

INSPECTION REPORT

STANDISH COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Standish, Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106531

Headteacher: Mr J. G. Ashton

Reporting inspector: Christine Harrison
4145

Dates of inspection: 14th-16th May 2001

Inspection number: 189172

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kenyon Road Standish Wigan
Postcode:	WN6 0NX
Telephone number:	01257 422265
Fax number:	01257 425858
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Eric Hill
Date of previous inspection:	16 th – 20 th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
4145	Christine Harrison	Registered inspector
19339	Susan Evasdaughter	Lay inspector
2632	Roger Holmes	Team inspector
19596	Bernard Treacy	Team inspector
21975	Ann King	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

ISIS
15 The Birches
Bramhope
Leeds
LS16 9DP

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Standish Community High School is a mixed comprehensive school educating 1125 pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. The school is larger than the average secondary school. The number of pupils has risen significantly since the previous inspection, when there were 974 on roll, and the school remains over-subscribed. The standard number of pupils admitted has risen from 200 to 250 but this number is regularly exceeded. The school takes pupils from Standish and from other areas extending into the centre of Wigan. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds but, overall, the socio-economic circumstances of pupils are above the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 9.5 per cent which is below the national average. The school has 15 pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Seven pupils speak English as an additional language but none of these pupils is at an early stage in learning English. There are 172 pupils on the special educational needs register; this is 15 per cent of the school population, broadly matching the national average. There are 41 pupils who have statements of special educational need and, at 3.6 per cent, this proportion is above average. Older pupils entered the school with overall attainment in national tests at the age of 11 that broadly matched the national average. As numbers of pupils have risen, the test results of incoming pupils have improved and those for the current Years 7, 8 and 9 were above average. The school has been a specialist Language College since 1995.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school which continually strives for excellence. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and his senior deputy has produced a community in which teachers, support staff and governors all work together to improve the education provided for pupils. Teaching is good overall. Pupils appreciate what is done for them, respond positively and work hard. They achieve very well and gain significantly better standards in GCSE examinations than might be expected in relation to their test scores when they join the school. The school provides very good value for money for its own pupils, makes a very valuable contribution to the surrounding community and provides support and opportunities for other schools.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain GCSE results that are well above the national average because they are well taught and teachers expect them to try their best. Pupils' very good literacy skills also contribute to their success.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the school; they are enthusiastic and respond very well to the teaching they receive.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by his senior deputy, ensures that the school is constantly taking on new and challenging initiatives for the benefit of pupils.
- The Advanced Skills Teachers, who lead the English and science departments, ensure that pupils' experience in those subjects is exciting, of consistently high quality and leads to very good achievement.

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory but not as good as it is in most other subjects.
- The school does not make enough use of test results and other assessment information to help pupils make faster progress.
- Weaknesses in the accommodation for physical education and music restrict the activities that can be undertaken and hence pupils' achievement in those subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in September 1996. Results in GCSE examinations have improved faster than the national average. Both girls' and boys' results have improved but girls' results have improved more quickly. The overall quality of teaching has improved because the proportion of lessons that are good or very good has increased significantly.

The school responded enthusiastically to the findings of the previous inspection, working not only on the small number of key issues but on all the minor weaknesses raised by the inspection team. There has been very good progress in improving pupils' access to information and communication technology (ICT): the school now has very good computer equipment, the ICT facilities are well managed and staff have received appropriate training. The legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship is now fulfilled. The consistency of GCSE results in different subjects has improved but this remains an area for further improvement. Similarly, the school has made good progress in its use of the records of pupils' test and other assessment results but is aware that this information is not yet being used to full advantage.

STANDARDS

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

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

In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, results were well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. Taking all three results together, the results were above the national average and above average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Girls gained better results than boys in English and the gap between girls' and boys' results was bigger than that found nationally. Boys gained better results than girls in science and slightly better results in mathematics. However, taking an average over the last three years, the results in mathematics and science show little difference between the attainment of girls and boys. There is some variation in the test results from year to year; the results are rising but not as fast as the national trend. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above the national average for all schools and well above average compared with schools where there are similar proportions of pupils

eligible for free school meals. Both girls and boys gain results that are well above average but girls' results are better than boys'. GCSE results have risen faster than the national average over the past five years. In 2000 pupils gained their best results in English, English literature, French, Spanish and drama. Pupils did not do as well in art and design, media studies, German, mathematics, physical education and social science. In these less successful subjects for this school, results matched the national average in mathematics and media studies but were below average in the other four subjects. Where results fell below the national average, the effect was produced by boys gaining below average results; girls' results were at or above the national average in all subjects. The school sets itself appropriately challenging targets for GCSE results. It exceeded its target for the overall results in 2000 but the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C fell slightly short of the target.

In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall attainment at the age of 14 was above the levels expected of pupils of the same age nationally and matched that indicated by recent test results. Pupils' work at the age of 16 indicated attainment in individual subjects that is better than expected for pupils of the same age and generally reflects recent GCSE results in those subjects. Pupils' literacy skills are well above average for their age and make a very significant contribution to their progress in all subjects and their eventual success in GCSE examinations. Their numeracy skills are average.

Pupils who are in the current Years 10 and 11, and those who took GCSE examinations in 2000, had test results at the age of 11 that matched the national average. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, make very good overall progress as they move through the school. GCSE examination results are well above average and much better than might be expected in relation to pupils' test results when they joined the school. The results indicate very good achievement by pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are interested and involved in most lessons and maintain high levels of concentration. They take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is often very good in lessons, particularly where teaching is challenging and interesting. Behaviour around the school is usually good but there are occasional problems at lunchtime when pupils have insufficient suitable space in which to play games or relax.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. During their time in the school, pupils develop into mature and confident young adults with a strong sense of responsibility. Relationships within the school are trusting, respectful and friendly.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average and rates of unauthorised absence are very low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

*In this inspection it was not possible to observe lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 because Year 10 were doing work experience and Year 11 were on study leave. The inspection team made judgements on the quality of teaching for these pupils using evidence from an extended sample of pupils' work, individual and group discussions with pupils and information from parents.

The quality of teaching and learning in the school is good. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons, good or better in 74 per cent, and very good or excellent in 33 per cent. Only two lessons, four per cent of those seen, were unsatisfactory. Evidence from pupils' written work indicates that the overall quality of teaching for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is similar to that seen for Years 7 to 9.

The quality of teaching is very good in English and science. A particular feature of the teaching in these subjects is the high level of consistency in teaching quality, together with an interesting variety in teachers' approaches, across the various groups. Teaching is satisfactory overall in mathematics but there is considerable variation in the quality of those lessons. There have been particular problems with the use of temporary teachers in mathematics and the management of these teachers has been unsatisfactory. There is much good and very good teaching in other subjects though there is less consistency than in English and science. Across the school, a major strength in the teaching is very good management of pupils based on mutually respectful relationships. Teachers in all subjects contribute to the development of pupils' literacy skills, building on the strong lead provided in English. Numeracy skills are taught within mathematics and in other subjects, notably in science, but there is insufficient co-ordination of these efforts across all subjects. Teaching successfully meets the needs of all pupils in the school, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, so that all learn effectively. In the occasional unsatisfactory lessons, either the planned activity did not enable pupils to make enough progress or the teacher did not succeed in managing pupils' behaviour.

The quality of pupils' learning broadly matches that of teaching. Pupils' very good attitudes to work and their very good attendance also contribute positively to their learning. However, in some lessons in physical education and music, pupils do not learn as quickly as they should because the accommodation, and occasionally the resources, are inadequate for the activities being undertaken.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and pupils benefit from additional opportunities to study languages and to take part in effective work-related courses in Years 10 and 11. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and links with the community are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are very effectively supported by teachers and, where appropriate, by learning support assistants. Arrangements are efficient and closely monitored.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils all speak English fluently. They receive any additional support they need so that they learn as successfully as others in their groups.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Pupils are encouraged to consider and reflect in assemblies, form times and lessons. They have many opportunities to take on responsibilities and broaden their experience of dealing with other people. Pupils value the individual development programme which provides important information and guidance on, for example, study skills, relationships and planning for future careers.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school provides an environment where pupils are valued, supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential. There are, however, weaknesses in the use of assessment information to monitor and improve pupils' progress.

Parents have very positive attitudes to the school. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is very good. It is easy for parents to get in touch with teachers if problems arise and parents are happy that most problems are quickly resolved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and senior deputy provide excellent leadership. Management is very good overall but the performance of subject departments varies from very good to satisfactory, and further monitoring and support is needed to improve consistency.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works very effectively. Governors know the school well and provide a range of valuable expertise. They play an important role in questioning the value of new initiatives and ensuring that these are beneficial to pupils.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school makes very good use of the findings of an external consultant and asks pupils for their views on what works best in helping them to learn. However, the school is at an early stage of using pupils' grades, levels and other assessment information for monitoring and evaluation.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is constantly seeking to make the best use of available finance and to provide the best possible education for pupils. It has been very successful in obtaining and using funding for its new developments. The school provides very good value for money.

The school has excellent accommodation in many areas, particularly for languages, science and ICT. By contrast, the accommodation for music and physical education is unsatisfactory, and limits pupils' achievement.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effort and achievement the school expects • The good progress that pupils make • The good support provided for pupils' personal development • The ease with which parents can approach the school with questions or problems • The leadership and management of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that is set. Some parents feel that there is too much homework and others that there is too little or that the amount varies too much • The arrangements for pupils during the lunchtime break

Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by parents. The school does have high expectations and pupils make very good progress. Some parents are concerned about the variation in the amount of homework that is set. The school has recently overhauled its homework policy and practice. While there are still some variations in the quality and quantity of homework, the amount of homework is usually appropriate and the school now makes good use of homework to support learning. Inspectors share parents' concern about lunchtime arrangements. There is limited hard surface area for pupils to play games and there are few spaces available for sitting. In these difficult circumstances, there have been a few incidents of bullying. This is unusual and regrettable in a school where relationships are generally very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils attain GCSE results that are well above the national average because they are well taught and teachers expect them to try their best. Pupils' very good literacy skills also contribute to their success.

1. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and those who took GCSE examinations in recent years, entered the school at the age of 11 with overall attainment in English, mathematics and science that broadly matched the national average. At the age of 16 they gain GCSE examination results that are well above average and much better than might be expected in relation to their attainment when they entered the school. In individual subjects in the 2000 GCSE examinations, pupils gained their best results in English language, English literature, history, French, double award science, drama and Spanish.
2. As pupils pass through Years 7, 8 and 9, they respond enthusiastically to the good teaching they receive. They achieve very well in English and achieve well in most other subjects. Pupils' overall attainment in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the age of 14 is above the national average and pupils achieve better results in the tests than would be predicted on the basis of their earlier results in the national tests for 11 year olds. There is some variation in the test results across the three core subjects. The test results in 2000 in English were well above the national average, in science they were above average and in mathematics were average. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment broadly matched the standards indicated by these test results.
3. The very good literacy skills that pupils acquire during their first three years in the school make a very important contribution to their attainment in all subjects, both during Years 7 to 9 and, even more importantly, in Years 10 and 11. In their written work, across the full range of subjects, pupils display a good level of accuracy in their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. They also possess sufficient flexibility in their use of language to be able to adapt their style to the purpose for which they are writing. Pupils are also given many opportunities to produce extended pieces of work, which encourages them to develop their ideas in depth.
4. The main influence on pupils' progress and their eventual achievement in GCSE examinations is the good teaching that they experience. Teachers generally have good knowledge of their subjects and use that knowledge to plan lessons carefully. A particular strength of teaching is the attention that teachers pay to meeting the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and clearly expect them all to make every effort. There are very good arrangements for pupils with special educational needs. Subject teachers contribute to individual education plans so that they have detailed knowledge about individual pupils' needs and how they intend to meet them. Learning support assistants now work within particular subject areas so that they are able to provide well-informed and effective support for pupils. Pupils who are gifted and talented are appropriately challenged in lessons and this work is underpinned by very good curriculum opportunities for these pupils. Pupils who are talented in languages take French GCSE in Year 10 and build on their earlier learning of a second foreign language to take a GCSE examination in that language in Year 11; those with an aptitude and interest in science have the option to study the three separate GCSE science subjects.

5. Most teachers have very good relationships with pupils and the atmosphere of mutual respect forms a secure background for their very effective management of pupils. The school is aware that girls achieve more highly in the school than boys and that the gap in attainment is greater than that found nationally. It has investigated the factors that affect boys' achievement and now makes full use of its findings in terms of the ways boys can be encouraged to achieve more highly. For example, in an individual development programme lesson for Year 9 a teacher dealt quietly and sensitively with a boy whose initial aim was to distract the class. He then worked well for the remainder of the lesson and the whole class made very good progress. The approach used by the teacher precisely matched that shown to be most effective in the school's investigations. However, there are a few lessons where teachers put too much emphasis on the importance of managing pupils effectively and do not consider sufficiently the importance of pupils learning at the best possible rate. In a few lessons, including some in art, teachers do not expect enough of pupils in terms of their behaviour and concentration. In these lessons the pace of learning slows because of the need to deal with lapses in pupils' behaviour.
6. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and often make their aims clear to pupils at the beginning of the lesson so that pupils know exactly what they are required to learn. In the better lessons there is a review at the end of the lesson to check that the aims have been achieved, to reinforce what pupils have learnt and to give them the satisfaction of noting the progress they have made. However, there are other lessons, including some in mathematics and some aspects of design and technology where the teachers' planning does not sufficiently emphasise the progress that is to be made during the lesson. In these circumstances, teachers regard the activity being undertaken in the lesson as the important consideration, rather than the learning that will result. In these lessons pupils do make progress in completing their tasks but their pace of learning is not as quick as it could be.
7. A particular strength of the teaching in many lessons is the very effective questioning by teachers to check and develop pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher asks pupils to explain the methods they use in their calculations so that others in the class can extend their range of strategies for solving problems. In design and technology teachers make good use of questioning to encourage pupils' own designs and extend their thinking without dictating a solution. In very good lessons there is often an interesting range of learning activities to maintain pupils' concentration and ensure that they learn effectively. In a Year 7 English lesson, for example, pupils were challenged by a demanding lesson in their introduction to Shakespeare. By the end of the lesson they were able to recognise and re-create some of Shakespeare's effects, including being able to write rhyming couplets to a strict metrical pattern.
8. There are occasional lessons in which teaching and learning are outstanding. In an English lesson for Year 8, the teacher had written his own story, which was set in the local area and drew upon the local dialect. This excellent resource attracted the interest of pupils and led them on to develop more sophisticated reading skills by increasing their understanding of how a story might be constructed. In a Year 9 science lesson for a lower attaining group, the whole atmosphere surrounding an investigation emphasised a concern for accuracy and high quality work; pupils responded very positively and their investigative skills were much better than might be expected in such a group.
9. Teachers make good use of homework to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. Homework tasks are valuable and often interesting. Homework diaries are well used

and highly valued by pupils. Teachers generally mark pupils' work regularly and carefully. Marking in English is exemplary; there is close attention to detail and teachers make helpful suggestions for improvement. They adjust the style of marking to the particular purpose; there are full, reflective comments on coursework and incisive notes to guide answers to examination questions. Not all marking, however, reaches these high standards and there are some books in which marking is bland or fails to pick up all the relevant weaknesses in pupils' work.

Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the school; they are enthusiastic and respond very well to the teaching they receive.

10. Pupils have mature and responsible attitudes to their work. Their written work and practical projects indicate that they can sustain effort and complete projects to a high standard. Pupils' notes are suitably detailed and precise, reflecting both the quality of the teaching and pupils' own efforts. Pupils take pride in their work and usually present it very carefully. For example, in a science lesson for Year 7, some boys who clearly found producing neat handwriting a real challenge were, nevertheless, concentrating hard and producing very tidy accounts of their experiment. In a Year 7 food technology lesson, pupils of all levels of attainment present their cooked items, including buns and pizzas, carefully.
11. Assemblies and most form times encourage the development of responsive and responsible attitudes among pupils. For example, in a form time for Year 9, pupils responded well when asked to reflect on the problems that would arise if they could not hear or see or move their limbs. In an assembly, the congratulations for a winning football team were extended to apply to a losing rugby team who had nevertheless persevered and worked hard together as a team.
12. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually very good. In lessons where teaching is very good or excellent, there is a real 'buzz' of excitement and enthusiasm among the class. For example, in a history lesson pupils become thoroughly engrossed in making decisions about how they would attack a castle. They were developing an understanding of warfare in the past and also improving their decision-making and problem-solving skills. Even where teaching does not reach such high standards, pupils generally enjoy their work. They join in readily with the activities that are provided and use initiative when necessary, for example in German when a Year 8 pupil substituted a suitable phrase because he did not know the precise one that was required. If the pace of the lesson slows slightly, as it does at times when teaching is no more than satisfactory, pupils are usually tolerant and maintain good behaviour, though they are sometimes rather restless.
13. Pupils behave well as they move around the school. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and keen to help. The inspection team received several courteous enquiries about whether they were enjoying their stay in the school. When pupils are asked the way to a particular part of the school, they do not simply give directions but offer to take the visitor to where he or she wants to go.
14. Pupils' positive attitudes to the school reflect those of their parents. Parents' views indicate the high regard that they have for the school. It is easy for parents to make contact with the school and raise any problems because a senior member of staff is on duty in the school from very early in the morning until late in the evening. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is very high.

15. The school provides facilities for many community activities including a nursery, evening classes and sports clubs. The school is a vibrant place long after the end of the school day. Pupils often take part in activities at the school well before they are due to transfer into the school. These strong partnerships, which the school has forged both with parents and with the community as a whole, are a positive influence on pupils, their attitudes to the school and to their work and hence to the progress they make.

The excellent leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by his senior deputy, ensures that the school is constantly taking on new and challenging initiatives for the benefit of pupils.

16. The leadership provided by the headteacher has been a major factor in the school's rise from being threatened with closure in 1985 to its present situation as an over-subscribed and very effective school.
17. The most important feature about the leadership is the constant desire for improvement and the absence of any complacency. Following the previous inspection, the school noted every area for improvement in the report, however minor, and included it in the action plan. This striving for excellence pervades the whole school. During this inspection, individual teachers, including members of the management group, all responded very positively to any suggestions for improvement made by the team.
18. The headteacher's excellent leadership of the school is complemented most effectively by his senior deputy. They share the same philosophy and she takes a major role in implementing the various initiatives. She shares with the headteacher the ability to turn ideas into action at considerable speed. She leads the team of curriculum co-ordinators who, in turn, provide leadership for the form tutors in each year group. The senior deputy has been active in developing the role of these co-ordinators so that they have an over-view of pupils' academic progress as well as their personal development. Although there is still some improvement to make in the use of assessment information by the co-ordinators, they nevertheless know pupils very well and provide a very valuable source of support and guidance for pupils. They also contribute effectively to the monitoring of the work of the school.
19. A genuine concern and care for individuals, both pupils and staff, is another strength of the leadership of the school. Teachers know that much is expected of them but also that they are appreciated and valued. They work very hard and are thoroughly committed to the school. There is an atmosphere of teamwork and co-operation throughout, often enhanced by a strong collective sense of humour. The school places an emphasis on encouraging staff to try things out and to take considered risks, secure in the knowledge that they will not be blamed if their experiment proves unsuccessful.
20. This school is very quick to become involved in new initiatives in education. Indeed, in many respects it acts in advance of changes that later become common, or even standard practice, in schools. For example, its staff development procedures, piloted in English and science, were used by the Department for Education and Employment in planning the performance management arrangements now being used in all schools nationally. The wealth of innovations in the school has been valuable because clear benefits for pupils can be identified as a result of the changes that have taken place. This was the first school in the country to gain 'Investors in People' status and, as a result, the school puts strong emphasis on teamwork and on training for all staff. Teaching and non-teaching staff and governors are all involved in a rigorous selection process for new staff so that the school can select the most appropriate staff to

maintain and improve the quality of experience for pupils. The school has been awarded the Charter Mark for the quality of its service. A key feature of this award is the requirement for the organisation to ask its 'customers' about the quality of the service they receive. The school has developed its procedures in this respect and is now well informed about pupils' experiences and views, particularly in terms of homework and their preferred teaching and learning styles.

21. The award of Language College status and its acceptance by the whole school community are an important result of the successful educational leadership provided by the headteacher and governors. A separate Language College development plan provides the focus for the effective management of this initiative and business sponsorship has been successfully sought and used to provide very imaginative, high quality accommodation and resources. These excellent facilities have a positive impact on motivation, progress and achievement in modern languages. In line with the requirements of Language College status, the school regularly provides access to the facilities to local businesses and many visiting schools. The additional income from these activities is used to provide useful extra resources for the school.
22. The management of the school is very good in most respects but has not yet succeeded in overcoming the inconsistencies that occur between different subject areas. The members of the management team bring a range of skills to their roles and work effectively and conscientiously in support of the school's aims. The school is well organised and runs efficiently. The school's monitoring of its work is generally thorough. In particular, the school benefits from regular monitoring visits from an external consultant. These visits and subsequent reports provide detailed and valuable insights into the work of the school. On a recent visit the consultant investigated homework, an area about which the school had concerns and about which some parents still have reservations. The consultant identified weaknesses and the school acted quickly to update its policy and practice on setting homework. Only a short time afterwards, the inspection team found the school to be making good use of homework. However, the school is not entirely successful in using monitoring effectively to improve its practice. There are still significant variations in the quality of teaching, and of departmental management, between subject departments. The school's senior management group is aware of these variations in quality but has not yet taken sufficient action to support and improve the less successful departments.
23. The governing body provides very good leadership for the school. Governors are extremely well informed, partly because they share training opportunities with the staff. They appreciate the excellent work of the headteacher and share his quest for improvement but they are quick to question and challenge any proposals to ensure that they are in the best interests of pupils in the school. For example, the headteacher has recently taken on a role in supporting another school in the area and the two Advanced Skills Teachers have to spend time in other schools. The governors took great care to convince themselves of the overall benefits of these arrangements before they approved them.
24. The school's expenditure exceeded its income in the previous financial year but there are clear plans to reduce the budget deficit. Financial control is good and the school is implementing the minor suggestions for improvement in the recent auditor's report.

The Advanced Skills Teachers, who lead the English and science departments, ensure that pupils' experience in those subjects is exciting, of consistently high quality and leads to very good achievement.

25. The heads of department for English and science have both been awarded the status of Advanced Skills Teacher in recognition of the high quality of their teaching. As heads of department they also provide very good leadership for their respective subject areas. The impact of their work is seen in all aspects of English and science in the school. In both these subjects there is a high level of consistency in the quality of teaching that pupils receive, even though teachers maintain their individuality and use their own particular approaches. In particular, teachers within the subjects have established similar routines in lessons and expect similar high standards of behaviour, effort and achievement. Pupils going to any lesson in English or in science know what is expected of them, irrespective of the particular teacher taking the lesson. Other strong features of the two departments are their exemplary marking, very good use of assessment information, strong extra-curricular programmes and excellent display that creates an interesting learning environment for pupils. This consistency in teaching, together with the exciting atmosphere for learning, are the result of very good leadership of the departments reinforced by thorough monitoring of, and support for, individual teachers by the subject leaders.
26. The very good teaching that pupils receive in English and science enables pupils to achieve very well in those subjects. There is also a particularly significant impact on pupils' overall achievement in GCSE examinations. Pupils' very good literacy skills, which are developed most effectively in English and reinforced and extended in other subjects, contribute to attainment in all subjects. English and science contribute two GCSE subjects each to pupils' GCSE total points scores and science is now teaching three separate science subjects to some higher attaining pupils in Year 10 so that the potential contribution of science in the future is increased still further.
27. It is part of the role of Advanced Skills Teachers that they also use their expertise more widely in their own school and in other schools. In this school, the role has been extended and the two teachers concerned have been given the status of assistant headteacher in order to take further advantage of their teaching and management skills. However, the school does not yet make enough use of these teacher's skills in other subject departments in the school where there is less consistency, particularly in the quality of teaching that pupils receive and the use that is made of assessment information.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory but not as good as it is in most other subjects.

28. Pupils' achievement in this school is generally very good. There are, however, some subjects in which pupils do not achieve as well as they do in others. The previous inspection report raised this issue of a lack of consistency between examination results in different subjects. Since then results have improved generally and there have been particular improvements in some, previously less successful, subjects. For example, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to C in Spanish has risen from below average in 1995 to well above average in 2000. Similarly, results in history have risen from below average to well above average. Hence, the school has made satisfactory progress in improving the consistency of achievement across the subjects but there are still some subjects in which achievement is not as good as it should be.
29. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, pupils did not achieve as well in art and design, German, media studies, physical education, mathematics and social science, as they did on average in their other subjects. Although it was not possible to investigate the teaching in all of these subjects in detail, it is important to identify some relevant features of these subjects and, in particular, where improvements have been or could be made. GCSE results overall in design and technology are above the national average but pupils' performance in some aspects of the subject at GCSE, and in some lessons in Years 7 to 9, is not as good as it is in others. In art and design there have been recent changes in staffing and there are clear indications, both from estimated grades for the 2001 GCSE examinations and from the work seen, that standards have improved significantly. The modern foreign languages department has produced an action plan aimed at raising attainment in German. Although this plan contains sensible strategies for improvement, there is a shortage of precise targets against which the improvements can be judged. Pupils' work indicates that they are now making satisfactory progress in German but there is some shortage of variety in the written tasks that are provided. There is good teaching in physical education but pupils' learning and achievement is adversely affected by a shortage of suitable indoor accommodation.
30. Pupils gain results in mathematics that match the national average in both the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations. Pupils' work in mathematics seen during the inspection shows similar standards to those indicated by the results. The test and examination results show that pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment when they enter the school but it is not as good as their overall achievement in GCSE examinations or their achievement in English and science.
31. The school has introduced several strategies to raise standards in mathematics; these are appropriate and are having a positive effect. However, any gains that have been made as a result of these strategies have been undermined by staffing difficulties. The school has been without one full-time mathematics teacher for much of this school year. The pupils in classes timetabled for this teacher have been taught by a variety of temporary teachers, some specialists and some not, some for fairly long periods and others for only a few lessons. The school has found it very difficult to recruit and retain specialist temporary mathematics teachers. The problems have been increased because the situation has not been adequately managed by the head of department. Temporary teachers have not received enough support, particularly in terms of being given precise information on what pupils have covered and what they need to do next. A

similar situation has existed where pupils have been taught by an initial teacher training student. Standards of work in pupils' books were clearly falling and yet there was not enough intervention to rectify the situation.

32. The quality of teaching in mathematics is broadly satisfactory overall but, in individual lessons, there is a wide variation in teaching quality from very good to unsatisfactory. In the occasional very good lesson the teacher has high expectations, particularly in terms of pupils settling quickly and concentrating throughout the lesson. In satisfactory lessons, the pace of the lesson varies and, for parts of the lesson when the teacher is addressing the whole class, the pace is often rather slow and pupils become restless. Where teaching is, occasionally, unsatisfactory, the activity provided is enjoyable but does not enable pupils to learn enough. There is a need for further monitoring of, and support for, teaching to ensure that the teaching in all lessons is at least good.

The school does not make enough use of test results and other assessment information to help pupils make faster progress.

33. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was assessing pupils' work but had few systems in place for making significant use of the information that assessment provided. Since that time the school has made good progress in using the results from assessments but it is still not using the information as effectively as it could do.
34. The school has introduced a whole-school system for recording pupils' effort and attainment in each subject. The system includes details of pupils' attainment when they enter the school and then subject departments add to the information regularly so that the school is building up an accurate picture of pupils' effort and progress across the subjects. In the past year the school has also begun to use two schemes that enable targets to be calculated for individual pupils in both their National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations. These individual targets are used to calculate the whole school targets and are also entered into the recording system so that it is apparent what pupils can and should achieve. The introduction of these schemes was appropriately accompanied by training for staff and governors so that they all gained an initial understanding of how the schemes could be used.
35. The system for recording assessment data has been successful in improving the security and accuracy of the data that can be used in reporting to parents. The introduction of the target-setting schemes has been successful in raising teachers' awareness of pupils' potential. However, the use of the data varies significantly between subjects. In English, the assessment information available on entry is supplemented, soon after pupils' arrival, by the department's own testing so that an accurate 'picture' of pupils' overall attainment can be compiled and pupils can be allocated to appropriate teaching groups. In science, teachers use the assessment outcomes from regular testing to identify weaknesses and adjust teaching accordingly. In other subjects, there is a strong emphasis on getting a secure and accurate assessment of pupils' attainment when it is needed for reports but departments are not yet concentrating enough on using the results of assessments, together with pupils' individual targets, to establish whether pupils are making sufficient progress. At whole school level, curriculum co-ordinators are careful to look at the data for any indications of pupils' who are not making enough effort. However, they are not yet making sufficient use of the data on attainment to identify any subjects or teaching groups where pupils are not achieving as well as they should. For both individual pupils and particular subjects, there would then be a need to follow up any identification of weaknesses with strategies to produce improvement.

36. The target setting systems which have been introduced by the school will, when they have been in place long enough to be used to collect data from National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations, provide a means of calculating the 'value added' in different subjects and in different teaching groups within subjects. This important source of detailed monitoring information is not yet fully available to the school and this represents a current weakness in its monitoring arrangements.

Weaknesses in the accommodation for physical education and music restrict the activities that can be undertaken and hence pupils' achievement in those subjects.

37. The school's accommodation is very good overall but there are stark contrasts between accommodation that is excellent in some areas and unsatisfactory in others.
38. The excellent, newly re-modelled modern languages building, with its video conferencing facilities, electronic whiteboard and multi-media suite, is effectively used by both the school and the local community. The accommodation, together with excellent resources and equipment, have a positive effect on the progress that pupils make and the standards they achieve. In particular there has been a very significant improvement in GCSE results in French since the school gained Language College status. Results were below the national average and they are now well above average.
39. The accommodation for science is also excellent and the close grouping of very high quality laboratories makes it easier for the science department to establish consistency in terms of the routines in and around lessons, how pupils are expected to behave and the effort they are required to make.
40. Excellent accommodation certainly enhances the learning environment for science and modern foreign languages. Nevertheless, this does not imply that accommodation is the most significant factor in the success of certain departments. The English department, for example, provides a consistently high quality of teaching and learning in classrooms that are often cramped and poorly ventilated. The department makes the best of the situation, using exciting and stimulating display to improve the surroundings and create a positive backdrop for lessons.
41. The accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory because there are insufficient suitable indoor spaces. This situation affects the learning in physical education in two ways. The department has to compile a rota so that all groups have some access to the facilities they need for different activities. The result is that the groups studying GCSE physical education only have limited access to, for example, gymnastics facilities so that they do not have the opportunity to progress beyond the foundation level in gymnastics. The department also often has to divide the sports hall in order to run two lessons at once. Under these circumstances there is simply not enough space for pupils to undertake all the activities that they could do and there are problems in listening and concentrating because of the inevitable noise generated in the adjoining group. Teaching in physical education is generally good but, as a result of the limitations in accommodation, pupils' learning is not as good as it should be in response to such teaching.
42. Accommodation for music is another weakness. One of the music rooms is too small for the size of groups that are taught in it. The problem is made worse because the equipment is inadequate. In one lesson, for example, pupils were taught in this very small space and were required to share keyboards so that they had to wait their turn. Because of weaknesses in the equipment, the keyboards were used without headphones so that noise levels were too high for pupils to gain a clear idea of their

own output. Under these circumstances, and despite teaching that was broadly satisfactory, pupils made unsatisfactory progress.

43. A further problem with the school's accommodation concerns the available space for pupils at lunchtime. The dining facilities are fully stretched in dealing with the increasing numbers of pupils in the school. The dining room area, although recently extended, remains small for the size of the school and pupils have to move out of the dining room as quickly as possible. Pupils often have to stand for a long time in a queue for lunches. There is no space for pupils to sit down if they eat packed or snack lunches. When they have eaten, pupils have limited space in which to spend the remainder of the lunchtime. The learning resource centre is very well used and there are several extra-curricular activities in which pupils can take part but these arrangements are not enough to meet the needs of all pupils. The grass area is frequently too wet to be used and the hard surface space is very restricted. In this situation, when many pupils cannot play active games or simply sit somewhere and relax, there are occasions when bullying occurs. The school does not yet make as much use as it could do of its available indoor accommodation and the level of staff supervision is insufficient to counter these problems. The shortage of space at lunchtimes is having an adverse effect on pupils' social development and relationships in this school where, in all other situations, such aspects are very good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

(1) improve pupils' attainment in mathematics by:

- making more use of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that all teaching is at least good and more closely matches that of the best teaching in the school;
- ensuring that all lessons have a sharp focus on what pupils should know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson;
- improving the management and supervision of temporary teachers and initial teacher training students so that disruptions to pupils' progress are minimised;
- making more use of the models of very good practice that exist in the management of science and English to improve the consistency of pupils' experience across all subjects.

(Paragraphs: 6, 29, 30, 31, 32).

(2) make more use of assessment data to improve pupils' progress by regularly comparing pupils' attainment in each subject with their target levels or grades, identifying any weaknesses in progress, and adjusting teaching and support to ensure that pupils' progress is at least good in all their subjects.

(Paragraphs: 33, 35, 36).

(3) improve the accommodation for physical education and music by drawing up plans for the necessary changes and implementing them as funds become available.

(Paragraphs: 37, 41, 42).

In addition to the key issues above, the governors should consider the following minor point for inclusion in their action plan:

The arrangements for pupils at lunchtime could be improved by:

ensuring that pupils can sit down to eat packed lunches or snack lunches;
permitting pupils greater access to the school's indoor accommodation;
increasing the supervision of pupils around the site;
increasing the hard surface play area, as funds become available.

(Paragraph: 43).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	29	41	22	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1125
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	107

Special educational needs

	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	41
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	172

English as an additional language

	No. of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No. of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	101	101	202

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	69	75
	Girls	85	67	60
	Total	148	136	135
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (74)	67 (71)	67 (71)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (35)	41 (41)	39 (40)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	60	60
	Girls	73	59	55
	Total	127	119	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (70)	59 (68)	57 (69)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (41)	34 (30)	35 (32)
	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	93	104	197

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	47	90	92
	Girls	66	101	101
	Total	113	191	193
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57.4 (60)	97 (97)	98 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.5 (44.7)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1110
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	252

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.9
Key Stage 4	21.0

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2611686
Total expenditure	2620430
Expenditure per pupil	2330
Balance brought forward from previous year	-28665
Balance carried forward to next year	-37409

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1125
Number of questionnaires returned	218

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	46	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	59	36	1	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	53	7	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	49	14	4	2
The teaching is good.	45	51	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	46	7	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	30	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	24	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	37	53	7	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	37	2	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	44	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	40	5	1	10

Other issues raised by parents

Several parents expressed concern about problems at lunchtime arising from long queues for lunches and a shortage of suitable space for pupils to play and relax.