speaking skills. Pronunciation is good and pupils speak confidently, using past, present and future tenses as appropriate. However, they do not use French independently to carry out routine classroom transactions, either with their teacher or with one another.
169. The quality of teaching is good and is a strong feature of the department. In over two thirds of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or very good. In only one lesson was the teaching unsatisfactory and in this case the activities of the lesson were not suited to the needs of a group of pupils whose behaviour was challenging. Most lessons are conducted at a lively pace that keeps pupils on their toes. A significant element of the good teaching is the careful planning of a variety of activities that enable pupils to practise all four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Very good classroom control ensures that pupils' minds are concentrated on the task in hand. Teachers use French extensively in their lessons. This sets an appropriate challenge to pupils, but there is too little emphasis on pupils using French.
170. Pupils work hard in most lessons. They want to learn and they want to be seen to be successful. They co-operate well with one another. They take some responsibility for their own learning by using dictionaries to check the meanings of words, and, in Year 9, higher-attaining pupils are developing the habit of learning independently by working through a range of activities at their own level and pace, under the watchful eye of their teacher.
171. The department offers a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. There is good provision for different groups of pupils, including gifted pupils, those with learning problems and those whose home language is not English. ICT is used satisfactorily to develop pupils' learning. A varied programme of extra-curricular activities, including visits to France, extends pupils' cultural development and enhances their experience of language learning. However, the school's National Curriculum arrangements for French in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory as a consequence of serious staffing disruption and a succession of recruitment difficulties in recent years. The school made French an optional subject at the end of Year 9 and a large proportion of pupils no longer continue their study of a foreign language.
172. Procedures for assessing academic progress are unsatisfactory. Assessment of pupils' progress is based on end-of-unit tests. No reference is made to National Curriculum level descriptions. Teachers do not make any diagnostic assessment which would enable them to track the progress of individual pupils continuously over an extended period of time and to set targets in order to improve standards of work.
173. The leadership and management of the department are good. The recently appointed teacher in charge of the department is working hard with her colleagues to regenerate the department. There is clear direction and a shared commitment to improve.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is unsatisfactory but improving, except in respect of covering the full National Curriculum.

Strengths

- The management of music is satisfactory and improving.
- Staff are committed, enthusiastic and hardworking.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are very low; performing, composing and listening skills are underdeveloped.
- The full National Curriculum is not taught.
- Curriculum time, accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

174. There have been difficulties in making a permanent appointment to the post of teacher in charge of this subject. A teacher attached to an agency is covering the vacancy. This teacher has contributed very well to music in the school, going beyond the remit of her contract.
175. Pupils enter with well below average attainment in music and Teachers' Assessments confirm this. By the end of Year 9, standards are still low. Pupils' progress varies in lessons from good to unsatisfactory but overall achievement is unsatisfactory. Most pupils are working at about Level 2 or 3, but some talented pupils attain higher levels and meet the national expectation. Pupils sing too rarely. In composing, most pupils' understanding is insecure. Pupils listen satisfactorily.
176. In GCSE work, there is no Year 10 group but there are nine pupils taking the course in Year 11. Standards are below average. Pupils lack the experience to compose with understanding. Several pupils now receive instrumental tuition and this is helping to raise standards. Attitudes and behaviour in the group are satisfactory and the highest-attaining pupils are keen. Overall, pupils' progress in lessons now is good but achievement, over time, is unsatisfactory.
177. Teaching is sound and often good, for example in GCSE work. Where unsatisfactory teaching occurs, it relates mainly to weaknesses in the curriculum. Teachers (including visiting and support staff) show secure subject knowledge so that they teach confidently. Instructions and directions are clear and teaching is lively, so pupils understand the objectives. Good attention is given to developing musical vocabulary. Schemes and lesson content are a weakness in that there is too much study of music rather than learning through the making of it. Lack of singing and too much emphasis on the current pop music scene result in an unbalanced curriculum. In the best lessons, expectations are high but sometimes, pupils, especially the few high-attaining pupils, are insufficiently challenged because of the lack of extension work. Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language are well integrated and make similar progress to the other pupils. Lessons have clear structures and are well organised, but pupils do not always perform in the final part of the lesson to consolidate their learning. The management of pupils is often good, especially with the younger classes, but is less secure with some difficult groups. As a result, relationships are mainly good. Lessons start briskly, maintain a good pace and have variety so that the pupils remain focused at first because of the energetic and enthusiastic style. However, because pupils lack very basic skills in music, their interest wanes. Most pupils are good-humoured and enjoy practical work but in a few classes in Years 8 and 9 many, mainly boys, lack the self-control to stick to the task, work at it and learn so that they under achieve. Pupils dislike written work. As a result, behaviour varies from good to unsatisfactory, which affects the progress of everyone and the atmosphere. Pupils cannot work independently, for example to rehearse in groups, because of the lack of practice areas. Often, they lack the confidence to tackle the task. Music technologies are not used, except within keyboards, as the music room lacks these and a computer. The lack of suitable resources affects learning.
178. The capacity for improvement in the provision for music is good. Documentation is being developed and day-to-day organisation is good, reflecting the shared commitment and hard work of staff involved, including the support staff and visiting colleagues.
179. The range of regular extra-curricular activities in music is very limited but a successful Christmas Concert was held last year. The regular use of live and recorded music in assemblies is

developing and enjoyed by pupils, as for example when a small group of Year 11 girls sang *Amazing Grace*. This is now an improving department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Strong leadership of the department.
- Good quality teaching.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for the subject.
- Involvement of pupils in the planning and evaluation of their work.

180. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment and limited experiences that are generally below those expected. The 2001 Teacher Assessments in physical education showed the proportion of pupils achieving the national standard by the end of year 9 to be below that expected. Although inspection evidence supports these findings, the attainment levels achieved by pupils in Years 8 and 9 indicate that significant progress is now being made and standards are rising. In games activities, many pupils demonstrate satisfactory levels of ball handling skills and spatial awareness but find it difficult to apply these skills when the element of competition is introduced. In gymnastics a minority of pupils demonstrate a range of good quality movement, both on the floor and on apparatus, but the gymnastics ability of the majority is limited and their movements lack quality, control and tension. Pupils understand the need to prepare for physical activity and some pupils are able to lead their class in effective warm up sessions.
181. Since September 2001 all pupils in Year 10 have been involved in the short course GCSE examination. This has had the effect of increasing the level of motivation of the pupils for the subject, although motivation was previously encouraged through entry for a First Aid qualification. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject and inspection evidence indicates that the levels of attainment are in line with expectations. Pupils in Year 11 taking the examination in the subject display satisfactory levels of skill in a range of activities. Many have a good understanding of tactics and strategies, and are able to apply the skill they have practised when they are playing full games.
182. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and given much support by teachers and other pupils, and reach a satisfactory level of attainment. Teaching is sensitive and there is no evidence of pupils with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Talented pupils are identified and are encouraged to extend their skills level in school lessons and with out-of-school clubs. Many school teams take part in a large number of inter-school matches and gain much success. A number of the school's pupils have represented the Borough of Newham in a variety of sports.
183. Though there has been a complete change of staff since the last inspection, the transition has been smooth and the good quality teaching that was noted at that time has been continued. All the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and the majority were judged to be good or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear demonstrations and explanations. In lessons aims are made clear, content is appropriate and the relevant resources well organised. Relationships between teachers and pupils are sensitive and positive. Teachers show a care and concern for the pupils whilst encouraging the best in fair play through co-operative and competitive experiences. Some opportunities are given for pupils to evaluate each other's performances but this aspect needs to be further developed. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject, and their pupils respond very positively to this both in lessons and out-of-school activities. Most pupils behave well and work hard. Their enjoyment of the activities is very evident.
184. Although the poor quality accommodation limits the range of subjects that the department can offer pupils, the curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The

department is in the process of introducing a new system for the assessment and recording of pupils' attainment. Comprehensive records are now being kept, and staff now need to use the wealth of information to influence curriculum planning and to set individual physical education targets for all pupils.

185. Many staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, which are well supported. Professional coaches are employed to run basketball, table tennis and dance classes. Pupils have the opportunity to go skiing in Italy and to join groups that attend the local authority's outdoor pursuits centre
186. The accommodation for the subject continues to be unsatisfactory. The poorly decorated on-site gymnasium is supplemented by the use of the facilities of the Newham leisure centre. The time it takes for the pupils and staff to get from school to the leisure centre and the difficulty of supervising pupils on the journey are of concern. The school is in urgent need of the sports hall it is trying to get, and there is no doubt that with such a facility attainment levels would improve. Departmental displays around the school do much to stimulate interest in the subject.
187. The teacher in charge of physical education was appointed to the school in September 2000. In spite of being in post for a relatively short time she has made an impressive start to the reorganisation of the department, has established a clear sense of direction for the departmental staff and has raised the status of the subject within the school. Strong leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. Staff demonstrate a willingness to work together, support each other, and show a strong commitment to the improvement of the department.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management.
- Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Continuing professional development.
- Textbooks for homework and revision.
- Use of assessment for learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs.

188. The school began to enter candidates for the GCSE (short course) Religious Education examination in 1998. In that year one pupil in ten achieved an A*-C grade. Since then the trend has been very strongly upward and in 2001 more than one pupil in three achieved grades A*-C. These latest results are still well below the national average but rank well against other subjects. Results in GCSE Religious Studies are also well below the national average but are close to results in similar subjects. Teacher Assessment in Year 9 shows that most pupils are at Level 3 or above with only a minority reaching Level 4 or above. These results are very low and well below what pupils in Year 9 achieve in other subjects.
189. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show that progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory but also confirm the school's finding that, by the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment remains well below expectation. Pupils have some knowledge of Christianity but their knowledge of other religions is superficial and insecure. Understanding of religious ideas and correct use of specialist vocabulary are very undeveloped. Without systematic knowledge of specific religions, pupils lack the skills and confidence to relate religious belief and practice to themselves and to their experience of life.
190. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good and attainment by the end of year 11 is below, but not well below, average. Pupils study Christianity and Islam in relation to moral issues and ultimate questions. In Year 11 pupils follow the short course, but in future all pupils will follow the full course. The substantial improvement in results since 1998 and the increase to two lessons a week make working towards the national average an ambitious but realistic target. Pupils are generally aware of the religious beliefs and social data required by the examination. To improve further, pupils need to develop their ability to explain and apply religious ideas and to acquire greater skill in evaluation. By Years 10 and 11, pupils' confidence as learners has increased and attitudes have improved. Personal development and relationships remain good.
191. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are generally satisfactory but there are some weaknesses. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough and the input and activities of lessons are demanding enough. Marking in exercise books is encouraging but does not tell pupils what level they are at or how they could improve. Assessment using the national scale of attainment has begun but needs further development so that information gained may be used to raise standards. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Some pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties are not only negative in attitude but also manage to avoid doing written work in class.
192. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. Teachers' expectations are significantly higher than with younger pupils. The requirements of the examination enable better planning, better methods and better use of learning resources. However, there is insufficient focus by teachers on assessment objectives, as well as the content of the examination. Pupils respond to the content with interest and a greater willingness to make the necessary intellectual effort. Teachers manage pupils better and make good use of the textbooks now available for the new courses.

193. The curriculum is significantly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7, 8 and 9. The extra time and the incentive of success in the examination are important factors, but attitudes improve and attainment rises with the systematic study of specific religions. Religious education across the school as a whole contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils increasingly recognise its value to their personal and intellectual development as they move up the school.
194. Leadership and management are good. Religious education reflects the aims and values of the school well. It shares the school's emphasis not only on respect for people's beliefs but also on promotion of spiritual development and social inclusion. The development plan for religious education is practical and gives a clear educational direction for the future. The teachers show a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. The major issue is that raised by teachers' lack of specialist qualifications in religious education. Weaknesses of knowledge and understanding in the teacher have a negative impact on pupils' learning and opportunities for future improvement will not be realised fully without a strong commitment to continuing professional development.
195. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. In no respect is provision worse and in many respects it is better or much better. In Years 7, 8 and 9 behaviour is better and pupils' personal development is much better. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve more and their personal development is better. Teaching and learning have improved in Years 10 and 11, curriculum provision is much better and opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have increased. Results of Teacher Assessment in Year 9 show how much remains to be done. The greatly improved results in the GCSE (short course) show how much has already been achieved.