

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SOUTH WIGSTON HIGH SCHOOL**

South Wigston, Leicester

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120310

Headteacher: Mr Gary Toward

Reporting inspector: Marianne Ellender-Gelé  
2348

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 June 2001

Inspection number: 188297

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 10 - 14

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St Thomas Road  
South Wigston  
Leicester

Postcode: LE18 4TA

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Roy Hughes

Date of previous inspection: 10 – 14 June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2348	Marianne Ellender-Gelé	Registered inspector	Equal Opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
9056	Valerie Cain	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11830	Jonathan Banks	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
12008	David Bray	Team inspector	Music	How well are pupils taught?
31146	Pamela Brooks	Team Inspector	English, Literacy	
1839	Maurice Edwards	Team Inspector	Mathematics, Numeracy	
19858	John Follett	Team Inspector	Physical Education	
14734	Maureen Harris	Team Inspector	Religious Education	
2711	Alan Jarvis	Team Inspector	Science	
15479	Christopher Land	Team Inspector	Geography	
14604	Barry Lewis	Team Inspector	Design and Technology Information and Communication Technology	

1953 3	Jan Martin	Team Inspector	Special Educational Needs English as an additional language	
2053 3	David Rogers	Team Inspector	Art	
2203 8	Hilary Spurrier	Team Inspector	History	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

South Wigston High School is a much larger than average Foundation middle school. It has 839 boys and girls aged 10 to 14 on roll. The school serves South Wigston and Glen Parva, south of the city of Leicester, and it is oversubscribed. Approximately one third of pupils come from outside the normal catchment area, many from the city of Leicester. The number of boys and girls is evenly balanced. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (12.2%) is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low (2%) and none receive specific language support as they are fluent in English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, at 14.2 per cent, is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, at 5.2 per cent, is above average. When they join the school at age 10, attainment of pupils is below average, particularly in writing. The school gained an Achievement Award in 2001 in recognition of the well-above-average results achieved when pupils leave school at age 14.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very effective school. It aims to achieve the best for everyone. The school is popular. Although results are below average at age 11, pupils in Year 6 achieve well, given the transition to a new school at the beginning of that year and their below-average starting point. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and, by the time they leave aged 14, they achieve well above average in tests when compared with similar schools. Leadership is very good and there is much very good teaching. The cost per pupil is low and the tight accommodation is used very efficiently. The school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are high at the end of Year 9. Pupils gain well-above-average results in national tests in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils learn very well from Year 7 to Year 9 and their progress is good.
- The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers create a physical environment of high quality and use excellent resources to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils want to learn.
- The headteacher, senior management team, heads of subject and heads of year provide very good leadership. The governing body is led well and is very effective.
- Standards and the quality of education are consistently very good in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development are very good. Relationships are excellent.
- Strategies used to monitor, evaluate and review the school's work are very effective. Consequently, senior managers know where strengths lie and where improvements are needed.
- Procedures for monitoring pupils' welfare and guidance are very effective. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Pupils are prepared well for their future studies.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards and results in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for 11-year-olds.
- Standards in music in Years 7 to 9 and in religious education in all years.
- Application of information and communication technology in subjects of the curriculum.

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

The strengths far outweigh the areas for improvement. The school has the capacity to maintain its strengths and improve further.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in June 1996 and progress since then has been good. Results in tests have improved in line with the national trend, although not sufficiently at age 11. Teaching is much better than in 1996; there is now a higher proportion of very good lessons. A few shortcomings

remain in the teaching of religious education and personal, social and health education. Teachers have tried very hard to deepen their subject knowledge, but they are not specialists. Methods and activities do not always probe sufficiently pupils' understanding. The key issues identified in 1996 have been addressed well. Teaching in art is now good. Standards in basic skills in Years 7 to 9 are good, but writing skills in Year 6 remain below average. Assessment procedures are now effective. Pupils are given clear targets and their academic progress is monitored well. Provision for the spiritual and cultural development of pupils is no longer an issue. Each pupil experiences "Thought for the Day" and one assembly per week but there is still no daily act of collective worship.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests, in English, mathematics and science.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Key Stage 3	C	C	B	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In the above table, "similar schools" means "those school with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals".

Pupils transfer to South Wigston High school at the beginning of Year 6 with lower-than-average writing skills. Despite the sound progress in that year, pupils do not catch up quickly enough and do not do well in the tests. Standards of work seen in English and mathematics for current Year 6 pupils are better than these past results indicate, but overall achievement, at age 11, remains below average and well below in science. However, by the time they are 14, pupils achieve much better than pupils in similar schools in English, mathematics and science. The trend in results is rising in line with the national rising trend. The progress made towards the challenging targets set is good.

Standards in music, at age 14, are below those expected because of staffing difficulties. In religious education, standards at ages 11 and 14, are below expected levels. In all other subjects, standards are at least in line with expected levels. When they leave school, pupils achieve better than average in design and technology, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Standards in numeracy are sound. Standards in literacy and oracy are good.

There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls, and the progress of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils learn well and are given much support and equality of opportunity to reach the highest possible standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in spelling and reading. They write well when provided with helpful frameworks, but are less confident when writing unaided. The 'Corrective Reading Programme' provides a particularly good boost to underachieving readers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils want to do well and demonstrate high commitment to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are considerate and polite. They respect their property and that of others. They care for their learning environment.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Pupils work together harmoniously. They are mature and value others' views and opinions.

Attendance	Satisfactory, and in line with the national figure. Unauthorised absence is rare. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.
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Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are major strengths of the school. These underpin and promote an excellent climate for learning.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 10-11 years	aged 12-14 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very 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 very good and a strength of the school. It is effective in all year groups. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of the lessons observed. This is a very high proportion. In nearly three-quarters of these lessons the quality of teaching was good or better and pupils learnt very well as a result. Of these effective lessons one third were very good or excellent. In a very small proportion of the teaching (3 out of 123 lessons), one or more shortcomings led to pupils not making sufficient progress. No lessons were of a poor standard.

Teaching in English is very good overall, and in mathematics and science it is good. Teaching in these subjects is particularly strong in Years 7 to 9 because of teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily in all years.

Good teaching was observed in most subjects. It was particularly effective in a high proportion of lessons in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. The few lessons with shortcomings were in religious education and personal, social and health education. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good because of good planning to meet individual needs and realistic but high expectations for all. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. Gifted and talented pupils have sound provision overall, and they learn well. All pupils show interest in their work, take pride in what they do and in how it is presented. As a result, they acquire new knowledge rapidly in lessons, are inquisitive and willing to make a lot of effort.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is relevant and provides a rich range of learning experiences. However, some subjects do not have enough teaching time.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Arrangements ensure that these pupils have every opportunity to succeed. Teachers know pupils well, and learning support assistants provide effective support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Provision for cultural development is good. Opportunities to develop spiritual understanding are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. This is a strength of the school. The school promotes good behaviour and includes all pupils equally. Staff know pupils well and provide very good support for their welfare and academic progress.

The school is highly valued by parents and pupils. Communications with parents and parental involvement are given high priority. Parents feel happy to contact the school and are confident that their suggestions and complaints are listened to and acted upon. The school strives to involve parents, and almost all have signed the home/school agreement. Communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs is good.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, senior management team, heads of subject and heads of year provide very good leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is led well and is very effective. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They are clear about strengths and areas to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Pupils' attainment is analysed and progress is monitored well. The quality of teaching and learning is checked with a focus on seeking further improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Careful budgeting and the good use of funds support developments well. The school applies a range of different spending options in order to secure best value for money. Good investments in equipment and accommodation create an attractive learning environment.

Accommodation is tight, but of excellent quality. Specialist facilities are good, with some restrictions in music and for indoor games in physical education. Resources for learning are always at least good and, in some areas, very good, for example the CAD/CAM facilities in design and technology and the good range of texts in English (poetry) and science. Teachers and support staff are well qualified, but a lack of specialist expertise limits improvement in religious education. Recruitment difficulties affect standards in music.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Their children like school.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Their children make good progress and are expected to work hard.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The new headteacher and all staff are very approachable.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour is very good.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Teaching is good.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The school provides an interesting range of activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is either too much or not enough homework. Parents are not always clear about when it is due.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Some parents do not feel well informed about progress made in all subjects.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A few parents feel that the school does not work closely with them.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive comments of parents. Homework is set regularly and diaries are kept well. Teachers are mindful of the need to ensure balance and keep to the homework timetable. Inspectors agree with the comment about lack of clear information about progress. Reports to parents are not sufficiently informative and, in some years, arrive to parents too late to be acted upon. The school is aware of this issue and is working on a new format for the coming year. There is no evidence to suggest that the school does not work closely with parents. Parents' and pupils' views are sought regularly and the school is open to suggestions.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

- 1 After a slow start in Year 6, the school is very effective in improving pupils' performance from Years 7 to 9. When pupils leave the school at age 14, results in English, mathematics and science are well above average when compared with similar schools. In almost all other subjects, except music and religious education, standards are at least in line with expected levels, and in several subjects they are better than that. In 2001, the school received an Achievement Award for the very good standards achieved.
- 2 At age 11, results in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science are below the national averages and well below those of similar schools. Despite the good teaching, the positive attitudes of pupils and the appropriate curriculum provided in Year 6, pupils do not catch up sufficiently quickly in these three subjects. In English and mathematics, work seen for current Year 6 pupils indicates better standards than in previous years. In science, standards remain well below average at that age. In all other subjects, except religious education, standards are at least in line with expected levels.

#### **Results and achievements in Year 6**

- 3 When they enter the school at age 10, pupils' attainment represents the full range from very high to very low. However, the proportion of pupils with low standards of literacy skills, particularly in writing, is higher than average. From this low starting point, pupils make sound progress, but have only two terms to reach the standards expected in the national tests. Results in the last three years have remained well below those of similar schools. Teachers' assessments, both at the beginning and at the end of Year 6, are not sufficiently accurate, as shown by the significant difference between the teachers' figures and those of the Year 2000 tests in English, mathematics and science. Since the last inspection, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected levels (Levels 4 and above) and the higher levels (Levels 5 and above) have not improved sufficiently to catch up with the national improving trend.
- 4 In 1998 and 1999, the gap between results of boys and girls in English was quite significant, but not in 2000 when boys did almost as well as girls. In mathematics and science, boys do better than girls. There is no evidence of differences in the progress of pupils from minority ethnic groups compared with their peers. Boys and girls learn well and make sound progress.
- 5 Achievements are at least in line with expected levels in all other National Curriculum subjects, except in religious education, because of insufficient curriculum time to cover the Agreed Syllabus and insecurity in the subject knowledge of teachers. Particular strengths are in design and technology,

French, information and communication technology and physical education. In these subjects, pupils make good gains over time, leading to higher-than-average standards for pupils at age 11.



## **Results and achievements in years 7 to 9**

- 6 Progress and achievements of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are strengths of the school. Results in the English, mathematics and science national tests are above the national average and well above those of similar schools for the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels (Levels 5 and above). In 2000, results in the English tests, at the higher levels (Levels 6 and above) were well above those of similar schools and they were above average in mathematics and science. These good results represent a significant achievement, particularly because in 2000 the number of boys taking the tests (115) was much higher than the number of girls (73). The rising trend in the school's average points score in English, mathematics and science follows the national improving trend. Girls do better than boys in the English tests, reflecting the national picture. Boys do better than girls in mathematics and science.
- 7 In music, the limited time given to the subject and the difficulty in finding appropriate staff has had a detrimental impact on standards, which are below expectation at age 14. In religious education, weaknesses are as indicated above for Year 6. In art and geography, standards are in line with expectations. Standards are well above the standards normally seen in design and technology, and above in French, German, history, information and communication technology and physical education. Overall, progress is good for all pupils, regardless of ability, gender or ethnic background. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well.

## **Progress of pupils with special educational needs**

- 8 It is not appropriate to compare the attainment of pupils with special educational needs against the national expectation. While the number of pupils having special educational needs is within the normal range, a significantly high percentage of this group have very low literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the school.
- 9 Pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress in achieving the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs), because of the arrangements made for them, and because their needs, both learning and behavioural, are known well by teachers and are planned for. They make particularly good progress in reading and spelling between Year 6 and Year 9. The progress made in subject areas in acquiring knowledge and skills is good. They acquire good basic literacy and numeracy skills, and write well in all subjects when provided with supportive and clear frameworks. They are less confident or able to write fluently unaided, and opportunities for developing speaking skills are limited. The 'Corrective Reading Programme' provides a particularly good boost to underachieving readers. Many pupils said that they made good progress thanks to this programme and felt that they learnt well in lessons. This is confirmed by inspection findings.

## **Progress towards targets**

- 10 The school's strategy is to set high targets. The headteacher believes that this provides challenging goals for all to aim for. At the end of Year 6, however, the targets set are very high, at levels well above actual results. Progress towards goals set for the end of Year 9 is good, with actual results being very close to the targets set in 2000. In English, the target set for the percentage of pupils reaching Levels 5 and above was 80 per cent, the actual result was 75 per cent; in mathematics the target set was 75 per cent and the actual result was 73 per cent; in science 70 per cent was the set target with an actual result of 72 per cent achieved. These targets are potentially achievable.

### **Standards of literacy and oracy**

- 11 Speaking and listening skills are good across subjects. In modern foreign languages, oral activities are designed to instil confidence and develop clarity of diction, with good use of resources such as work cards to guide paired conversation. In geography, pupils give thoughtful and clear answers, for example when talking about migration, landscapes and other geographical developments. In mathematics, pupils are able to explain their solutions to problems clearly and, in art, pupils describe their work well. In some subjects, opportunities for group work are lost, such as in English and in religious education, where much discussion is teacher-led, and there are insufficient planned oral activities for pupils with special educational needs.
- 12 Reading skills are above average in all subjects. Independent reading is promoted well during form time and at the start of English lessons, when pupils also read a range of literary texts. Pupils are confident when reading aloud and do so with good expression and understanding. Teachers provide a good variety of reading materials such as: in design and technology, with well designed workbooks; in physical education, through good activity work cards; and in religious education, when extracting information from the Internet for the marriage topic. All subjects ensure that key words are taught well.
- 13 Writing skills are above average across subjects. Most pupils can write in a variety of styles as a result of their work in English and history, but opportunities to use these skills are not always created in other subjects. Much written work reflects pupils' ability to produce accurate, factual answers. In modern foreign languages, there are very good standards of spelling and grammar, and in subjects such as science and history, the use of a structured format for written tasks improves standards. By the end of Year 9, high attaining pupils produce written work of a very good standard, such as an extended history essay on the Versailles Peace Treaty. In English, pupils have opportunities to word-process and draft written work. Writing is well presented, and displays of pupils' work throughout the school set good standards. Pupils with special educational needs make fewer gains in extended or independent writing as they remain reliant on support.
- 14 A good deal of work has been done to improve standards of literacy across subjects but, as yet, not all departments focus on this aspect in their

development plans or schemes of work. Further development is planned to establish a consistent approach to literacy throughout the school and to extend the use of existing good practice.

### **Standards of numeracy**

- 15 Numeracy standards across the school are in line with those normally seen, and in mathematics they are developed well. In Year 6, the department has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy for all pupils and it is having a beneficial impact on standards. The National Numeracy Strategy for pupils at Years 7 to 9 has just been launched and teachers are currently planning its implementation to build effectively on Year 6 numeracy work. Activities enable pupils to practise and learn their number skills and develop a range of methods for calculating. Most pupils know their tables and can recall them quickly. They can use fractions, decimals and percentages and can explain how their calculations are performed and know how to check for errors. The application of these numeracy skills across subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory and pupils know how to draw upon the knowledge acquired in mathematics. For example, in physical education, in addition to timing and measuring athletic events, pupils use acute and obtuse angles well to explain the correct body position for throwing events; in geography, pupils estimate areas and interpret rainfall graphs with accuracy, and in history they use tables correctly to analyse census data. In design and technology, pupils use skills of measurement effectively, especially in connection with the computer-aided design equipment. In science, they measure and weigh accurately and use graphs well to display results. These examples are not co-ordinated and happen in an ad hoc manner. In order to raise standards further, good practice should be shared and developments in each subject area monitored, as indicated in the Years 7 to 9 National Numeracy Framework.

### **Priorities for the school to raise standards further are:**

- to improve the rate of progress in Year 6 so that pupils recover from low standards on entry and obtain results which are at least in line with those of similar schools, and
- to make better provision for music in Years 7 to 9, and in religious education in Years 6 to 9, so that pupils reach at least expected levels when they leave school.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 16 Pupils enjoy school and display very positive attitudes to their work. They are keen to learn, to answer questions and to participate in a variety of activities. Levels of concentration are high across all ages and groups. In lessons, pupils' attitudes are very good and frequently excellent. For example, Year 6 pupils displayed very high levels of concentration in a literacy lesson when engaged in work on horror and suspense; they made excellent predictions and enthusiasm was high. In French, pupils in a Year 7 lesson on asking directions, demonstrated excellent attitudes. This is because they were willing to take risks and use the foreign language spontaneously. In a Year 8

mathematics lesson, pupils were very enthusiastic about making a presentation of chance events. They made very good gains in their understanding.

- 17 Parents believe that the school promotes high expectations and success for everyone. They confirm that their children are keen to represent the school and that achievement is celebrated. The inspection team agrees with these views. The standard of presentation of work is good and improves with maturity. Pupils' attitudes to their work and the pride that they display towards their school are clear strengths. They respond very well to the good teaching and come to lessons prepared to work.
  
- 18 Behaviour, both in lessons and around the site, is very good. Pupils know the code of conduct, they understand and adhere to the rules. Any inappropriate behaviour is quickly dealt with. Staff have a consistent approach to dealing with poor behaviour. Parents and pupils both think that the system is fair. Exclusions are few and used only in the more serious cases. Pupils are courteous, polite and move around the site in a sensible and considerate manner, even in congested areas such as stairs and doorways. No examples of inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection. Good examples of consideration were observed in the dining hall at lunchtime where pupils queue sensibly and are polite to dinner staff. Pupils respect their own and others' property, and the building. The site is clean and tidy throughout.

- 19 Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and of the impact of their actions on others. Form time is used effectively to promote discussion on a variety of issues, for example standing up for what people believe is right. Opportunities for personal development are wide-ranging. Older pupils act as mentors for younger pupils and get involved in extra-curricular activities, residential experiences, trips and in the School Council. Pupils, when given the opportunity, diligently perform their tasks with pride, for example the “E-Team” in charge of saving electricity in the school. Rewards are keenly sought and success is celebrated in assemblies. Pupils often demonstrate enthusiasm, motivation and good team spirit. They enjoy taking responsibility; for example in physical education, where Year 9 pupils displayed good knowledge when leading a warm-up in an athletics lesson.
- 20 Relationships are excellent both between pupils and all staff, and between pupils themselves. Everyone is well-integrated. Pupils work harmoniously together in groups and in pairs, they chat and socialise enthusiastically at break times. There is no evidence of bullying, sexism or racism. Pupils listen to each other, value opinions and respect views. They help each other and tell each other how to improve, for example in information and communication technology (ICT), where expert users of ICT help others willingly.
- 21 Pupils with learning difficulties have very good attitudes to learning. They remain on task for long periods of time, and strive to work well at all times. They present their work with care and attention. The levels of respect and friendliness between these pupils and with their teachers are remarkably high. Pupils identified as having behavioural difficulties usually behave well in lessons because of the individual arrangements made to support them, including mentors, and because of the good management strategies used by teachers.
- 22 Pupils are well prepared for the future. They are articulate, mature and confident. Values are high and parents confirm that their children are well prepared for life. The inspection team agrees with these views. Adults provide excellent role models, and pupils respond positively to their lead and encouragement.

## **Attendance**

- 23 The rate of attendance is satisfactory and is in line with the national average. The main reasons for absence are illness and some holidays taken within term time. Unauthorised absence is rare and below the national average. Parents are fully aware of the need to inform the school of absences and the great majority comply. Good attendance is given a high priority. Effective systems are in place to identify quickly those pupils with attendance problems. The school provides effective guidance and support to pupils and their families in order to improve attendance levels further. The impact of these strategies is particularly noteworthy in the significant drop in the number of pupils with less than 80 per cent attendance from 40 to 30.

24 Punctuality to school and to lessons is very good and this has a positive effect on learning and attainment.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 25 The quality of teaching is very good and is a strength of the school. Teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of the lessons observed. This is a very high proportion. In three-quarters of these lessons the quality of teaching was good or better and the pace of pupils' learning was faster than average. Of these effective lessons one third were very good or excellent. In a very small proportion of the teaching (3 out of 123 lessons), one or two shortcomings led to pupils not making sufficient progress. This was a very small proportion of the teaching observed, and no lessons were of a poor standard. Teaching was effective in all year groups. Year 6 teaching was very good or excellent in one fifth of lessons of the lessons observed. This was slightly below the one third of very high quality lessons in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is particularly effective in Years 7 to 9 because of the high expectations set by teachers.
- 26 Good teaching was observed in most subjects. Teaching was particularly effective in a high proportion of lessons in design and technology, English, modern foreign languages and physical education. The few lessons with shortcomings were in religious education and personal, social and health education, because teachers are not specialists and activities do not always probe sufficiently pupils' understanding.
- 27 In lessons where teaching is of good, very good or excellent quality, pupils learn quickly, are challenged effectively and make rapid progress. This occurs when teachers:
- challenge, inspire and expect the most of pupils. In modern foreign languages, pupils learn well because teachers plan in depth, use mime and gesture, and use their own personal skills very effectively. They expect the highest quality of work from all, with a particular emphasis on improving the accuracy of diction and providing immediate feedback to pupils on their oral work;
  - use methods which enable pupils to learn effectively. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, good classroom organisation allowed pupils to understand an extract from 'The Silver Sword' very well because they rehearsed their understanding of language, such as plurals, suffixes and synonyms, and then applied these skills to write diaries which required an element of creativity. In Year 6 science, objectives for the lesson were put on the board at the start and were referred to at the end of the lesson, enabling pupils to be clear about what they had learnt;
  - insist on key terminology and reinforce correct vocabulary. For example, in information and communication technology, pupils learn well through good descriptions of hardware and software. Teachers provide very good guidance on how to use these for specific projects;
  - manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour. This is the case in almost all lessons. Most teachers create a positive atmosphere

that motivates pupils and encourages them to behave well. This has a very good impact on their learning because pupils maintain concentration, focus on the quality of their work and are productive;

- use time, support staff and other resources well. In a Year 9 history lesson on Romans, pupils were given good materials to read, and a structured format for essay writing helped them with their work. These resources guided pupils well towards specific aspects of the topic and structured pupils' thinking;



- assess pupils' work thoroughly. In English, pupils' books are marked thoroughly and frequently, and helpful comments are made on areas for improvement; and
- use homework effectively. In a Year 6 history class, good use was made of the opportunity to interview close relatives on the topic of the local area around the school.

28 Many teachers exude vitality and share their enthusiasm for their subjects with pupils. They have lively interactions with pupils, use purposeful questioning combined with a good sense of humour and spontaneity. They set stimulating, challenging and relevant tasks. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. They:

- acquire new knowledge and skills in most lessons and demonstrate consistently high levels of effort. In music, pupils learn keyboard skills quickly through frequent practice, and they work hard at activities throughout the lessons. They try their best at all times;
- are productive and work at a good pace. In a Year 8 physical education lesson, pupils made very good progress in tennis skills, particularly in serving and returning the ball, despite some limitations in the space available for this activity;
- show interest in their work. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson on probability, pupils maintained their interest well and made good progress despite the heat of the room and the difficult concepts they were learning; and
- understand what they are doing and how they can improve. In a Year 7 design and technology (textiles) lesson, pupils had very clear tasks and were not waiting for further instructions from the teacher.

29 The teaching of numeracy and literacy skills is sound overall. The reinforcement and co-ordination of the development of number skills is not yet planned in all subjects. When application occurs, it is often determined by the tasks more than by systematic planning. As a result, some opportunities to remind pupils of the basic principles learnt in mathematics, and how they can apply what they have learnt to other subjects, are at times missed. The teaching of literacy is a central focus of whole-school development and a policy document is being produced. At present, there is some inconsistency across departments. In most departments, good practice in the use of key words and glossaries improves pupils' vocabulary. Pupils are taught to write in a variety of styles in English and history and, in science, models are used well to help pupils write in an appropriate style. Teachers provide a good range of reading material: in design and technology, booklets have been produced at reading levels appropriate to pupils' abilities. Opportunities for extended group discussions to develop oracy are sometimes lacking, but teachers are efficient in leading class discussions.

- 30 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, both by subject teachers and by special needs specialists, is good, characterised by planning for individual needs, setting of tasks within their range, and conveying consistently high expectations for achievement. Lessons which have clear routines, a good pace, and a series of short activities engage the attention of these pupils and ensure they succeed. The methods used by special needs specialists are sometimes less effective when questions are too closed, and teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, is focused on the development of skills, rather than on the understanding of concepts. There is little opportunity for pupils to explain their thinking, to explore ideas independently or to use practical aids, including information and communication technology, to enhance learning. Individual education plans are very helpful to subject teachers, ensuring that effective advice and strategies are given to help pupils to understand what they have to do in order to improve their learning.
- 31 Teachers plan lessons that interest all pupils, regardless of their gender or ethnic origins. Many teachers analyse the performance of girls and boys in order to make comparisons and plan how to improve upon the differences in attainment and rates of progress that occur. The school has started to identify gifted and talented pupils. In the lessons observed, most subjects catered well for their needs. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, an investigation into energy transfers included work targeted at Level 8 of the National Curriculum (this level is well above average). In mathematics, lesson activities are planned to cater for gifted and talented pupils. Despite some good examples, there is still too much inconsistency in the planning of activities for these pupils. Gifted users of information and communication technology are not sufficiently challenged; they mark time in some lessons. Across subjects, gifted and talented pupils still have insufficient opportunities to use their learning in extended, creative and open-ended activities.
- 32 The school has a very effective system in place for monitoring the quality of teaching. All teachers are regularly observed as part of this programme and suggestions are made for improvement and development. Since the previous inspection, the number of unsatisfactory lessons has decreased, the number of good or better lessons has increased and the quality of teaching in art has improved significantly. The following areas still need improvement:
- the quality of teaching in religious education and in personal, social and health education, and
  - opportunities for pupils to work independently and exercise initiative.

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

- 33 The school offers a curriculum of sound quality which has a number of good features. Pupils have a rich and varied range of learning experiences relevant to their needs. However, some subjects do not have enough teaching time.

## **Key Stages 2 and 3**

- 34 In Year 6, pupils benefit from a broad curriculum. For example, all pupils learn French a year before required by the National Curriculum. From Year 8, provision for learning German as a second foreign language is very good; all pupils start to learn German in Year 8, and many continue in Year 9. Across all years, provision in the taught course for information and communication technology is also very good, although pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their information and communications skills in other subjects. In science, the very varied range of learning opportunities leads to good motivation and high standards. Some subjects provide stimulating experiences. In humanities, a variety of educational visits and a Year 6 tour of the local area enable pupils to discover historical and geographical reasons for the settlement. Several pupils receive additional music tuition from peripatetic teachers. However, there are some weaknesses in the curriculum. There is not enough time given to music and insufficient time is allocated to cover all the required areas of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education. In art, the teaching in modules breaks the continuity of pupils' learning. There are few opportunities for drama within the curriculum. Although some subjects plan well for opportunities to develop creative skills, particularly for the gifted and talented pupils, this is not a consistent feature across all areas of the curriculum. Overall, the level of provision is satisfactory and is effective in broadening pupils' knowledge and experiences. Challenge days offer stimulating and enjoyable opportunities to stretch the gifted and talented pupils. The use of specific funding provides additional activities with open access to pupils of all abilities.

## **Special educational needs**

- 35 The very good arrangements for pupils with special educational needs ensure that they have every opportunity to succeed in learning. The small groups for English, and mathematics and the additional, individual support that they receive, enable them to improve their reading, spelling and writing skills. Teachers know their pupils well and individual education plans are used effectively to meet specific individual needs in subjects. Support is appropriately targeted towards improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy. When pupils are withdrawn for this specific support, teachers ensure that pupils retain access to all curricular experiences and do not miss work covered by the rest of the class. The curriculum and activities, in whole class situations, are matched well to individual needs. Pupils are engaged in learning, thanks to good use of questioning and achievable goals being set for them, for example in physical education and modern foreign languages where teaching is strong and all pupils succeed. These, however, place great demands on teachers, particularly where class sizes are large.

## **Strategies to develop literacy and numeracy**

- 36 Much preliminary work has been done to introduce national strategies effectively. In English, the National Literacy Strategy is implemented well.

Good practice was evident, such as the focus on key words and the use of structured guidance for essay writing, in some other departments. There are whole school marking and spelling policies in place and a reading policy is in draft form. A further training programme is planned in line with recent national developments in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are very keen to follow national guidelines and adhere closely to the literacy framework, thus limiting opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and creative skills. Provision for across the school is sound. The mathematics department has introduced the National Strategy for all pupils in Year 6 and this is helping to improve standards. The strategy for Years 7 to 9 is currently being introduced, building effectively on work with the younger pupils. Numeracy skills are reinforced well in several subjects. In order to raise standards further, numeracy and literacy policies should be applied consistently across the curriculum.

### **Extra-curricular provision**

- 37 There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Parents praised provision for sporting activities, with particular reference to the commitment of staff. Inspectors agree with these views. Many sporting opportunities are provided, both in competitive sport and to encourage participation by all within school, for example inter-form football for girls. There are also dance and musical performances and clubs such as the art and information technology clubs. Take-up is monitored carefully in sport and music but less consistently in other areas. Visits to France give a large number of pupils very beneficial experiences which help to develop their language skills and cultural understanding. The school provides flexible arrangements to ensure that all pupils can participate in every aspect of school life. There is good provision to ensure that pupils of all abilities access activities if they so wish.

### **Personal, social and health education (PSHE)**

- 38 The school provides a comprehensive programme for PSHE. The units are planned well to match the age and needs of pupils. The programmes of study are organised effectively for each year group and include significant aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, as well as covering the required topics of health, drugs and sex education. A weakness is that time to cover the programme is sometimes reduced when the assembly overruns into the time allocated for this important element of pupils' personal development. The programme is taught by form tutors who have relevant experiences and expertise to guide group work and discussions. High quality use of time needs to be secured across all form groups. Pupils value their PSHE lessons and are aware of the contribution these make to their personal development as they grow up.

### **Careers education**

- 39 There is a very strong careers programme. It is based on very good information about the pupils and gives useful guidance about the future options available in the colleges that pupils go to when they leave. The teacher in charge of careers has produced a helpful booklet for pupils to

collect information about themselves and, working with their form tutor, to consider the choices open to them. Careers education is included in the PSHE programme. This careers work links well with the pastoral support programme and visits by the Careers Adviser. Some parents indicated that their children did not know what to choose, when considering options for Year 10, because they had to do so early in Year 9. As reported above, inspection evidence confirms that very good information is available to help pupils to choose. The timing for choices to be made meets agreements among all local schools and colleges.

### **Community links to the curriculum**

- 40 Community links are well established and successful. There are strong links with several sports clubs, which provide valuable coaching to pupils and school teams. Through the Superschools Project, many major sports stars have visited the school to work with pupils and to raise funds. Each year, a different department runs the day and buys additional resources from the money raised. Another strength is the mentoring scheme, which includes adults from the local community acting as mentors for older pupils, supported by sponsorship from local firms. A weakness is that there are too few visits to local places of worship. Links with local firms to enrich learning in subjects, despite efforts, are limited.

### **Curriculum links with educational partners**

- 41 Links with other schools are a major strength. Liaison is very good, both with feeder schools and with the colleges that most pupils move on to. There are frequent visits to feeder schools to ensure good liaison, planning and sharing of information about the pupils. Induction days help pupils to adapt to their new school. There are regular meetings between subject departments within the family of schools to ensure the smooth transition into GCSE programmes. This has led to the development of Bridging Units for pupils at the end of Year 9. These provide a good foundation for the next stage of learning and complement well the comprehensive assessment information that is gathered and passed on, with recommendations, for example, about suitability for particular courses. There is good collaboration with the colleges to identify and support pupils at risk of disaffection. The colleges make specialist teachers, such as a dance specialist from the nearby Arts College, available to work with pupils in lessons and to prepare performances. The very good arrangements for pupils with special educational needs ensure that their specific needs are known as soon as they enter Year 6 and that full information is transferred to the colleges when they leave aged 14.

### **Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 42 Since the previous inspection the school has made good progress in addressing provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities have been planned to promote and explore these aspects within curricular areas, leading to examples of good practice.

## **Spiritual development**

- 43 Sound progress has been made in promoting spiritual awareness, a key issue in the previous inspection. Spirituality is promoted well through high quality visual displays throughout the school. Discussions in humanities subjects encourage pupils to consider and learn about aspects of faith, and teaching across the curriculum provides some moments of wonder, for example in physical education when pupils considered the awesome serving speed of tennis professionals. However, such moments are restricted. The requirement for a daily act of worship is still not met, although the linking of assembly themes to a “Thought for the Day” ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to consider moral, social, and spiritual questions. For example, during the week of the inspection, the theme of honesty and standing up for truth, provided opportunities for teachers to explore with each year group the life of Martin Luther King, and to link this with passages from moral fables and the New Testament. However, opportunities for reflection and deeper sharing of ideas were often missed because the “Thought for the Day” was delivered too hurriedly, with little discussion. At times, teachers took too long to present the theme in assemblies, leaving limited time to absorb the message and reflect. Where due consideration was given, for example when pupils were pulled together well by the teacher in an intimate circle, this was a very meaningful moment of the day.

## **Moral development**

- 44 Moral development is promoted very well, through the continuous teaching of right and wrong in assemblies, form time, and all curriculum areas, including personal, social and health education. For example, Year 6 pupils learned about Nazism and the effects of the second world war when reading the Silver Sword in English, and Year 9 pupils displayed excellent awareness in their group discussion of the need for adverts to include all races. The School Council provides a good opportunity for pupils to develop their citizenship skills. The school has a strong anti-racist and anti-bullying policy. The school’s code of behaviour and its aims consider aspects of behaviour and links these to moral issues. These are demonstrated well in pupils and teachers setting very good personal examples.

## **Social development**

- 45 The school promotes very good relationships between pupils and with staff, and the consistently good modelling of attitudes and values ensure that social development is good. This is reflected in the high standards of behaviour in and around the school and in lessons. For example, the school has recognised the need to provide something special for Year 9 at lunch times and allows them to use the inner quad as a quiet time for talking with their friends. Year 9 pupils value and respect this privilege. In many lessons, social development is promoted through a wide range of topics. For example, in science, pupils consider health issues; in design and technology, they are reminded of basic rules for safety; and in PSHE they consider issues linked to pollution and the environment. Physical education and modern foreign

languages develop listening skills well. In many subjects, pupils are often encouraged to collaborate and help others. In information and communication technology, searching a database helps pupils become more aware of the relevance and application of ICT to social and geographical contexts.

## **Cultural development**

- 46 The need to provide more opportunities for cultural development was a key issue identified in the previous inspection. Sound progress has been made in providing a better range of cultural opportunities for pupils. There is good extra-curricular provision in terms of sport and musical activities and residential visits, including trips to France. While theatre groups are invited into the school, visits to theatres are limited; currently there are no opportunities for teaching drama in the school. Other cultures are recognised through themes and events, for example in the celebration of the Chinese New Year and Diwali, and in the organisation of a multi-cultural music festival. Some subjects promote awareness of other cultures well, for example in the exploration of African sculptures in art, and the exploration of Rangoli patterns in mathematics. As yet, the planning to introduce other cultures in curricular areas is not being reflected consistently in experiences offered, particularly in music and religious education.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 47 The school continues to place high priority on the support, guidance and welfare of pupils. These aspects remain great strengths of the school as mentioned in the previous inspection report. Parents confirm that their children like school and are very well cared for. Pupils state that they feel safe and secure and able to approach staff should they need help or advice.
- 48 The pastoral care pupils receive is of a very high quality throughout the school. Form tutors know their pupils very well, relationships are good and pupils have confidence in their support. Pupils' personal development and academic progress are systematically monitored. Effective arrangements are in place to handle Child Protection issues should they arise. Staff are trained and vigilant. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy with regular checks. The site is clean and well-maintained and there are regular fire drills and checks of electrical equipment. Several qualified first aiders are available to ensure that all medical needs are met. Parents are contacted immediately should there be concerns. Good use is made of the professional agencies for support and advice, including very effective liaison with the Education Welfare Officer. Communication between teachers is very good, for example morning briefings are used well to notify relevant staff of individual concerns.
- 49 As in the previous report, the attendance rates at the school are a tribute to the very effective way in which absences are identified, monitored and followed up. Form tutors take registrations in their classrooms at the

beginning of both morning and afternoon sessions. Registrations are prompt and efficient and pupils know the routines well. Registers comply fully with requirements. Concerns are quickly followed up and parents contacted. The Education Welfare Officer is involved whenever necessary and will promptly make contact with parents and pupils to offer help where needed. Certificates are awarded for high levels of attendance and are received with pride in assemblies. The school places great emphasis on the need for good attendance to maximise learning and attainment. Holidays taken within term time are discouraged and are monitored. Pupils are expected to arrive punctually to school and to lessons. Lateness is identified and sanctions imposed if lateness persists.

- 50 The monitoring of behaviour is very effective. There is a comprehensive behaviour policy. Parents confirm that they and their children know the rules and expectations and consider them to be fair. Rewards are keenly sought and success is celebrated. Sanctions are applied for inappropriate behaviour and staff are consistent in their application. No inappropriate or oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. Any incidents are dealt with quickly and parents are contacted if necessary. Exclusions are rare and are used only in the most serious cases. High standards of behaviour are expected from all pupils at all times and the great majority comply. Assemblies and form time are used effectively to promote the need for good behaviour and self-discipline. The good programme of PSHE makes a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of important issues, such as bullying, self-confidence, health, relationships, the importance of study and current affairs.
- 51 The mentoring scheme is very successful and valued by parents and pupils. This well-planned initiative enables the provision of academic and welfare support for pupils who need help at particular times. Presently, sixty-eight Year 6 and Year 7 pupils are mentored by older pupils in Years 8 and 9. Older pupils are themselves mentored by students from the local college and adults from the community. Parents and pupils value the scheme and confirm that it has a positive impact on attainment and personal development.
- 52 A well-established transition programme ensures that pupils from the feeder schools have the opportunity to visit, discuss and have actual lessons in their new school, thus allaying fears. Pupils from outside the normal catchment area feel well briefed. Similarly, pupils moving on to the college are well prepared for their GCSE studies and have discussed options carefully.
- 53 Pastoral staff demonstrate very well the school's practice of including all pupils in learning opportunities, by supporting pupils with severe behavioural difficulties through individual arrangements and specific targets to improve behaviour. Currently, there is insufficient clarity in their role, both with regard to responsibility for placing these pupils on the special needs register in order to access assessment and additional support, and responsibility for co-ordinating multi-agency planning and support for these pupils. Pupils on the register of special educational needs are known well by staff and receive appropriate support and guidance.



## **Assessing pupils' achievements and progress**

- 54 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are very good. The issue concerning the monitoring of pupils' academic progress, identified in the previous inspection, has been addressed well. There is now an effective, whole-school policy which includes useful guidance to teachers and explains practices in detail. A senior member of staff oversees the process very conscientiously. Much development work is taking place to make the whole system manageable and accurate. Pupils believe that they know how well they are doing across their subjects and that they receive helpful information on progress made. Overall, inspectors agree with their views; however, the assessment of pupils' standards and progress in religious education, and their capability in information and communication technology across subjects of the curriculum are not yet monitored with sufficient accuracy and regularity.

- 55 The school makes good use of national and county comparative data to analyse the progress made by each year group, each class and individual pupils from the time they enter Year 6 to the time they leave at the end of Year 9. Particular effort has been put into gathering accurate information about standards on entry into Year 6 because pupils have such a short time before taking the end of Year 6 National Curriculum tests. Teachers have spent a great deal of time and energy liaising with colleagues from the main feeder schools to discuss what pupils understand and can do. The analysis is used well to review and look back at successes, but is not used enough to plan and adapt the programmes of study to needs. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 are not sufficiently accurate, particularly in science and English, compared with the actual tests results.
- 56 Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is a strength because the information gathered from assessment is used well to influence pupils' progress positively. There is much good practice in many subjects, for example in mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. In these subjects, teachers make good use of assessment data to analyse progress in depth and share this information with pupils so that their progress is as rapid as possible as they move through the school. Feedback to pupils is precise and teachers adapt curricular planning in the light of assessment findings. A relative weakness, within this positive context, lies in the assessment of the more able users of information and communication technology. Sometimes, talented users of this communication medium are not exposed to a sufficiently demanding curriculum. Pupils are kept fully aware of the results of assessment in a very sensitive way and know what they need to do to improve. Pupils said that they felt confident to meet the targets set and that support from their teachers was very good. Inspectors agree, because detailed knowledge of pupils, which includes the efforts and attitudes that they demonstrate to their studies, is readily available. The efficiency of recording and using assessment information is aided greatly by all teachers having access to their own laptop computer so that they can act upon information readily and swiftly. Teachers provide information on progress made in subjects to form tutors who have an accurate overview of pupils' successes and future targets for learning.
- 57 The Code of Practice arrangements for identifying, assessing and supporting pupils with special educational needs are good. Arrangements for transfer into the school and to the next phase of education ensure the continued good progress of this group of pupils. Since the previous inspection, subject teachers have been involved in setting targets in the individual education plans and this is done very well, leading to a close match between lesson activities and the needs of pupils. Through careful monitoring and evaluation, regular review arrangements now involve and inform parents and pupils very well. The targets identified in individual education plans do not yet refer sufficiently to the specific needs of pupils. Plans are in hand to improve this practice, from September 2001, in the light of the requirements of the revised Code of Practice.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 58 The school is highly valued by parents and pupils and is very popular. It remains over-subscribed. Parental involvement and good communications with parents are given a high priority by the senior management team, governors and staff. Parents receive good quality information throughout the year; for example, there are regular newsletters, letters from the headteacher, a useful diary, moving-on book and curricular information. Parents praise the quality of information given when their child starts in Year 6. Procedures in the case of absence are clear and known well. Parents feel that the tone and quality of communications have improved. They are happy to contact the school and are confident that their suggestions and complaints are listened to and acted upon. Inspection findings confirm these views. However, reports to parents do not provide sufficient information on their child's progress in all subjects. A few parents expressed the view that the reports are not sufficiently tailored to reflect their child's standards and progress, and inspectors agree. The school is aware of this issue and there are plans in hand to review the reports in the coming year.
- 59 The school has worked hard to increase the involvement of parents of pupils with special educational needs in the annual reviews of their statements. Communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. There is frequent telephone contact to ensure the wellbeing of this group of pupils and regular reporting on their progress. These parents report good levels of satisfaction with the special needs support provided.
- 60 The majority of parents are involved in their child's learning. Parents sign organisers and confirm that their comments are noted; this contributes to a useful home/school dialogue. There is generally a good attendance at parents' evenings, but the response to questionnaires inviting parents to comments and share their views on the school are limited. The school strives hard to encourage and involve parents and almost all parents have signed the home/school agreement. The School Supporters Association hosts fundraising events and money raised is used to improve resources and the environment, thus benefiting all pupils.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 61 Leadership and management are strengths of the school. The main aim of "care, respect, success for all and celebration of achievements" is evident throughout the teaching and the contribution made by all staff. The vision for the school underpins policies, decisions and the day-to-day running of the school. The school is proactive and engaged in national and local projects such as the New Opportunities Fund, bridging projects with local schools and the school-based mentoring scheme, aimed at improving the educational opportunities for all pupils. The school has received an Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills in recognition of improvements made in the quality of education provided.

### **Leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff**

62 The leadership of the recently appointed headteacher is very good. He leads the school with confidence, energy and enthusiasm, and sets high standards for himself, staff and pupils alike. The senior management team supports him very well. The two deputy headteachers and the two assistant headteachers provide a good, complementary range of experiences, styles and talents to inform developments at the school. The fixed-term appointment of middle managers to the senior management team is good practice as they bring a fresh look at issues and benefit from the professional experience of leading specific, whole-school matters. Heads of subjects and heads of year have clear, delegated responsibilities and this works very well. Their leadership is good, particularly in the way they monitor, review and evaluate the strengths and areas for development in their areas of responsibility. Communication is excellent. Staff have a high degree of commitment to the school and its pupils. There is much evidence of good teamwork and positive morale.

- 63 Leadership of the special needs provision is good. It is characterised by a very clear vision of curricular entitlement for these pupils, and the development of very good structures to support and monitor their progress. Very good procedures for monitoring the quality of the special needs provision ensure continued improvements in organisation and planning, and the efficient deployment of special needs funding. The team of trained special needs staff work well together, making the most of the resources and accommodation at their disposal. Currently, the quantity of information and communication technology hardware and software used to promote the literacy and numeracy skills of this group of pupils, and their access to subject learning, is inadequate.

### **Role of the Governing Body**

- 64 The governing body is very supportive and carries out almost all its statutory duties well, except for the daily act of collective worship. Governors bring a wealth of experiences to the school from the world of commerce, education and industry. They understand their role in holding the school to account for its performance very well, and in helping to deal with issues relating to standards, the curriculum, personnel, finance, the community and premises. They have an effective committee structure, are involved fully in key decisions and are increasingly involved in the long-term strategic decisions about future developments at the school. However, these decisions are not yet translated into a more user-friendly, whole-school, development plan. For example, governors and school leaders are aware that results at the end of Year 6 are low, but there is little direct reference to agreed future strategies to remedy this weakness. Few departmental development plans reflect whole-school priorities, because the latter are not articulated with sufficient clarity. The chair of governors leads the governing body very well.

### **Managing its own improvement**

- 65 The senior management team evaluates progress regularly, is aware of strengths and areas needing to be improved and takes action where necessary. The monitoring, evaluation and review process is the underpinning priority of the school. Governors and school leaders seek the views of staff, pupils and parents about the school's work. There is a very good schedule of lesson observation undertaken by senior staff and heads of department, aimed at achieving improved standards of teaching and learning across all subjects. This is very effective, but more remains to be done to secure consistently good teaching in religious education and in personal, social and health education. Heads of department are given guidance on how to use statistical data to check and improve pupils' achievements, demonstrating that the school seeks to continually raise standards. The impact of these efforts is yet to be seen in Year 6, but is obvious in the high standards achieved when pupils leave school at the end of Year 9.

### **Financial planning**

66 Financial planning continues to be of very high quality. A specialist curriculum is made available in all years at a comparatively low unit cost, with monies from Years 7 to 9 being used to subsidise provision in Year 6. There is prudent management of the budget. Currently, there is a positive balance of around 4 per cent of income and, in addition, a 3 per cent contingency fund is maintained. In total, this is above what normally needs to be retained but there are good plans to use the money for the benefit of the pupils currently in school. The finance officer keeps an extremely tight rein on finance, and routine administration of the budget is very efficient. The school applies a range of different spending options in order to secure best value for money. For example, there is much comparison of how the school's standards and costs compare with similar schools, and how resources put into Year 6 are justified. Competitive tendering is used very well to obtain external services, and there is wide consultation on how funds should be allocated to the school development plan. Monies received through special grants such as the Standards Fund, to support booster classes and social inclusion, and to provide additional support for pupils with special educational needs are spent extremely well. Since becoming a foundation school there has been no external auditor's report on financial management and administration. However, the governors have established very good safeguards to ensure that income and expenditure are very closely monitored. The governors' committee structure works very well and the influential policy and resources committee oversees the financial implications of the work of other committees to ensure that money is extremely well targeted. Financial control has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' achievements at age 14 are very good, the quality of education and teaching has improved and pupils' attitudes and personal development are very good. Value for money also shows improvement and is very good because of the very high effectiveness against below average unit costs.

### **Staff development**

67 In most curricular areas, teachers are well qualified to teach their specialist subject. In religious education, non-specialist teaching is affecting standards. The reduction in the number of non-specialist teachers of religious education is a significant improvement. There are insufficient music teachers to cover the curriculum adequately. The school has an excellent professional development programme for all teachers. Newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school are well supported. The technical and administrative staff provide very good support and they benefit from an effective staff development programme, especially in information and communication technology. Procedures for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing lessons are very good and performance management is securely in place. The school continues to benefit from its commitment to Investors in People. There is effective management and training for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Year 6 and good use of the Local Education Authority's consultants. The current introduction of new national initiatives in Years 7 to 9 is planned well on similar lines.

### **Accommodation**

68 Accommodation is good and is sufficient for the different grouping arrangements of pupils in most subject areas. There are good specialist facilities, for example in science, and effective use is made of the rooms in design and technology. In information and communication technology, whilst the space is adequate for teaching the specific ICT lessons, there is insufficient opportunity for other departments to gain good access to the ICT suite, but this is being addressed. In some subjects, classes are large, for example in history, and limited space affects the range of activities that can be provided. This is recognised by the school, and plans are in hand to improve the situation. Most subjects benefit from suited accommodation. As mentioned in the previous report, there are still insufficient practice rooms for music and inadequate space for indoor games in physical education. The library is currently being refurbished with substantial finance available. The very good building and grounds maintenance programme compensates for some of the physical limitations. Displays of teaching and learning material in and around the classrooms are excellent. They add considerably to the attractiveness and quality of the learning environment. They also provide a stimulating and imaginative addition to all teaching rooms. The quadrangle is reserved for pupils in Year 9 and they enjoy this unique privilege.

### **Learning resources**

69 Learning resources are good in general and are very good in several departments. For example, in design and technology, the CAD/CAM facilities are excellent; in English there is a very good range of poetry books and, in science, there are good study texts. The mathematics department benefits from a good range of texts used for homework. The school has good resources in information and communication technology; all members of staff benefit from having a laptop computer. The texts used in history are dated, but are more than compensated for by the department's own resources.

### **Parents' comments**

70 Parents are pleased with the leadership and management of the school. Parents also believe that staff changes and training have been managed well. Inspectors agree, except that issues remain in religious education and music. Many parents state that they feel confident in approaching any member of the senior team with issues or ideas. Some say that they have noticed and welcomed the new style of open consultation and positive leadership with the appointment of the new headteacher. Parents believe that all pupils are treated equally, encouraged to do their best and provided with appropriate resources to learn well. Parents agree with and support the values promoted by the school. Inspectors confirm the positive views of parents.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

To build on the successes demonstrated well in Years 7 to 9, governors and staff should:

1. raise standards at age 11 in English, mathematics and science by:

- identifying this issue as a key priority of the school development plan;
- making more accurate use of teacher assessment in the light of national tests results, and
- implementing appropriate teaching and learning strategies, with more emphasis on the development of writing skills.

*Refer to paragraphs 2, 3, 72, 73, 83, 93 and 95.*

2. raise standards in music at age 14 and in religious education at ages 11 and 14 by:

- providing sufficient curriculum time for teaching and learning;
- providing appropriate staffing for music, and
- enabling further training for teachers in religious education.

*Refer to paragraphs 150 and 153 for music; 165 to 171 for religious education.*

3. improve the application of information and communication technology within subjects of the curriculum by:

- ensuring better access to the ICT rooms;
- identifying this as a priority more consistently in departmental plans, and
- planning systematically the use of ICT in the subjects' schemes of work.

*Refer to paragraphs 58, 135, 138 and relevant subject paragraphs.*

The school should also consider the following subsidiary issues:

- providing further opportunities across subjects for more able pupils (*refer to paragraph 31*)
- improving reports to parents (*refer to paragraph 58*), and
- providing for a daily act of collective worship (*refer to paragraph 64*).



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	123
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
7	26	40	24	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y6 – Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	839
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	102

Special educational needs	Y6 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	44
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	119

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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 2**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	97	104	201

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	60	63	71
	Girls	64	50	61
	Total	124	113	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (61)	57 (63)	66 (68)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	45	66	79
	Girls	55	58	73
	Total	100	124	152
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	50 (53)	62 (50)	76 (70)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	115	73	188

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	87	89
	Girls	61	51	46
	Total	141	138	135
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (71)	73 (70)	72 (53)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (36)	41 (33)	27 (15)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	78	107
	Girls	55	49	67
	Total	120	127	174
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (53)	68 (58)	93 (88)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (6)	32 (32)	37 (43)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	12
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	821
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	1
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: Y6 – Y9**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y6 – Y9**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	237

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y6 – Y9**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y6 – Y9**

Key Stage 2	25.8
Key Stage 3	25.5

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1,841,494
Total expenditure	1,853,309
Expenditure per pupil	2,209
Balance brought forward from previous year	91,940
Balance carried forward to next year	80,125

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	839
Number of questionnaires returned	143

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	48	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	47	6	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	46	19	3	1
The teaching is good.	41	52	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	39	13	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	41	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	33	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	51	15	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	45	46	6	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	6	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	42	4	3	2

The response to the parents' meeting (16 attended), and to the parental questionnaire (17%), was limited.



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

### **ENGLISH**

- 71 By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 9, standards are well above average. During their time in school pupils experience a broad range of activities and they benefit from much good teaching. They have positive attitudes and work very hard.
- 72 In recent years standards of literacy on entry into Year 6 have been below the national average, and standards in writing have been very weak. Results in the national English tests at age 11 have been well below average, although work seen for current pupils in Year 6 shows that sound gains are being made. The attainment of girls and boys is broadly similar. The national test results at age 14 are well above average. Girls' results are higher than boys', matching the national difference. The trend in results is rising.
- 73 At the end of Year 6, standards are below average in speaking and listening. Pupils discuss topics in pairs and engage in discussion at a basic level, led by the teacher. They use standard English confidently and speak to their teachers appropriately. Listening skills are good during whole class discussion, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop oral skills through groupwork. Almost all classroom exchanges are brief, and there are many silent members in a class. Reading levels are in line with the national average. A great deal of emphasis is placed on developing focused reading, and pupils benefit from working on a wide range of texts. They make significant gains in this skill during Year 6. Although pupils make steady progress in writing, standards remain below the national average. Extensive work is done at word and sentence level, but pupils are not always able to transfer these skills into their own writing; many pupils have technical weaknesses in basic punctuation which hamper progress. Good work is produced by able pupils. For example, when writing about Manchester airport they presented their arguments in well-composed essay form. Less able pupils, who have some success with short pieces of teacher-directed work, have limited opportunities for independent extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs make positive gains in reading, but make less progress with their writing skills. All pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and they produce attractive classroom displays.
- 74 By the end of Year 9, pupils reach well-above-national standards, and progress from Year 7 to Year 9 is very good. Standards of speaking and listening are sound. In most lessons seen, oral work was directed by the teacher and offered few opportunities for independent talk, but in one excellent lesson on advertising, Year 9 pupils of average ability were engaged in animated group work. They made spirited contributions to class discussion and were able to develop their responses when challenged by the teacher. Listening skills are good overall. Standards in reading are very good. Most pupils read aloud fluently and with understanding. Pupils in Year 7 read an excellent selection of poetry books with much pleasure. Work

in exercise books offers examples of very good responses to literary texts such as "Black Harvest" and "Midsummer Night's Dream". In a poetry lesson, Year 7 pupils demonstrated that they were also able to analyse metaphor. Writing skills are very good and progress in this skill is rapid across the key stage. For example, a well-designed topic on "Islands" gives pupils opportunities to write in a variety of forms such as diaries, poetry and playscripts. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are able to write in a range of genres; they have learned drafting and editing skills and are able to structure work successfully. Able Year 9 pupils produce sustained pieces of writing and use quotation confidently. In Years 7 to 9 there is opportunity for pupils to draft work on computers, and a clear programme to use ICT is in place, contributing well to raising standards further. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress but still struggle with more extended pieces of writing. Pupils with high ability perform well overall.

- 75 The behaviour of pupils in all years is always good and is often very good. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and their teachers, are strengths. Teachers, without exception, have created a positive ethos for learning, co-operation and courtesy in their classrooms and levels of concentration are high. The independence of pupils is limited because most activities are led by the teacher. Pupils would benefit from more space for initiative and opportunities to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- 76 The quality of teaching is very good overall, and is particularly effective at Years 7 to 9. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and give clear introductions to lessons so pupils understand what they are expected to achieve. At the end of each lesson, pupils have an opportunity to reflect on their learning. Teachers' planning is very good and lessons have good pace and clear focus. Many lessons tend to follow a similar format, where opportunities for wonder and excitement about language are sometimes lost. For example, in one Year 7 lesson on personification, pupils were taught the technique efficiently and given good examples, but had no time to explore the device for themselves. In the best class discussion, the teacher engaged the pupils immediately in learning, probed initial responses and required pupils to expand their views and opinions. Questioning techniques do not consistently encourage exploratory thought and the development of ideas, or draw all pupils into discussion. For example, in one Year 9 class, contributions were made by only six boys, with the rest of the class listening passively. Marking of work is a strength of the department and all books are marked regularly and thoroughly. Pupils feel confident about asking for help and their teachers give clear guidance about what improvements are needed. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 6 and Year 9 underestimates pupils' achievements: it falls significantly below the standards reached in national tests.
- 77 Subject leadership is very good and significant progress has been made in the organisation of the department over the last two years. Teachers are energetic and hardworking, always seeking ways to improve. Accommodation is satisfactory, with well-kept classrooms and excellent



displays that create a positive learning environment. The large size of groups means that rooms are sometimes cramped and this limits activities, such as the use of drama in lessons. Resources are good, and appropriate schemes of work are all in place.

- 78 Since the previous inspection, progress has been good. Teaching and learning is now monitored on a regular basis. Test results and school data are used well to monitor progress and raise standards, particularly at Years 7 to 9. Pupils are set individual targets for improvement. Texts from a range of different cultures are now studied, as indicated in schemes of work, and contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The implementation of a literacy policy within the subject is very thorough. Opportunities for use of ICT have been identified in Years 7 and 9, but not in Year 6, and this is an issue to address.

- 79 Actions to raise standards further, particularly at age 11, should include:
- gathering accurate evidence of attainment on entry to the school, identifying where specific weaknesses lie and focusing the support to improve results at age 11;
  - developing writing skills in Year 6 to promote creativity and independence of thought, particularly for the highest and lowest attainers, and making better use of information and communication technology, and
  - improving the accuracy of teacher assessment at ages 11 and 14.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 80 Pupils make very good progress in mathematics, reflected in the above average results in the national tests at age 14. Pupils have a mature attitude towards their work and move onto the next school with considerable confidence for continuing success.
- 81 Although pupils make satisfactory progress in their first two terms, results in the national tests at age 11 are still well below average. However, progress in Years 7 to 9 is very good and results at age 14 in the national tests are well above average. The school adds considerable value to attainment in mathematics. The rate of improvement over recent years has been greater than the national rise. Teacher assessments reflect these improvements, but underestimate the percentage of girls reaching at least the expected level at the end of Year 9.
- 82 In Year 6, progress is satisfactory; current pupils acquire a good range of calculating skills and can apply them to problems involving percentages, fractions and decimals. Pupils in lower-attaining classes and those with special educational needs understand how our number system works and remember table facts. They enjoy number games that focus on, for example, the four times table, and enter into the activities enthusiastically. Most can easily find factors of any 2-digit number and explain their methods for doing this to others in the class. A few pupils have weak understanding of the basic mathematical concepts. High attaining pupils can identify square and rectangle numbers, and use this information to predict the next term in sequences, where the first term is not 1. They know about negative numbers and can both add and subtract in the context of real problems and using number lines. Not all are yet totally confident to simplify more complicated numerical expressions involving brackets but they are beginning to understand conventional mathematical rules. Overall, progress is satisfactory in the required areas of study, and standards are as expected at that age.
- 83 By the age of 14, numerical and algebraic skills have been improved considerably. Progress in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Pupils' work books show regular coverage of different areas of mathematics, although the application of ICT skills in mathematics are not well developed. Lower attaining pupils can apply their knowledge of mathematics with considerable

success to solve problems, mentally, connected with proportion, number and place value, shape and geometrical puzzles, multiplication and division. Most, but not all, can use equipment to measure angles to a good degree of accuracy. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of how to conduct an investigation in mathematics or carry out a practical problem-solving task. They develop very good independent learning skills and can work efficiently in small groups, sharing and extending mathematical ideas. High-attaining pupils, including the talented and gifted mathematicians, can develop alternative approaches to the solution of problems. Many are able to move from spotting algebraic patterns arising from their work, to establishing and checking that their formulae work. They can explain their mathematical thinking and communicate this effectively to each other, the class and the teacher. Pupils with special education needs make good progress in acquiring number skills.

- 84 Standards of teaching and learning are good. In the majority of lessons, teaching is effective, with some very good features. On occasion, teaching and learning are excellent. In none of the lessons observed were teaching and learning less than satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good, and is reflected in the emphasis placed on the correct use of mathematical language. Planning is mostly effective, clearly showing how the objectives for pupils' learning are to be achieved. Teachers use a variety of teaching and learning methods and expectations are usually high. Where teaching and learning are at their best, the activities presented are interesting, capture pupils' attention quickly, and lessons start with a demanding mental mathematical problem. Pupils show sustained concentration, learn rapidly and high expectations are maintained throughout the lesson. They enjoy the work and the humour in the engaging methods used. Often a summary brings together what has been learnt, and homework effectively prepares pupils for the next step in learning. Where there are weaker features in otherwise satisfactory lessons, pupils are not asked to explain their methods, and errors in their thinking are not always corrected.
- 85 There are many instances where very good teaching leads to effective learning. For example, a Year 8 class was starting a series of lessons on probability. After an effective mental starter challenge which set high expectations, pupils placed a series of events, some very humorous, onto a probability scale, from 'will happen' to 'will not' happen. The mathematical interest and attention in the room was high. The activity suddenly became much more relevant as the teacher asked each, in turn, to predict the next colour of a pastille from a packet of fruit pastilles, and recorded the outcomes. A 'success' gained the fruit pastille - at the end of the lesson, of course! The teacher deliberately attempted to influence the perception of the probability, as for example, when two black pastilles came together. Pupils were fascinated, almost into disbelief, by the eventual distribution of black fruit pastilles in one packet. They knew how their estimates of probability were being affected by the preceding event. They learnt about equally likely and un-equally likely events. This was a very good lesson in which the fundamental ideas of probability were learnt. It also provided a very good springboard to move onto the mathematical measurement of

probability. Intense discussion, and some expected frustration, gave rise to enlightened mathematical thinking in a Year 9 class on problem-solving investigation to examine the number of hidden and visible faces when regular cubes were placed in increasingly complex shapes. The teacher structured the feedback to pupils so that they were able to learn very effectively and develop their own solutions. Teaching and learning was very good.

- 86 Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are very positive. Many enjoy the lessons and can say what they have learnt, with confidence. They are able to explain what they have to do and face up to the sometimes difficult challenges that mathematics presents with a determination to succeed. This attitude has a strong, positive bearing on standards and progress in lessons.
- 87 The leadership and management of the department are very good. The mathematics team is energetically led with a very personal and passionate vision for the future. New ideas are eagerly embraced and training for the new initiatives is planned. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements, is balanced across the required areas of work, apart from the lack of use of ICT, and is enriched by historical and imaginative perspectives. Booster classes provide further challenge for high attaining pupils. The development plan is good, but success criteria are not always specific enough to measure improvements. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is good and leads to improving standards, particularly by the end of Year 9. The assessment systems enable staff to determine pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses. Further analysis of the attainment of pupils on entry and of their rate of progress through Year 6 is required. Targets for pupils are set, but Year 6 pupils need to have more information on what they need to do to improve.
- 88 The department has made good progress since the previous report. A well-conceived vision statement now introduces the departmental guidelines. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is in place, and is having beneficial effects on standards of attainment. The department should raise standards, particularly at age 11, by:
- analysing pupils' strengths and weaknesses on entry to the school and taking actions to improve results in tests at age 11;
  - establishing a whole school approach to improving numeracy skills in subjects, and
  - integrating information and communication technology fully into teaching and learning.

## **SCIENCE**

- 89 Standards in science show marked improvement as pupils move through the school because of good leadership, a very good curriculum and enthusiastic, well-informed teaching.

- 90 In 2000, results at age 11 in the national tests were well below average, in the bottom 5 per cent of similar schools. Far fewer pupils than normal achieved at an above average level, and the proportion achieving below average was much higher than normal. This reflects sound achievement from the well below standards of the same pupils on entry at age 10. Boys' results were better than girls'. This difference has emerged since the previous inspection. Since the previous inspection, results at age 11 have risen from 44 per cent of pupils achieving the average standard or better in 1996 to 66 per cent in 2000. Standards have not risen as fast as they have nationally and the gap between the school's results and the national results has been widening. These results reflect pupils' weak science, literacy and numeracy skills on entry, the low amount of time given to the subject in Year 6 and a weaker revision programme for the tests than is provided at age 14.
- 91 Results in the Year 2000 national tests at age 14 were well above average, and showed improvement on 1999 when they were generally average. Achievement was very good compared with similar schools and particularly strong amongst the average and lower-attaining pupils. However, there is some underachievement amongst average-attaining girls. Higher attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily but could do even better. Boys achieved much better than the girls at both the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6. Results in 2000 were much higher than those reported at the previous inspection. Standards are similar to those seen in English and mathematics. The overall trend in the past four years has mirrored the national trend.
- 92 In the work of current Year 6 pupils, standards at age 11 reflect last year's national test results and are well below average. High-attaining pupils work comfortably at a higher level across all aspects of work. For instance, they understand the difference between primary and secondary consumers and use the correct electrical symbols to draw simple series and parallel circuits. Their standards in investigative work are commensurate with their abilities and they are starting to develop an inquisitive approach to investigations. Average-attaining pupils are less sure of the correct conventions to use when drawing simple electrical circuits but have a grasp of some important principles such as the magnetic rule and that gravity is a force and is measured in units of Newtons. Good vocabulary work is sometimes a key feature, as was seen in a lesson where pupils were learning the names and functions of each part of a plant cell. This approach helps to address noticeable weaknesses in literacy skills, but pupils' ability to write convincing explanations of why things happen in science, and their recording of observations remains weak, especially amongst low-attaining pupils. Good use of essay structures helps pupils to write better accounts of their scientific investigations. Little use is made of information and communication technology to enhance standards and opportunities are not embedded well in the schemes of work.
- 93 Standards achieved by current Year 9 pupils are well above average. Year 9 pupils have recently taken their national tests and are already working confidently on their GCSE work. Standards above average in biology, chemistry and physics for pupils of all abilities, and the extremely good

attention given to scientific enquiry results in even higher standards in this skill. High attainers can use symbols when writing chemical equations, explain how light is refracted in water and investigate the factors that affect the swing of a pendulum. They are less proficient at writing incisive predictions and drawing conclusions that are consistent with the evidence they collect. Many average-attaining pupils use the particle theory of matter to explain changes of state, know the names and functions of the important organs in the human body and recognised how energy is transferred. Scientific thinking skills are strong, as was seen when average attainers showed that they could explain how osmosis occurred using the idea of particles and concentration gradients. Low attainers in Year 9 are also doing work at a higher level than expected and, for example, in their bridging project on Earth and Space, some understand that an artificial satellite stays the same height above the Earth because it has balanced forces acting on it, and many showed a good knowledge of the nine planets in the solar system. Whilst they develop good understanding of science in everyday life, the historical and multi-cultural perspective of science receive less attention. Work is neat and well-presented. Spelling, punctuation and presentation of work are much improved from Year 6. Numeracy is used appropriately to help in calculations, and when drawing and interpreting graphs. Information and communication technology continues to feature more strongly in writing up investigations than in other work.

- 94 Pupils of all abilities have very good attitudes to the subject. They work very hard in lessons and safely during practical work. As they grow older, they develop a healthy curiosity and interest in the subject. Behaviour, both of boys and girls, is also very good and reflects very positive classroom relationships. Their very positive attitude towards science feeds through to their national test results, especially at age 14.
- 95 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is strongest in Years 7 to 9 where there is some very effective teaching, especially of the top sets. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good but overhasty teaching occasionally leads to misinformation being given to pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and this is conveyed to pupils. Teachers use a wide variety of stimulating and well-chosen practical activities which help to maintain pace, challenge pupils and promote high levels of understanding. Individual teachers plan their lessons in different ways and quality is not always assured. In the very best teaching, they share very clear objectives with pupils and use plenaries well to help conclude the lesson. However, in other lessons seen the aims of the lesson were not clear enough to pupils and the lessons ended with haste or without time set aside to reflect on what had been learnt. Some innovative methods are used to good effect such as concept maps and writing frames for investigative work, but there is a lack of agreement on the key techniques that all teachers should use to raise standards. Learning support assistants are deployed well in lessons and their impact on standards of attainment and behaviour is good. Teachers' expectations are sound in Year 6 and good in Year 7 to 9. Pupils of all abilities receive very good challenge but, occasionally, opportunities are missed to probe their understanding through

more open and extended questioning. Teachers manage pupils very well, with very good relationships helping to create a productive working atmosphere. Marking gives encouragement and helps point out achievement, but does not always give a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in learning. Pupils' learning targets are not always linked to a clear, scientific goal. Satisfactory use is made of homework but the range of activities provided at present is narrow.

- 96 Across the department, consistency is required to strengthen the quality of teaching further and share good practice. The very good curriculum has richness and challenge and helps support high standards for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. Good procedures are in place to assess standards, but teacher assessment is inaccurate and over-generous in Years 7 to 9. The spacious laboratories are modern, and high quality display helps create a stimulating environment. There are insufficient up-to-date textbooks to help pupils learn in class and at home; however, very good levels of practical resources, and the extremely high quality technical support, help underpin the high level of practical work. Progress since the previous inspection has been good in that standards at age 14 have risen considerably and the quality of teaching has improved slightly. However, there has been little erosion of the difference in standards achieved by boys and girls. Results at age 11 continue to fall behind national standards, and assessment is still not used as well as it could be to identify pupils' learning needs.
- 97 Action points to raise standards further, particularly at age 11, should include:
- improved accuracy and use of teacher assessment in Year 6, and
  - more consistent sharing of the existing very good features of teaching, particularly focused on teaching strategies that improve the performance of girls.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 98 At age 11, standards meet the national expectation. This is true for boys and girls and for all aspects of the required programmes of study. Pupils demonstrate technical competence and expressive skills in the range of media they use. Pupils acquire an increasing range of artistic skills, knowledge and understanding as they work through their first year in the school. Many pupils have appropriate knowledge of famous artists and their work; they use technical vocabulary with understanding and confidence. Low attainers show less control in the use of materials. High attainers demonstrate greater control of materials, their output of work increases, and they demonstrate greater self-knowledge of their progress in the subject. Good drawing and colouring skills are developed through creative effort and concentration. The pastel work on 'Fruit' and the painting exercise exploring 'Abstract Art' provide good evidence of this learning.

- 99 By the age of 14, boys' and girls' standards are broadly in line with the national expectation. Teacher assessments confirm this position. Many pupils show increased knowledge of a variety of artists and use an extended, technical vocabulary accurately. Workbooks illustrate gains in independent learning which are not extended sufficiently because regular homework is not set. Pupils successfully extend work done on earlier designs into new forms of expression. This is demonstrated well in painting work inspired by 'Aboriginal' art and the three-dimensional masks resulting from 'African' studies in Year 7. Painting and composition skills are developed, and colour is handled boldly and sensitively. The impressive series on the use of faces to explore colour and collage is a good example in Year 8. In Year 9, pupils can translate well-researched drawings into imaginative and highly decorated slab pots. Pupils with special needs are well integrated into lesson activities and maintain their interest. They make good progress. The needs of more able learners are also considered and they make good progress. The teaching style adopted for this group, together with the setting of higher expectations, combine to create greater challenge. There are plans to extend this identified group further.
- 100 Attitudes to work are good in Year 6 and very good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are quick to settle, listen attentively and are well-behaved. Much care is taken in the presentation of work, and pupils are generally enthusiastic, with particularly high levels of concentration at Years 7 to 9.
- 101 Standards of teaching and learning are good in all years. They are most effective when good subject knowledge and understanding relates well to the needs of pupils and are combined with well-planned tasks, high expectations, probing questioning, good pace and increasing challenge. Sharing of responses to the tasks set at the end of the lesson is not always done. Procedures for monitoring progress across the years are good and include setting individual targets for pupils; however, the range of data available is not currently used to inform curricular planning. The work of the art department contributes to the development of pupils' literacy skills. All projects have new technical vocabulary lists recorded in work books and key words are discussed thoroughly and displayed in class. Work from attainment target 2 and end of project evaluation sheets both include written work, which is consistently marked, but not always corrected.
- 102 Art room displays are very good and celebrate achievements. The amount of work in folders is limited because art is currently taught in rotation as one of the many activities within the design and technology department. This explains why standards are only in line with expected levels despite the good teaching and learning. The school has already planned new timetable arrangements which are intended to provide continuity and progression on a weekly basis. Good teaching, thorough planning, clear priorities and an emphasis on basic skills have had a significant impact on standards. Art is managed very well and the subject specialist has been supported very effectively by the head of department.



- 103 The art curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' cultural, moral and social education. It promotes a sense of self-worth through achievement. It raises awareness of the varieties of creativity, stimulates self-expression and encourages pupils to take pride in their work. The department recognises the value of the spiritual aspect of education as part of personal development, and pursues this to some extent, although opportunities for reflection are at times missed in class.
- 104 Since the previous inspection, very good progress has been made, particularly in raising achievement and in the much improved quality of teaching. Pupils' understanding and practical skills have also progressed as a result of the high expectations made clear in lessons. Well-considered schemes of work offer a range of learning experiences in both two and three dimensional media. Images resulting from an exploration of the work of Matisse and Mondrian at Years 7 to 9 are good examples of the use of information and communication technology as part of the art curriculum, although more can be done to develop the use of this medium further.
- 105 Actions to raise standards should include:
- more consistent use of homework to reinforce course skills and promote independent learning;
  - increased opportunities for reflection to enhance spiritual development, and
  - the implementation of the revised timetable to improve continuity and progression.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 106 Since the previous report, standards have continued to improve, with pupils being supported well by high quality teaching and learning. Pupils are eager to participate in the subject and make very good progress in developing their designing and making skills. The subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 107 By the age of 11, standards are above average. When designing, pupils are able to gather information independently about puzzles and games and use it to produce ideas that can be made in resistant materials (wood, metal and plastic). Pupils sketch their ideas well, using a range of colouring media and techniques in textiles and make choices between the decorative designs to cater for individual tastes. When making, pupils can combine a range of ingredients in food successfully to create rock cakes. Pupils organise themselves extremely well and ensure the cakes they make match their recipe. The rate of progress in pupils' learning from the time they enter the school to age eleven is very good. This is because they are supported well by competent teachers and clearly-planned units of work.
- 108 Standards at the age of 14 are well above those normally seen. When designing a mechanical toy, pupils investigate a range of toys, make

comments on them and use the findings to develop their ideas. In food, pupils research a range of breads on the basis of taste, texture and looks so they can choose the one they prefer to use for their sandwich design. Pupils use a very good range of designing strategies to support their work and show different ways of presenting ideas. When making a wall hanging in textiles, pupils work well from the plans they have produced, modifying them if they are too difficult to make. They are expert at using hand and machine sewing techniques safely to stitch their designs onto fabric, demonstrating high quality precision and control. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils make very good progress in their learning. There is no difference in the rate of progress made by boys compared with girls. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in all years.

- 109 Pupils enjoy design and technology and get excited at the prospect of making high quality products. They work with a very good level of interest, and the concentration shown by a significant majority is very good. Behaviour is consistently very good; pupils relate well towards each other and show excellent respect for their teachers.

- 110 The overall quality of teaching is very good, with some teaching being excellent. In the best lessons, teachers make use of a well formulated lesson structure, starting with a clear introduction, leading to practical activities where the teacher provides good support and works with individual pupils to make sure each understands what is being taught. Effective lessons end with a good review and consolidation of what has been learnt or achieved. In these lessons, the impact on pupils' creative and making skills is very good, as was observed in a CAD/CAM lesson (computer-aided drawing and manufacture) where pupils were planning machining pathways. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of particular media are very good. For example, in a lesson on constructing framed structures, the teacher used key terminology well and demonstrated effectively the safe use of a sanding disc. Pupils are always managed very well, with teachers providing whole class and individual support as appropriate. This support is sensitive and is effective in ensuring that pupils remain focused on the task set.
- 111 Curriculum provision for the subject is excellent and provides all pupils with ample opportunities to receive an appropriate depth of knowledge and understanding of subject content. The use of computers to support learning in design and technology is excellent in resistant materials, but they are used less well in food, textiles, electronics and graphics.
- 112 The subject co-ordinator provides excellent leadership and clear, educational direction for the subject. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of the teaching and learning are very good, with teachers producing individual portfolios of evidence of pupils' work and sharing good practice with each other. Assessment procedures in the subject are developed well and there is good formal assessment of progress made by pupils, though they are not yet involved fully in the process. Teacher assessments provide accurate benchmarks against which to assess standards. Reports to parents provide very good detail of standards reached in design and technology, and of how pupils can improve their work and achieve more highly.
- 113 Accommodation and resources are in excellent order; staff have worked hard to create vibrant areas despite shortcomings in the size of some rooms and the lack of technician support for the heavy crafts. Technician support maintains effective displays of pupils' work that celebrate their success, and performs key administrative functions to enable teaching staff to focus on teaching.
- 114 Since the previous inspection report, attainment, progress and quality of teaching have all improved, giving pupils an even better quality of education in design and technology. Actions to promote further improvement should include:
- the provision of extension activities to challenge gifted and talented pupils;
  - the involvement of pupils in the assessment process, and
  - the embedding of information and communication technology in more units of work.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 115 Standards achieved in geography at ages 11 and 14 are in line with the national expectation. Pupils in all years make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Their use of geographical skills is a strength. For example, in Year 6, pupils can draw useful sketch maps of Stratford. In Year 7 they use graphical skills to describe the differences in climate in Italy. In Year 8, progress is good. This is because more time is allocated to the subject and, as a result, pupils study geography to a greater

depth and detail; they use simple statistics well to describe the school's microclimates. In Year 9, they can explain the physical processes involved in changing landscapes.

- 116 Oral skills are good. Year 7 pupils give thoughtful answers to account for the disparity of development in the regions of Italy. In Year 8, pupils describe clearly the factors leading to migration from Central America and also describe the variety of landscape and society in Brazil. Written work is always well presented with maps and diagrams of good quality. There is no difference between the progress of boys and that of girls. High-attaining pupils sometimes have the opportunity to progress well through the use of extended homework and assessed projects, as in the work on school microclimates in Year 8.
- 117 Pupils are punctual, settle down quickly into lessons and are interested in their work. They are responsible and respond well to their teachers. Pupils are always courteous, helpful and show respect. They work hard and cooperate well with each other. Levels of concentration are good. Classroom assistants support pupils with special educational needs. They learn to write clearly and accurately and listen well. Key words are displayed in classrooms to help pupils to understand and use subject specific words.
- 118 Teaching is always at least satisfactory, often good and, on occasion, very good. Most teachers are well-qualified and have a depth of knowledge and expertise which is passed on well to pupils. Oral work is helped by the good use of questioning techniques to elicit from pupils what they already know. In particular teachers are patient in encouraging participation by more reticent pupils. Lessons are planned and managed well, and in the most effective lessons, the imaginative use of a variety of resources and styles of teaching stimulates interest. Lessons are taught as a whole class but often contain elements of group and individual work which provide good opportunities to develop independent learning. As a result of the effective teaching, pupils learn well.
- 119 Pupils of all abilities are managed well, and appropriate work is matched to the needs of less-able pupils, who make good progress. Extension work for the more-able is not targeted rigorously enough to improve their work further. Marking is consistent and helpful. Pupils are informed of their national curriculum levels at major assessments. Targets are set which motivate and inform pupils. However, this practice is just starting and needs to be enhanced. Fieldwork is organised well, but lacks geographical rigour. Opportunities for pupils to gather and process data are insufficient. This is the one geographical skill that is weak and needs to be developed. Information and communication technology is an underused resource in fieldwork.
- 120 The head of department provides very good leadership and is making good progress in developing the subject. The curriculum meets statutory requirements; its contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Planning is effective, and the members of the

department work well together. Formal monitoring of teaching and learning is in place, but the department recognises the need for further development. Assessment procedures are good; the assessment management system helps to direct curricular development. New schemes of work show logical progression and are regularly monitored. However, the limited allocation of curricular time sometimes means that some areas of work are covered superficially. Departmental resources and accommodation are good. There is some evidence of the use of information and communication technology in pupils' work. However, it is mainly confined to word processing and there is limited use of spreadsheets or data handling.

121 Since the previous inspection, progress has much improved and the less able are now achieving to an appropriate standard. Teachers' expectations are high, planning is better and lessons offer clear aims and objectives with a greater variety of teacher and learning styles. Pupils now use a greater variety of resources and independent learning is beginning to take a higher priority.

122 Actions to raise standards further should include:

- the use of information and communication technology to develop skills in gathering and processing data, and
- the provision of work matched to the need of more able pupils.

## HISTORY

123 Standards achieved in history at ages 11 and 14 are in line with the national expectation. Pupils in each year group make good progress. In Year 6, they have a good understanding of chronology, can give accurate descriptions of events and are beginning to use a range of different sources. The oral interviews they undertake about the history of South Wigston are a useful exercise in the gathering and interpretation of "first-hand" evidence. Pupils in Year 7 are able to look at why events happen and begin to tease out the relationship between different causes, for example the reasons why the Norman invasion occurred and the way in which King Harold was defeated. The benefits of additional time for history are clearly evident in Year 8, enabling pupils to produce structured and detailed written work; for example on the reasons for, and nature of, the Trade Triangle in the 19th Century. Pupils are encouraged to interpret data and particularly effective use is made of evidence from the 1851 Census. The written work produced by the more able pupils in Year 9 is of a high standard, demonstrating their ability to reconstruct and explain events in the past; for example, explanations of different interpretations of the motives surrounding the policy of appeasement. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well both by classroom assistants and through the use of writing frames to match their needs.

124 Behaviour in most lessons is usually good and is often excellent, with pupils keen to be involved. Staff insist on high standards, and pupils rise to them.

Pupils usually sustain their interest and effort throughout the lesson and make good use of their time.

- 125 The quality of teaching is generally good; it is sometimes very good and is never less than satisfactory. As a result, pupils learn well. In the most effective lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is used to stimulate interest and there is a sense of purpose and pace. The work in these lessons is pitched appropriately. For example, a lesson to higher-ability Year 9 pupils on the carving of Trajan's column captivated their imagination and stimulated very good debate and enquiry about the nature and validity of the evidence available. In all the lessons seen clear objectives were set and generally achieved. Good use was made of time with particularly effective, short tasks being set at the start of the lesson while routines such as registration took place. Questioning techniques are good. Good use is made of recapitulation by most teachers to consolidate the learning during the lesson. In the least effective lessons, teachers' introductions were over-lengthy, leaving too little time for pupils to complete tasks. Much of the teaching in history is undertaken by non-specialists which does, at times, lead to a lack of accuracy and depth in subject knowledge. There has been an improvement since the previous inspection on the

range of teaching strategies used. However, the large size of some groups inhibits the development of more active strategies to involve pupils more directly in their learning, such as drama.

- 126 The scope and range of the curriculum is in line with National Curriculum guidelines, though the small amount of time allocated to history in Years 6, 7 and 9 makes it difficult to study the units in the required depth. This is further complicated by differences in the coverage of the syllabus between teachers. Good use is made of common assignments in order to determine National Curriculum levels. Target sheets are used at the start of each module to guide future progress and work in books is regularly marked, though little advice is given to help pupils to improve further.
- 127 The department is adequately resourced with good quality worksheets, photographs and source materials supplementing a somewhat restricted bank of textbooks. There is very good access to information and communication technology and some planned use of it. At present, the use of information and communication technology is not exploited sufficiently to enhance learning and teaching.
- 128 The department benefits from clear leadership. Staff training and development is managed well, and the work of the department is monitored regularly. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress. Links with primary schools have been strengthened, allowing greater continuity of learning.
- 129 Actions to raise standards should include:
- increased time allocation for history in Years 6, 7 and 9;
  - further improvement to schemes of work to ensure a common entitlement of experience for all pupils, and
  - more use of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

- 130 Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained and remain good by the time pupils move to the next stage in their education. The school has made a significant investment in information and communication technology and this has ensured that all pupils now have access to good quality resources.
- 131 By the age of 11, standards are above the national expectation. Pupils are able to word process their writing and combine text with graphics, as seen in their poster- style layout for an Easter holiday. They use a spreadsheet program to create a simple cost sheet in a unit of work called "It's raining again". When handling information, pupils can enter numbers or text into a prepared database and undertake simple searches. The rate of progress in pupils' learning in Year 6 is good. This is because they are supported well by



competent teachers and follow a specific course in the development of their ICT skills.

- 132 Standards at age 14 are above those that are normally seen. By the end of Year 9 all pupils can produce a travel agency brochure which combines text and graphics in a layout that shows pupils can produce professional layouts for adults. Pupils' knowledge and use of spreadsheets continue to improve. They can create spreadsheets which use formulae to calculate costing and profit margins for "Whoever in concert", an imaginary entertainment production. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils make good progress in their learning. Further progress is limited because they have few opportunities to build on their existing knowledge due to insufficient application of information and communication technology in other subjects. There are, however, some excellent examples where the use of computers has significantly enhanced subject provision and improved pupils' knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology. One of these examples is in design and technology in which pupils engage with computer aided drawing (CAD) and manufacture (CAM) to a very high standard and produce puzzles. There is no difference in the rate of progress made by boys when compared with girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years and use computers well to improve literacy, using "Word" and the Internet, to search and capture text and pictures for projects.
- 133 Pupils enjoy working with computers. They work with a good level of interest, and the concentration shown by a significant majority is good. Behaviour is consistently very good. Pupils relate well with each other and show respect for their teachers. More able users of information and communication technology are willing to help others and show confidence when asked by the teacher to demonstrate to the whole class.
- 134 The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some teaching being very good or excellent. When teaching is very good, teachers create a calm, orderly atmosphere and have a clear idea of what is to be covered in each lesson. Their knowledge and understanding of the subject demonstrated during lessons is very good. For example, in a lesson on desktop publishing the teacher constantly used the correct terminology to describe the tasks and the features of the software being used. Pupils are always managed well. Support for individuals is sensitive and effective whether from the teacher or technicians. A particularly strong feature observed in some of the teaching is the use of review sessions at the end of lessons to summarise what has been learned and achieved.
- 135 Provision for the subject is excellent and provides all pupils with ample opportunities for them to receive an appropriate depth of knowledge and understanding of computers and their value in pupils' learning. However, the use of computers to support learning in other subjects is below that normally seen and therefore limits pupils' progress.
- 136 The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and is beginning to make progress in the development of the subject. However, although she is in a

position to influence the use of computers to improve learning, the whole school strategy is still not being implemented fully and needs reviewing. There are too few good examples of gifted and talented pupils working on projects that are both challenging and relevant to their learning needs. The design of the school web-site is a good example of how well more able pupils respond to challenge. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are good, but further sharing of good practice is needed. Assessment procedures in the subject are well-developed. There is very good formal assessment of progress made by each pupil in their ICT lessons, but assessment is not yet fully established in other subjects delivering aspects of information and communication technology. Teacher assessments tend to be generous when judged against the national average at the end of Year 9 and do not yet provide accurate benchmarks against which to assess standards. Reports to parents do not provide sufficient detail of how pupils can improve their work and achieve more highly.

- 137 Pupils' access to information technology has been improved, with the provision of additional high quality computers bringing the pupils-to-computer ratio up to the national average. The technicians are very competent and ensure systems are fully operational, and non-specialist teachers are very well supported. The school has identified a clear need for further professional development for all staff and has started to address this issue through the New Opportunities Funding scheme.
- 138 Since the previous inspection report, attainment, progress and quality of teaching have been maintained and remain at a good level. Action to promote further improvement should include:
- developing pupil portfolios to establish benchmarks to improve teacher assessment;
  - creating more opportunities for pupils to use their computer skills across all subjects of the curriculum, and
  - continuing to deliver and monitor the subject development plan priorities.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – FRENCH AND GERMAN**

- 139 In modern foreign languages, pupils benefit from a broad curricular experience and expert teaching. They work hard and behave well, and so they make good progress in language learning. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development.
- 140 Pupils begin French in Year 6, a year before required by the National Curriculum, and so they have a head start on most schools by the end of Year 6. This is a considerable advantage as they make good progress in Year 6, and this is sustained through the rest of their time at the school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above the norm, because pupils start early and are taught well. Most can understand the teacher speaking French almost all the time and can use a good range of basic, familiar language covered so far, for example to speak about the rooms in their house. However, speaking is confined mostly to set phrases directed by the teacher. Pronunciation is very good, except sometimes when reading aloud. Written work is neatly presented and is generally accurate when copying or filling in missing words, using prompts provided. A few pupils with special educational needs remain dependent on support to say a few basic phrases and they make spelling mistakes; however, their progress is good, thanks to the skilled teaching.
- 141 During Years 7 to 9, pupils continue to develop their language skills well, building well on the good foundation established in their first year. By the end of Year 9, they achieve language levels above the average. Teacher assessments show that results are steadily improving to above the national average. These high standards are reflected in lessons. High attainers understand, and use well, past and future tenses. They use confidently a good range of familiar language, both in speaking and writing. They develop

a good grasp of grammatical structures and, through the structured teaching and their positive attitudes to learning, learn to apply them confidently. Their pronunciation is good and they speak confidently, for example, in an extended dialogue about a recent visit abroad. They also write accurately, using a good range of structures and expressions. Average and low attainers can understand familiar language well and can use the past and present tense reasonably accurately. They express opinions in speaking and writing, sometimes with support and with some inaccuracies, for example in spelling and in forming verb endings. Reading of key words and phrases is good, although few opportunities were observed for extended reading. Low attainers need a lot of support but gain reasonable confidence to speak basic phrases. They cope well with questions from the teacher but there is little routine use of language by pupils in the classroom. In both key stages, boys are encouraged to join in and they respond well to the active teaching style, making similar progress to girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers make great efforts to support them. This places great demands on teachers when classes are large. There are some opportunities for the most able to be stretched in the top sets, when coping with challenging questions and being expected to re-use language previously covered. However, they lack clearly defined targets to aim for. Learning a second foreign language provides a further challenge. All pupils take German for one lesson a week in Year 8 and many opt to continue in Year 9.

- 142 The standard of teaching is very good. It is always at least good, mostly very good and occasionally excellent. Highly skilled teachers guide pupils through a carefully structured series of activities which build up their language skills. Teachers speak French or German throughout the lesson, carefully choosing their words and using gestures, mime and props to help pupils to understand. They make sure that all stages of learning are clear, so pupils are sure what is expected and what to do. Teachers' insistence on accurate pronunciation and spelling, combined with well-paced, whole-class practice, ensures that pupils understand and use language structures with confidence and reasonable accuracy. Teachers make expert use of key words and phrases, attractively displayed in the classroom, to reinforce language points: for example, to stress the link between spelling and pronunciation or to improve use of correct verb forms. All of these features contribute strongly to the development of both literacy and foreign language skills. Teachers judge well the level of questions to ask different pupils, as in a Year 7 class, where the teacher skilfully encouraged slow learners, making sure they all succeeded, while also giving more challenging questions to stretch those who understood more. Teachers work very hard to include everyone, but this task makes great demands on them when there are large classes, a wide range of ability and little extra support. Teachers teach to the whole class most of the time, maintaining good pace and giving pupils a clear sense of purpose but, in their enthusiasm, do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise speaking, either as part of a structured task or routinely in the classroom. Teachers encourage good motivation by using real objects and frequent references to how pupils could find the language they learn useful, for instance, going to a football match or helping a friend to order a meal. This

helps to keep boys interested. The successful programme of visits to France is also used to stimulate interest and provide a reason for learning the language, as well as giving pupils valuable cultural insights. Teachers establish high expectations for work and behaviour and use a judicious balance of praise, support and challenge, which the pupils respect. This leads to ideal conditions for learning. Behaviour is impeccable, the slightest whisper being considered out of place. Pupils settle quickly to tasks and sustain high levels of concentration. They apply themselves well and make good progress in developing their language skills. A minor weakness is that, although objectives are clear, they are not consistently reviewed and used to set specific class and individual targets. This means that, although pupils understand and work hard at tasks set, they do not always see what these tasks are leading to and how they can improve.

- 143 The head of department ably leads a strong team. Teachers work well together, sharing good ideas, supporting and monitoring each other in a professional way. They show great enthusiasm and dedication and are keen to go on improving. Very good systems are already in place for assessing pupils and analysing test results, leading to targets for improvement. These need to be used in class more, in order to support and challenge individual pupils, particularly the most able. Computers are underused as yet, but the department has begun to use them and teachers are undergoing training. The steady improvement in results indicates good progress since the previous inspection. The department shows the capacity to go on improving.
- 144 In order to improve further, the department needs to:
- develop ways of helping pupils to use French and German routinely in lessons;
  - make clear to pupils how well they are doing and give them specific targets and guidance on how to do better, and
  - use information and communication technology to enhance language learning.

## **MUSIC**

- 145 Music makes an effective contribution to the life and aims of the school. The school has recently found it difficult to recruit music staff. This has resulted in some disjointed experiences for pupils as they change teachers, are taught by supply teachers or receive a below average number of music lessons. The school is aware of these problems and has made reasonable efforts to try to improve upon the situation.
- 146 The attainment of Year 6 pupils is similar to that normally found for this age group. The classes that have received a lesson consistently with the same teacher are securely at this level. Classes that have recently had different teachers, or experienced periods of time without any music lessons are below

average. This feature applies to all year groups. Year 6 pupils have a secure knowledge of music notation. They understand how to write music down and clap and play short passages of music. They sing confidently and in tune. They are aware of key words and use them with confidence. They are effective at finding notes on the keyboard. Their musical understanding is less secure. In particular, they are not able to compose more extended pieces with secure use of expressive qualities, such as making decisions about how loud or fast pieces are.

- 147 The attainment of Year 9 pupils is below average. The school's assessment of pupils suggests an average attainment of level 4 of the National Curriculum. This appears to be accurate. The average expected attainment for this year group is level 5 or 6. Pupils have a sound knowledge of keyboards and can find notes efficiently. They can play and clap rhythms in compound time quite securely and have a reasonably well developed musical vocabulary. They sing with enthusiasm, but with a lack of control and technique. They do not compose pieces that are sufficiently extended, creative and imaginative. There is very limited use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- 148 In all year groups, pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They arrive at lessons promptly and quickly settle to the task given. They co-operate well with each other and continue to work well despite the cramped accommodation and limited resources available. They are responsive to suggestions for improvement. Boys and girls respond equally well.
- 149 The standard of teaching is good for all year groups. There are many positive features in the teaching, such as the good concentration on key skills, such as keyboard technique and use of key vocabulary; the very high expectations for pupils' work; the excellent concentration and rapid pace of learning; the excellent management of pupils, and good classroom organisation which overcomes many difficulties caused by the limited accommodation. These good features ensure that, in all lessons, learning is good. Pupils make progress, particularly in developing keyboard skills or the ability to play and clap short rhythmic passages. Progress in more extended and creative composition tasks is less secure. More opportunities for extended and creative tasks need to be planned in a scheme of work. This will benefit all pupils but ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently stretched. There should also be even more integration of activities, such as performing, composing and listening.
- 150 The department is efficiently managed and led. This has enabled the department to cope well with difficult staffing problems. The departmental development plan lacks sufficient emphasis on teaching and learning and gives too much emphasis to extra-curricular activities. There are insufficient music teachers and a lack of suitable accommodation. This means that, at present, pupils do not consistently receive sufficient teaching to enable them all to reach the level of attainment expected for their age. Resources are just adequate but keyboards are showing signs of ageing and there is not a plan to develop or extend resources over time.

- 151 Sound improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Some areas have not been improved, namely the use of 'expressive interpretations', the coherence of the scheme of work, the use of ICT and a lack of accommodation. Additionally, there are now insufficient teachers, and attainment in Year 9 is below average. Other areas have shown secure improvement: teaching is now good, the pace of lessons is good, there is use of music from outside the Western European tradition, and the strong range of extra-curricular activities has been maintained. These make a positive contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
- 152 In order to improve further the department needs to:
- develop a scheme of work;
  - improve accommodation and staffing;
  - ensure that all pupils receive a minimum entitlement to music lessons, which will enable them to reach an appropriate level of attainment for their age, and
  - improve the use of ICT and provide more extended and creative composition tasks in all year groups.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 153 In physical education, pupils benefit from a broad curriculum and a very good extra-curricular programme. They work with enthusiasm and achieve good standards of performance in a range of physical activities.
- 154 Almost all pupils in Years 6 achieve standards of performance which are as expected for their age, and a significant number achieve above this level. By the end of Year 6, attainment is slightly above that which is typical for pupils of this age. Some good skills and knowledge are being developed; for example, in a Year 6 athletics lesson, the first on hurdling, many pupils were starting to develop a good understanding of basic hurdling technique and were able to demonstrate an improving performance in their stride pattern as they approached the hurdle, with an improving dipped body position over the hurdle.
- 155 There is a similar picture for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 with a significant number of good performers. Some good skills are developed, especially in a range of athletics events, tennis, cricket and softball. For example, in a Year 7 cricket lesson, many pupils were making very good progress in performing a pull-shot with power and accuracy. In a Year 8 tennis lesson, most pupils were able to perform a good serve with an accurate throw of the ball into the air and were able to strike it with increasing accuracy. In a Year 9 athletics lesson on throwing a discus, pupils were making good progress in refining their technique and were starting to extend the distance they could throw the discus. There are good opportunities provided to enable pupils to improve their planning, evaluation and coaching skills in athletics; by the end of Year 9, pupils achieve at a level above that which is typical for their age. This is

supported by the Year 2000 teacher assessment of pupils' performances at the end of Year 9. The percentage of pupils in the school achieving or exceeding the expected level was higher than the national average.

- 156 The vast majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to their lessons. They take a keen interest in their work and strive to learn new skills and improve their performance. Behaviour is invariably good. Teachers establish very good relationships with their pupils and they support them very effectively. Pupils also collaborate very well with their teachers, and with other pupils when working in pairs and small groups.
- 157 All physical education lessons are taught by subject specialists and all teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They work well as a team and provide a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities. There is good use made of effective planning of teaching methods which enables pupils to make good progress. For example in a Year 6 lesson, the teaching of sprint relay was enhanced by very good teaching methods which enabled pupils to experiment with different starting points so they were able to understand the importance of the outgoing runner timing his start in order to maximise speed. In a Year 7 cricket lesson, the teacher made good use of video footage demonstrating a pull-shot, followed by a well-organised practice to enable pupils to develop their technique. Lower-attaining pupils were effectively supported in this lesson by the use of a batting tee to hold the ball in the right position for them to play the correct shot; as a result they made good progress.
- 158 The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides good opportunities for all pupils to develop good skills and knowledge in a range of activities. The criticism in the previous report of an over-emphasis on games activities has led to a review and the introduction of a more balanced programme of activities. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, and parents and pupils alike speak enthusiastically about these opportunities which extend learning and contribute well to moral, social, personal and physical development. There is open access to all pupils who wish to take part in these clubs. The department has identified gifted and talented pupils in the subject and encourages these pupils to attend extra-curricular clubs in school and to pursue their interests further through its links with a range of local sports clubs. The next step is to ensure that lessons provide better opportunities to enhance the skills of the more able pupils even further, for example using them to demonstrate a particular skill to the rest of the group. The facilities for teaching the subject are satisfactory overall, although the indoor facilities do significantly restrict the opportunity to develop indoor games like badminton, basketball, soccer and volleyball.
- 159 The department has made some good improvements since the previous inspection, especially in pupils' attainment. Most pupils were judged to be performing at a level to be expected for their age. Attainment is now above average. Teachers support low-attaining pupils well and provide some good opportunities for them to make progress and improve their skills. Objectives for lessons are now clearly focused, are shared with pupils at the beginning



of lessons and then often recapped at the end. There are better opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work and to suggest how they can improve further. Non-participating pupils are now drawn into the teaching. They are used to assist with judging and to observe and evaluate others' performance, and the department makes good use of observation focus sheets to assist this.

160 Action points to improve further should include:

- the development of assessment procedures and practice, especially in the light of the new eight levels of attainment in physical education, and the review of reports to parents to ensure they convey more clearly what their children know, understand and can do in the subject, and
- the review of the current schemes of work to identify opportunities for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

161 Standards of attainment in religious education by the ages of 11 and 14 are below average. This is due mainly to the insufficient time allowed within the curricular provision for religious education in all years.

162 By the age of 11, pupils have a good knowledge of some aspects of religions, including Christianity and other world faiths. For instance, they can identify the founders of world religions and features of places of worship. They have a good vocabulary which they can use accurately and their work is well presented. However, they have very limited understanding of some of the underlying concepts in the subject so that their learning is often restricted to learning about religion to the exclusion of learning from religion. For example, although they can retell stories such as 'The Lost Son' with some accuracy, they do not readily understand or apply meaning about being sorry and forgiveness.

163 By the age of 14, although standards are better than at the end of Year 6, they remain unsatisfactory overall, affected by a recent change of syllabus as well as insufficient provision of time for religious education. Standards are good in Year 8 when pupils have one lesson per week. This directly affects understanding and relevance of learning. For example, pupils can identify and describe customs and rituals concerned with festivals and life ceremonies of a range of world religions and show a good understanding of the underlying concepts of belief, celebration and authority. They can express their own thoughts and feelings well when given the opportunity to do so. For example, writing about special times in life and hopes for the future was very thoughtful and sensitive. Some Year 9 pupils show exceptional maturity of understanding of the concept "sacred" when writing about their own experience of special writings.

- 164 Pupils have good skills in using information and communication technology, for example PowerPoint, search facilities and CD ROMs when doing their own research and giving presentations to the class. Some topics build well on earlier work, for example, aspects of the Bible. However, at times, there is too much repetition when a subject is revisited, but knowledge and understanding are not sufficiently

deepened. This is especially so for pupils with special needs, when work involves much copying. This does not develop understanding for the less able nor sufficiently challenges the more able pupils.

- 165 Pupils behave very well, showing respect for the subject and for resources. They handled Bibles carefully and were very responsible in using information and communication technology to find out information. They take pride in their work and maintain concentration. They are interested in learning and respond with enthusiasm when allowed to participate, but they can be passive at times when teachers do not include opportunities for them to talk about their own thoughts and experiences
- 166 Because religious education is taught in modules within humanities, it was not possible during the inspection to observe sufficient lessons to make an overall judgement about teaching. However, the following strengths and weaknesses emerged from some lesson observations, together with scrutiny of pupils' work and talks with pupils. It is obvious that non-specialist teachers have worked hard to broaden and deepen their own knowledge of religions, but the lack of specialist expertise limits the use of affective and reflective teaching methods which probe understanding and relate to the pupils' own experience, thereby adding relevance to their learning. There are some very good examples of good practice, such as in Year 9 when pupils were given time to reflect on a piece of writing which was special to them. These good features are not consistent across groups: they need to be shared with other teachers to give parity of experience for pupils and to increase confidence in teachers who are not specialists and are unsure of how to use these methods and approaches.
- 167 Teachers plan their lessons with a clear structure, and lessons are well organised. However, planning does not consistently identify what pupils would be expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of a lesson. Basic skills of writing and presentation are taught well, and work is marked regularly. However, the lack of assessment, based on clear assessment criteria, does not allow progress to be monitored at present, though this aspect is clearly identified on the agenda for development. The lack of varied resources sometimes allows opportunities to be wasted for stimulating interested responses from pupils. For example, in a lesson when pupils were asked to consider what Jesus might have looked like, there were no pictures available for them to reflect upon.
- 168 The department is led well. Much recent development of schemes, based on a clear rationale, has led to considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Reduction in the number of teachers teaching religious education and the introduction of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus has added coherence to the curriculum. It is recognised that this is the first step. Areas identified for development are appropriate and include assessment in line with other humanities subjects; more use of times for reflection, with more effective learning strategies to enable pupils to deepen their understanding. Crucial to the continued improvement in standards is the issue of the time allowed for religious education in the curriculum. The Agreed Syllabus

requires 5 per cent of the total timetable to implement it fully. The present allowance of 2 per cent in Years 6, and 9, 3 per cent in Year 7 and 4 per cent in Year 8 does not ensure compliance. The plans arising from recent curricular review to increase time for humanities will not sufficiently address this point.

- 169 Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils through the study of a variety of beliefs. However, pupils do not have much first-hand experience of the wide variety of faiths and traditions within the local community through the use of visits and visitors to the school.
- 170 Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, with fewer teachers teaching religious education allowing for more consistency, and appropriate, revised schemes of work following the adoption of a common syllabus which all teachers follow. A wider range of teaching methods to include the affective and reflective domains is now used, but these are by no means used consistently by all teachers.
- 171 Issues to address include:
- more time to be provided for religious education to allow the statutory requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus to be met;
  - training to be provided for those teaching religious education to become conversant and confident with approaches which engage the imagination and allow for reflection;
  - assessment to be developed in line with other humanities subjects, but with criteria specific to religious education to monitor pupils' progress more closely, but which also allows for individual response;
  - further revision of schemes of work to ensure compliance with the Agreed Syllabus and to identify expected outcomes in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills, and
  - tasks and activities to be matched more closely to meet the needs of the less able and to provide sufficient challenge for the more able pupils.

The first two action points are outstanding from the previous inspection.