

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BITTERNE PARK SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Southampton

LEA area: Southampton

Unique reference number: 116458

Headteacher: Susan Trigger

Reporting inspector: Dee Wheatley  
3538

Dates of inspection: 30 April – 4 May 2001

Inspection number: 188424

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dimond Road  
Southampton

Postcode: SO18 1BU

Telephone number: 02380 325200

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Marker

Date of previous inspection: 29 April 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3538	D Wheatley	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are the standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19693	S Hall	Lay inspector		How high are the standards - pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4908	I Farquhar	Team inspector	Mathematics	
16434	R Samways	Team inspector	English	
14429	A Stillman	Team inspector	Science	
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art	
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17618	M Hillary	Team inspector	Geography	
18740	M Headon	Team inspector	History	
4344	T Ferris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15866	J Forster	Team inspector	Music	
23030	C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
16546	G Langtree	Team inspector	Religious education	
27380	K Stevenson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language	
13048	A Boyden	Team inspector	Business studies	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Bitterne Park is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16, situated in a residential area to the north-east of Southampton. The school is popular in the local area; it is oversubscribed, and there are regular appeals for admission. With a roll of 1,292, it is bigger than average. The pupils are predominantly white, although over five per cent, which is a larger than average proportion, are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Indian, Caribbean, African, Chinese and Pakistani. About half of these pupils require support in developing their English language skills. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The pupils are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, at 24 per cent, is above average. The main needs catered for are difficulties with reading and writing, emotional and behavioural difficulties and, to a lesser extent, hearing, visual or other physical impairment. The attainment of the pupils on entering the school has varied over recent years but overall is slightly below average.

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

The school provides a sound education for its pupils. It has a number of good features and is improving. At the age of 14, pupils achieved below average results in the national tests in 2000. At the age of 16, their results in 2000, whilst slightly below those of the previous year, were close to the national average for grades A\*-C. The proportion achieving five or more A\*-G grades was high and the results overall were above the average for schools of similar prior attainment. The school's trend over recent years is below the national average, however. Current standards are improving, partly as a result of close tracking of progress. The improvements are the result of recent concerted efforts to support and track the progress of Year 9 and Year 11 pupils. The teaching is sound overall and it is good at Key Stage 4. However, unsatisfactory behaviour by a significant minority of pupils disrupts the learning in lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the school are good, being well focused on raising standards, but more needs to be done to improve behaviour. The school has had a high turnover of staff in recent years, which has slowed the momentum of its developments. Income and expenditure are slightly above average and, given the satisfactory achievement overall, the school provides sound value for money.

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

- Above average standards at Key Stage 4 in science, art, drama, media studies and GNVQ.
- Good provision for, and achievement by, pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.
- The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4.
- Good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The provision of vocational and work-related programmes at Key Stage 4.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities provided.

## What could be improved

- The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, particularly boys at Key Stage 3.
- Teaching and standards in modern foreign languages, especially of pupils of average and below average attainment.
- Homework is not set consistently and is not always marked promptly.
- The provision of religious education at Key Stage 4, which does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996. Improvement since then has been satisfactory. While there has not been an overall improvement in the GCSE results, the pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 is good when compared with schools of similar prior attainment. In addition, actions taken in the last year to improve standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are bearing fruit. With further development of these strategies and their extension to other year groups, the school should be able to consolidate the gains and see them reflected in the examination and test results. The quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 4, where there is a higher than average proportion of very good teaching. However, there is a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3, which was not found during the previous inspection. There has also been a decline in standards of behaviour of a minority of pupils and actions to address this have not been concerted enough.

The accommodation has been considerably improved. With regard to the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, action has been concerted and outcomes are good. There have been considerable improvements to ICT provision, for instance, consolidating the good standards and increasing its use throughout the school, although still more remains to be done. The pupils are being enabled to develop independence as learners through the provision of the learning resource centre, study support sessions, the involvement of pupils as reading mentors, and access to work-related and vocational courses. Good progress has been made in the development and use of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. Many good opportunities are now made available for the pupils to develop their cultural awareness and the provision for spiritual development has been considerably enhanced.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	C	C	B

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

At the age of 14, the pupils' results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests were below average in English, mathematics and science. This represents a decline in standards from the previous year in mathematics and science. Girls performed considerably better than boys in



English. The school's trend over the last five years is below the national trend. Given the pupils' attainment on entry, their achievement by the age of 14 is satisfactory. The standards of the current Year 9 pupils in all three subjects are better, bringing them in line with the average. Standards in the other subjects are mainly average, except in drama, where they are above average, and modern foreign languages and music, where they are below. Standards are above average in the ICT course in Years 7 and 8. However, in Year 9, where ICT is taught through other subjects, standards are 'patchy' and inconsistent.

The school's overall results at GCSE in 2000 were close to the national average, as they were the previous year. Pupils of average to below average ability and those with special educational needs achieved well, as indicated by the proportion achieving five or more A\*-G grades. Compared with schools which had achieved similar results at the end of Key Stage 3 two years earlier, the results were above average. The subjects that performed best were drama and ICT, where results were well above average. In business studies, girls performed much better than boys. The weakest subjects were science, design and technology, history and physical education, where the results were well below average. From the evidence of the inspection, the attainment of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 4 has improved in several subjects, bringing them in line with the average. Above average standards are now found in science, art, GNVQ and media studies. Attainment is weakest in modern foreign languages, where it is below average. Overall, given the recent improvement in standards, the achievement of the pupils, including those with English as an additional language, is good at the key stage. The school achieved its target for A\*-G grades in 2000, but not its target for A\*-C grades.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall, but there is considerable variation, with some negative attitudes, particularly at Key Stage 3.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory overall. Although the majority behave appropriately, a significant minority, mainly boys at Key Stage 3, do not. They have poor concentration and persist in disrupting lessons, affecting the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The majority of pupils co-operate well, they are keen to take on responsibilities and readily support various charities.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are broadly average.

The atmosphere in the school is generally good. The majority of pupils have good relationships with one another and with their teachers. They support each other and the school. For instance, older pupils help younger ones with their reading and prefects assist staff around the school. A significant minority of pupils are badly behaved, however, to the extent that they disrupt others' learning. This is mainly, but not only, boys at Key Stage 3. The number of fixed-term exclusions is higher than the average for a school of this size.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	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.*

Of the lessons seen during the inspection 92 per cent were judged to be satisfactory or better, 60 per cent good or better and 22 per cent to be very good or better. The strongest teaching is at Key Stage 4, where good specialist knowledge, the demands of the examinations, and the tracking of progress sharpen the focus. In addition, the provision of study skills and extra revision classes has improved the learning of the oldest pupils. The teaching is very good in drama, science, media studies and GNVQ at Key Stage 4. It is good in most lessons in English, history, geography and art, and is satisfactory in other subjects, including mathematics. In the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, poor attitudes and behaviour of some pupils and slow pace affect the learning.

At Key Stage 3, the teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is a significant proportion (12 per cent) of unsatisfactory teaching. There is also two per cent of poor or very poor teaching at the key stage. The most effective teaching includes appropriate objectives, brisk pace and warm relationships. These features, together with well-resourced activities, are found in the good teaching in English, science, ICT, art and physical education at this key stage. The teaching is mainly sound in other subjects, including mathematics. In the unsatisfactory and poor teaching the biggest weakness is weak discipline and class management; other shortcomings are a lack of challenge in the activities and slow pace of work. Some teachers, particularly those who are inexperienced and/or temporary, whose class management skills are less well developed, find it difficult to control classes where the behaviour of a few (mostly, but not only, boys) disrupts the learning of all. This feature is to be found in a number of subjects including English, mathematics, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, physical education and religious education at this key stage. Approximately one-third of lessons in modern foreign languages were found to be less than satisfactory at each key stage.

The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well at both key stages, both in normal lessons and in the separate sessions for small groups. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is also good.

The provision of homework is unsatisfactory because it is not set consistently and it is not always promptly marked.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Good at Key Stage 3. Requirements met at Key Stage 4, except in the provision of religious education. Time for physical education at Key Stage 4 is insufficient. Provision for ICT is mainly good, but there are weaknesses in that for pupils in Years 9 and 11.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The identification of needs and planning to meet them is thorough. Learning support assistants provide very good support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The pupils make good progress and achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Significant improvement in spiritual and cultural provision since the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Effective pastoral care. Good attention to welfare, health and safety. Good monitoring of academic progress. Less effective monitoring of unsatisfactory behaviour.

The school has effective links with parents. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Equality of opportunity within the curriculum is very good, The range of extra-curricular activities is also very good, particularly in sport and in the wide range of educational visits both here and abroad. Provision for personal and social education (PSE) and careers guidance is good and links with the community have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and their social development. Procedures for tackling poor behaviour are not wholly effective and the requirements of the agreed syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4 are not fulfilled.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Clear educational vision and focus on improving standards by headteacher and senior managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed about strengths and weaknesses in standards. They are systematic in reviewing progress against development priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Effective analysis of data and target setting are leading to improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning is well linked to improvement priorities. Slightly above average income; average outcomes in pupils' performance; satisfactory value for money.

Resources are generally good except in music and science where there are shortages. The accommodation has been considerably improved in art, science and ICT and with the addition of a new 'learning resource centre'. However, the amount of indoor space for physical education is inadequate; this restricts the range of activities provided. The school has a high turnover of staff, which means that many pupils have a greater than normal number of changes in teachers, which affects their learning in some areas. The headteacher and senior managers have a strong focus on raising standards, and actions taken with Year 9 and Year 11 in the past year have made a considerable difference. The principles of 'best value' are well applied in the negotiation of contracts and comparing costs with other schools.

## 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>• The school is welcoming and approachable.</li><li>• It expects their children to work hard.</li><li>• Their children make good progress.</li><li>• Their children like school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The behaviour of a minority of pupils who affect the learning of others in lessons.</li><li>• Homework - not enough of it, not set regularly or always followed up.</li></ul>

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views of the school. The atmosphere in the school is generally good. The pupils do well at Key Stage 4; their achievement is improving at Key Stage 3. The inspectors found both of the parents' concerns to be justified. The behaviour of a significant minority is affecting learning. This is mainly at Key Stage 3, although there is also a small amount at Key Stage 4. There is a homework schedule for each year group but it is not consistently applied, which means that, for some pupils, homework is not helping to improve their learning in the way intended.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The attainment on entry varies from year to year and is slightly below average overall. The attainment of the current Year 7 pupils on entry in 2000, based on their National Curriculum test results (taken at age 11 in primary schools), was slightly below average. It was depressed by girls' results, which were considerably below those achieved by girls nationally. This contrasts with previous years when attainment on entry was broadly average. For instance, the standards of the current Year 9 pupils (1998 Key Stage 2 results) on entry were in line with the average for both genders in all three subjects. In 1999 (the current Year 8) standards on entry were average overall in English and science, and for boys in mathematics. Girls' results in mathematics were well below average, however.

2. At the end of Key Stage 3, results in National Curriculum tests in 2000 were below both the national average, and the average for similar schools (based on free school meal data) in English, mathematics and science. There was little gender difference in the science and mathematics results but girls performed better than boys in English. The results represent a decline overall on those found at the time of the last inspection (1996) when they were average in mathematics and science. In English, girls' results were average whilst boys' were below. The school's trend is below the national in all three subjects at this key stage. Given that attainment on entry is slightly below average, the pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

3. At GCSE, the school's performance trend for the last five years is also below that found nationally. In 2000, the results were slightly below those of the previous year. Based on the proportion achieving five or more A\*-C grades and the average point score of each pupil, the results in 2000 were close to the national average. This was also the picture at the time of the last inspection. The 'significantly improving' dimension mentioned in the previous inspection report has not been demonstrated in the overall results. Boys' and girls' results were close to the average for their gender in 2000. The difference in their attainment was in line with that found nationally. Over the last three years, boys' attainment was close to the average and girls' was above. The proportion achieving five or more A\*-G grades was above average in the 1996 inspection. This was also the case in 2000 and indicates that average and below average attainers, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well. When compared with similar schools, based on the Key Stage 3 results achieved by these pupils two years earlier, the 2000 results were above (the similar school) average.

4. Overall, given the below average performance of these pupils at Key Stage 3, the GCSE results represent good achievement at Key Stage 4. This is due to good attention to the examination requirements, focused teaching and effective monitoring of pupils' progress, which add pace to the learning in most subjects.

5. The inspection found achievement to be better overall at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.

6. In English, the standards being attained by the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 (i.e. those currently in Year 9) show improvement on last year. The standards of both boys and girls are now broadly average and their achievement is good. Pupils collaborate effectively in discussing demanding literary texts and are developing skills in a wide range of writing styles. At Key Stage 4, from a position of below average performance at GCSE last year, the inspection found standards to be in line with the average. A good range of writing in response

to texts is evident in GCSE coursework. For instance, some sensitive and reflective writing was produced in response to Wilfred Owen's war poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and Sherriff's 'Journey's End'. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

7. In mathematics, broadly average standards are now being attained by the oldest pupils, both girls and boys, at Key Stage 3. During the key stage, pupils consolidate their understanding of number and become more skilled at handling data. They learn to measure, estimate and study the symmetry of shapes. They use algebra and learn to look for patterns in number. They need, however, more opportunities to explore the mathematical applications of their work and to develop their computer skills in the subject. At Key Stage 4, where GCSE results were slightly below average in 2000, the standards attained by the oldest pupils are now in line with the average, and the difference between boys' and girls' results has narrowed. The improvement in standards is due, in part, to effective target-setting and tracking of pupils' achievement.

8. In science, the attainment of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 is average overall and there has been an increase in the percentage of higher levels (six and above) being attained. Achievement is good overall. Good scientific understanding is being developed throughout the key stage. For example, Year 7 pupils can model electrical current flow in simple and complex circuits and Year 8 pupils can demonstrate that, in photosynthesis, starch is only produced when both light and chlorophyll are present, amongst other things. At Key Stage 4, where GCSE results were well below average in 2000, the standards of the oldest pupils are above average and achievement is good. This is due to good specialist knowledge, which is used well in the teaching, and a clear focus on the examination requirements.

9. With regard to the other subjects of the curriculum, at Key Stage 3, pupils are achieving very well in ICT (in Years 7 and 8) and drama, where standards are above average. The discrete ICT course in Years 7 and 8 is well taught and clearly advances pupils' confidence and expertise. In Year 9, where ICT is delivered through other subjects, the learning is more 'patchy'. Average standards are found in design and technology, geography, history, art, physical education and religious education. Pupils' achievement is good in geography, art and physical education, and satisfactory in the other subjects. Whilst standards are below average in music at Key Stage 3, achievement is generally satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, the standards of the oldest pupils are above average in art and GNVQ, and well above average in drama and media studies. The achievement of pupils in these subjects is good or, in the case of GNVQ and drama, very good. In both subjects, effective teaching, closely linked to examination requirements, develops pupils' confidence and independence. The standards of pupils studying GCSE ICT are well above average but for other pupils in Year 11, who do not follow a discrete course, they are inconsistent. Standards are average in design and technology, geography, business studies, music, history, core physical education (i.e. that which is followed by all pupils) and GCSE religious education. Achievement is good in geography, business studies, history, music, and GCSE religious education, and satisfactory in design and technology and core physical education.

10. Standards are below average at both key stages in modern foreign languages and the achievement of a significant minority of pupils is unsatisfactory. This is due to poor behaviour by a number of pupils, which disrupts the teaching, slow pace of lessons and too much emphasis on writing, as well as the impact of frequent changes of teachers over recent years. The standards of GCSE physical education are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory, largely owing to unsatisfactory achievement in the theoretical aspects of the examination. There is no teaching of religious education at Key Stage 4 to those pupils who do not opt for GCSE religious education. This has an obvious impact on standards and contravenes the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school has appropriate plans to make up the deficiency in Year 10 next year, but not in Year 11.

11. Standards in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Pupils with special education needs achieve well, overall, in relation to their prior attainment. Their achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT and design and technology, and those taking a GNVQ course make very good progress. However, the achievement of special educational needs pupils in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) also achieve well. Many of them do well in examinations and the proportion reaching expected levels in tests and GCSE examinations is increasing each year. Where it was appropriate, a few of these pupils were entered for GCSE in their first languages (i.e. in Turkish and Punjabi) in 2000, and were successful in achieving grade C or better. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall, and is good in history at Key Stage 3, in science and music at Key Stage 4, and in art at both key stages.

12. The school sets targets which are appropriately based on analysis of prior attainment data and which have a reasonable element of challenge. It achieved its target for A\*-G grades in 2000, but not that for A\*-C grades, which was set at 45 per cent attaining five or more A\*-C grades.

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

13. The atmosphere in the school is generally good. The attitudes of the majority of pupils are positive; they apply themselves well to work and enjoy good relationships with adults and their peers. In some lessons, for example in some science and physical education lessons, the pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They listen carefully to instructions, concentrate on their tasks and are keen to answer questions. However, a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys at Key Stage 3, have a negative or 'don't care' attitude to school. These pupils do not want to co-operate with the teacher, they are often unwilling to listen and appear to have little interest in lessons.

14. At the time of the last inspection, behaviour was judged to be good. However, concern about behaviour was expressed by the parents attending the inspection meeting and about a third of those responding to the questionnaire. Although the number of parents responding was very small in relation to the large size of the school, nonetheless, the inspection team found the concern to have foundation. Behaviour is now unsatisfactory overall. Whilst the majority of pupils behave appropriately, and many behave well, a significant minority of lessons are disrupted by the anti-social behaviour of some pupils. This occurs at both key stages but is found more frequently amongst boys at Key Stage 3. Girls, too, can be involved on occasions. These pupils demonstrate the attitudes described above. They are restless and unwilling to concentrate and apply themselves to work in the way required. Their behaviours include calling out impulsively, pushing others around and speaking across the teacher and other pupils. A few are wilfully defiant and seem to relish the opportunity to interrupt others' learning. By contrast, in over 25 per cent of the lessons seen the pupils behaved very well, reflecting their good self-discipline, social skills and motivation to succeed. Many of the pupils with negative attitudes behave better when the teachers have high expectations of behaviour, set challenging work and conduct lessons at a lively pace. Behaviour around the school is usually appropriate but can, occasionally, be unacceptable, such as pupils using strong language to others in the corridors. The number of fixed term exclusions is higher than that in schools of similar size. There were three permanent exclusions last year.

15. The pupils say that incidents of bullying are nearly always quickly sorted out. Racist remarks are rare but are fully investigated and dealt with effectively.

16. The personal development and relationships of the majority of pupils are good; this judgement reflects the findings of the previous report. Pupils are generally keen to take up responsibilities. The School Council meets frequently and has brought about real changes in the life of the school. Year councils raise very substantial amounts of money for charity. GNVQ pupils organised their own educational visit and other pupils co-ordinate sporting events. Many pupils give valuable support to others in the reading club. Prefects assist staff around the school and give helpful support to Year 7 tutor groups during their induction. Pupils undertake duties as librarians and take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities with enthusiasm. Relationships are generally good; the majority of pupils work well together and support each other in lessons. There is good racial harmony and pupils generally enjoy socialising during breaks.

17. The pupils have maintained the satisfactory levels of attendance found at the time of the previous inspection. The attendance rate for 1999/2000 of 91.6 per cent and the unauthorised absence rate of 1 per cent are broadly in line with those found at similar schools. No year group had an attendance rate of below 90 per cent.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

18. The teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Of the lessons seen during the inspection 92 per cent were judged to be at least satisfactory, 60 per cent to be good or better, and 22 per cent to be very good or better. Two per cent of all the lessons seen were excellent. The picture, overall, has improved on that found at the time of the last inspection owing largely to a strengthening of the teaching at Key Stage 4, where there is a higher than average proportion of very good teaching. However, there is a significant minority of unsatisfactory or poor teaching at Key Stage 3.

19. At Key Stage 3, the figures were as follows: 88 per cent of the teaching satisfactory or better, 54 per cent good or better and 14 per cent very good. In 12 per cent of the lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory and in 2 per cent it was poor or very poor. Good teaching, which is found particularly in science, ICT, art and physical education at the key stage, is characterised by good specialist knowledge, clear objectives, brisk pace and warm, good-humoured relationships. In the past year, attention to study skills and target-setting with pupils have improved the learning and standards of Year 9 pupils. The teaching is satisfactory in other subjects, except in modern foreign languages where it is unsatisfactory. A significant feature of the weak teaching is the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils (mainly boys) who disrupt lessons and adversely affect the learning of the rest of the class. This consists of poor concentration, unwillingness to listen, unrestrained calling out, speaking across the teacher and other pupils and resisting instruction. It is often accompanied by poor application and presentation of written work. Such poor behaviour is affecting learning in several subjects, including English, mathematics, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, physical education and religious education at Key Stage 3, and, to a lesser extent, at Key Stage 4. More experienced teachers manage these pupils better by and large but they present quite a challenge and the school is not currently sufficiently effective in tackling the issue.

20. At Key Stage 4, the overall picture is better. Ninety five per cent of the teaching was at least satisfactory, 67 per cent was good or better and 31 per cent very good. The learning lagged a little behind the teaching owing, again, mainly to unsatisfactory behaviour but this was much less of a feature than at Key Stage 3. The teaching is very good in drama, science, ICT, media studies and GNVQ. It is mainly good in English, history, geography and art, and at least satisfactory overall in other subjects. As well as the positive features mentioned in Key Stage 3, focused attention to the demands of the GCSE and vocational examinations is improving the learning at this key stage. In a science lesson, for example,



the teacher's expertise with electronic configuration enabled the pupils to understand and explain the highest range of GCSE work. In the last year, target-setting, assessment and tracking of the pupils' progress, as well as the provision of study skills and revision classes, have also been particularly effective in raising standards in Year 11. Very good and mature behaviour also contributes to the good learning in many areas. This was exemplified in art during the inspection by Year 11 pupils, who were very confident in undertaking the final stages of their examination preparation in the absence of their usual teacher. The teaching in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory owing to discipline problems, slow pace and inappropriate tasks in some lessons. Frequent turnover of staff has affected the continuity of learning and resulted in disaffection by pupils.

21. Parents expressed concerns about the amount and regularity of homework. The inspection found their concern was justified in that there is much inconsistency in the setting, recording and checking of homework across subjects. However, the situation is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Coursework and examination requirements help to regulate the homework demands at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, the inconsistency is more marked and there are indications that the situation is worse in lower sets (ability groups). Pupils describe the allocation of homework as 'unpredictable'. Teachers do not always set homework on the nights stipulated in the schedule. This is the case in several subjects, but particularly in mathematics, science, English, geography and design and technology. When it is set, pupils often do not record the homework in their planners and the checking by parents and tutors is not systematic.

22. Pupils with literacy and numeracy difficulties follow a 'withdrawal' programme in Years 7 and 8, which is well taught. The individual education plans provided for pupils with special educational needs are used effectively by teachers to identify how best to support and challenge these pupils. Learning support assistants (LSAs) provide very good support for pupils with special needs.

23. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are well taught. Subject teachers receive good information about their needs from specialist teachers. Many teachers have received specialist training in teaching these pupils and they apply their knowledge effectively, using an appropriate variety of approaches. They are sensitive to pupils' needs, enabling those whose English language skills are not yet well developed to understand and participate.

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

24. The quality and range of learning experiences offered are good at Key Stage 3. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, the school offers drama and personal and social education (PSE). Any underachievement at this key stage is related to weaknesses in teaching rather than to the curriculum. In Key Stage 4 the quality and range are satisfactory overall. Particularly good features, such as the vocational provision and the range of subjects offered, are counterbalanced by weaknesses in the provision for religious education and to a lesser extent for physical education and ICT (Year 11). Equality of opportunity within the curriculum is very good. No courses are barred to any pupil. The school has taken considerable care to ensure that all parents and pupils are aware of the alternative provision in Years 10 and 11.

25. Compared to the time of the last inspection there has been considerable improvement in the overall provision for developing the pupils' skills in ICT (see subject section, paragraphs 124 to 130). However, there is still work to be done to ensure all pupils in Years 9 and 11 have adequate opportunity to develop their skills. There has also been

good improvement in the provision for pupils with special educational needs (see paragraph 29 below). Current provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 remains weak.

26. Within subjects, the curriculum is particularly well organised in English, drama, geography, in the GNVQ courses, and in religious education in Years 7 to 9. All pupils are prepared and entered for English Literature. Good links with industry and business enrich the GNVQ courses. In religious education, good links are made between the beliefs and feelings of the pupils themselves to the key beliefs and teachings of the religions they are learning about. In geography, a good range of topics is taught and within these the balance of skills, themes and places is well planned.

27. In Year 10 the school has made considerably more use than most schools of the new freedoms to replace formerly compulsory subjects with vocational alternatives. In this year some 60 pupils do not study a modern language. Instead they follow the vocational access course, or study support or the GNVQ Part 1 in Leisure and Tourism. The first of these involves general preparation for work plus one afternoon per week at the City College, Southampton following courses in construction, hairdressing, vehicle maintenance, care, retail, etc. In the study support group the pupils receive additional help in basic skills. From the evidence of the inspection, these courses are working well. The pupils are well taught and their motivation is good. The school intends to expand this provision to 40 per cent of the pupils in next year's Year 10. It will need to monitor this closely to ensure that provision meets the needs of all. Already, the knowledge that they will be able to drop the subject is adversely affecting the attitudes of some pupils towards their learning of a language in Year 9.

28. Provision for the development of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In addition to the work in the English and mathematics departments, aspects of literacy and numeracy are included in the tutor programme. Sessions seen in the inspection were satisfactory, although the school will need to monitor more closely to check that the programme is consistently taught.

29. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers are well informed about the specific learning needs of these pupils and use this knowledge to plan lessons to support their learning. Learning support assistants (LSAs) give them very good support in lessons and extra provision is made for them in out-of-school clubs for reading and homework, study skills and individual mentoring.

30. The school's provision for, and practice in, personal and social education (PSE) are good. There is a well-developed programme for all year groups, which covers a range of personal and social issues, including sex education, and careers. PSE is taught by a small, enthusiastic team of teachers and the quality of teaching and learning seen in lessons was good. In a Year 7 lesson on alcohol, the effective use of key words and interesting, varied learning activities led to good pupil response and understanding. In a Year 10 lesson on career opportunities in the local area, an interesting and skilfully taught lesson (designing a new leisure facility) enabled pupils to work well in groups, consider both their own and other pupils' ideas and present their plans in a helpful, constructive manner. The vast majority of pupils enjoy PSE and find the syllabus content relevant to their needs and interests.

31. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. There is a well-organised programme from Years 7 to 11. Particular highlights in the programme include "The Real Game" (a sophisticated simulation of managing on your income) in Year 8; the "Looking Forward Day" in Year 9, when pupils experience a Post-16 taster course in local sixth form and further education colleges; the "European Awareness Day" in Year 10; and the annual careers evening. The two-week work experience programme in Year 10 is well organised. On the guidance side, the school has a good partnership with the local careers service.

Interviews with individual pupils and groups of pupils are well organised, according to the new government guidelines. For example, in Year 9 the careers adviser sees all those on the school's register of special educational needs, all deemed "at risk" and all who are considering the vocational option.

32. The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is very good. There are sports teams in football, rugby, netball, basketball and athletics, and considerable individual success at county level. In addition, there is an extensive programme of competitions between tutor groups. There are clubs for badminton and gymnastics. In music there is a good range of instrumental lessons and other provision, e.g. orchestra, guitar ensemble and jazz band. Most subjects provide extra classes in the run-up to GCSE. Other activities include computing, Christian Union, art, homework support and the annual drama/music production. The curriculum is also enriched by a good range of visits. For example, there are day trips to Northern France and to Germany (the Christmas market in Aachen), and exchange visits to both countries, including an annual visit to the science museum in Paris. In addition, there are theatre visits, visits to galleries, including one for Year 10 pupils to Barcelona, a visit to the D-day landing beaches in Normandy and field trips in geography. The school also provides a skiing club and there is a biannual skiing trip which is open to all pupils.

33. The main weakness in the curriculum is that in Years 10 and 11 provision for religious education does not comply with the legal requirements. Currently, the minimal provision in these years does not meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school's plans for September 2001 will remedy this situation in Year 10 but there are no plans to extend this into Year 11. Two further weaknesses relate to physical education and ICT. In the former, insufficient time for the subject in Years 10 and 11 means that, although the pupils get some experience of all the required areas, the depth of their learning is considerably reduced. In ICT only those pupils studying ICT as a GCSE subject and those following the GNVQ and business studies courses are receiving sufficient opportunities to develop their skills.

34. The school's partnership with the community is good; it has a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and their social development. Well-established links with local employers enable pupils to prepare for the world of work. They benefit from good quality work placements for work experience, work-related learning and GNVQ placements. Some able pupils have benefited from Industry Days based in school and at the premises of a local employer. Good links have been established with support agencies. For instance, youth advisers are invited to run lunchtime sessions with particular emphasis on relationships and sexual health.

35. The school has developed good links with its partner institutions. The school has very good links with local colleges to inspire pupils who are becoming disaffected. The pupils are able to choose from a range of college placements to gain a Vocational Access certificate. A number of pupils have also experienced taster courses. The school has good links with local Post-16 establishments and provides good guidance for pupils transferring to further education. Links with feeder primary schools are satisfactory and the induction programme for Year 6 pupils is good. A beneficial initiative has enabled pupils of GCSE drama to visit local primary schools and help dispel myths about secondary school life through dramatic presentations.

36. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. This represents significant improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development, which were key issues in the previous report.

37. The school's provision for spiritual development is good. In religious education, pupils consider important issues such as the origins of life, life after death and the purpose of human beings. In mathematics, pupils very skilfully used technical terms to explore, through poetry, issues of loss, pain and sacrifice. The school's acts of worship, while not fulfilling legal requirements, are of high quality. All observed acts of worship were well planned, organised and delivered with skill, engaging pupils' interest and actively involving them in discussion. Good opportunities were provided for pupils to reflect on the issues being explored. For example, in a Year 8 assembly on the theme of "people are more important than things" the skilful use of slides and personal experience enabled pupils to think carefully about what is important to them. Music, both live and recorded, is effectively used to enhance the quality of pupils' experience. The school has developed very good practice in collective worship but cannot provide it on a daily basis to all pupils because of lack of space. In music and art, pupils have good opportunities to share their ideas and feelings.

38. The school's provision for moral development is good. Moral issues such as prejudice, discrimination and medical ethics are effectively explored in religious education. In physical education, there is a strong emphasis on right and wrong, on honesty and fairness in playing sport and on considering the behaviour of professional sports people. In geography, pupils consider environmental issues such as the protection of the rainforest; in history, pupils study the ethics of warfare. The school actively seeks to develop the moral awareness of its pupils through the impressive and positive support it gives to a wide range of local, national and international charities. The pupils show real commitment and energy in raising large amounts of money for a number of causes.

39. The school's provision for pupils' social development is good overall. In both GNVQ and business studies courses, pupils work well in teams and show genuine responsibility in organising learning activities. In physical education, pupils work well in pairs and groups, learning how to give and receive constructive criticism. Drama makes a very strong contribution to pupils' social development through both the taught curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The active School Council and the school's tutorial programme also seek to develop important social skills such as respect for others, a sense of justice and co-operation. While these activities are effective in many respects, the school does not yet provide well enough to ensure that all pupils display the social skills expected in lessons.

40. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development has also improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. In art, pupils gain good insights into their own cultural tradition and are encouraged to appreciate the richness and diversity of art in other cultures. The schemes of work for music place a strong emphasis on music from differing cultures. In English, the use of poetry, particularly at Key Stage 4, is effective in promoting pupils' cultural awareness. Good use is made of artefacts, visits and visitors in religious education to broaden pupils' cultural awareness. Displays around the school indicate a strong sense of valuing different cultures. Pupils with English as an additional language are given good opportunities to share their own cultural heritage, e.g. playing music in assembly and sharing special celebrations within their own culture with other pupils.

41. Since the last inspection the school has developed a clear and informative policy on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and invested time and funding into developing these dimensions of pupils' learning. Good, helpful guidance is provided in nearly all subject handbooks on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of learning. The school has moved effectively forward from a position of weakness in the last inspection to a position where its provision for these areas is now good overall.

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

42. The school provides good educational and personal support for the vast majority of its pupils. Pupils say that they can talk to tutors and year co-ordinators if they need help. Staff know the pupils well and work hard to support those who have particular difficulties. The school works closely with external agencies and values the support given by these professionals. It can rightly claim success with many of its pupils but has not yet been able to manage the behaviour of a small number of disruptive pupils (mainly Key Stage 3 boys).

43. Pupils whose mother tongue is not English feel well supported and have integrated well into school life. In lessons they are offered effective help with technical language. They feel that they can turn to staff if they have any academic or personal problems. One boy spoke of a certain senior teacher as “always being there for Asian pupils”.

44. The Key Stage 4 pupils who have become disaffected are given very good support through structured programmes of extended work experience and the use of college placements. All Year 11 pupils are offered a mentor to help them reach their full potential in the GCSE examinations. Careful monitoring through ‘tracking records’ of pupils who are not putting in enough effort has been successful in raising achievement. Support for able pupils is at an early stage but firm foundations have been laid which will help staff identify and challenge able pupils.

45. The school fully complies with the special educational needs Code of Practice. Statutory requirements outlined in Statements of Special Educational Needs are met very well. Annual review processes for pupils with Statements are extremely thorough. Initial testing is effective in identifying pupils who would benefit from additional or more focused teaching, and assessment is used to develop appropriate individual education plans.

46. The school has good procedures to ensure the pupils’ welfare, health and safety. Arrangements for child protection are good. Members of the senior management team have received comprehensive training. A deputy headteacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and carries out his duties effectively. Basic procedures are in the staff handbook and the school follows local authority guidelines.

47. The arrangements for first aid are very good. The full-time nurse co-ordinates first aid and is based in a well-equipped medical room. She provides high quality care for pupils who are ill or injured and adds a further dimension to the pastoral support for pupils. There are very good procedures for the administration of medication. Four other members of staff are qualified in first aid.

48. The school pays good attention to health and safety. Overall management of health and safety is the responsibility of a deputy headteacher. A sound policy is in place and any potential hazards are recorded and the appropriate action taken. Each department has recently carried out risk assessments, and regular checks of the premises are made.

49. The school’s procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Year co-ordinators and tutors monitor absences and the school makes early contact with home if there are concerns. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer to support pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. The school rewards pupils and tutor groups for good attendance. The ‘respite centre’ (a room where pupils can work, out of normal lessons, under the supervision of a teacher) has been very successful in re-integrating pupils who were non-attenders. One pupil said if the respite centre did not exist he would still be at home, watching television all day.

50. The school’s procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are unsatisfactory overall. This is because a relatively small number of pupils in each year group

disrupt a significant minority of lessons. The school has a clear behaviour policy, which emphasises the rewarding of good behaviour, but this is not always applied successfully. The year co-ordinators have devised a variety of rewards, which have had a mixed response from the pupils. Rewards in the form of photocopied certificates are not always valued, whilst badges for good attendance and effort are greatly prized. High expectations of classroom behaviour are not always firmly established, particularly by less experienced teachers. Various systems are being developed to support pupils with behaviour difficulties, including a good programme of anger management for some younger pupils, but more needs to be done both to monitor the impact and tackle the unsatisfactory behaviour.

51. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and keeps records of incidents, including those of racism. Pupils say that any bullying is usually dealt with well.

52. The quality of the school's procedures for assessing the pupils' academic progress is good overall and makes a positive contribution to the standards being attained. In subjects the procedures are firmly embedded in the National Curriculum levels and in the GCSE and GNVQ criteria. A particular strength is the explicit advice given in all subjects to the pupils on what they need to do to improve sufficiently to reach the next level or grade. Procedures are particularly well organised in religious education in Years 7 to 9, in science in Years 10 to 11 and in the GNVQ courses. The use of assessment data to plan the curriculum is satisfactory overall and good in ICT, science, business studies and in the GNVQ courses. For example, in ICT this has led to a focus on the requirements for the highest grades, i.e. A\*-B. The assessment and monitoring of pupils with special needs have improved significantly since the last inspection.

53. There has been considerable development in the last two years in the tracking of the pupils' progress by senior managers. The main impact of this has been in the identification of underachieving pupils in Years 9 and 11. In the other years this process is embryonic and not as effective a diagnostic tool as it could be. The school's plans for more thorough analysis in the other years are appropriate. The use of data for setting individual targets for pupils is sound. 'Minimum' and 'challenge' targets are clearly communicated to pupils and their parents. A weakness in the process is the lack of systematic monitoring of how this is carried out by individual teachers and checking of these targets against actual performance, other than in Year 9 and Year 11.

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

54. Parents and carers have confidence in the school, and its popularity has resulted in it being oversubscribed. The parents generally expressed positive views about the school at the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaires and say that their children like school. The parents feel that their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They value the information they receive about the curriculum and say that if they have worries or problems the staff are very approachable. Nearly a third of parents who responded to the questionnaire are concerned about the behaviour of a small number of pupils who disrupt the learning of others. A significant minority of these parents are also not happy about the amount, consistency and marking of homework.

55. The school has effective links with its parents. The vast majority appreciate the ways in which staff take the time and trouble to contact home. For example, a teacher telephoned parents to say that a pupil with behaviour difficulties had had a 'good day'. Letters of praise are sent home and parents are invited into school if there are concerns. Parents are able to contact key members of staff by direct telephone line and e-mail. Parents are invited to sign the home/school agreement, which is printed in the pupils' planners.

56. The impact of the parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Parent governors are supportive of the school and help to shape its future. The Friends of Bitterne Park work hard to raise funds for the school.

57. The quality of the information which the school provides to parents is good. This reflects the findings of the last inspection. New parents receive good information through meetings and a helpful prospectus, which includes valuable information about the curriculum and homework. The annual governors' report is informative and easy to read. The newsletters provide parents with good quality information about future events and celebrate the school's successes. The school web site is very user-friendly and enables parents and pupils to access helpful information about subjects being studied, such as geography topics. Overall, pupils' annual reports are of satisfactory quality, giving encouraging comments on effort and attitude. There is some clear advice on how pupils can improve their work, for example in geography, ICT and modern foreign languages. Throughout the school year, parents are kept well informed about how their children are getting on through interim reports, annual reports and consultations with subject teachers and tutors. These provide good opportunities for parents to review their children's progress. The school offers to translate information for parents whose native tongue is not English. There are good systems for liaising with parents of pupils with special needs, both generally and as part of the review process for these pupils. The school also makes good use of the Southampton Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (SEMASS) home-school liaison service officer to ensure the well-being of minority ethnic pupils.

58. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is satisfactory. The majority of parents come to parent consultation evenings and the recent 'Options' evening was very well attended. If pupils are underachieving, 'tracking reports' are sent home each day and parents are asked to comment on their children's progress. The school provides parents with clear guidance on homework and they sign the student planners each week. The inconsistent setting of homework, however, hampers the parents' support for their children's homework.

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

59. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good in most respects. The headteacher and senior managers, most of whom have joined the school in the last three years, have good educational vision and lead the school well, providing clear direction for its work. There is an appropriate focus on raising standards and improving teaching quality in the three-year strategic improvement plan (SIP). Actions taken to improve performance have gained momentum in the last year with the focus on Year 11 and Year 9 pupils, which has resulted in improved standards, particularly in science. Whilst there has not been significant improvement in GCSE results overall since the last inspection and there has been a decline in those at Key Stage 3 in 2000 to below average, the extension of these strategies to other year groups has the potential to further improve standards. The management of subjects is effective; in science, ICT and GNVQ it is very good. Department development plans are well focused on the whole-school priorities, for example, to raise standards. In many instances, heads of departments have had to work hard to minimise the effects of rapid staff turnover.

60. Part of the school's improvement strategy has been to improve the motivation of some disaffected pupils at Key Stage 4. Effective action has been taken to provide a curriculum which better meets the needs of these pupils, who are not suited to a wholly academic diet. This includes vocational, work-related and 'study-support' options, which have improved the motivation and behaviour of many. However, there is still a considerable minority of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, whose attitudes and behaviour are

unsatisfactory and who disrupt the learning of others. Whilst a good pastoral support programme is in place, the school has not been wholly effective in identifying the extent of the problem or in taking steps to address it. It is not, for example, directly addressed as a priority in the SIP.

61. Considerable effective work has been done to promote good quality teaching, including in-service training for staff, on improving the learning of boys, for instance, and monitoring of teaching through lesson observation. This has led to improvements in some subjects but in others the impact has not been marked. Furthermore, the very considerable turnover of staff has limited its impact in a number of subjects. The monitoring of teaching has not been sufficiently effective in picking up the impact of poor behaviour on teaching and learning.

62. The school's induction and training arrangements for staff are thorough and effective and the performance management requirements for the appraisal of staff are in place. There are appropriate specialist teaching staff but a very high rate of staff turnover means that this is not consistent and the frequent changes impact on the learning. The majority of the current staff were not employed in the school at the time of the last inspection. This trend continues; in the last two years virtually half the staff have changed. The turnover has inevitably resulted in discontinuities in pupils' learning, particularly in modern foreign languages, mathematics, design and technology, music, art and history. It has had impact on the leadership of the school, slowing the momentum of improvements. It has also placed subject managers under considerable strain as they strive to ensure appropriate induction for new staff and consistency of quality in their subjects. The turnover is mostly due to promotions, to teachers moving area or to other personal circumstances. Temporary arrangements which are sometimes required, such as the use of supply teachers, do not always ensure the level of continuity necessary to sustain pupils' motivation and learning. The situation is not helped by the difficulties in recruitment which are affecting many schools, both locally and nationally. Whilst the school is very aware of the problem and has taken action to minimise any negative effects, the governors and senior staff need to monitor the impact on pupils' learning more closely. The school also needs to consider further how it may best attract and retain experienced and qualified teachers.

63. The governors are well organised and they have clear policies, guidance and terms of reference. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses in standards and are well briefed and supported by the headteacher in understanding the analysis of performance data. They could, however, be more aware of the extent of the behaviour problems in the school. The committee structure works well. The governors are systematic in reviewing the progress of the school's development priorities. The curriculum committee is active in monitoring subject effectiveness, inviting heads of department to report directly to it on a rotational basis and to be accountable for standards and quality in their subjects. The finance and premises committee has overseen good improvements to the accommodation. It is also effective in monitoring the budget with the very good support of one of the deputy headteachers. Whilst the governors have generally good procedures for acquiring information and monitoring the school's effectiveness, they do not have a 'visit schedule', which would ensure that they have regular opportunities, on a rotational basis, to see all parts of the school in operation.

64. The school is well resourced, with enough books and audio-visual and computer-based material to support the curriculum. The new learning resources centre is an excellent addition to the overall provision, and is well used by staff and pupils to support research and further study in all subjects. There is, however, a shortage of data-logging equipment, which hinders some work in science. Music has insufficient percussion instruments and has no computer access, which severely limits the learning.



65. Since the last inspection there have been a number of good improvements to the accommodation, including three new ICT suites, a very useful learning resource centre, four fully refurbished science laboratories and prep rooms, and, more recently, a new outside seating area in one of the courtyards. The premises offer good provision in most subjects, including English, superb drama facilities, religious education, special educational needs, art, ICT, history, geography and science. However, there are a number of weaknesses arising from the age of the buildings and the considerable increase in pupil numbers over recent years. For instance, the main dining area is now too small. The physical education facilities are inadequate in a number of respects: the changing rooms are too small and the two gymnasiums are wearing out and are also too small to cope with indoor activities, especially in wet weather. The subject is also short of a specialist classroom. Recent efforts to provide a new sports hall were turned down by local planners because the site is under the flight path of Southampton Airport. With the increase in science teaching planned from September 2001, the school will be short of one science laboratory and there are problems with the music practice rooms.

66. The financial planning is well linked to the school's improvement priorities. This is recognised in the last auditor's report, which makes only minor recommendations for improvement. These have now been addressed. Effective budgeting and management of resources have enabled the school to make considerable improvement to the accommodation and the learning environment, for example, for science, art and ICT. It has also enabled it to provide alternative, enhanced provision to the curriculum at Key Stage 4, through vocational and work-related programmes. Special grants are appropriately used, for example, to support EAL pupils who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Substantial additional funds, over and beyond the designated grant, are provided by the school to ensure good support for pupils with special needs. There is close monitoring of the budget overall and clear expectations of subject department budget monitoring. In bidding for development funds, departments are required to evaluate the effectiveness of their previous spending against their intentions. This good practice could be further enhanced by a clearer focus on outcomes which denote improvements in teaching, learning and standards. The principles of best value are effectively applied. Good overall financial management has enabled the school to carry a small surplus into this financial year.

67. Improvement since the last inspection in 1996 is satisfactory overall. There has not been an overall improvement in the GCSE results or in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests since then. The school's trend has remained below the national at both key stages for the last five years. However, actions taken by senior managers in the last year to improve standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are bearing fruit. With further development of these strategies and their extension to other year groups, the school should be able to consolidate the gains and see them reflected in the examination and test results. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory, with good teaching at Key Stage 4. However, there is a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3, which was not found during the previous inspection. There has also been a decline in standards of behaviour of a minority of pupils and actions to address this have not been concerted enough.

68. The accommodation has been considerably improved, as indicated above. With regard to the key issues identified in the previous inspection report, action has been concerted and outcomes good. There have been considerable improvements to ICT provision, consolidating the good standards and increasing its use throughout the school, although still more remains to be done to extend its use in music, science and geography, for example. Pupils are being enabled to develop independence as learners through the provision of the learning resource centre, study support sessions, the involvement of pupils as reading mentors, and access to work-related and vocational curricula. Good progress

has been made in the development and use of individual education plans for pupils with special needs. Many good opportunities are now made available for pupils to develop rich cultural awareness and the provision for spiritual development has been considerably enhanced through staff training and explicit attention to this dimension in planning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to improve further the standard of education provided, the senior managers and governors should:

**1. Improve the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, particularly boys at Key Stage 3, by:**

- ensuring the behaviour policy (including the use of support, sanctions and rewards) is effective and is consistently applied;
- providing training and support for less experienced staff in classroom management;
- monitoring closely the impact of behaviour and attitudes on learning, and acting promptly to address poor behaviour.

See paragraphs 13, 14, 60, 61 and 67.

**2. Improve teaching and standards in modern foreign languages, by:**

- providing more speaking and listening activities;
- increasing the pace of lessons;
- improving the teachers' skills in managing behaviour.

See paragraphs 131-136 and 10.

**3. Make sure that homework is set and marked regularly, by:**

- ensuring it is set according to the published timetable;
- monitoring it more closely and ensuring it contributes to the learning of all pupils.

See paragraphs 21 and 54.

**4. Ensure that the requirements of the agreed syllabus for religious education are met in both year groups at Key Stage 4.**

See paragraphs 155 and 10.

70. Other weaknesses which are less serious but which should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan, include:

- seeking to improve staff recruitment and retention in order to increase the continuity of staffing (see paragraph 62 );
- improving the accommodation for physical education and make more time for the subject at Key Stage 4 (see paragraph 145).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	201
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	38	32	7	1	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	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1292	
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	157	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	299	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	50

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	46

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.4	School data	1.0
National comparative data	7.7	National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	134	112	246

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	54	84	70
	Girls	74	64	55
	Total	128	148	125
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	52 ( 55 )	60 ( 61 )	51 ( 54 )
	National	63 ( 63 )	65 ( 62 )	59 ( 55 )
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	13 ( 15 )	32 ( 35 )	21 ( 21 )
	National	28 ( 28 )	42 ( 38 )	30 ( 23 )

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	66	90	83
	Girls	83	66	62
	Total	149	156	145
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	59 ( 56 )	61 ( 62 )	57 ( 64 )
	National	64 ( 64 )	66 ( 64 )	62 ( 60 )
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	21 ( 16 )	32 ( 36 )	23 ( 22 )
	National	31 ( 31 )	39 ( 37 )	29 ( 28 )

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	125	99	224

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	46	118	124
	Girls	46	94	94
	Total	92	212	218
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 ( 43 )	94 ( 93 )	97 ( 98 )
	National	47 ( 46 )	90 ( 90 )	95 ( 95 )

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38.1
	National	38.4

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	15
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	6
Indian	35
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	7
White	1200
Any other minority ethnic group	13

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage	4	
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	66	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	80
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	525.75

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	19.9

### **Financial information**

Financial year	99 - 00
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	£
Total income	3,002,667
Total expenditure	3,095,167
Expenditure per pupil	2,504
Balance brought forward from previous year	97,311
Balance carried forward to next year	4,806

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1292
Number of questionnaires returned	91

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	67	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	59	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	51	27	5	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	52	23	7	1
The teaching is good.	23	62	7	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	49	15	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	41	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	41	9	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	52	12	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	36	40	15	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	48	12	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	57	7	1	8

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

### **ENGLISH**

71. Attainment on entry of the current Year 7 was slightly below average overall, although boys' results, being broadly average, were better than girls', which were below. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the 2000 national tests, standards were below the national average. Girls' results were better than boys' but both were below the national average for their gender. From the lessons observed across Years 7 to 9, and from the scrutiny of work, it is clear that the achievement of the majority of pupils is generally good. The evidence from recent internal assessments shows that in the forthcoming national tests there should be an improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or above and also a larger proportion of Levels 6 and 7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve to the best of their ability, as do those for whom English is an additional language.

72. GCSE results for 2000 in English were below the national average for pupils gaining A\*-C grades, with the gap between the performance of boys and girls being very close to that found nationally. Results in English literature were well below average for A\*-C grades. The percentage of pupils achieving A\*-G grades in both subjects was, however, slightly above the national average and in this respect it is important to note the English department's policy of entering all Year 11 pupils for the literature examination. It shows good progress and achievement that 99.5 per cent of them managed to gain a GCSE grade. The evidence from inspection observations in Year 10 and 11 lessons, the department's own analysis of data and the scrutiny of pupils' work combine to show improved standards of achievement. Predicted grades for Year 11 pupils in both English and English literature, based on trial exams and teachers' assessments of coursework, indicate that results in 2001 should be in line with national averages. Pupils with special educational needs continue to achieve well at Key Stage 4.

73. The quality of teaching is rarely less than satisfactory and it is often good or very good. All members of the English department are well-qualified specialists with strong knowledge of their subject. The best teaching occurs in carefully planned lessons, where learning objectives are shared with the pupils, teaching strategies are varied and the pace is brisk and purposeful. Pupils are given regular opportunities to learn through group discussion and interaction. In these lessons, the learning tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and they understand the criteria for assessing their work. The best teaching also provides pupils with homework that complements and extends the learning done in class. However, homework is not set consistently for all groups, particularly at Key Stage 3. Attitudes and behaviour in English lessons are mostly good and often very good or excellent. There is a small minority of lessons where, despite good planning, the silly, immature behaviour of a small number of pupils prevents teaching from being effective and impedes the learning.

74. The English department schemes of work ensure full coverage of the statutory National Curriculum requirements in speaking, listening, reading and writing. There is effective speaking and listening in many lessons, often led by very good teacher questioning and commentary, drawing out a range of perceptive contributions from pupils. At Key Stage 3, pupils frequently collaborate to prepare and present their ideas to the class, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where they worked most effectively in groups to find and read out examples of figurative language. Year 9 pupils develop their oral skills in their script-reading work on 'Macbeth', through 'hot-seating' characters or in imaginary interviews with a well known author, Robert Westall, following the reading of his novel 'The Scarecrows'. Key Stage 4 pupils successfully develop these skills as they meet the more formal demands of speaking and listening for GCSE. They become more confident in the use of standard English and



learn to adapt their speech to suit different purposes and audiences.

75. As an integral part of the statutory curriculum, all pupils read a range of good quality literature, including work by pre-twentieth century authors, Shakespeare and other major writers. At the same time, they encounter some challenging texts such as 'Junk' and 'Stone Cold' by recent and contemporary writers. The department has recently extended the range of texts for use at Key Stage 3 in order to ensure that pupils read and reflect on texts from different cultures and traditions. In their wider reading assignments for GCSE, pupils successfully compare an interesting range of literary texts. A Year 10 group of lower ability boys, for example, were actively involved in solving a Sherlock Holmes mystery as part of their work on Conan Doyle and Rankin. Many pupils make good use of the excellent range of books available in the learning resources centre. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils were reading a wide range of information texts about Southampton in order to write their own travel guides. There is a thriving reading club on three mornings before school, where Year 10 volunteers support the reading of less confident younger pupils, who are making good progress as a result.

76. Pupils are encouraged from the start of Key Stage 3 to plan, draft and revise their writing, taking note of teachers' marking, before producing the final version. Some of the best folders at Key Stage 3 contain a wide range of writing - leaflets, advertisements, poems and stories - in which pupils show considerable achievement over the three years. Some Year 9 pupils, for example, have successfully tackled issues of racism and discrimination in essays stemming from their reading of the novel 'Paper Tigers'. Where teachers are not always following the department's agreed procedures for organising pupils' work, folders are sometimes messy and disorganised.

77. In their GCSE coursework, Year 10 and 11 pupils produce a good range of writing, much of it in response to their reading. For example, the reading of Owen's war poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' with Sherriff's 'Journey's End' leads to some sensitive, reflective writing. Many pupils make very good use of computers to produce and publish their writing. A wide range of pupils' written work is displayed effectively in classrooms and in the corridors, including some most impressive writing by pupils for whom English is an additional language.

78. The marking of written work is mostly good, providing pupils with clear indications of what succeeded and how to improve on weaknesses. Practice is inconsistent across the department, however, and teachers would benefit from sharing the good examples.

79. The literacy co-ordinator has written a policy for cross-curricular literacy, but developments in departments are still in the early stages. There are pockets of good practice in a number of subjects. Pupils' writing skills are developed through imaginative tasks in religious education, geography and science, for example. Some of the most able Year 9 pupils, as part of a competition, wrote excellent poems from a mathematical perspective. A number of departments are highlighting technical and subject-specific vocabulary in classrooms, and some teachers make use of writing frames to support the learning of weaker pupils. Standards of reading and writing are satisfactory in most subjects but there are weaknesses in modern foreign languages, where, other than the most able, many pupils struggle to write with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. The learning resource centre is effective in promoting reading and supporting the development of cross-curricular study skills. The special needs department provides a good programme of support for those Year 7 pupils needing help in basic literacy skills.

80. Leadership and management of the English department are good. There is a strong sense of direction and teamwork, with a clearly stated and shared philosophy encapsulated in the handbook. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are now in place and the

department is beginning to make use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and achievement and to set targets. Reports to parents are good, clearly related to the programmes of study and assessment criteria.

81. Since the last inspection the department has maintained satisfactory standards of attainment. It has improved its planning procedures, giving greater coherence to schemes of work and clarifying learning objectives. Increased use of the learning resource centre and ICT facilities has improved pupils' research skills, and roles and responsibilities within the department are now more clearly defined.

## **Drama**

82. Drama is a strength of the school. It is a very popular subject taught separately from English at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards of attainment have been consistently very good over a number of years. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations were well above the national average for pupils gaining the A\*-C grades.

83. The quality of teaching in the Key Stage 4 examination classes is consistently very good, stemming from experienced teachers who have a secure knowledge of their subject. At Key Stage 3, the teaching is never less than satisfactory and pupils respond well, working most effectively in mixed groups. They learn to reflect on and evaluate their own and one another's work, devising drama through imaginative uses of voice, space and movement. A particularly good example was seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils explored the idea of 'devils and angels' as part of a module on medieval life and morality plays.

84. The design of the drama curriculum, and teachers' assessments, ensure continuity and progression in knowledge, skills and understanding, so that by the time they opt for the subject in Year 10, pupils are very well equipped to achieve high standards. They continue to refine their skills, interpreting scripts and creating highly imaginative and thought-provoking pieces of theatrical performance. At the time of the inspection, this was exemplified most impressively in the work of Year 11 pupils, as they made the final preparations to perform their work to the external examiner. There were some excellent interpretations derived from such diverse sources as Russell's 'Blood Brothers' and Wertemberger's 'Our Country's Good'.

85. The quality of the work in drama is undoubtedly enhanced by the superb accommodation. The two studios are very well equipped technically and enriched by displays of a variety of theatre posters, photographs of pupils at work and details of how drama is assessed.

86. Drama makes a very significant contribution to the life of the whole school, both in developing pupils' personal, social and cultural learning and also in providing a very good range of opportunities for involvement in extra-curricular theatre activities and performances.

## **MATHEMATICS**

87. In recent years, standards of attainment have been just below the national average on entry to the school, with fewer children awarded the higher grades at Key Stage 2 on leaving primary school; boys have done better than girls. Broadly, this has been the picture at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9), although the boys' results are then closer to the national average and reflect the year on year improvement in attainment which is seen nationally. Girls have not shown the same improvement and their results have lagged behind those nationally.

88. The current picture at Key Stage 3 is that attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' work, together with school predictions for Year 9, shows that by the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are in line with those nationally and that the girls are doing as well as boys.

89. GCSE results have shown a similar pattern, with results just below the national average and girls doing less well than boys. Again, the attainment of the current group of pupils at Key Stage 4 indicates a rise in standards to those found nationally and a closing of the gap between boys and girls. The increase in standards is due, in part, to a specially designed programme that has focused on tracking pupils' achievement and target setting.

90. During Key Stage 3, pupils consolidate their understanding of number and become more skilled at handling data. This helps them with work in geography and science as well as improving techniques when carrying out surveys and drawing graphs in other subjects. They learn to measure, estimate and study the symmetry of shapes; this assists with work in art and design and technology. In algebra, the work leads to the use of formulae and to looking for patterns in number. Most of the work impacts on other subjects, but not enough time is spent in lessons showing just how useful mathematics can be or how knowledge of mathematics can help with other studies. Similarly, the pupils' computer skills are not sufficiently developed to make any significant impact on work within mathematics. Throughout Key Stage 4, pupils continue to build on previous work, adding the skills of coursework necessary for the examinations; and the GNVQ programmes benefit from an understanding of the graphical representation of data. Again, the place of mathematics in other subjects and in the world of work is given insufficient attention.

91. Teaching is sound and sometimes good, but there are aspects of the teaching which need improvement. Teachers build up good relations with the pupils, take care to prepare their work and provide good role models of courtesy and respect for individuals. They explain work carefully and give lots of encouragement in class. Books are marked and helpful comments made on how to improve. The teaching does lack variety, however. There is a heavy reliance on conventional explanation, question and answer techniques and these are not appropriate for the needs of all pupils, in particular, those who find mathematics difficult. Some questioning techniques are not well developed and fail to build on pupils' responses. Also, too little time is provided to allow pupils to ask questions about the lesson or to encourage dialogue. The setting of homework is erratic; it is not well used to support learning at either key stage.

92. The pupils' work is very carefully monitored and individuals know how well they are doing in comparison to National Curriculum standards. Although pupils are given targets which provide an impetus for improvement, at present they lack sufficient detail to help those pupils whose progress is very slow. Pupils with special educational needs, however, make good progress and those pupils for whom English is a second language are given good support at both key stages.

93. The pupils generally respond well to the teachers' efforts and get on with the work of the class. However, in some lessons, teachers have to combat an undercurrent of chatter and have to remind individuals not to call out; in a few instances, a few pupils disrupt the work and spoil the learning for others.

94. Much of the current teaching is being directed to raising standards, particularly in Years 9 and 11. This is having the intended effect, but the curriculum has narrowed as a result, with the wider application of the subject and use of computers under-represented as outlined above. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a limited impact to date. The department places a good emphasis on developing language and there is the

unusual outcome of seeing some witty and sensitive poetry arising from mathematical terminology and ideas. Extra work is available for the most able pupils in Year 9 and many pupils in Year 11 attend extra lessons after school to help improve their examination results.

95. The department is given clear guidance on what to teach and the staff use their resources well. The classrooms and corridors have good displays of mathematical material, which enhances the working environment for the pupils.

96. Since the last inspection there has been a complete change of staff. The head of department has given a good lead on many initiatives: the main developments have been a focus on tracking pupils' achievements and the drive to increase standards at both key stages.

## **SCIENCE**

97. The pupils' attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 met the national average for the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5, but was below average for higher levels. Overall, the school was 1.2 points behind (the equivalent of one term's progress) the national average point score for 14 year olds for science as it has been, more or less, for the last five years. There is little real difference between the performance of boys and girls. However, the attainment of the current Year 9 pupils has risen considerably, and is now in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels (Level 6 and above) has improved too. This is a significant improvement on last year and shows the pupils to be achieving well. For example, in one Year 7 class, pupils were modelling electrical current flow in simple and complex circuits by having to act out the role of electrons and various components in the circuit. With good explanations from the teacher and various re-runs, by the end of the lesson they were able to give very good descriptions and definitions of what was happening in the circuit - thus demonstrating at least Level 5 and probably Level 6 understanding. In another Year 7 class, pupils were looking at the difficult idea of the differences between chemical elements and compounds and, with good teaching, they came to a Level 5/6 understanding most satisfactorily. Equally good attainment was seen with Year 8 pupils who were able to show that in photosynthesis starch is only produced where there are, amongst other things, both light and chlorophyll present.

98. The GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average. However, the attainment of the current Year 11 pupils is above average. This is a considerable improvement on last year and represents good success across the whole ability spectrum for boys and girls alike. Furthermore, evidence from assessment of early modular work indicates that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2002, i.e. when the current Year 10 prepare to leave in a year's time, will be higher still, with the potential to be well above the national average. Many pupils at Key Stage 4 are achieving very well, especially those in the highest and lowest sets where they are well challenged. Overall, achievement at Key Stage 4 is good, with the pupils, including those with special needs and English as an additional language, making good progress in all aspects of science. Gifted and talented pupils also achieve well at the key stage.

99. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good; at Key Stage 4 it is very good. Teachers' expectations for pupil attainment and behaviour are good in virtually all cases, although where expectations are occasionally low, pupils' performance and behaviour drop significantly. Teachers' relationships and control strategies are good and most manage the pupils' behaviour sufficiently well to keep control without unnecessary confrontation. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and is used to good effect to stimulate learning. For instance, in two top set Key Stage 4 revision classes, the teachers' knowledge of, and expertise with, electronic configuration and the periodic table enabled them to explain and

elucidate the highest range of GCSE work to very good effect. Equally, this strong subject knowledge allowed teachers to work with slower learners and successfully break down the concepts and present them in good logical steps that related to the pupils' own experiences. Teachers' expertise and range of teaching strategies are good and their use of learning outcomes, introductions and summaries to promote learning is excellent. One lesson had a pupil as the "Keeper of the Learning Outcomes" whose role was to check that the objectives were being followed and appropriately summarised at the end! In the majority of lessons, the teacher is still the main provider of information and not enough is being done to help the pupils become more independent learners. However, one or two teachers adopted new ways for the pupils to learn, for instance, using the pupils as electrons and power users to model electrical circuits, promoting 'mind-mapping' as a good tool for revision, using new round-the-class question games, and introducing writing for different audiences.

100. The department has taken effective steps to reduce the amount of unnecessary writing the pupils have to do and usefully encourages the writing to come from the pupil, rather than being copied from the board. As a result, pupils' books contain good work showing better than usual understanding. However, there is not enough help given to pupils to achieve high standards in the presentation and organisation of their work and their diagram skills are poor. Similarly, neither homework nor the use of texts and the Internet as extra sources of information is well used to support their learning.

101. Throughout the department, pupils are given a clear picture of how they are doing and a clear target grade. They have an increasingly good understanding of the implications of these as they grew older. Many are also given copies of marking schemes and grade criteria to help them improve their work themselves. This is all used to good effect in helping the pupils to improve their work independently. The school meets the knowledge, understanding and investigative requirements of the National Curriculum well, but fails to provide for all the necessary broader aspects such as ICT, teaching about safety, risk assessments, and the history of science. Leadership within the department is good and there is the capacity to improve further. Since the last inspection the department has improved well.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

102. On entry to Year 7, pupils' art skills and understanding are below the national average, especially those of boys, whose spatial awareness is often very weak. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment matches the nationally expected range across a variety of two- and three-dimensional media. This represents good improvement from the time of the last inspection, when standards were below average. Almost all pupils learn well across this key stage, developing secure knowledge of the historical aspects of the subject and using these well to inform their practical work. This is another important improvement from 1996, when these wider aspects of pupils' learning were poor. They are now well planned into the curriculum and pupils' background knowledge and written work are often strengths at both key stages. Pupils do well in art when judged against their ability levels, with almost all making good progress to Year 9.

103. GCSE results improved significantly after the last inspection, to a point in 1999 where they were much higher than the national average. Although they fell to below average in 2000, they represented good achievement for many individuals, given their underlying ability. This was particularly so for pupils with special educational needs, whose grades were often good. Pupils with special talent in art also do well, with A\* grades slightly exceeding the national average. This good picture is reflected in current work seen at Key Stage 4. Year 11 were taking their examination in the week of the inspection and standards seen show much higher potential than last year. Pupils' preparation work is good, with effective research habits acquired in earlier years used beneficially to produce good visual and written

sketchbook work. Pupils' final examination pieces sustained the attainment predicted by their course-work standards, which cover a wide variety of media and scale. By the end of Year 11, overall standards are slightly above average. This, again, represents good improvement from 1996 when attainment was below expectations. Very little low attainment now exists in pupils' work by Year 11, with achievement for all individuals good across this key stage.

104. The teaching seen was good overall. After a period of stability following the last inspection, recent staffing turbulence was exacerbated in the week of inspection by unexpected senior staff absence. The fairly new teaching team and new head of department are, together, revising schemes of work to suit pupils' needs better. Pupils' good skills development at Key Stage 3, to redress spatial awareness deficits, for example, is attributable to successful planning and teaching of these aspects. Examples of this were seen in the Year 8 project about "contained space" and the reordering of Georgia O'Keefe images in Year 7 lessons. Expectations that pupils will become competent, independent learners at Key Stage 4 are high, and were well exemplified in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were very confident to undertake the final stages of their examination preparation in the absence of their usual teacher. Excellent, mature behaviour and attitudes indicated very effective learning, with pupils understanding well the need to produce an individual, creative response to the stimulus of "Inside". Sensitive, well-targeted one-to-one discussions with pupils in lessons are the key mechanism for teachers to transmit these expectations. These sessions ensure that individuals are challenged appropriately. Class management is usually good, with potentially very difficult behaviour managed well. Occasionally, though, some pupils' behaviour, particularly that of lower-attaining, younger boys, is poor enough to spoil their own learning and that of others. In these classes, some pupils do not learn well enough. Assessment has improved significantly, and the focus on encouraging pupils to understand how good their work is has been effective in enabling most to improve their standards, for example to improve a potential D grade to a C. It has been less effective in enabling higher-attaining pupils to understand and articulate the ways they might improve their work, for example from A to A\*.

105. Other improvements since the last report include new accommodation, which together with more and better resources has enabled the department to provide an appropriate range of two- and three-dimensional experiences. Opportunities to use information and communication technology for research are good, but department computers are inadequate to enable pupils to use ICT creatively or regularly. Good planning for the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the curriculum, and for the inclusion of gallery visits at home and abroad now also enhance pupils' work, and contribute greatly to pupils' enjoyment of the subject and to their success.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

106. By the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils achieve standards that are broadly average. However, standards in lessons vary, with comparatively lower levels of achievement often found in lessons where teachers are not trained in the subject. Standards in food technology are above average and pupils are generally better at making their products than designing them. The pupils successfully carry out research and develop criteria for the products they design. Also their ability to use computers to research and to present data is good, as is their ability to plan how to make their designs. However, their graphical skills are below average. Also, their ability to develop and detail their design ideas is below average as there is insufficient focus on these aspects throughout the course. The pupils' ability to manufacture is sound and occasionally better than this. They confidently use computers for control, graphics, and to model food products. Strategies to enhance computer-aided manufacture are planned to start in September. The achievement of most pupils, including those with English as an additional language, is sound over the key stage, and many pupils with special

educational needs make good progress. However, in some instances the more able underachieve because they are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills fully. The standards the pupils achieve are generally in line with those at the time of the last inspection, yet there has been a significant improvement in the standards of textiles.

107. By the end of Key Stage 4, the pupils currently achieve average standards in class. Standards have improved significantly over the past year. GCSE results in 2000, at A\*-C grades, were well below the national average. This compares with slightly below average results in 1999 and average results in 1998. In 2000, the girls achieved higher standards than the boys by a margin which is 10 per cent greater than the national difference. However, the standards the pupils are currently achieving in their coursework in Year 11 is slightly above average. The lower standards achieved in 2000 coincided with the appointment of a number of teachers who had limited experience of preparing pupils for the examinations. However, they have worked hard to improve the standards of this year's cohort. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection when they were described as "generally at or below national expectations". Attainment is currently highest in graphic products and the new textile course. Achievement is better in Year 11 than in Year 10, owing to the focus on examination requirements.

108. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. It is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The teaching was unsatisfactory in one Year 8 lesson where the teacher had insufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject. This resulted in most of the class underachieving as they had insufficient background knowledge or guidance to learn essential facts from developing and testing their bridge structures. The six non-specialists who contribute to the teaching of design and technology have worked hard to extend their expertise and they make a positive contribution to the teaching of the subject. However, the further development of design and technology and the raising of standards is hampered by the lack of a stable body of specialist teachers.

109. In most lessons, teachers explain what pupils should achieve by the end of the session, which enhances the pupils' motivation and sense of purpose. Also, good support materials provide guidance in organising the pupils' work, and well-managed lessons ensure good pace and efficient use of time. Often, good marking and feedback ensure that the pupils understand the standards they achieve and are clear what they should do to reach a higher grade. Good teaching is also associated with good questioning to help the pupils identify and build on previous learning. For example, in a food lesson, Year 10 pupils drew on previous knowledge to identify potential target-groups before evaluating ready-made products. There are examples of the good use of resources to stimulate the pupils, such as when Year 11 used a range of different cameras to identify and sketch ways in which they could be improved. However, there are some instances where insufficient imagination by teachers limits the range of resources, techniques and materials the pupils have to work with, which results in dull lessons. However, the pupils enjoy their work in design and technology and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are often good, as they are keen to succeed. Better, and more consistent, use could be made of homework to support learning. While there are detailed lesson plans for teachers at Key Stage 3, there is no effective strategy to ensure that lessons build on the learning from the previous units of work, taught by different teachers during the course. This adversely affects the standards of designing at Key Stage 3.

110. The leadership and management of the department are good. Significant progress has been made to provide detailed schemes of work for Curriculum 2000 and to enhance the use of ICT. Good progress has also been made in developing and introducing effective courses in textiles at both key stages. The subject leader works with energy and enthusiasm to support an unusually large team, many of whom are non-specialists. He has a clear vision

for the development of the subject, yet progress is often limited by the lack of a suitably qualified and stable staff. Assessment strategies are well developed and individual targets set. However, insufficient use is made of the criteria for grades to help pupils know how to reach higher standards. Teaching is well monitored, yet insufficient use is currently made of data to monitor the progress by classes and year groups. The department generally has appropriate accommodation and good resources, other than for graphical products, where the learning environment in some instances is not conducive to high quality work.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

111. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) are in line with the national average and achievement is generally good. Pupils in Year 9 have good knowledge of place and very good understanding of themes, such as those related to the environment. They are developing very sound mapwork and graphical skills. Lower-attaining pupils are able to contribute to a discussion about the causes of global warming and its effect on people's lives in the future. Most pupils are able to describe the physical processes that cause the greenhouse effect and the more able pupils can write extended pieces explaining conflicting views about environmental issues. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are making good progress. Boys are working at similar standards to girls and all groups of pupils are reaching average standards. This represents a clear improvement since the last inspection.

112. The GCSE results in 2000 were close to the national average. The results have been consistently above the school average over the last four years. Pupils of all abilities, including those with English as an additional language, are making good progress. Pupils in Year 11 have a thorough grasp of the basic geographical skills, including Ordnance Survey map work. Less able pupils can correctly identify coastal features. More able pupils can explain how physical processes operate along a section of coastline and give detailed answers to questions about water management schemes. Year 10 pupils are making good progress in their study of population. Although some less able pupils find it difficult to include enough detail and use their case study knowledge, most pupils are reaching appropriate standards. Most pupils can successfully complete population pyramids and draw conclusions based on an analysis of their shape. Pupils with special education needs are making good progress as a result of focused support by teachers.

113. Teaching is good overall. Specialist teaching at all levels helps to provide the necessary subject knowledge and challenge in lessons. Teachers plan thoroughly, have clear objectives for lessons and explain things clearly to pupils. Lessons have a clear beginning, middle and end and there is always a good range of activities. Lessons are not just textbook based. In one typically good Year 8 lesson the teacher used colourful pictures of Kenya to capture the interest of pupils and involve large numbers of them by name in a lively question and answer session. This encouraging, yet challenging, style of teaching ensured that there was no disruptive behaviour and all pupils were fully involved.

114. Occasionally, in lessons which were satisfactory in most respects, there was a lack of work geared towards the least or most able pupils, who tended to do the same task, regardless of its suitability. In a few lessons, the poor behaviour of or two pupils disrupted the learning of others at times. Homework is not consistently set and marked in all classes at Key Stage 3.

115. Leadership of the department is good. The new head of department has a clear vision of what the department needs to achieve. There is a focus on monitoring and raising standards. The department is well set to build on previous strengths and move forward. All the major areas from the previous inspection have been addressed.



## HISTORY

116. The standards of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 are in line with the average. When the prior attainment of these pupils is considered their achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils with special educational needs are achieving well. So, also, are the more able and talented pupils. By the end of Year 9 pupils' understanding of chronology is good; most are able to use historical terms accurately and make links between reasons for an event. The more able pupils can use extended writing to explain key historical features. A Year 9 assessment on the causes of the Second World War showed considerable numbers of pupils producing written work of a high standard. However, at Key Stage 3, pupils are not able to evaluate sources fully enough or to see why and how interpretations of historical events differ. They are too often using sources merely as a comprehension exercise.

117. At Key Stage 4, results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below average but the work seen in both the current Year 10 and Year 11 is at national standards. The most able pupils evaluate sources at a sophisticated level and are able to assess sources for reliability and usefulness. Their achievement is good. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special needs make sound progress. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils evaluated the usefulness of a graph for assessing the economic prosperity of the USA during the Second World War. Improved standards at Key Stage 4 have been brought about by good analysis of the requirements of the examination syllabus, focused teaching with a distinct emphasis upon examination techniques and careful mentoring of pupils.

118. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. There is some good teaching in Year 7 and Year 9 and some very good teaching in Year 8. Teachers' subject specialist knowledge is good and they use appropriate historical terminology in explanations. In many lessons a good pace is maintained and teachers use a variety of teaching methods which impact positively on the learning. In a Year 9 lesson on the causes of the Second World War, having conducted their own research, pupils then had to make a presentation to the rest of the group on the significance of their researched topic to the outbreak of the War. Where teachers challenge pupils' thinking they respond well, asking intelligent historical questions, such as why William the Conqueror, in attempting to control England, gave so much land to certain barons, which then gave them so much power. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by learning assistants, who give them support and ask probing questions, which helps their learning. The use of writing frames enables the less able to cope with extended writing. Where teaching is less effective, it is because teachers allow pupils to spend too much time on one activity and provide insufficient challenge in the lesson.

119. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. Teachers have placed an appropriate emphasis upon preparing pupils for the GCSE examinations and this has meant that pupils have been taught how to evaluate sources and have a clear understanding of the concepts of cause and consequence. Teachers use their own excellent subject knowledge to enhance the learning of pupils, many of whom have detailed knowledge of the events of the period being studied. This was clearly evident in a Year 11 lesson on the effects of Nazi rule on different sections of society in Germany up to 1938. There has been some very imaginative teaching at Key Stage 4, as seen in a Year 11 lesson on Kennedy and the Civil Rights Movement. However, less able pupils at Key Stage 4 find some of the topics difficult and, although a revision guide has been provided, it is not sufficiently matched to their learning needs.

120. Behaviour is generally satisfactory but there are a small number of pupils, mainly Year 7 and 8 boys, who are causing difficulties by their challenging and loud behaviour. They

demonstrate poor listening skills and less experienced teachers sometimes lack the strategies to deal with them. This has affected their progress and that of other pupils in the lessons concerned. There are generally good teacher/pupil relationships, particularly at Key Stage 4, and teachers use praise freely to motivate and reward good work and behaviour.

121. The range of the curriculum is in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum except that, at Key Stage 3, a local study needs to be planned and the use of ICT needs to be integrated more into the planning and teaching. History contributes well to the overall development of pupils' moral, social and cultural awareness and to the development of citizenship.

122. The leadership and management of the subject are good and there is a strong team spirit between the teachers, who support each other well. However, the fact that history teaching is spread amongst so many staff, a number of whom teach in other subject areas, means that coherence becomes difficult for the head of department in planning, monitoring and sharing the workload of the department.

123. Overall, following a decline in standards in the intervening years since the last inspection due to staff changes and a lack of focus on examination techniques, the department is now making progress and considerable improvements have taken place.

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

124. A discrete ICT course is taught in Years 7 and 8. In Year 9, ICT is taught through other subjects. Pupils enter the school with below average expertise, but by the end of Year 8 are performing above levels expected. In Year 9, however, standards are 'patchy' but largely satisfactory. By the end of Year 8, the most able pupils can select information relevant to a particular question from Internet or CD-ROM and use it effectively. Most pupils understand, and therefore learn quickly, the technical aspects of using a range of software. Pupils seen making their own 'PowerPoint' presentations learned, after only one demonstration, how to add animations and sound effects. Some more able pupils were seen learning independently to create flow charts on screen. Pupils concentrate throughout lessons, almost always behaving well and treating the equipment with respect. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language work at high levels in ICT with sufficient guidance, and so their level of achievement is high. Only a few pupils, however, give sufficient attention to the extent to which their work takes the needs and interests of the audience or user into consideration. Most Year 7 pupils did not consider the impact of their message in their screen design. In Year 8, pupils who were devising cafeteria menus were able to retrieve data and paste it into their own documents, but did not use their knowledge of food technology in menu design. Pupils can create questionnaires using a database, then insert the data, interrogate it and display results. The majority, however, merely describe their findings, they do not explain or analyse them. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils make insufficient use of the computer to correct their written work or plan their thinking. Their experience, and therefore their knowledge, of measurement and logging of data is poor.

125. In the GCSE examinations, results in both the full and the half course were well above the national average in 2000, as they were also in the last two years. Boys' results were consistently slightly better than girls', with considerably more boys than girls choosing to study ICT.

126. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection confirms the impression given by the GCSE results, as the performance in class of pupils studying GCSE ICT is well above national expectation. They make full and relevant independent use of the full range of GCSE applications. Their coursework shows that they work systematically

using appropriate techniques to design solutions to a variety of business set-ups. Their knowledge of the application of ICT to many aspects of work and leisure is very good. They work carefully and thoroughly, therefore achieving very high levels in coursework. GCSE results from previous years and written work during Year 11 revision lessons show that pupils of all abilities need to improve their expression of knowledge on examination papers. In all Year 10 and 11 groups seen during the inspection, boys performed slightly better than girls, but some girls were among the most capable pupils. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good, in that they can, with assistance, complete the same tasks as others in their groups.

127. Standards of ICT are 'patchy', but largely satisfactory, in Years 9 and 11 where there is no taught ICT for all, and subject teachers are inconsistent in their use of ICT. The work done in geography and religious education shows the level of which pupils are capable, with ICT being used to develop pupils' research and thinking skills, and to express findings appropriately. Work done in design and technology assists pupils' learning of the subject and shows that they can use challenging software, while in subjects such as English, geography and religious education, the tasks show that pupils can use ICT to help them learn. Pupils studying business studies and GNVQ have a high level of achievement in ICT. In some areas, however, for example history, credit is given for direct printing out from Internet or CD-ROM without considering the quality, meaning or relevance of the information. Relevant use of ICT in some subjects, for example music, is hampered by lack of appropriate equipment.

128. Teaching of ICT as a subject is good at Key Stage 3, and at Key Stage 4 where specialists teach the GCSE courses, it is very good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Their enthusiasm for the subject, respect for the pupils and very clear purpose ensure that in almost all lessons the pupils work to their full capacity and learn well. All teachers follow the very good schemes of work devised by department specialists, so that pupils in the ICT courses in Years 7, 8 and 10 have the same opportunities. Staff plan lessons effectively to ensure that the pupils reinforce existing knowledge and skills while developing new areas. They set relevant homework and enable pupils who do not have their own computers to use computers in school after every session. While they do not formally plan separate work for pupils of different ability, they ensure, by well-judged individual help, that all pupils can understand and complete the tasks, with appropriate levels of independence. As a result, the pupils learn quickly, develop confidence and have a high level of interest in activities. In a minority of lessons, where teachers over-emphasise demonstration without sufficient pupil involvement, learning is less good but is still satisfactory. While teachers of Years 7 and 8 encourage pupils to present their work well, they do not always ensure that the written text is accurate or that pupils deliver their messages to the intended audience.

129. Teachers give good feedback to pupils during lessons, on assessed work and also on school reports, so that pupils are told specifically what they need to do in order to improve. GCSE candidates are given very good advice in order to raise their grades, and are very good judges of their own performance. Teachers in various subjects, for example science, can identify and assess levels of ICT used within their subject. As a result, the ICT department is aware of standards of Year 9 and 11 pupils who do not study ICT as a separate subject. The co-ordinator keeps good records and analyses them effectively in order to plan for improvement in standards.

130. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school has planned for improved entitlement to the ICT curriculum with GCSE for all in the present Year 10, and has developed the use of ICT in most subjects. The level of equipment has improved, with good quality computers now at national average ratio to the number of pupils, in well-designed computer rooms and also in most subject areas. A full-time technician maintains the reliability of the

system. Staff in almost all departments are now being trained to use ICT and some can assess ICT capability. Although there are few specialist teachers in the large ICT department, and most of the staff have commitments in other areas, all teachers in the department are aware of the content and approach that they need to follow. The leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator uses assessment and monitoring of pupils' standards in order to plan for future improvement. Some measures remain to be taken. There is still a need to acquire appropriate equipment for some departments, for example music, which can only achieve very basic use, and science and geography, which need to be able to measure and analyse physical variables. Teachers are missing opportunities to contribute to improved standards of literacy and numeracy. The department is, however, achieving the need stated at the last inspection to meet statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

131. All pupils study either French or German in Years 7 to 9. The vast majority continue with one language in Years 10 and 11, a very small number adding a second language.

132. The attainment of the oldest pupils currently in Year 9 is below average. Whilst many of the more able pupils are attaining the expectation for 14 year old pupils, most of the others are attaining below or well below this. The more able are beginning to cope with talking and writing about the past. Pupils of average ability are reasonably accurate when working on textbook and other exercises but are very insecure when asked to express themselves in more open-ended tasks. The less able cope at best speaking or writing in short phrases. In relation to their ability and to their overall attainment on entering the school, most pupils make sound progress over Years 7 to 9, achieving satisfactorily. However, a significant minority, including some of the pupils with special educational needs, do not. Their negative attitude to learning a language and their teachers' difficulty in controlling the behaviour of a significant number of pupils in the class are the key reasons for this underachievement. For some, the knowledge that changes to the school's curriculum mean that they will not be studying a language in Year 10 reinforces their negativity.

133. The performance of the pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2000, as measured by the proportion achieving grades A\*-C and by the average scores of all pupils, was below average. This was so both as a percentage of those entered and of the all the pupils in Year 11. In French, however, the attainment of the girls was close to the average for girls nationally and the percentage of all pupils achieving at least a grade G was higher than that found nationally. The attainment of the oldest pupils currently in Year 11 broadly matches the above picture. The more able use a variety of tenses and expressions in their speaking and writing, though not always accurately. They have satisfactory to good understanding of longer passages containing some unfamiliar language in reading and listening. The average and less able pupils can communicate at a basic level in speaking and writing but are very inaccurate and have little sense of the structure and rhythm of sentences in French or German. They understand specific detail in reading and listening to passages containing mainly familiar language. As in Years 7 to 9, most are making broadly satisfactory progress, though a significant minority are not, especially in Year 10. This includes pupils across the ability range. As for the younger pupils, this underachievement is concentrated in specific classes in which the teachers have difficulty controlling behaviour and/or are underestimating the pupils' ability.

134. At both key stages, most of the teaching is in the satisfactory to good range. However, a third of the lessons seen were judged to have significant weaknesses and the teaching overall is therefore judged to be unsatisfactory. In the best teaching (the one-third of lessons judged to be good) the key factors are a good relationship with the class,

considerable encouragement and praise, activities that are well matched to the pupils' previous learning and clear objectives for the lesson. As a result, in these lessons the pupils are interested and concentrate well, they apply a good level of intellectual effort, and they acquire new skills and knowledge at a good rate. Where the teaching has significant weaknesses, the pupils spend too much time writing, the pace of the lesson is too slow and the teacher struggles to maintain a satisfactory level of discipline. Consequently, very little is learnt, too many pupils are not engaged in the lesson and the behaviour of many is unsatisfactory and at times poor or even very poor. Those who want to learn are prevented from doing so.

135. Overall, the quality of the provision for modern languages has declined since the last inspection when standards were described as close to the average and teaching as never less than satisfactory. A key factor in this has been the increasing rapidity of the turnover of teaching staff. Over half have left in the last two years and in the current year a number of classes now have their third teacher. Inevitably, this is frustrating the head of department's endeavours to raise the overall level of attainment.

136. Despite the extent of underachievement, there are a number of strengths in the leadership and management of the subject. There is a good focus on improvement. Assessment is well organised and the head of department has been effective in making new staff aware of what the pupils need to be doing to progress to a higher level. The good range of exchanges and visits to France and Germany has a positive impact on the motivation of those who participate in them. However, the extent of the disciplinary problems being experienced by some of the teachers and the head of department's own teaching load mean that he is overstretched.

## **MUSIC**

137. The standard that most pupils attain at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average, although a minority do reach the expected level. This does, however, reflect satisfactory achievement during the key stage, since most pupils entering the school in Year 7 are also working below the level expected at the end of Key Stage 2. In nearly all lessons, the pupils are able to complete tasks and perform together accurately, such as when combining repetitive Samba parts, and they understand and use technical terms. The skills and techniques involved are, however, simple and few pupils perform more extended parts or talk at length about the music they hear.

138. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results have varied without any clear trend over recent years. The pupils currently in Year 11 have a wide range of ability but the quality of work seen during the inspection supports the school's predictions that overall results this year will be in line with the national average. Given the lower standards at the end of Key Stage 3, the achievement of pupils, including those with special needs, English as an additional language, is good. Pupils with a particular talent for music achieve well, being enabled to enjoy practising their skills through extra-curricular opportunities as well as in class.

139. The number of both boys and girls learning to play instruments with visiting teachers is close to the national average. School staff provide a jazz group, orchestra and other opportunities for these pupils and the playing is notable for both its musical subtlety and attention to detail. Other pupils are involved in school productions and in performing class-based work.

140. Pupils respond well to music, showing both interest and enthusiasm. They work easily together, show appreciation for one another's work and treat equipment very well. A

significant number of pupils find it difficult to concentrate for long but behaviour is usually satisfactory. Confrontational behaviour by a very small number of pupils does sometimes interrupt lessons but these incidents are very well handled by the teachers.

141. The teaching by the permanent staff is consistently good. Due to a vacancy, some classes are currently being taught by supply teachers and the quality of this teaching is poor. When the teaching is good, the pupils are well managed and well motivated by praise and encouragement. The staff set high personal examples of respect and fairness. They are very good at planning activities and asking questions that enable pupils to understand what they are learning. Many pupils can, as a result, operate as 'thinking musicians', applying knowledge and evaluating their work, albeit at a simple level. When supply teachers provide lessons, the activities set are not always sufficiently clear and the teachers do not engage with the pupils to ensure that they are completing the tasks or learning through them. At Key Stage 4 the teaching is always good. There is a good balance between developing technical expertise and subjective musicianship.

142. The department has implemented whole-school issues raised in the last inspection and the quality of teaching has improved as a result. Although some new keyboards have recently been bought, the range and quality of instruments is still limiting pupils' potential. There are currently no computers in the department and this presents a severe restriction upon learning at both key stages.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

143. Standards reached by the majority of pupils in Year 9 are in line with the national average. When the pupils arrive in Year 7 many of their skills are below average. By year 9 they have good ball skills in games such as rounders and they show good sprinting and jumping techniques in athletics. This represents good achievement through the key stage.

144. The majority of pupils understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle but they are generally not confident in the use of technical language. They have good planning skills and are able to successfully evaluate their own and the performance of others. A minority of pupils work hard at the physical activity, but do not listen attentively to the teachers' explanations or respond to question and answer sessions. The few pupils working below the expectation have poor ball co-ordination and find it difficult to transfer new skills into a competitive situation.

145. Standards reached by the majority of the pupils in Year 11 (those who take physical education as a core subject, but not to GCSE) are in line with the average. A minority are working below average and a minority are above. Particular strengths are the pupils' athletic and ball skills. Their performance becomes more consistent and effective and they are able to anticipate the response from others in games such as tennis and rounders. A minority of pupils, mostly girls, have poor technique in tennis and a limited variety of shots to outwit their opponents. The amount of time for the teaching of physical education at Key Stage 4 is insufficient for activities to be taught to the expected depth. This lack of time also means that there is too little use made of local facilities to provide the varied programme of study that could be expected.

146. In 2000, the GCSE results were well below the national average at A\*-C grades. Results at A\*-G were above the national average with 100 per cent gaining pass grades. Results have generally been low since the last inspection, but higher than other schools in Southampton. Attainment by the majority currently studying GCSE is below average relative to examination requirements. A minority are average. Practical work for the majority is average with a significant minority above average. The pupils make good progress in their

practical work. Learning is less rigorous in the theoretical aspects of GCSE because the pupils have not previously been targeted sufficiently early in areas of weakness. They are generally not confident in the use of technical vocabulary, when both writing and speaking, and their recall of facts is poor.

147. The overall quality of teaching, and its impact on the pupils' learning, is good. It is best at Key Stage 3. There are some elements of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4. The teachers always let the pupils know what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson. They use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical, evaluative and planning skills. Good examples of this were seen in several athletics lessons where the pupils had to plan their own relay teams taking into account their individual strength and weaknesses. This, combined with good teaching points, resulted in improved baton change-over techniques and faster times in the next few races. Techniques are developed logically with enough time to practise and refine skills before using them in a competitive situation. Question and answer sessions are used effectively in most lessons to assess the pupils' knowledge. The style of questioning is not yet consistently developed to challenge the pupils intellectually and to encourage them to use technical vocabulary that would help to prepare them for the GCSE course.

148. The teachers' expectations of high standards of work are nearly always consistent and they continually encourage pupils to strive for better performance appropriately related to their ability. In one GCSE tennis lesson, the task set was too hard for many of them and the pupils' rate of learning and attitudes deteriorated. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are well behaved and are well motivated to improve their skills when the teaching is challenging and the teacher insists on the expected code of conduct. However, there are a minority of pupils that are constantly disruptive in lessons in both key stages, but particularly at GCSE. The pace of learning becomes slower and many other pupils then become distracted. Pupils with special educational needs and English as a second language are well integrated into lessons and achieve well at Key Stage 3 and core Key Stage 4.

149. The analysis of the GCSE results in 2000 was far more thorough than in previous years. As a result, effective new teaching ideas have been introduced to improve standards in theoretical aspects. Many of the pupils are now better prepared for the exam, but are still not achieving as well as could be expected. Varied homework assignments are set regularly and give pupils the opportunity for independent research and some extended writing. The marking, at its best, is constructive, regular and sets targets for pupils to improve. However, the quality varies between teachers and missing work and notes are not followed up sufficiently. The detailed assessment procedures are linked to the new National Curriculum levels and are well placed to be useful tools to track the pupils' progress, highlighting strengths and areas for development.

150. For the most part, there is a mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the pupils and this makes a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is especially evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where pupils continue to enjoy team and individual success in inter-form tournaments and local, county and national competitions in sports such as football, basketball and athletics.

151. Leadership of the department has ensured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The pupils now have greater opportunities for independent learning and tasks set nearly always challenge pupils at their own level. Formal monitoring of teaching is at an early stage but new successful ideas have been introduced from departmental discussions. For example, the introduction of inter-form tournaments has contributed to greater participation in activities and the development of good team building skills. GCSE results have been disappointing. However, the new strategies introduced are effective. The lack of a

permanent base for theoretical lessons creates difficulties in establishing a stimulating environment and also for the transportation of resources. The internal teaching areas are in a poor state of repair and are not adequate in number to effectively deliver the curriculum in wet weather when large numbers of pupils are timetabled for physical education. The dining hall is not an appropriate teaching space for practical activities such as tennis and severely restricts the pupils' progress. The changing rooms are too small for large groups of pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

152. At Key Stage 3 standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and achievement is satisfactory overall, with a number of good features. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.

153. Pupils can highlight key beliefs in Christianity and the other religions studied. They make good connections between their own ideas and experiences and important religious beliefs and values. For example, in a creative Year 7 lesson, the pupils effectively related their own special objects to the importance of the Quran for Muslims. In Year 8, the pupils are able to connect poems and stories from the North American Indians to modern day environmental issues. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Progress is good when they are given varied and stimulating learning activities. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, special needs pupils were encouraged, through the use of art and poetry, to share their ideas about what was important to them. Progress was less effective when pupils were asked to simply copy information. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress but would, on occasions, benefit from developing their own ideas with greater depth. Pupils with English as a second language make satisfactory progress. Where appropriate, pupils from minority ethnic groups have been able to share their beliefs and ideas in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Achievement is often good in religious education when the teaching is challenging and imaginative. For example, a Year 9 lesson on human rights produced good learning through the skilful use of music, slides and focused discussion groups. This led to pupils responding positively and working effectively at understanding Christian viewpoints on human rights.

154. The newly introduced (September 2000) short course in religious education in Year 9 is having a positive effect on pupils' standards and achievement in the subject. At the present rate of progress standards are set to rise considerably.

155. At Key Stage 4, standards and achievement are currently unsatisfactory. This is due entirely to the absence of timetabled religious education provision. Pupils currently in Year 9 will continue their short course in Year 10 in September 2001 and this should impact positively on standards and learning. However, Year 11 pupils will still not have access to the subject.

156. The small group of pupils studying GCSE religious studies are achieving in line with national standards and their achievement is good. The pupils are well motivated and through good skilful teaching and the effective use of ICT their progress is encouraging. Pupils can highlight key beliefs and practices in Christianity and Islam and are good at sharing their own views and ideas. Recent examination results have been mixed. Entries are small in number. The results in 2000 were low but matched pupils' achievements in other subjects. The statutory requirement of the Southampton Agreed Syllabus to provide religious education for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not being fulfilled.

157. The quality of teaching in religious education is always at least satisfactory and often good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, which is a significant improvement on the previous inspection findings. All lessons observed were well planned with clear aims which



were well shared with the pupils. For instance, the aims of a Year 8 lesson on environmental issues were clearly shared, leading to pupils responding well and showing depth and maturity in their responses. There is a real commitment to developing positive, purposeful relationships with pupils. Resources are very well used to enhance learning. For example, the use of music, slides, textbooks and key religious passages in a Year 9 lesson led to good quality learning by pupils on the issue of human rights. Occasionally, the introductory elements of the lesson are too long, leading to some loss of interest and concentration by pupils.

158. Pupils' attitudes to learning in religious education are satisfactory overall and are often good. Many pupils are keen to ask and answer questions and to read aloud. In a Year 7 lesson pupils, when sharing their special objects, showed genuine respect and sensitivity to one another. In a small number of lessons, a minority of pupils (usually boys) behave immaturely, do not listen well or sustain concentration. This has a negative impact on the majority of pupils, who want to learn. These incidents are nearly always dealt with satisfactorily by the teacher but they mar the enjoyment of learning in religious education, which most pupils have.

159. At the time of the inspection, the head of department was on maternity leave. The school has been very effective in ensuring continuing leadership of the department and cover arrangements are very good. The department has many strengths. Its documentation, particularly the planning, is very good indeed. Pupils' work is marked regularly and helpful guidance enables them to make further progress. Good use is made of target setting to move learning forward. Religious education makes a significant and effective contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development through the exploration of ultimate questions (such as how life began or beliefs in life after death) and moral issues (human rights, environmental concerns, medical ethics). Staffing, accommodation and resources are all good. Overall, the department is talented, hard working and, given solutions to the problems of the Key Stage 4 allocation, well set to make further progress.

160. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory overall with a number of significant improvements. These include improvements in standards and learning at Key Stage 3 and the introduction of a short GCSE course for all pupils, as well as a full course for the most able, in Year 9. There is also less use of non-specialist teachers at the key stage. Issues in which unsatisfactory progress has been made include the lack of provision at Key Stage 4, particularly Year 11, inconsistent examination results in the full GCSE course and the provision of more challenging work for more able pupils.

## **OTHER COURSES AT KEY STAGE 4**

### **Business Studies**

161. Business studies is taught as an option at Key Stage 4. The percentage of pupils achieving GCSE results at A\*-C grades over the past three years has been below the national average and was significantly so in 2000. The results in 2000 were above the national average for girls but well below average for boys. The number of pupils attaining A grades was only a tiny fraction of those entered for the examination. The course is a popular one in both Years 10 and 11. There is a wide range of pupil abilities, including a significant minority in the lower ability range. The standard of the current Year 11 pupils is higher than the last group to take GCSE. More than half the pupils are on target to achieve A\*-C grades with a greater number likely to attain the highest grades than last year. There is no significant difference between the current performance of girls and boys. Most pupils have a good grasp of different forms of business activity. They understand the issues involved in marketing products. They use their knowledge to consider local business issues. They understand the conventions of profit and loss accounting. A significant number of pupils use computers well to present their work. The most able pupils plan their work well and use a range of computer applications to present and analyse data. They use specialist terms appropriately and can apply their knowledge to real life situations such as in a case study on British Airways. The achievement by most of the pupils over the past year has been good.

162. In nearly all the lessons seen the pupils made satisfactory progress and in well over two-thirds their achievement was good. The pupils show interest and commitment in response to teaching which is positive, enthusiastic and encourages all pupils to achieve. The teachers present topics in a very clear way that most pupils can readily understand. They plan their lessons well and have good subject knowledge. They use study sheets and revision packs, which are of great help to pupils of all abilities and give valuable guidance on how to tackle topics. They give effective support to individual pupils in lessons so that nearly all of them are able to work at a good pace. Very occasionally, however, the pace can be too fast for the least able pupils to keep up. The pupils respond well to the teachers' positive and good-humoured approach and their high expectations so that most of them willingly take on challenging tasks and seek to bring a high standard of presentation to their work. They showed very good commitment and concentration in virtually all the lessons seen. For instance, nearly all the pupils enthusiastically volunteered answers on different types of advertising and promotion and their relative advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, pupils with a broad spectrum of abilities concentrated hard and worked industriously in lessons on the relatively difficult topic of profit and loss accounting and thus, the vast majority could carry out calculations and understand the trends in the data. Throughout these lessons the teachers insisted that the pupils draw on their previous knowledge and use business terminology correctly. The teachers mark pupils work in a way that helps them to improve their standards by giving specific advice and encouragement. Their marking, however, needs occasionally to be less generous in some subject criteria.

163. Business studies has very good leadership. Under a new head of department the teachers have worked hard and with considerable effect to raise standards over the past year. The comprehensive improvement plan, which includes changes to the syllabus, to how pupils learn and to accommodation, is a major factor in the current rate of progress. The department provides a very good service to all the pupils.

## GNVQ

164. The first group of Intermediate level Leisure and Tourism GNVQ pupils will complete the programme this year. There are also groups of pupils taking GNVQ Intermediate level Business and Foundation level Leisure and Tourism in the current Year 10. In the group of Year 11 pupils, all are in line to complete the programme successfully with several likely to attain merit grades. All the pupils have successfully completed the externally marked unit tests. Most of the pupils have a good grasp of the jobs involved in the leisure industry and the qualifications needed for entry. They use computers to process and present their research data to good effect. They work well in team activities. Some particularly good work was seen relating to a weekend break at Butlin's, Bognor Regis, which the pupils had taken the initiative to plan and organise in its entirety. They were able to reflect on the contributions of the different planning teams involved and most of them were able to evaluate well how effectively they had worked as a team and what they would need to consider when planning similar activities in the future. Pupils in Year 10 have made a very good start to the programme. Very good presentation characterises the work of all but a small number of pupils. Whilst there are still elements of skill that they need to develop much further, the pupils, many of whom have particular learning difficulties, have achieved very good results in external unit tests. Several have gained merit grades. Some good lessons were seen in Year 10 Business where the pupils planned and carried through effective presentations on commercial organisations they had chosen to study; and in Leisure and Tourism where pupils researched promotional literature from current leisure attractions in order to inform their own project based on marketing facilities at Southampton F.C.'s new stadium. The achievement of the pupils, relative to their levels of prior attainment, is very good.

165. The teaching was good in all the lessons seen and very good in most of them. The teachers have high expectations and the pupils respond well to the challenging tasks set for them. The teaching has many strengths, which include clear aims and objectives and the provision of interesting learning activities, backed by useful written support material. Pupils across the ability range make very good progress because their teachers provide valuable individual support in lessons to reinforce their whole-class teaching. This enables the pupils to maintain a good pace of learning such as was seen in the preparation of their individual presentations. Teachers show an appropriately flexible approach. For example, when a class experienced difficulty maintaining momentum in their planning of promotional materials, the teacher quickly re-engaged their interest by transferring the task to a computer based approach. However, the teaching would benefit from more varied tasks over substantial blocks of time in order to more fully sustain the pupils' interest. The marking of pupils' work is a strength of the programme. Teachers' assessment is accurate, giving good written feedback which helps the pupils to target improvements for the future. The pupils readily state how much they are motivated by the teachers' efforts and by their good humoured and positive approach.

166. There are good links with business in GNVQ. In addition to examples cited above, a very effective lesson stemmed from a talk by a local leisure centre manager. This closely followed the course criteria and showed good prior planning with the class teacher. There is a very good link with City College, Southampton, which organised an effective induction programme and maintains links with courses that pupils might progress to after completing their GNVQ course. The GNVQ course benefits from sharing teaching materials and ideas through a staff development consortium of local schools.

167. The GNVQ course has very good leadership. The strengths are outlined in the Business studies section above. GNVQ is a very effective teaching programme and the very good progress made by all but a tiny fraction of the pupils owes much to the careful planning undertaken and the clear vision of progress shared by the department.

## **Other Vocational Programmes**

168. The school currently provides vocational programmes for a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11. These programmes give opportunities to learn both within and outside the school and provide alternatives to subjects such as design and technology and modern foreign languages in the curriculum. They form part of an approach targeted at motivating pupils to engage with their learning and plan for the next stage of their careers. They also form part of a policy aimed at providing vocational learning to more young people in their final years at school.

169. In Year 11 the Work Related Learning programme gives each pupil an extended work experience placement for one day per week over several months. This follows on from an initial induction programme and a meeting with a local Careers Service advisor to help clarify chosen areas of interest. They also have time back in school to reflect on their experiences, to plan targets for the workplace and to review their progress. As a result many of them are better placed to go on to further education or employment with training.

170. In Year 10 the school has introduced a Vocational Access Programme linked, with a number of other local schools, to City College, Southampton. The programme is described as a 'Passport to Employability' and pupils are encouraged to view it positively as an alternative option. They are asked to apply for selection on to it. After a career interview and induction day at college, for the first two terms the pupils spend half a day per week working on vocational options at college. At school they work on units of work which prepare them in a more general way for employment. The college options include such areas as construction trades, hairdressing or bakery. The third term is spent on individual work placements in line with the college options the pupils found to be most interesting. Pupils have also visited different places of work as part of their school based programme. The programme is designed to help pupils progress on to NVQ programmes. All pupils are on target to complete it successfully. They will gain a nationally accredited Vocational Access Certificate.

171. The pupils have reacted very positively to each programme. It was not possible to observe their lessons because they were on extended work placements but there is considerable evidence of very good progress made by them. Several Year 11 pupils have decided on their educational, training and employment options after school. On the Year 10 programme several pupils have displayed considerable talents within their chosen options including one who will achieve a College award for her work in hairdressing. The pupils speak of how well the programmes motivate them and their impact has been demonstrated in the substantial reduction in the incidence of poor behaviour by those involved. A recent report by the local educational inspectorate stresses the positive impact of this element of the inclusion programme.

172. Both programmes are well planned and there is very effective liaison with City College. The number of Year 9 pupils who have applied to join the Vocational Access Programme is considerably higher than those currently on it; and there will also be more college options available. The two programme options referred to have already had a considerable impact on those pupils taking part. This impact is in no small part due to the strength of teacher commitment and a substantial allocation of resources. That allocation includes school staff working with their college counterparts on link sessions in the Vocational Access Programme.

## **Media Studies**

173. GCSE media studies is a new subject in the Key Stage 4 options. It has already proved to be a popular choice, with 56 Year 11 pupils about to be entered for the examination and a further 40 Year 10 pupils close on their heels.

174. Standards in the Year 11 coursework are high, with over 70 per cent of pupils expected to achieve A\*-C grades. Based on the limited sample of coursework available, the standards in Year 10 are also very good. Pupils are producing some exceptionally good pieces of assignments, ranging from glossy teenage or football magazines to detailed analyses of pop music videos and alternative versions of gangster movies.

175. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and often very good. Lessons are well planned and a wide variety of resources used effectively. Relationships with the pupils are positive and good-humoured. Coursework is marked thoroughly, but sensitively and there are some good displays in the classroom, exemplifying pupils' achievements.

176. The course is running with minimal technical resources and the co-ordinator has recently put in a 'growth' bid to finance the purchase of an editing suite. Meanwhile, pupils make effective use of video and audio equipment both in and out of the classroom, with a group from Year 10 making a short film for a national competition. Much of the coursework shows skilled use of ICT, including digital cameras and the Internet.

177. This course offers pupils considerable challenges and opportunities for independent study. They enjoy its relevance to their own lives and thrive on being able practically to develop their own ideas. At the same time, the course has a demanding theoretical dimension which enables pupils to reflect on the social, cultural and moral impact of the media on their lives.