

INSPECTION REPORT

THE STANWAY SCHOOL

Stanway, Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115378

Headteacher: Mr Jonathan Tippett

Reporting inspector: Roslyn Fox
4617

Dates of inspection: 21 – 25 January 2002

Inspection number: 191273

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Stanway School Winstree Road Stanway Colchester
Postcode:	CO3 5QA
Telephone number:	01206575488
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chairman of governors:	Mrs J Orpen-Smellie
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4617	Roslyn Fox	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
9271	Selwyn Ward	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	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?
8402	Vivien Johnston	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
1292	Vera Foster	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30433	Chris Corp	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23880	Olivia Hall	Team inspector	Art	
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
18663	Phil Burchell	Team inspector	Geography History Citizenship	
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	How well is the school led and managed?
4697	Robert Black	Team inspector	Music	
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Physical education	
10761	Pat Willan	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector		

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Stanway School, a foundation comprehensive school with 761 girls and boys, is smaller than the average school. Almost all pupils are white. Although pupils' attainment on entry was average in Year 7 in September 2001, in previous years, the proportion of lower-attaining pupils has been bigger than average. Pupils are mainly from the residential area on the outskirts of Colchester. They come from a broadly average range of social and economic backgrounds, although the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average including both learning and behavioural difficulties and of these, 6 have statements of special educational needs, which is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is very low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are broadly average. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently-appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the school and staff share his commitment to improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils do well in design and technology, geography and music.
- Pupils' attendance and behaviour are good, and they are provided with good personal, social and moral education and good support and guidance.
- The school has good links with other schools and colleges, particularly with primary schools, and pupils' learning is enhanced by well-developed links with the local community.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities improves pupils' learning and they have very good careers advice.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and staff know what needs to be done to raise standards.

What could be improved

- The attainment of pupils, especially higher-attaining boys, in a range of subjects including English, science, art, geography, history and modern foreign languages.
- Pupils' independent study and writing skills and the use of computers across the curriculum, as standards are lower than they should be in these areas of their learning.
- Standards in religious education, which are not high enough because the course does not cover all that is outlined in the local Agreed Syllabus.
- Planning for the school's development, including how to make best use of the skills of staff and resources such as the library and computers.

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 November 1996. Its improvement since then is satisfactory. Progress in tackling the issues has been faster in recent months, under the guidance of the recently-appointed headteacher, and the school is becoming more popular. The school has improved its results in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, in line with the national trend. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils' attendance is better. Pupils behave better because teachers implement the behaviour policy more consistently. The school has worked to raise the standards of boys and higher attainers, with some success, although more remains to be done to ensure that pupils do as well as they are capable of in all subjects. Most teachers now use assessment to guide planning appropriately but

the monitoring of teaching and learning has not been rigorous enough to identify weaknesses in several subject areas. The school is well placed to bring about further improvements.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Overall, the school's results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were average compared to schools nationally in 2001, with a trend of improvement similar to that nationally over the past four years. In English, the results were below average, in mathematics they were broadly average and in science they were above average. In comparison with similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), results were below average. They were average when compared with those of schools in which the pupils had similar attainment on entry in Year 7 (as measured by their scores in the national tests at the end of Year 6), indicating that overall the pupils had achieved satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9.

In 2001, the school's GCSE results were similar to those of the past four years. They were better than at the time of the last inspection. The percentage of pupils gaining five grades A* to C was similar to the national percentage. Following the last inspection, results dropped significantly in 1997, but rose steadily from 1998, in line with the national trend. Results were particularly strong in music and geography and the food technology and textiles areas of design and technology. Pupils did least well in science, French and religious education. In many subjects, girls outperform boys to a greater extent than nationally. This was particularly true of higher-attaining pupils.

Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are broadly average, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are average in mathematics, art, geography and history across the school, in science in Years 7 to 9 and in English and physical education in Years 10 and 11. Standards are below average in English and physical education in Years 7 to 9, in science in Years 10 and 11 and in French across the school. They are above average in design and technology and music in Years 7 to 11. Standards in religious education are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory because the curriculum does not cover all it should. Standards in literacy and numeracy are broadly average. Although standards in information and communication technology are average in lessons in this subject, they are below average overall because pupils have too few opportunities to use computers in other subjects.

The school met two of its targets for GCSE results: the percentage gaining five grades A* to C and the average points score (which measures the average total points score attained by pupils). It did not meet its challenging target for the percentage gaining five or more A* to G grades, although a higher percentage of pupils attained these than nationally. Similarly it did not meet its target for one or more grade G or better.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils have a positive attitude to school and most respond well in lessons. They are attentive and most work with concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is good in most lessons and around the school and this contributes positively to pupils' learning. The school has been through a

	period where the rate of short-term exclusions has been exceptionally high because of instances of poor behaviour. The rate of exclusion is now showing a downward trend because teachers implement the behaviour policy more consistently and pupils behave better.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Pupils relate well to teachers and other adults and interact well with each other but they do not take enough responsibility for their own learning. The school functions as a harmonious community where pupils of different abilities and backgrounds mix and work together appropriately.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is good throughout the school and contributes well to pupils' learning and attainment. Most pupils arrive at school on time and move briskly between lessons, and so very little teaching time is lost during the day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and are better than reported by the last inspection. Most lessons seen were judged to be satisfactory, and just over a third were good. A small proportion of the teaching was unsatisfactory and a similar proportion was very good. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teaching is good in design and technology, geography, music and physical education in Years 10 and 11. Teachers give clear explanations and ask focused questions that reinforce pupils' learning well. Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education where some pupils are not learning enough because they do not concentrate sufficiently and satisfactory in all other subjects. Key strengths relate to teachers' subject expertise and their good management of pupils in most lessons. In the best lessons, teachers identified clear learning outcomes, which ensured that pupils kept on task and learned well. They knew exactly what they wanted their pupils to learn, and ensured that pupils were fully involved in lesson activities. Marking is satisfactory overall, and generally helps pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. Weaknesses relate to expectations of what pupils can do, particularly with regard to higher-attaining boys, and the planning of lessons, to ensure that all pupils learn effectively. Pupils do what they are asked to do and try hard but some teachers over direct the work and do not allow pupils to take responsibility themselves for what they are doing. Despite being effective in some subjects, the teaching of the skill of literacy is unsatisfactory overall because teachers do not implement the school's policy consistently. In many subjects, teachers do not make enough use of computers in learning activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory overall because statutory requirements are not met in ICT across the curriculum, in religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in design and technology and modern foreign languages in Year 10. Extra-curricular provision is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by learning support assistants, but subject teachers do not do enough in

	lessons to ensure that activities and resources meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The individual support for pupils who speak English as an additional language covers appropriate areas of language, but is not always linked closely enough to what will be covered in work within other subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Provision for social development is good. Pupils have many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. Provision for moral development is good. A well-planned programme of personal and social education contributes effectively to pupils' moral development by encouraging consideration of moral issues, including issues of bullying and a consistently applied behaviour policy is in place. Provision for cultural education is satisfactory with strengths in music. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect and the school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. The school is aware of the many different groups within it and ensures that pupils enjoy the full range of opportunities on offer. Systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good and procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Well. Information sent to parents is of good quality, making clear what pupils need to do to improve and how parents can help. Parents receive useful annual reports, and good termly progress reports on effort and attendance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. The headteacher has worked hard to improve a number of aspects of the school, notably behaviour and its reputation in the local community. The senior management team have a clear understanding of their new responsibilities and of what now needs to be done. Most subject areas are managed appropriately, and many are managed well. The exception to this is religious education, where leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. The governors are caring and committed. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with senior managers to provide a sense of direction and to manage change effectively. Statutory requirements are not met for ICT across the curriculum, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and modern foreign languages and design and technology in Year 10. Pupils do not take part in a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school are unsatisfactory. The new management team has developed a detailed set of priorities for the future improvement of the school but planning for the school's development, including how to make best use of the skills of staff and resources, lacks rigour. Some aspects of the school's work are not as effective as they should be.
	Satisfactory overall. The management of the school's budget on a day-to-

The strategic use of resources	day basis is good. Longer-term budget planning is weak and not linked to development planning at whole-school or department level. The numbers, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff are appropriately matched to the demands of the curriculum. Although resources in most areas are satisfactory, weaknesses in the library and in the provision and availability of computers, render resources unsatisfactory overall. Accommodation is satisfactory. The principles of best value are applied appropriately.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations of their children. • The good progress their children make at school. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework given to their children. • The information they are given about their children's progress. • How well the school keeps in touch with them. • The range and choice of out-of-school activities.

Over half the parents returned a questionnaire. Inspectors agree with the positive views they expressed. Contrary to the parents' views, information to parents about their children's progress and communications with parents were judged to be good. The team found that homework varies from subject to subject, although generally pupils are receiving an acceptable amount. Additionally, the team judged that a good range of out-of-school activities enhance pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the start of Year 7, pupils' attainment is broadly average. It was higher in 2001 because in previous years there were fewer higher-attaining pupils and a larger proportion of lower attainers than average. Results in the national tests in 2001 at the age of 14, were broadly average, when all pupils are taken into account. Compared with similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, the school's results for 2001 were below average. They were average when compared with those of schools in which the pupils had similar attainment on entry in Year 7 (as measured by their scores in the national tests at the end of Year 6), indicating that overall, pupils achieved satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. Over the past five years, the trend in the school's overall results has been of an improvement at a slower rate than nationally.
2. English results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in 2001. Fewer pupils than nationally gained level 6 in both tests and teacher assessments. Compared to similar schools (on the basis of free school meals), the 2001 results were well below average. Girls did better than boys in relation to girls' and boys' results nationally. Mathematics results at the end of Year 9 were average compared to schools nationally. They were below the average for similar schools. The attainment of boys and girls was broadly similar. Science results at the end of Year 9 were above average and were also above those obtained in similar schools. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
3. Since 1997, the school's performance in English, mathematics and science has been broadly in line with the national trend although results in English declined appreciably between 1996 and 1999, but there was a significant improvement in 2000. Assessments undertaken by teachers in the foundation subjects of art, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education show that some teachers overestimated their pupils' performance by placing them above, and in several cases, well above the national expected standard. In several subjects, for example, history and modern foreign languages, girls have tended to do much better than boys, in relation to girls' and boys' results nationally.
4. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books across the range of subjects, shows that standards are average at the end of Year 9. In mathematics and science, the standard attained by pupils is broadly average. In English, standards in Year 9 are below average overall but assessment records show that the attainment on entry of these pupils was also below average and that they are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils' standards in art, and ICT are not as high as teachers' assessments and are broadly in line with national averages. Standards in design and technology are above national averages and in modern foreign languages and physical education they are below. Standards are also below average in religious education.
5. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, results were broadly in line with national averages when compared with maintained schools nationally, and below average when compared with similar schools. Since 1996 the school's average points score per pupil has remained broadly the same, although following a considerable drop in 1997, results improved significantly in 1998. Since then, results have improved in line with the national trend. Analysis of the school's data indicates that pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their previous performance in the Year 9 tests at the age of 14, in all subjects apart from design and technology, geography, and music where they achieve well and religious education where their achievement is poor.

6. GCSE results in 2001 were in line with national averages in all subjects with the exception of design and technology and music where they were above, mathematics, science, history and French where they were below average and religious education where they were well below. In many subjects girls outperform boys. This is particularly true of higher-attaining girls and boys. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in history and modern foreign languages, girls performed better than boys. In geography, girls performed significantly better than girls in other schools whilst boys performed slightly less well than boys nationally. In design and technology, whilst the overall GCSE results for all design and technology subjects have been consistently above the national average, with individual results for food technology and textiles technology being well above average, it is the girls who have done best. Results in the photography option in art in 2001 were well above average with girls attaining results that were well above girls' national averages and boys performing much worse than boys nationally.

7. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is average in English, mathematics, art, history, information and communication technology (ICT), and physical education. It is above average in design and technology, geography and music, below average in science and modern foreign languages and well below average in religious education. This picture broadly reflects the school's results in the GCSE examinations in 2001. Girls are generally doing better than boys. This was particularly noticeable in English, where girls' written work is presented much better than boys. Higher-attaining girls show good understanding of the poems they are studying whereas higher attaining boys in Year 11 showed little understanding of the linguistic features of the poem they were discussing. Only a small number of lessons were seen in business studies, and it is not possible to make firm judgements about standards overall.

8. Standards in literacy are broadly average, though considerably higher for girls than for boys. Girls' work is generally presented accurately and well. Many boys, particularly those who are higher-attainers, take too little care to write neatly and correctly. For example, they make basic mistakes in spelling and punctuation. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects which means that they are not as good as they could be. The library is under-used, partly because there are not enough book resources for the needs of the curriculum, and as a result, pupils have not developed sufficient skills in independent research.

9. Standards of numeracy are also average. Pupils acquire their numeracy skills in mathematics lessons, which sometimes include a mental mathematics starter activity to reinforce basic number skills. They have opportunities to recall number facts and to manipulate whole numbers, negative numbers, fractions and decimals. They use and make sense of information presented in timetables. They display information graphically and interpret it. They measure and weigh in food technology, calculate resistor values in electronics, model stock and profit figures in ICT and draw and interpret distance/time graphs in science.

10. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils with special educational needs attained results in line with their target grades and a significant number did better than predicted. Pupils are set by attainment in all subjects, which enhances the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Overall, they make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately. They are mainly supported well in lessons by support assistants though some small groups are withdrawn, for example for literacy. When support assistants are not available, pupils' progress is not as good because teachers do not ensure that tasks and activities match their individual needs.

11. The school has had few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Their learning in English has been good, enabling satisfactory achievement in other areas of the curriculum. Gifted and

talented pupils learn well as a result of out-of-class support, but have too few opportunities for extension work in lessons and as a result are not achieving as well as they should.

12. Since the last inspection the school has improved its results in line with the national trend. Standards in design and technology, geography and music have improved but in English, standards are weaker at the end of Year 9. Girls continue to do better than boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Although some targets were exceeded in 2001 and achievement is judged to be satisfactory, much remains to be done to ensure that pupils achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

13. Pupils have generally positive attitudes to school, and most respond well in lessons. They are attentive and most work with concentration when assigned individual tasks. When working in pairs, they usually collaborate well, with each pupil contributing, although in some lessons, paired work led to a few pupils taking a more passive role whilst their partner did the work.

14. In classroom discussion or where a teacher questions the class, pupils are keen to volunteer answers. This means that in most lessons there is a high rate of active participation. Despite their positive attitude, however, pupils are very dependent on their teachers. They do not have well-developed skills in learning independently, a weakness identified in the last inspection. They do what they are asked to do, but few examples were seen of pupils taking the initiative.

15. Behaviour was good in all but a small minority of lessons, and made a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Where behaviour was less than satisfactory, pupils, and particularly some in Year 11, do not stay on task and disrupt the learning. Good behaviour was also seen around the school and when pupils moved between lessons. As pupils themselves report, this is an improvement following changes made to the school's behaviour policy. It is also the result of better provision for pupils' social and moral development. The rate of short-term exclusions has been exceptionally high in the recent past. Around ten per cent of the boys in the school were excluded during the year because of occasional, poor behaviour. The rate of exclusions is now showing a downward trend because teachers implement the behaviour policy more consistently and so behaviour is better.

16. Pupils' social development is good. Pupils are polite and friendly, relate well to teachers and other adults and get on well with each other. Because they benefit from good provision for social and personal development, the school functions as a generally harmonious community, where pupils of different abilities and backgrounds mix and work well together. Pupils from all year groups take on positions of responsibility as form captains, form representatives on the pupil council, sports captains and librarians. Younger pupils speak with appreciation of the benefits they have had from "buddy" arrangements where older pupils have supported them. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the provision made for them. They gain confidence through in-lesson help and from the supportive environment provided by learning support assistants. Extra-curricular activities are well supported by pupils.

17. Although pupils' spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory, weaknesses mirror gaps in the school's provision. Pupils have too few opportunities to reflect on their own values and beliefs and on the feelings of others. Isolated but nonetheless unacceptable examples were seen of pupils thoughtlessly passing insensitive remarks that might upset or offend others.

18. Since the previous inspection, the school has taken steps to ensure that teachers implement its discipline and behaviour policy consistently. As a result, behaviour has improved. Attendance has

improved considerably and attendance levels are good throughout the school. This is making a positive contribution to pupils' learning and attainment. Most pupils arrive at school on time and move briskly between lessons, and very little teaching time is lost during the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory overall and results in satisfactory learning. The teaching was good in just over a third of lessons seen. A small proportion of the teaching seen was unsatisfactory and a similar proportion was very good.

20. Teachers have good subject knowledge in many subjects. In art, for example, teachers are very experienced with good expertise. They make their expectations clear and as a result pupils know exactly what is expected of them and learn well. In design and technology, all teachers have good technical knowledge, reflected in their demonstrations, which enables pupils to follow instructions effectively. In geography, teachers have secure subject knowledge and a good understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. They develop pupils' oral, written and practical skills well. In music, subject knowledge is a key factor in the pupils' enthusiastic responses to the teaching. In religious education however, teaching is unsatisfactory because not all teachers have sufficient subject knowledge and do not get the support they need to teach the course successfully.

21. Teachers' understanding of what needs to be done to enable pupils to learn is less secure. Good planning resulted in good learning, as in a very good mathematics lesson where Year 7 pupils made great intellectual effort and gained in competence and confidence when revising the concepts of mean mode, median and range because of the very structured way in which the lesson had been planned. In a Year 7 science lesson, pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the concept of brightness, as a result of very clear lesson objectives, aimed at all abilities within the group. In many lessons however, teachers had not planned the work well enough to enable pupils to learn in a methodical way. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the work provided, relating rotation and reflections to symmetry, did not link in with the previous lesson that had been on straight-line graphs. Instead it dealt with a topic that had already covered, in the words of one pupil, "several times". In a Year 7 English lesson on advertising, pupils followed suitably sequenced work but an over reliance on the textbook and the requirement for pupils to copy the questions before writing their answers meant that time was lost which could have been spent more profitably and as a result, they made satisfactory rather than good progress.

22. Lesson time is generally used efficiently, as in a Year 9 mathematics lesson on probability, where pupils were helped to concentrate by being told how long they had to complete a task. Similarly in French and German, effective use is made of deadlines to motivate pupils and keep them on target. In the best lessons, pupils increase their independence and confidence because they have ample opportunity to develop both their knowledge and skills. This was seen often in music but particularly in a Year 10 lesson that reviewed the structure of 'Blues' music. Here, the teacher's focus on learning and good use of a range of material totally engaged the group, encouraging them to describe what was happening in the music in a variety of ways. In geography, all lessons seen were well-structured and most were taught with a pace and enthusiasm which motivated pupils. Teachers explain their aims and methods carefully and check throughout lessons to ensure that pupils have really understood the work. In some lessons, however, teachers spend too much time talking to pupils, rather than allowing them to move ahead for themselves. This was seen in a Year 10 history lesson, where there was no statement of aims at the start of the lesson and so pupils were reliant on the teacher for direction and for the pace of the work. Unsatisfactory teaching often resulted from teachers' misjudgement of the sort of work pupils could do, as in a Year 10 science lesson, in which lower-attaining pupils were given work that was far too difficult for them.

23. Most teachers manage pupils well and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. On the whole, pupils learn well in lessons and co-operate with teachers and with each other. Teachers manage less enthusiastic pupils effectively, and as a result, most complete a satisfactory amount of work. For example, in a geography lesson looking at why Colchester is situated where it is, the teacher coped well with some pupils' lack of motivation and confidence because materials had been well-prepared and appropriately challenging work had been set. This was not the case in some religious education lessons, where pupils wasted too much time. In a Year 9 lesson with a lower-attaining set, a group of girls chatted throughout and by the end had only a few copied notes and the beginning of a poster to show for their efforts.

24. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' work varies considerably from subject to subject, but is satisfactory overall. There are good marking and assessment procedures in design and technology and useful opportunities for discussion with pupils' about their work. In modern foreign languages, teachers use assessment policies well to ensure that pupils' progress is well monitored. In ICT, there is a good system for informing pupils about the standard of their work and how it can be improved in Years 10 to 11, but there is no system for Years 7 to 9 and this is unsatisfactory. In English, marking is too variable in quality. Some is detailed and gives clear, helpful guidance on how to improve, but most, although encouraging, is not informative enough. Homework is used satisfactorily in subjects and forms an integral part of lesson plans.

25. Teachers' expectations are high in music, geography and design and technology but generally they are too low. In some lessons, teachers do not provide enough activities to enable pupils to discover and try out things for themselves. They sometimes identify what they want to cover in a lesson, rather than what they want pupils to learn, and as a result learning suffers. For example, in an English lesson based on the poem 'Blessing', few opportunities were provided for pupils to think about what they were hearing, and the teacher clarified words and phrases without asking them if they could explain for themselves. In some subjects, such as art, teachers' expectations of higher-attaining pupils sometimes lack rigor and as a result, research lacks challenge. In history, whilst teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and offer a range of types of work, pupils are not challenged enough by being given more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers mostly explain their aims to pupils at the start of lessons, but they tend to be expressed as a bank of knowledge or understanding to be gained, rather than as a combination of knowledge and skills.

26. The skills of literacy and ICT are underdeveloped because they are not taught consistently across subject areas. Pupils' skills in reading, writing and using computers are not as good as they should be. Explicit teaching of literacy skills is not integrated into the lesson planning of many subjects, which means that pupils have too few opportunities to improve their writing and presentation skills and to practise their reading. Exceptions to this are in art and geography, where an emphasis on developing literacy skills, in the use of key words, for example, was a feature of many lessons and in science, a wide range of opportunities was provided for all pupils to use their literacy both in written work and in class discussions. The school is aware of these weaknesses, and is in the process of appointing a teacher to be responsible for implementing its literacy policy. There is little use of computers across the curriculum. Very little use of computers by pupils was seen in English, science, art and design, design and technology, history, physical education and religious education.

27. Detailed information is made available to all teaching staff about pupils with special educational needs, including targets for those pupils with an individual education programme. Some subjects, for example science, make good use of this information in their planning but in some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to adapt materials to meet the needs of identified children. A small team of learning support assistants works throughout the school and supports in-lesson learning well. They

provide good assistance to ensure that pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. The provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory. Daily support sessions are provided for those who need help in which new vocabulary and language uses are taught. The learning in these sessions is good, and has enabled satisfactory progress to be made in other areas of the curriculum.

28. Since the last inspection, when a fifth of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory, teaching has improved considerably. Issues relating to classroom management have been resolved and strategies to meet the learning needs of boys and higher-attainers have been introduced. Weaknesses in subject expertise for personal and social education have been dealt with but not in religious education. Expectations of some teachers are still too low and there continues to be some variability in marking practice from teacher to teacher. The skills of literacy and ICT are underdeveloped because they are not taught consistently across subject areas. Much remains to be done in terms of monitoring lessons, providing feedback and modifying planning to enhance teachers' expectations.

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

29. The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities for pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language that meets their interests, aptitudes and particular needs appropriately. The curriculum however, does not meet statutory requirements in several respects and as a result is unsatisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught plus drama and a second foreign language. Since the last inspection, the school has obtained a better balance by increasing the curriculum time for ICT and English and modern foreign languages in Year 9 and by reducing the time allowance for art and music. The curriculum has been changed in some subjects, notably English, to address the needs of underachieving boys but with too little effect. The school has introduced a work-related course where selected pupils spend three days in school studying five GCSE courses and spending two days in work. This has been successful and is to be expanded next year. Changes have been made in Years 10 to allow a wider option choice for pupils. Pupils now decide if they wish to study design and technology or a modern foreign language in Year 10. This strategy also allowed the school to increase the amount of time for physical education for all pupils, but statutory requirements are not met because the wrong procedures for withdrawing pupils have been followed. In science there is no data logging in Years 10 and 11 and there is not enough time to cover all aspects of the local Agreed Syllabus in religious education. There is not enough cross-curricular ICT to meet National Curriculum requirements.

30. The timetable is well-structured for most subjects, although occasionally non-specialists teach subjects such as religious education, mathematics and ICT. There is not enough time for lower-attaining pupils to study both German and French in Years 8 and 9 and in Years 10 and 11 there is not enough time to teach the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The provision of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory in both key stages as staff have difficulty gaining access to computers. Most departments have produced satisfactory schemes of work to guide their work.

31. The provision for teaching the skills of literacy is unsatisfactory. A policy has been introduced recently, but is not being implemented consistently and as a result pupils' skills in reading and writing, particularly the skills of boys, are lower than they should be. Some good practice was observed in science, geography and art, but in general, curriculum planning does not provide well enough for the development of pupils' competence in reading and writing. The provision for teaching the skills of numeracy is generally satisfactory because pupils are provided with regular opportunities to practise

number skills in mathematics lessons, although numeracy is not yet developed in other subjects across the school as a whole.

32. Extra-curricular provision is good. Many staff teach a range of activities both at lunchtimes and after school. Good sports activities are provided including a very effective boys' basketball session run by two members of staff. Other activities include a business enterprise group and subject support groups for pupils having problems with class or homework. Art clubs and trips abroad enhance the curriculum in art. The trips to France and Germany and the variety of cultural activities organised within the languages department make a good contribution to the cultural development of some pupils. The band involves a good number of instrumentalists who enjoy the challenge of playing standard big-band classics in arrangements made particularly for them. Many pupils are involved in the current music-theatre production of 'Titanic' and singing groups and recorders are well supported. School concerts involve pupils of all abilities.

33. Gifted and talented pupils are well catered for through a variety of extra-curricular activities. For example, during the inspection, pupils from Years 8 and 9 took part in a useful mock trial exercise that enabled them to extend their oral and thinking skills and to develop their ability to negotiate and analyse. Provision in lessons is not as good because teachers do not plan for pupils' individual needs systematically. The individual support for pupils who speak English as an additional language covers appropriate areas of language, but is not linked closely enough to what will be covered in future work within other subjects.

34. Pupils with special educational needs are identified well through the close links established with feeder schools. Pupils are taught in ability groups, decided by departments based on prior information about attainment. They take all subjects. Some departments note the individual education programmes (IEP) devised by the special educational needs coordinator and prepare lessons and learning materials appropriate to their needs, but not all subject areas address these pupils' needs successfully. Pupils with special educational needs are given additional support, for example, some pupils in Year 8 do not study a second modern foreign language and spend more time developing their literacy skills. During the inspection this was seen to have a positive impact on their learning.

35. Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme of personal and social education (PSE) from Year 7 to Year 11, which contributes well to their personal development. Pupils have one taught lesson each fortnight and issues from PSE are followed up well in form time before the start of morning lessons. The PSE programme incorporates sex education and drugs awareness appropriately and offers very good careers support, along with training in study skills. Good use is made of visiting experts, including members of the police and health services. The PSE programme is well-managed and the quality of provision has improved considerably since the last inspection. Of the lessons seen, all were at least satisfactory and two-thirds were good. The PSE programme is regularly reviewed, with tutors and pupils involved in evaluation. This helps to ensure its continuing development and improvement. Citizenship contributes well to the PSE programme, with activities that focus on participatory democratic activities such as the school council. The current curriculum is broad and new schemes are effectively planned to fill in the gaps and fulfil requirements.

36. The school functions as an inclusive community involving all its pupils. Where support is given to pupils with special educational needs, this is done in class and as a result these pupils do not miss out on any lessons. Opportunities throughout the school are open to all, with the exception of some sports activities that are only open to boys or girls. Some girls complain that they are not allowed to play football.

37. The school is well established in the community. Local services are enlisted effectively to enrich the curriculum. For example, the community police and the schools' nurse service contribute well to the PSE programme. The school extends the Trident careers scheme beyond work experience to include the challenge of community involvement for its pupils, and enters for the full Trident gold award. Careers provision is very good, overseen by a teacher whose considerable experience and expertise is used to train and advise on local and county projects such as the Trident Skills for Life working party. Taught mainly through the PSE curriculum, the programme ensures progression. Outside agencies contribute to the careers provision at key transition points in Years 9 and 11. Community employers and employers' associations contribute well to the annual Careers Convention and help Year 11 with mock interview practice.

38. Communications with feeder schools are good and as a result the school is popular amongst its potential future pupils. Information on all new pupils is efficiently managed. The transfer of pupils with special educational needs is more smoothly effected as a result of a considerable number of prior visits between the feeder schools and the school. Many departments, including art, drama, ICT, English and mathematics, have recently been involved in projects with local primary schools. Through the Sports Leaders Award scheme, Year 11 pupils coach primary school children and the science department runs sessions for Year 6 children from the local primaries. The school provides the primary school local music consortium with facilities to practise. Links with local colleges providing sixth form education are well established. Relationships with partner institutions are very good and are strengthened by range of activities. The school coordinates annual employers' conventions with a neighbouring secondary school, to help pupils and parents make informed careers choices.

39. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. This is broadly similar to the position described in the last inspection. The provision for social development is good and this has had a positive effect in raising pupils' self-esteem and developing the good relationships between pupils and adults in the school. Pupils have many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. Older pupils can become prefects. Year 9 pupils take turns to work for a day in the reception area, and, in every class, pupils elect form captains, sports captains and a form representative who sits on the pupil council. Pupils joining the school in Year 7 benefit from a "buddy" scheme, where older pupils help them settle in. In physical education, pupils also take responsibility to work with local primary school pupils in helping with their sports.

40. Good provision for pupils' moral development has contributed to the recent improvement in standards of behaviour. An explicit and consistently-applied behaviour policy has been established, with clearly understood rewards and sanctions. As a result, pupils appreciate, and follow established boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They are encouraged to take part in fundraising activities in support of a number of charities, which helps to raise their awareness of others' needs. The school's well-planned programme of personal and social education also contributes well to pupils' moral development by encouraging consideration of moral issues, including bullying.

41. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities are provided in subjects such as English, art and music for them to learn about their own cultural heritage. Some subjects are particularly effective in incorporating opportunities to appreciate the diversity of other cultures explicitly within the curriculum. For example, in music pupils listen to African rhythms and contrast the use of pentatonic scales in Chinese and Western music. In subjects such as religious education, however, the study of other cultures is not always dealt with well. Pupils discussing the pros and cons of establishing Islamic schools, for example displayed insensitivity verging on bigotry that

went unchallenged by the teacher.

42. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. A few examples were seen of reflective writing, including work in religious education. For example, in a lesson about Jesus' visit to the Temple, pupils wrote, with empathy, letters of complaint that might have been sent by shopkeepers, angry at his interference with their business. Few chances are provided for pupils to reflect and there are too few opportunities for them to explore questions about meaning and purpose, values and beliefs. As at the time of the last inspection, the school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The weekly assemblies for each year group are supplemented with a "thought for the day" considered briefly during afternoon registration, but these sessions vary considerably in quality, and all too often, the "thoughts" are rather cursory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. There is good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils. Pupils report that issues to do with bullying are dealt with well. A bullying box in the library offers pupils the opportunity to report incidents and they say that they find staff approachable and that they would feel comfortable raising any worries or concerns with teachers. This applied both to bullying and to any other personal concerns that a pupil might have. Tutor groups remain with their form tutor throughout their time at the school so teachers and pupils know each other well. The school has good systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The behaviour policy, with its explicit tariff of rewards and sanctions, is clearly understood by pupils and even those who complain that it is more draconian than they were previously used to, appreciate that it has resulted in better behaviour and an improved climate for learning.

44. The buddy system is used to help all new pupils, including those with English as an additional language, to make friends and to cope with the demands of school life. Special educational needs staff are helpful, and liaison with parents is good. The school has a formal policy for meeting the needs of its gifted and talented pupils that works well for activities outside the classroom but these pupils are not recognised enough in subjects and year groups and although they are put into top sets for many subjects not enough is being done for them in the classroom.

45. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and have been very effective in contributing to the significant improvement in attendance since the last inspection. Tutors use electronic registers to record attendance. These transmit the data to the school office, enabling office staff to prepare daily lists of absentees efficiently and to attempt to contact the home on the first day of any unexplained absence. Good attendance is also promoted through rewards, with certificates awarded to pupils with a hundred per cent attendance in a term. Using the electronic system, registers are taken consistently in every lesson. This successfully deters in-school truancy.

46. Arrangements for dealing with injury, accidents or illness are good. The school has three qualified first-aiders, including a technician who is based in the medical room. All incidents and any treatments are fully and properly recorded. Good arrangements exist for storing and administering medicines sent in by parents. Appropriate health and safety checks are made. Inspectors noted no health and safety concerns.

Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are good. The named person for pupils considered to be at risk is the special needs co-ordinator, who is experienced and has good understanding of legal requirements and of the local education authority child protection procedures, which the school has adopted and follows.

47. The special educational needs coordinator has detailed records of pupils identified as in need. Information on pupils with special educational needs is made available to all teachers along with their individual education programme targets, where appropriate. Subject teachers are expected to build on these to make the provision for pupils with special educational needs more effective. For example, the science department has enhanced this information specifically to address all pupils' needs, but not all departments draw as effectively upon this information.

48. Assessment has improved since the last inspection and procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are now satisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well and form tutors play a key role in collating information. Heads of year are also involved. The school does not use a computer assessment package to facilitate the tracking of pupil progress and the setting of targets but a range of data is held for each pupil, including standardised test scores and end of key stage test data. Targets are set for each pupil for the end of Years 9 and 11, relating to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. There is a mentoring programme for pupils, mostly in Year 11, identified as being at risk of underachieving. Parents receive helpful progress reports each term about effort and attendance as well as useful annual reports. Data, held centrally, is used appropriately when allocating pupils to sets and is readily available to teachers to inform teachers' planning. Teachers' assessments were too high in several subjects at the end of Year 9, including design and technology, ICT, art and physical education because teachers overestimated the performance of pupils.

49. The school has recently begun assessing pupils' attainment related to National Curriculum levels for each subject each term and there is some good practice. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is satisfactory overall. Practice is good in music and in geography, where there is good pupil self-assessment. In design and technology, good systems exist for formative and summative assessment. It is satisfactory in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and physical education and unsatisfactory in English, art, history and religious education, where levels are not used and in ICT, particularly in Years 7 to 9, where assessments are not made.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Although a significant minority of the parents who returned questionnaires considered that the school does not work closely with them and that they are not kept well informed about how well their children are doing at school, inspectors disagree. The school works hard to involve parents. Parents are given good information in reports and regular updates on their children's grades. Reports are personal to each pupil and give parents a clear picture of how well pupils are doing in each subject, including, in the case of pupils in Years 10 to 11, expected GCSE grades. The very best reports include useful learning targets in each subject to help pupils improve their performance, but teachers do not always use these consistently. Parents also receive useful guidance on homework and study expectations, which enable them to support their children's education. The school has this year started to produce the Stanway Times, an informative weekly newsletter, much appreciated by parents, which gives very good information on school news, events and activities.

51. The special educational needs team depends on parental involvement for its successful outcomes. Communication with parents is an essential and regular feature of its work, both during the statutory annual reviews, as observed during the inspection, and on a daily basis. Parents are appropriately involved in the event of any problems. Those who attended the parents' meeting before the inspection expressed satisfaction with the pastoral care arrangements that operate through the form tutors and heads of year. Of those returning the questionnaires, nine in every ten parents indicated that they considered the school approachable with any questions or problems, and inspectors'

views of the arrangements for discussing concerns with staff, support this positive view. A number of parents provide active support for the school through the Stanway Friends' Association, which has raised significant sums contributing to school funds. The school has a good and effective partnership with parents and has successfully maintained this strength since the last inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The headteacher is an effective leader who, within a short space of time, has made rapid progress in improving a number of aspects of the school, notably behaviour and the reputation of the school in the local community. He leads by example. He has a clear vision and aims to create a safe environment in which pupils develop as individuals and achieve their full potential. He is determined to ensure that the whole school works together to follow these guiding principles. After a detailed analysis of the current management team, he redistributed responsibilities to match individuals' strengths and preferences and identified the most suitable task profile for the vacant post of assistant headteacher. The members of the senior management team have detailed job descriptions and a clear understanding of their new responsibilities. The headteacher has focused on strengths and weaknesses following a comprehensive evaluation of the school. As part of this evaluation, he observed all teachers in the classroom but these observations were more a means of getting to know the staff than a formal evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.

53. The headteacher and members of the senior management team are visible around the school, which helps create and maintain an orderly environment. Pupils' good behaviour confirms the effectiveness of this strategy. Members of the senior management team meet regularly and work well together to ensure that all members of the school community understand and follow the school's aims and vision. They are managing change well and establishing a shared commitment to improvement. Good communications with staff are effected by means of a weekly newspaper and a succinct pamphlet detailing school organisation.

54. The responsibilities of middle management are appropriately delegated to them but at present not enough is being done to evaluate the quality of their work. The heads of year and heads of department hold meetings regularly to discuss curricular and pastoral issues. Members of middle management also have regular scheduled meetings with senior managers, which enable an upward flow of ideas and useful discussion of whole school issues. Many middle managers are encouraged to take on whole school responsibilities, for example assessment and staff cover, in addition to their specific middle management tasks. Each department has a line manager from the senior management team and this system works well. In general, leadership at departmental level is satisfactory, except in design and technology, geography, music, PSE and special educational needs where it is good and in religious education where it is unsatisfactory. Some subject leaders, for example, modern foreign languages and PSE carry out their responsibility for routine monitoring of classes as a means of improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards well, but this is a weakness in the school as a whole.

55. Citizenship is taught through the PSE programme. Plans are in hand to introduce it as a half-termly course in September 2002. Training needs have been considered and guidance has been provided to those who teach it.

56. A useful set of priorities has been identified for the future development of the school. A whole-school development plan has not yet been formulated to support them. Some departments are working on this. In geography, for example, the action plan clearly identifies priorities such as the need to raise attainment, particularly of boys, and to modify and develop the curriculum to raise standards. This,

however, is a weakness in many subjects and across the school as a whole. Not all departmental plans include clear strategies for raising standards. As a result pupils make satisfactory and not good progress in many subjects.

57. Governors' knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is satisfactory. The governing body shares the headteacher's vision of the future development of the school. Governors are caring and committed. They work in committees coordinated by an over-arching school development committee. This structure enables them to work closely with the school and to have access to information about important developments, as well as to gain an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have been very actively involved in identifying priorities for the development of the school. For example it was a governor initiative to explore the possible sale of school land to generate funds to pay for new school buildings. It was also an initiative of the governing body to apply for special status as a Business Enterprise School. Most governors visit the school to attend awards meetings and a few meet staff and observe teaching, but this practice is not wide-spread. The governing body has not, however, fulfilled its statutory duties with regard to ICT across the curriculum, religious education in Years 10 and 11 and modern foreign languages and design and technology in Year 10. They have not ensured that the statutory requirement for an act of collective worship is met.

58. The numbers, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff are generally well-matched to the demands of the curriculum, except in religious education in Years 10 to 11 where a number of teachers without qualifications in religious education teach the subject. The school is fully staffed but there are imbalances in subjects such as mathematics, where some shared classes are taught by non-specialists and in ICT where a number of teachers from other subjects have had limited ICT training. The school has provided some training and support programmes but their impact on attainment has yet to be formally monitored. An advanced skills teacher has been in post for three years and has explored some successful links with other schools but the overall benefit to the school is limited because monitoring and review of this provision lacks rigor. Performance management is satisfactory. A performance management strategy is in its second round and targets have been set for teachers, however, monitoring is at an early stage. There is a satisfactory induction programme for new staff and a well-structured mentoring system for student teachers. Staff development is not linked effectively to a whole school development plan. For example, there has not been enough literacy in-service training or English as an additional language training for staff. Nevertheless, despite the fact that no staff have expertise in teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language, the special educational needs department manages the school's arrangements well. The expertise of outside agencies has been sought, and staff have done their best to identify relevant dual-language texts.

59. The special educational needs coordinator leads a small team of learning support assistants. Throughout the inspection, the team was seen to be effectively used supporting pupils. The support manager coordinates the activities of outside agencies and ensures these are recorded efficiently. Links with outside agencies and the local authority are appropriate. There is appropriate support for inservice training for the learning support assistants and teachers. The special educational needs coordinator is currently training as a specialist in the needs of dyslexic children. This is a considerable additional resource for the school.

60. The management of the school's budget on a day-to-day basis is good. Financial systems are tight and efficient. The most recent audit report identified only a few points for improvement, which have been acted upon. Regular reports are provided to the headteacher and governors, and to heads of department, to ensure that expenditure is within planned limits. The small current deficit is being dealt with appropriately. However, longer-term budget planning is a weakness. The school prepares its budget based on previous years' funding arrangements, with no systematic link to development

planning at whole-school or department level. The school has not looked carefully enough at the impact of comparatively low expenditure in some areas, notably maintaining the accommodation and providing resources for the library. As a result, both are now run-down. The school's income per pupil is higher than in most schools. This has enabled the governors to maintain six classes in each year group, even though the number of pupils in some years has not been up to that usually found in a six-form entry school. This has had the benefit of making class sizes somewhat smaller than is often the case, which was a major reason for the governors' decision.

61. Learning resources are unsatisfactory overall because of inadequacies in the library and in ICT. Resources to support learning are very good in physical education where there is specific equipment for pupils with special educational needs and the equipment in the department is of high quality. Modern foreign languages are well-supplied with cassette recorders and overhead projectors. In music, the provision for computers to use as an aid for composition is good, and in several subjects, for example science, design and technology and mathematics, resources are generally good. Many subjects experience difficulties accessing ICT resources. Either there are no computers within the department or access to the ICT suite is difficult because of over-booking. The number of computers in the school available for pupils to use is at a ratio of about one computer for every ten pupils, which is well below the national; average of one to seven pupils.

62. As at the time of the last inspection, the library is unsatisfactory. Since then, many books have been removed from the shelves and new books purchased. Funds have also provided computer systems for cataloguing and for pupil access to the Internet. There is also a small collection of CD-ROMs. The stock is inadequate for the needs of the curriculum and to support the development of literacy skills. Although the library is sometimes used as resource for topic study, there can be difficulty in gaining access for a class because of the support teaching that takes place there.

63. Accommodation is satisfactory. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Rooms have been grouped together in English, mathematics, history, geography and most science laboratories, which has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. It has helped with communications and better accessibility to shared resources and has been particularly effective in modern foreign languages, where a set of refurbished rooms is supported by a departmental office and resources area and in the art and special educational needs departments. Accommodation is satisfactory in physical education, where teachers make best use of the facilities available to them but the sports hall has poor acoustics and has no adjacent changing facilities. In bad weather this results in a dirty floor for activities. Accommodation has improved in ICT but the area is congested and narrow work tops means that keyboards are too close to computer screens. Improvements have been made in design and technology, particularly in the resistant materials area, but one food technology room has poor worktops and badly fitted furniture. In music, the situation is unsatisfactory. The room constricts performance and appreciation. This affects teaching and learning because noise levels interfere with concentration and composition. One practice room is apart from the music room making it difficult to supervise. Some display material is of good quality including artwork and examples of GCSE coursework but this is not consistent across all areas of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To raise standards further and improve the quality of teaching and learning, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise the achievement of pupils, especially higher attaining boys, through improved teaching, by:
 - increasing the pace and challenge of lessons [*paragraphs 2, 3, 6,7, 8,12, 22, 24,25,29, 44, 47,66, 67,71, 75, 82, 86,87, 91, 93, 95,98, 106, 113,128*]
 - identifying more clearly what it is pupils are expected to learn in every lesson, providing detailed feedback and modifying planning [*paragraphs 12,13,21,22,23,24,25,28,44,48,49,71,72,88,95,110,116*]

- (2) Develop pupils' independent study and writing skills and use of computers by:
 - ensuring that subject areas implement the whole school literacy policy [*paragraphs 14,24,25,26,69,78,93,102,116,117,151*]
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' written work [*paragraphs 31, 67,69,156, 157*]
 - increasing library resources and access to them so that independent reading and research tasks can be set [*paragraphs 8, 14, 62,69,110,116,134,157,*]
 - improving ICT resources so that subject teachers and pupils have better access to them [*paragraphs 26,61,63,72,85,96,117,123,126,127,152,158*]

- (3) Improve standards in religious education by:
 - providing enough time at Years 10 to 11 to cover all aspects of the Local Agreed Syllabus [*paragraphs 29,57,158*]
 - ensuring all staff teaching the subject are supported by detailed schemes of work [*paragraphs 42, 58, 157,158, 159*]

- (4) Improve planning, to support the school's priorities and make best use of the resources provided by:
 - involving all staff and governors and linking all aspects of the schools work together by means of a comprehensive plan of improvement [*paragraphs 56, 60, 96, 117, 126*]
 - monitoring the implementation of this plan effectively [*paragraphs 56,57*]

In addition to the above issues, the governors may wish to include the following in their action plan:

- Provide more opportunities for pupils' spiritual development by improving the quality of acts of worship and encouraging pupils to explore questions about meaning and purpose, values and beliefs [*paragraphs 17, 42*]
- Ensure that statutory requirements in modern foreign languages, religious education, design and technology, ICT across the curriculum and science in Years 10 to 11 are met [*paragraphs 29,30,85,104,124,127,132,158*]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	136
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	52	65	7	1	0
Percentage	0	7	39	48	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	761
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	59

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	132

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	81	56	137

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	57	61
	Girls	39	32	36
	Total	78	89	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (77)	66 (69)	71 (60)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (36)	41 (37)	42 (27)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	57	56
	Girls	35	32	32
	Total	82	89	88
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (62)	65 (71)	64 (60)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (22)	39 (37)	24 (23)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	74	141

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	22	62	64
	Girls	41	71	72
	Total	63	133	136
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45 (47)	95 (94)	97 (94)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40 (40)
	National	39 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	725
Any other minority ethnic group	35

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	2	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	80	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	446

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

Years 7 to 9	24.3
Years 10 to 11	20.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
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	£
Total income	2,091,919
Total expenditure	2,140,902
Expenditure per pupil	2,945
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,051
Balance carried forward to next year	29,932

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

761

Number of questionnaires returned

477

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	59	13	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	31	60	6	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	60	10	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	56	18	5	3
The teaching is good.	17	68	8	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	48	18	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	46	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	20	51	21	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	18	60	9	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	63	9	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	48	16	5	13

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Results in English literature have risen, and are now average compared to schools nationally.
- Teachers manage class activities firmly and so lessons are generally orderly.
- Most pupils, especially girls, work willingly and co-operate well in pair and group activities.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys, particularly those in the top sets.
- The use of ICT within English.
- The consistency and effectiveness with which department policies are implemented, including marking.
- The challenge provided to pupils, the pace of work in lessons and the teacher's focus on what pupils need to learn next.

64. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in 2001. Fewer pupils than nationally gained level 6 both in tests and in teacher assessments. In the previous year, the school's test results were considerably higher than the national figure, and better than the teacher assessments of the standard of pupils' work. Over the past five years, the school's test results have varied widely. They have generally been lower than the national figures, which have risen gradually. Compared to similar schools (on the basis of free school meals), the 2001 results were well below average. Girls have tended to do much better than boys, in relation to girls' and boys' results nationally. For example, a much higher proportion of the girls gained the nationally-expected level 5 or better in 2001.

65. GCSE results were average overall in 2001, in both English and English literature. This judgement is based on the average point score, for all pupils who took these examinations. As in the Year 9 tests, higher-attaining girls did better than higher-attaining boys, as is illustrated by the considerable difference in their results at A* to A, and A* to C grades. Over the past five years, results improved in English and English literature following a significant drop in 1997. They suffered a further drop in 2001. The results were broadly in line with those of similar schools.

66. Standards in Year 9 are below average overall. Assessment records show that the attainment on entry of these pupils was also below average overall. Taking this into account, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, though the girls generally do better than the boys. In Year 7, most pupils paragraph their independent writing appropriately, and higher-attaining pupils write clearly and accurately. Many are confident and articulate orally. By Year 8, average- and higher-attaining pupils understand the difference between fact and opinion. They identified examples of each in their work on the topic of the sinking of the Titanic, although their analysis of how facts and opinions were reflected within the text was less secure. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, had considerable difficulty with this work, partly because they found the text itself and its vocabulary hard to understand. In lessons discussing the features of persuasive writing, average and lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 identified relevant features of the layout and language of publicity materials, though most had difficulty in explaining how these worked to influence the reader. Almost all pupils are successful in using what has been discussed in lessons as a basis for their written work, including on 'Macbeth'. They are strongest in relating the plot and discussing what characters do, but even the higher-attaining pupils have difficulty in making evaluative comments.

67. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Pupils are prepared carefully for their GCSE coursework and examinations. Their achievement is satisfactory overall, although that of the higher-attaining boys is unsatisfactory. In general, the girls tend to do better than the boys – as is also the case in Years 7 to 9. The girls' written work is presented much better, usually with neat and legible handwriting, and accurate spelling and punctuation. Many write at considerable length. The boys' written work is often untidy, with weak spelling and less careful attention to developing a coherent answer to the question set. Most of the girls in the top set in Year 10 gave lively oral presentations that showed good understanding of Sylvia Plath's poems, whereas Year 11 boys in a top set showed little understanding of the linguistic features of a poem by John Agard. GCSE coursework shows that pupils are most successful in narrative-based work, both in creative writing and when responding to literary texts. Few develop skills in analysis and evaluation. For example, pupils have learned to give quotations in their literature essays, but only a minority of high-attaining girls have learned how to use these quotations as telling illustrations that support an argument of their own.

68. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. When given extra help, for example by a support assistant, they cope with the work set successfully. Too often, however, the texts used in lessons have not been adapted to meet their needs, and teachers have not identified exactly what these pupils are expected to learn from the activities. Their progress is slowed when, for example, they do not understand the text studied – as in the Year 8 work on the Titanic. In Years 10 and 11, the strong focus on preparation for and re-drafting of GCSE coursework means that most are enabled to gain a grade G or better.

69. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. Recent work has been undertaken to improve teachers' awareness of how to teach and extend pupils' skills in reading and writing, with mixed success. A spelling scheme has been introduced for Year 7 pupils, once a week during form time, and was observed being implemented successfully. In science and design and technology, teachers showed good understanding of techniques such as giving pupils a framework on which to model their writing. Key words are displayed in some departments, and used to help pupils learn specialist vocabulary and how to spell it. However, in other departments including history, geography and religious education, teachers pay insufficient attention to improving pupils' skills in reading and writing and as a result they are not as good as they could be. The school library has inadequate resources to extend pupils' learning in most areas of the curriculum, including English, and is too little used for wide reading and research activities.

70. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in about three-fifths of the lessons observed, and good in about a quarter. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was also observed. Strengths observed in most lessons included teachers' firm and effective management of pupils' behaviour, and so lessons are orderly. Relationships were generally positive and pupils worked willingly, particularly when given opportunities for collaborating in small groups. The work was well sequenced in most lessons, enabling the pupils to build their understanding of the content covered systematically. A good range of resources was sometimes used to present information to pupils, which interested and motivated them. The most successful lessons had a brisk start, teachers were good role models in their use of language, and explanations of the tasks were clear. In these lessons, pupils worked well because they understood what to do and tasks were well-matched to their needs. Sometimes, pupils answered teachers' questions enthusiastically, and higher-attaining girls asked good questions of their own during class discussion. Their evaluations of each other's performances in a Year 10 oral activity were perceptive and well-argued.

71. Weaknesses in teaching included a slow pace, too much talk by the teacher, and a lack of clarity about what pupils were expected to learn from the activities. For instance, pupils who watched a video account of the cultural background of a poem were not set specific points to look out for, and

so did not record any information. Pupils were rarely told what the objective of the lesson was, in terms of what they were expected to learn through the work set. Although teachers explained *what* to do clearly, they did not focus enough on *how* to do the work successfully. The lessons observed and the sample of pupils' work also showed that teachers do not adapt the work sufficiently to meet the needs of higher and lower-attaining pupils. These weaknesses have resulted in a lack of challenge, particularly to higher-attaining pupils, and have contributed to many pupils lacking confidence in independent work. The system of each pupil having a class book, which is rarely marked but which contains on-going written work, and a best book in which final drafts are copied up contributes to some pupils not learning to present their work carefully. It also reduces the teachers' opportunities to monitor pupils' written work and to intervene when it is not of the required standard. Marking is too variable in quality. Some is detailed and gives clear, helpful guidance on how to improve in future, but most is encouraging but not informative enough.

72. The improvement in English since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Compared to national results, the school's test results at the end of Year 9 were weaker in 2001 than in 1996, whereas the national trend has been one of improvement. GCSE results in English were above the national average in 1996 but average in 2001. However, results in English literature have risen from well below to broadly average. The weaknesses in boys' attainment and achievement remain, and teaching is less effective than reported by the last inspection. The department has made some improvements, notably in introducing some units of work to be followed by all staff, and in beginning to keep records that enable it to track how well pupils do from year to year. The information is not used enough at present to guide curricular planning. There is not enough use of ICT within English to meet National Curriculum requirements, partly because computer rooms are not free when teachers want some of their classes to use them. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, though recent initiatives are implemented inconsistently, which has weakened their impact. Staff know that much remains to be done to extend the good practice existing within the department and to raise standards.

73. Three lessons were seen in drama, and a small amount of written work from pupils in Years 10 and 11 was scrutinised. These showed that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy drama, and work well together in preparing improvisations. Pupils in Year 8 showed good awareness of space and audience, but lacked skills in presenting their versions of a fight scene from 'Romeo and Juliet'. The work was well sequenced and gave the class a good understanding of the events of the play. However, opportunities to teach specific drama skills, such as those needed for a fight sequence were missed. Drama lessons with older pupils showed similar strengths, but also that skills are given insufficient attention. GCSE results were lower than nationally in 2001, having been broadly average in 2000.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Planning at Years 7 to 9 is based appropriately on the National Numeracy Strategy framework.
- Teachers manage pupils well.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning and the progress of pupils in some lessons.
- The percentage of pupils achieving A* to C grades in GCSE examinations.
- The formal monitoring of the work of the department.

74. Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment in. In 2001, results of tests at the end of Year 9 were average compared to schools nationally. They were below the average for similar schools. The attainment of boys and girls was broadly similar. Pupils' performance was better in mathematics than in English but worse than in science. Since the last inspection results have followed the national trend with the exception of 1999 when they dipped.

75. In 2001, GCSE results were below average when compared with national results, both in terms of the proportion achieving A* to C grades in the average points score. The overall result was broadly in line with that of similar schools although the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades was below that of similar schools. Girls did better than boys. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to G grades was above the national average. Pupils' results in mathematics were broadly in line with their results in their other subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades was below that of the previous year but above the target set by the school. Over the past five years, results have remained broadly similar with a significant drop in 1999.

76. The standard attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 is average. Pupils are strongest in handling data.

Higher-attaining pupils know how to find the mean, mode and median for grouped frequency data, and lower-attaining pupils draw frequency diagrams. Pupils also demonstrate strengths in shape and space. Higher-attaining pupils use Pythagoras' theorem to find unknown lengths and lower-attaining pupils have a sound understanding of the properties of three-dimensional solids. Pupils' investigational skills are less well-developed. Pupils' achievement, including the achievement of those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7 is satisfactory.

77. The standard attained by pupils at the end of Year 11 is average. Pupils retain the strengths in their work on shape and space. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a facility with using trigonometry, including the sine and cosine rules to find lengths. Lower-attaining pupils draw and measure angles and calculate their sizes. Pupils' investigative skills are better developed than in Years 7 to 9 through the completion of coursework tasks. Pupils are less strong in algebra, where higher-attaining pupils work on inequalities and average attaining pupils on simple equations. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented make satisfactory progress overall, although the work provided does not always sufficiently match their needs. Where additional adult support is available, it has a positive impact on the progress they make.

78. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory in the lessons observed. Teaching was most effective where the planning took account of pupils' previous learning experiences and built suitably on them. In a Year 7 lesson for average attaining pupils, for example, the lesson began with what the pupils already knew about fractions and they used this when learning to change fractions to decimals. Where learning objectives were shared with the pupils, as in a lesson on indices for Year 9 higher-attaining pupils, they knew what they were supposed to be learning and it helped them to remain focused. Most pupils know what they are supposed to be doing in terms of exercises from a textbook, but they are not always told what they will know or be able to do by the end of the lesson as a result. Teachers have good behaviour management strategies. There is mostly efficient use of time. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on probability pupils were told how long they had to complete a task and this helped them to concentrate. Teaching was less effective where pupils were repeating work that they had already mastered at an earlier stage. In some lessons pupils were provided with insufficient challenge and this slowed their rate of progress. Pupils' learning is also satisfactory. When presented with suitably motivating tasks, pupils show enthusiasm for their work, as in a Year 7 lesson for lower-attaining pupils, where they worked out averages in the context of television ownership. Pupils tend to remain on task even when the work is not particularly motivating. Where work is at too low a level or not sufficiently challenging, pupils are not making appropriate progress in learning. This was seen in a

Year 9 lesson where pupils had covered the work on relating rotations and reflections to symmetry before. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning mostly through the use of software for consolidation and revision purposes. They have few opportunities to develop their literacy skills.

79. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. The quality of relationships is strength. In some lessons there is a high level of chattering, but most talk is work-related. Some examples were seen of challenging behaviour but the work of other pupils in the class was not affected.

80. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall with weaknesses. Although day-to-day administration of the department is satisfactory, there is no formal monitoring of the work of the department to gain information about the quality of teaching and learning, about the work being done by pupils, the standards they are achieving or the consistency with which policies are implemented. Setting arrangements in each year have a positive impact on the quality of learning by enabling teachers to plan for a narrower range of attainment than would otherwise be the case. The scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 is based on the National Numeracy framework, which has a positive impact on the quality, both of teachers' planning and of pupils' learning. There is, however, no scheme of work in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that pupils continue to progress. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Test results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations have been maintained and the quality of teaching remains broadly the same.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Qualified staff with good subject knowledge.
- Good planning resulting in good learning in over a third of lessons.
- Newly-introduced courses in each key stage provide pupils with a motivating and relevant curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The standards of lower-attaining boys.
- The range of teaching styles and opportunities for practical work, to further improve pupils' progress.
- The formal monitoring of teaching and learning to raise standards, especially at Years 10 to 11.
- The use of ICT within science including data-logging.

81. The results of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average. Seven in ten pupils gained a level 5 or above compared to the national figure of just over six in ten. These results were also above those obtained in similar schools. There was no difference between the percentage of boys who gained a level 5 or above, compared to girls. The number of pupils who gained a level 6 or above was above the national figure. Pupils do slightly better in science than in English and mathematics.

82. GCSE results were below average overall in 2001. This judgement is based on the average point score, for all pupils who took these examinations. The proportion of pupils in science obtaining a GCSE grade of A* to C was well below the national level in 2001. Contrary to the Year 9 tests, girls obtained better grades than boys. When compared to similar schools these results were also well below average. Following a significant drop in results in 1997, results improved in 1998 and maintained this level until 2000, falling again in 2001.

83. Standards in Year 9 are average. In Year 7, higher-attaining pupils describe and draw a range of electric circuits and exemplify their properties; lower-attaining pupils explain the biological aspects of human reproduction in a sensible, mature manner. Year 9 pupils have progressed adequately in the course and can set up electrical circuits and perform the measurements of voltage and current.

84. Standards in Year 11 are below average although Year 11 pupils follow a new modular GCSE course involving continuous assessment and their results indicate that the number of pupils gaining a grade A* to C will increase this year. In Year, 10 higher-attaining pupils explain the process of electrolysis while lower-attaining pupils describe the properties of magnets. In Year 11 higher-attaining pupils were confident in calculating speed and velocity from distance and time data. They drew and interpreted the relevant graphs from this data. Lower-attainers understood the limits to Hooke's law and recalled the elastic limit and its consequences.

85. Pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily across both key stages, but especially in Years 7 to 9. They are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. However, they are not made fully aware of what they need to do in order to improve. Support staff have the confidence to help a wide range of pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported in science, especially in Years 7 to 9. No particular support is offered to higher-attaining pupils. There is a wide range of opportunities throughout the key stages for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions, which means that these skills are better developed in science than in most other subjects. The use of computers is not widespread at either key stage because there is not enough access to whole class facilities and National Curriculum requirements are not met. There is no use of data logging in Years 10 to 11 and as a result statutory requirements are not being met and there are not enough data-logging units to enable better group use during lessons.

86. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching in science is well planned and taught by suitably qualified staff. In the lessons observed the teaching was satisfactory with some good teaching in Years 7 to 9. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge and good use of resources including support staff. The most successful lessons were those where there was good lesson planning with a structure that ensured the lesson had sufficient pace linked with effective class control. In one very effective lesson on circuits, Year 7 pupils were motivated and enthusiastic while carrying out practical investigation. Some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 10, however, where pupils' attitude and behaviour was poor because the lesson lacked pace and challenge and the work was too hard. Homework is structured and forms an integral part of lesson plans but the standard of work produced by the pupils is often below the level expected.

87. Relationships between teachers and pupils are satisfactory. Year 7 pupils, in particular, are keen and enthusiastic and show good attitudes. Pupils work in a safe and enthusiastic manner and respond well when performing practical work. Most girls produce work at both key stages that is complete and well presented, regardless of their attainment. In Years 10 and 11, some pupils, especially lower-attaining boys, have unsatisfactory attitudes to the subject. In a Year 10 group investigating nervous response, for example poor attitudes and behaviour prevented the learning from taking place, despite the teacher's clear explanation of how the investigation was to be carried out. Notes taken by a minority of higher-attaining boys are badly presented and often unfinished and many lower-attaining boys produce incomplete work of low quality.

88. The management of the department is satisfactory overall with some good aspects. The head of department has introduced new courses both at Years 7 to 9 and for GCSE. These courses present good opportunities for the department to increase the range of teaching styles, especially with regard to

practical activities. The assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is not yet performed in a way that fully evaluates the effectiveness of the courses but the new courses contain an assessment scheme based on National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, which will rectify this. Marking of pupils' books is not rigorous enough with few comments on attainment or setting targets and departmental policy does not ensure that pupils' expectations of the standard of work required, particularly the expectations of lower-attaining boys, are high enough.

89. Although results and standards at Years 7 to 9 have improved, these improvements do not extend into Years 10 and 11. There has been little progress on some of the issues raised by the last inspection and the improvement has not been satisfactory. Plans have been formulated to raise the attainment of pupils, especially boys and there is a team of experienced support staff, who are efficient and well organised, and who ensure that equipment and resources are present at the start of lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers' expertise and their relationships with pupils.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of pupils, particularly of boys.
- Pupils' research skills by making better use of sketchbooks, setting more challenging homework and providing more opportunities for pupils to use computers in art.
- More systematic planning to identify key priorities such as target setting, the development of ICT and the professional development of staff.

90. Pupils join the school with a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding in terms of drawing, painting and three-dimensional skills. In 2001, teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show that over nine in ten pupils reached the expected standard (level 5 or above) which is in line with national averages. Both girls and boys attained similarly. However, these results seem overestimated.

91. GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 2001, combined results for art and art and photography were broadly average compared with results for all maintained schools. This is a considerable improvement on the previous year, when attainment in the higher grades was well below average. Results in the art photography option in 2001 were well above average. Girls' results were well above the average for girls' nationally with a large proportion of higher grade, whilst boys' results were well below boys' averages overall. Since the introduction of photography as an additional art option, boys' attainment in the higher grades has improved. Pupils' did as well in art as in their other subjects.

92. Standards of work seen during the inspection at Years 7 to 9 were broadly average. Pupils mix and control paint appropriately, use a variety of mixed media. They record from observation with increasing accuracy. They know about primary and secondary colours and use this knowledge effectively, for example to learn about repeat patterns and analyse artists' techniques. The development of basic skills has improved, particularly for average and lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8, where drawing is weak, as a result of schemes of work that approach the formal elements of art systematically. Pupils acquire an understanding of contextual references steadily, through the study of different cultures. For example, an interesting display of three-dimensional mask designs from Africa, showed work of average attainment.

93. In Year 11, the standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average. Girls do better than boys because they are generally more systematic in the way in which they approach their work. The best coursework seen in mock examination studies was in the art and photography units. Here, preparation studies showed good competence in linking artists' work and satisfactory standards in pupils' skills in drawing and painting and in developing and composing photographic images. In Year 11, weaknesses relate to the area of progressing ideas, because of gaps in acquiring this knowledge through systematic research and investigation. A considerable amount of coursework is underdeveloped for many pupils because the quality of preparation is poor and homework is not rigorous enough. Inadequate ICT resources, such as the fact that there is no digital camera and scanner, prevent pupils from attaining the higher grades at GCSE. Too little use is made of the library as a learning resource, although a range of stimulating artefacts and prints is helping to extend and improve the skills of drawing from direct observation and revitalising pupils' studies across all levels of attainment. Year 10 pupils are beginning to show a more consistent approach to research by linking artists' work to their own studies, so that they improve their drawing and colour techniques. The display of Year 10 sculpture, based on natural forms, shows above average attainment and good achievement. Sketchbooks are used to record ideas but are not used enough as studio tools to underpin progression from Years 10 to 11.

94. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily relative to their starting point. Higher-attaining pupils are not stretched enough by research and homework to extend their analysis of artists' work. They do not learn to look closely and improve their techniques of painting and drawing. Pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress. They increase in confidence and self-esteem through teachers' good support and improve their presentation skills. Some above average blending and application of paint by pupils with special educational needs was observed in Year 8. Some pupils do not have enough opportunity to work with three-dimensional materials to improve their modelling and co-ordination skills. Achievement overall in Years 10 to 11 for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils, is satisfactory. The consistent use of reference material to support coursework helps pupils improve the quality of basic art techniques. Achievement is less than expected for many pupils, however, because their minimum target grades are set too low and expectations for many high attaining pupils, as a result, are poor.

95. The quality of teaching and learning in art is satisfactory. Good teaching was observed at both key stages, and often in Year 10. Teachers are very experienced, with good expertise. They generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and make these very clear. As a result, pupils learn satisfactorily at both key stages. Teachers explain the aims of the lesson carefully and refer to them during the lesson. Their good relationships with pupils have a positive impact on how pupils cooperate and share resources. Pupils enjoy art and are keen to learn but teachers' expectations of higher-attaining pupils sometimes lack rigor and research work lacks challenge. Most lessons have a good mix of teacher explanation and practical work, designed to improve pupils' visual language, for example in the clear demonstration and explanation given to Year 10 pupils on how to draw a hand in proportion. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to look closely at cultural artefacts, such as ritual figures from Africa, to develop their ideas on gargoyles or masks. Teachers support individual pupils through good questioning techniques to extend their skills of drawing from observation. The consistent emphasis on developing literacy skills, for example in the use of key words, was a feature of all lessons. Teachers often discuss work with individuals although end-of-lesson summaries are sometimes too brief. Teachers do not challenge pupils enough to explain and reflect on their own or the rest of the group's work, to extend their oral and presentational skills and consolidate what they have learned. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to extend the skills and techniques of higher-attainers, for example pupils have too few opportunities to compare well-known artists' techniques with their own work. Homework research complements coursework but the frequency and quality of

work brought to lessons are inconsistent across teaching groups. Marking does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are uncertain as to how they are achieving because they do not know their National Curriculum levels, and GCSE pupils are not made sufficiently aware of examination marking criteria. There is not enough use of computers in the teaching of art.

96. Art is managed satisfactorily. Improvement in teaching stems from revised schemes of work that are improving links with critical and contextual studies and ensuring that drawing skills are systematically taught. While the overall quality of improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, monitoring of pupils' work, teacher assessments and examination results remain areas for improvement. Limited technician support impacts unfavourably on the quality of three-dimensional studies offered to pupils in Years 7 to 9. Departmental planning does not identify key priorities, such as target setting, the development of ICT and the professional development of staff well enough. Art clubs and trips abroad enhance the curriculum for many older pupils but opportunities for younger pupils to see original art are limited. Too little use is made of displays of high quality work and exhibitions of higher grades at GCSE in classrooms and around the school, to raise achievement and promote the success of the department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Well-structured courses and programmes of work.
- Pupils' achievements and GCSE results and the good quality of teaching at both key stages.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good departmental management, and a strong team of committed teachers, which ensures close co-operation between teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The planning of lessons to interpret the good schemes of work in more detail.
- Clearer criteria for the marking of pupils work.
- The use of ICT within design and technology to enable National Curriculum requirements to be met.

97. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well above those reported nationally. However, analysis of pupils' work and lesson observations indicated that the levels attained have been over estimated.

98. The overall GCSE results for design and technology subjects have been consistently above the national average. Individual subject results for food technology and textiles have been well above and for graphics products, above the national average. In 2001, the pattern continued with the proportion gaining A* to C grades above the national average. Whilst boys' results were in line with the national average for boys, the proportion of girls gaining A* to C grades and the proportion of girls gaining A* and A grades were both well above the national average for all pupils and for girls. Girls and boys achieved a higher proportion of A* to G grades than national averages and did better in design and technology than in other subjects.

99. Pupils achieve above average standards in Year 9. Standards in both designing and making are above national expectations because the curriculum for design and technology subjects is well-structured and well taught. Pupils develop good levels of technical knowledge, communication skills and skills in designing and making. Designing is stronger in food and textiles because work in folders is

very well organised and relates acquired skills and knowledge to the projects being investigated. The quality of research, analysis, development of ideas and presentation improves as pupils progress through the key stages. It is very good for higher-attaining pupils. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, respond well to the structured learning activities, and achieve well. Pupils' practical work is good in all materials with good application of knowledge, sound use of tools and equipment and an emphasis on good quality outcomes.

100. Standards are above average in Year 11. The structured approach used by teachers to cover the coursework, enables all pupils to meet examination requirements well. In the best folders, the quality of research, analysis, development and evaluation of ideas is very good. Pupils understand how materials and ingredients can be used safely, effectively and sometimes creatively whilst developing their own ideas and skills. Presentation of work is often very good. Practical work is often very good because pupils use a range of skills effectively to produce well-finished products, which meet the specifications set out in design work. Although some pupils include a limited amount of computer-generated work in their folders, it is not enough to meet the National Curriculum requirements for design and technology.

101. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. In Year 7, they learn how to make fabrics and use sewing machines to make useful bags for their forthcoming 'Danbury camp'. Year 8 pupils develop a good range of knowledge about nutrients and their effects in a project on hamburgers. Higher-attaining pupils include well presented, annotated drawings of their ideas in this work, and all pupils, including those with special needs include, compare and analyse commercial packaging well and produce clear well planned flow charts of how they make their own designs. Year 9 pupils produce individually designed board games after researching and analysing a wide range of design ideas. Their finished work is good and includes boards, counters, instruction cards and printed rules, some of which are produced by using computers. Design folders show increasing depth of research.

102. Overall, teaching is good. It was satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed in both key stages, good in the vast majority of lessons and sometimes very good. All teachers have good technical knowledge, reflected in demonstrations and their individual support for pupils, which means that pupils understand what is expected of them and learn well. Teachers give clear explanations and ask focused questions that reinforce pupils' learning well. Planning is good but the planning of individual lessons is not detailed enough and does not clearly focus on pupils' learning. Teachers do not always identify what it is they want the pupils to learn, based on clearly identified targets. In most lessons, time is used efficiently. Pupils are managed well and teachers use a range of teaching methods very effectively. In a Year 9 food technology lesson, a good demonstration by the teacher clearly reinforced pupils' prior knowledge. The teacher asked perceptive, focused questions before pupils moved quickly and effectively into their practical activity, sharing workspaces well and demonstrating good use of utensils and equipment. Some basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught through oral and written work but this is sporadic and is not systematically identified in the planned programmes of work. Although pupils have some opportunities to use computers in class work, for example they use computer controlled sewing machines in the Year 7 bag project, and sometimes for homework for research and presentation, there is not enough use of computers to meet statutory requirements. Good marking and assessment procedures include good support and discussion with pupils' about their work. In Years 10 to 11, regular marking with written comments is very effective in enabling pupils to improve their work.

103. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Almost all pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and are keen to do well but there is a small minority of pupils who can be disruptive and have a negative effect on the learning of others if not well managed. Most pupils concentrate well in lessons and many Year 10 and 11 pupils spend considerable time and effort outside

of lessons improving their work. The success of lower-attaining pupils is a positive reflection of the effort and concentration they give to their work.

104. Leadership and management are good. Close co-operation between teachers has enabled good courses to be developed and standards to be raised. Departmental documentation is good and there is a very positive approach to monitoring the development and improvement of the subject, which has a positive effect upon pupil achievement. Effective use is made of current staffing but there is no-one with specific responsibility to coordinate the work of the resistant materials areas. Accommodation is used well and improvements are being made in the resistant materials area, but the condition of fitted furniture and worktops in one food technology room is poor. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, but access to specific design and technology related computer equipment is limited, an issue identified in the last inspection, and this affects the department's capacity to teach computer-related work as required by the National Curriculum. Some pupils do not take a design and technology subject in Years 10 and 11 and therefore statutory requirements for design and technology are not met. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good leadership, organisation and relationships.
- Good and sometimes very good teaching, leading to good learning for most pupils.
- Teachers use assessment well to set targets and review teaching.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys, particularly those in the top sets.
- The feedback given to pupils, particularly to average and lower-attaining pupils.
- The formal evaluation of teaching and learning.

105. Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are broadly average, but noticeably variable in terms of their grasp of geographical skills and techniques. In 2001 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that results are average with two-thirds of pupils reaching the expected standard (level 5 or above).

106. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection, keeping pace with national trends. In 2001 the results were broadly average when compared with the national results for all pupils. Overall pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment, and pupils did better in geography than in most other subjects. Girls performed significantly better than girls in other schools, particularly in A* to C grades. Taken over the last three years, girls' results have been significantly better than boys'.

107. The Year 9 assessments were reflected in work seen during the inspection and are in line with national expectations. More girls than boys attain the highest standards. Pupils understand the effect of rivers on the landscape or the causes and effects of population change. They read maps and use data and computers appropriately.

108. The overall standard of work is at the national average overall in Year 11. Higher-attainers produce work that is detailed, well-researched and contains high-level thinking. They link ideas gained from previous work and research. Lower-attainers understand some subject specific vocabulary, but have difficulties with words such as permeable, when discussing good and bad factors for choosing a

settlement. Most pupils take a sensible range of factors into account before reaching their conclusions, though a few have difficulty completing continuous written accounts.

109. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily relative to their starting point, particularly in their grasp of geographical terms and methods and the rate of progress is consistent. There is no specific support for gifted and talented pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are adequately supported and make appropriate progress but pupils' targets are not related specifically enough to the subject. When additional support is provided in class, this is managed satisfactorily and results from successful liaison between subject and support teachers. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve well. They acquire skills steadily. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. In a Year 10 lesson on patterns of settlement, the learning support assistant moved around effectively to support those pupils needing assistance so that everyone in the class understood the principles and applied their knowledge to the activity set. Generally all pupils are set similar tasks, but their structure and nature enable most pupils to participate effectively.

110. The teaching and learning of geography are good. Some very good lessons were seen. Most pupils work very well and co-operate well with teachers and each other. They complete considerable amounts of work during lessons because teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and make it very clear what, and how, they should learn. Teachers explain their aims and methods carefully and check during lessons to ensure that pupils have really understood the work. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and a good understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. Lessons have a good mixture of teacher explanation and pupil activities, which develop pupils' oral, written and practical skills, whilst extending their knowledge. All lessons seen were well-planned and most were taught with a pace and enthusiasm which motivated pupils. The consistent emphasis on developing literacy, for example through the use of key words and geographical phrases, was a good feature of all lessons. As a result, most pupils, including lower-attainers are good at using the right language for the context. In the best lessons, pupils show good independence, organisation and group working skills. For example a top set of Year 9 girls produced and explained a range of possible effects of population change on essential services. Similarly, Year 11 groups produced high quality presentations on aspects of environmental change in the local area. As yet, however, not enough use is being made of the library to extend pupils' research skills. Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and formal assessment is managed meticulously, but feedback to pupils does not tell pupils clearly enough how to improve specific skills or how to understand particular concepts. Much good use is made of National Curriculum levels, to show pupils how they are progressing, but average and lower-attaining pupils cannot describe in detail how they need to improve.

111. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Geography is well managed and the improvements in standards, planning, assessment, fieldwork and teaching stem from the clear and consistent direction, good teamwork and good monitoring. The department evaluates its work by reviewing pupils' work, and test and examination results effectively. The action plan clearly identifies key priorities, such as the need to raise attainment, particularly of boys, and to modify further, and develop work to improve the curriculum and raise standards. For example, the curriculum for Years 7 and 8 has been revised and plans have been made to raise standards further, especially for boys. The use of single-sex teaching groups in Year 9 is working well in this respect. The use of ICT is satisfactorily developed; computers are used more than in many departments in the school but further development will depend on better access to facilities. Monitoring of teachers' work is good, but formal and focussed evaluation of its impact on learning is underused.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers make lessons interesting and motivate pupils to gain knowledge and understanding.
- Good planning, sound work schemes and teaching lead to satisfactory progress overall.
- Homework and coursework are used well to extend pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Good relationships with pupils create a purposeful ethos and a commitment to improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys, particularly those in the top sets.
- Lesson planning to identify clear learning objectives and ensure maximum progress for pupils.

112. Pupils join the school with broadly average knowledge, skills and understanding, but with a wide range in their reading and writing skills. The 2001 teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show that most pupils reached the expected standard (level 5 or above) and results were above the national average. However, analysis of pupils' work and lesson observations indicated that these levels were over estimated. Over the past three years, girls have done better than boys, reflecting the national trend in the subject, and much better at level 6 and above.

113. GCSE results were below the national average in 2001 although they were above the level achieved in 1996. Two-thirds of the 2001 group were girls and, of these, over two-thirds achieved A* to C grades, which is better than girls' performance nationally. The boys in the group gained far fewer A* to C grades, which was well below the national average for all schools. Over the past three years, girls' results have been consistently better than boys'.

114. Standards in Year 9 are average. Girls do better than boys. The best pupils produce work that is very well presented, well-researched and developed in good extended writing, particularly in assessed extended project work. Most pupils take a sensible range of factors into account before reaching their conclusions, though lower-attaining pupils have difficulty completing continuous written accounts because they have not had enough opportunities to extend their literacy skills in lessons. In Year 10 and 11, standards are also average. Year 10 pupils understand the problems encountered by the Germans in Hitler's Germany but miss the opportunities to take notes from the video because they have not been given enough direction from the teacher on how to do so. Year 11 pupils identify the problems facing President Kennedy accurately and discuss them productively.

115. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The rate of learning is consistent from Years 7 to 9. Work in books shows that they steadily acquire historical knowledge and understanding, for example of their local heritage from Roman times to the period of the English Civil War. They also acquire satisfactory skills in the use of evidence to support history. Some pupils, particularly lower and average-attainers, download information effectively. The best work uses word-processing and the Internet with imagination and to good effect. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils who have chosen to study history achieve satisfactorily for their attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented are supported well in teacher-led activities, but their targets could be more closely related to the specific needs of the subject. When additional in-class support is provided, it is managed satisfactorily and results from effective liaison between subject and support teachers. Generally all pupils are set the same tasks, but teachers' support enables most pupils to participate effectively. In a Year 8 lesson on Cromwell, a learning support assistant worked well with a pupil with behavioural problems and also kept others on task.

116. Teaching and learning of history are satisfactory. Not all teachers are specialists, but all are well supported by detailed schemes of work and so pupils are taught consistently. The majority of pupils work well in lessons and co-operate with teachers, and with each other. Some younger pupils require, and mostly receive, effective management by teachers and as a result these pupils complete a

satisfactory amount of work during lessons. Teachers are generally knowledgeable, good at focusing pupils quickly and at recapping and moving on from pupils' previous learning. They sequence lesson activities logically, and ask questions well to check pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge. End of unit assessments are used well to record progress and support pupils by reference to the National Curriculum levels achieved. Homework and coursework are used well to extend pupils' learning. Weaknesses in teaching relate to ensuring the maximum rate of progress for all pupils, particularly those of average attainment. Whilst teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and offer a range of types of work, pupils are not challenged enough by being given more responsibility for their own learning. Too little use is made of the library as a learning resource, which means that pupils' literacy skills, and independent research skills are underdeveloped. Teachers mostly explain their aims to pupils at the start of lessons, but the aims tend to be expressed as knowledge or understanding to be gained, rather than as a mixture of these with skills to be acquired and processes to learn. For example, pupils do not know what they need to do to make group work fully effective. As a result too few pupils can explain confidently what it is exactly that they can do and what they need to learn to be able to do better.

117. History is managed satisfactorily. Improvement since the previous inspection is also satisfactory, with improvements in planning, assessment and setting pupils targets. The department has priorities for action, for example raising boy's attainment and improving the provision for ICT, but these have yet to be fully realised. The use of ICT has been improved, but is not yet satisfactory in lessons. Staff lack expertise and the subject does not have enough access to facilities and National Curriculum requirements are not met. The department has systems for monitoring its work, but they lack rigour. There is not enough emphasis on formal monitoring and extending the quality of teaching and learning by using a wider range of methods.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The developing confidence and competence of pupils, and the proportion of A* and A grades at GCSE. • Schemes of work that provide a good basis for the extension work required in Years 7 to 9. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cross-curricular use of computers, to meet subject based National Curriculum requirements. • The accessibility of computers to other subjects, to enable them to be used more regularly. • Assessment procedures for Years 7 to 9.

118. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are in line with those reported nationally. However, evidence from the inspection indicates that the proportion of the higher grades awarded is an over-estimate of what pupils actually achieve.

119. Results at GCSE were broadly in line with national averages when taking into account all pupils who took these examinations. They have been consistently below the national average for the proportion gaining A* to C grades. However, a significant proportion of more able pupils gain A grades. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades was above the national average and the majority of these were boys. All pupils were successful in gaining A* to G grades.

120. Current standards are in line with national expectations in Year 7 to 9. Pupils have suitable experiences in word-processing, desktop publishing, use of spreadsheets, databases, use of computers for control and preparing multi media presentations, as well as using the Internet for research.

Although pupils join the school with varied and often limited experience in ICT, they achieve well in Years 7 to 9. All pupils carry out the same tasks. Pupils with special educational needs often do well in set exercises because work sheets and guidance notes are well prepared and used, whilst higher-attaining pupils develop higher-level skills by applying their knowledge through extension tasks. In Year 8, pupils interrogate a prepared database and begin to devise their own. They show confidence and competence in using computers for different purposes. They use prior knowledge and skills in entering data, text and pictures in spreadsheet, word-processing, posters and slide presentations. In a Year 7 ICT lesson, pupils were quickly able to understand the principles of using a multi-media programme, and confidently produced a number of slides with animated text and pictures. Year 9 used the Internet to research information about web sites of ice cream manufacturers and made sound judgements about the quality of web site presentations and the information they contain.

121. In Years 10 and 11, standards are in line with national expectations overall. Coursework demonstrates that a structured approach has been followed in investigating their chosen project and pupils are well supported by their teachers. They have researched their topic, considered and selected appropriate software for the task, produced user guides and tested their solutions. Standards vary with attainment but all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily because they follow the coursework requirements carefully and are adequately taught. All pupils have the opportunity to extend their knowledge and skills through the core ICT lessons. Project work provides the opportunity for all pupils to develop and apply their knowledge and skills in a set context, such as a travel case study, for example, but standards vary considerably depending on a pupil's prior knowledge, interest and motivation.

122. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It was good in the lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. As a result, pupils learned well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Strengths include good planning and good management of pupils. Resources are managed well and this creates a very positive learning environment in which all pupils learn effectively and at a pace appropriate to their attainment. Although most teachers are not ICT specialists, subject knowledge is generally sound and this enables teachers to provide good levels of individual support to all pupils in lessons. However, the fact that so many non-specialist teachers are teaching the subject has a detrimental effect on standards as a whole. Teaching methods are effective; pupils soon develop a good range of knowledge, which they can apply with confidence. When lessons were less effective this was due to insufficient detail in the planning of pupils' learning activities and lack of focussed targets for pupils' work. The quality of ongoing assessment is good because there is good individual help and advice to pupils during most lessons. Assessments and feedback to pupils in GCSE groups are good and enable pupils to improve their work. Most pupils work at a good pace and demonstrate high levels of concentration.

123. Although all pupils have good access to computers through the taught ICT lesson programme, opportunities to use computers in support of their work in other subjects are too limited. Some subjects, for example modern foreign language, geography and music include more significant amounts of computer-based work. For most, too little ICT work is planned into programmes of work. Consequently, the National Curriculum requirement for subjects to include ICT are not met. Most pupils like working with computers. Although they often have to share, they do this well, show good concentration and are keen to finish their work. Behaviour is good, although a small number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and small groups of boys in Years 10 and 11 can be unproductive and difficult. This affects both their own work and that of others.

124. The time allocated for ICT in Years 7 to 11 is good and National Curriculum requirements for ICT are met as a taught subject. Whilst the programme for ICT lessons has increased, too few other subjects make use of computers as required by the National Curriculum and statutory requirements are

not met. Not all subject have plans to fulfil their ICT requirement and most subjects have restricted opportunities to do so because they do not have enough access to computers and other equipment. As a result standards in ICT across the curriculum are not as good as they should be. The practice of including work from other subjects in the taught ICT lesson programme is good but is not sufficiently planned or coordinated.

125. Assessment procedures for Years 10 to 11 are good and provide a good system for informing pupils about the standard of their work and how it can be improved. There is no system for Years 7 to 9 and this is unsatisfactory. The department is undergoing a period of change. A new head of department has recently been appointed and changes in the ICT curriculum, such as the increased time allocation for Years 7 to 9 pupils have yet to be reflected in the schemes of work. Some documentation assists teachers in developing pupils' ICT experiences but it is not detailed enough to support the large team of non-specialist teachers teaching pupils in Years 7 to 9 or to ensure that there is enough depth in pupils' ICT work as they move through the school.

126. There have been significant improvements in some aspects of the teaching of ICT since the last inspection. Management is satisfactory overall. However, the new head of department has inherited a number of planning and coordination problems that will be difficult to resolve without substantial help from the senior management team in considering the whole-school strategy for ICT.

127. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Aspects of resources have been improved and there is a commitment for this development to continue but the ratio of computers to pupils is below the national average and the lack of access to computers is affecting the teaching of ICT. In ICT lessons, computers have to be shared and many subjects cite lack of access to computers as the main reason for not developing their use of them. Accommodation has improved but rooms are relatively small and the use of narrow worktops means that keyboards are too close to computers screens. Staffing is unsatisfactory. The school has only one ICT specialist who is supported by nine other teachers whose main subjects are not ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The monitoring of pupils' learning and achievement is good.
- Resources and accommodation are very good and enhance pupils' learning effectively.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE French.
- The amount of French and German used by teachers, and the spontaneous use of French and German by pupils to enable them to cope with unexpected language and situations.

128. Overall the results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below average for all schools. Although the proportion of pupils gaining level 4 and over was in line with national averages, the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 and over was below. Girls attained much higher standards than boys. Results in French at GCSE in 2001 were also below national averages whereas results in German were in line. The results in French were better than at the time of the last inspection. They were not as good in German, partly because in 1996 only higher-attaining pupils studied German, whilst the full ability range was entered for the examination in 2001. Girls did about the same as girls nationally but boys' results were significantly lower than boys' results nationally.

129. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and are similar to the teacher assessments. Pupils in the higher sets in French and German attain average standards whilst the standards of work in lower sets are well below average. By Year 9 higher-attainers write extended letters and compositions about a range of topics such as family, work and healthy eating, containing present, future and past tenses with the aid of models or writing frames. They express simple opinions, give reasons and are beginning to be aware of basic grammatical patterns, for example gender, adjective agreement, prepositions and the conjugation of some common verbs. When fully supported, many average-attainers copy sentences and short dialogues fairly accurately and write short descriptive paragraphs about where people work. Lower-attainers label pictures, copy sentences and lists with few mistakes but often fail to use capital letters for nouns in German. Presentation of work is variable. Girls do better than boys. The boys' written work is often untidy and is copied incorrectly.

130. Standards in Year 11 are below average. The attainment of many pupils in the top sets in Year 11 was average in both French and German. In the other sets, standards observed in lessons were very low. In a Year 10 top French set, pupils understood details in an extended listening text about food and asked and answered questions confidently using a good range of structures. In a French top set in Year 11, pupils understood recordings about illness and injury and engaged in good telephone role-plays. In another Year 11 French class, pupils understood a recording about leisure activities, but there were gaps in their knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary and their replies to simple questions were hesitant. Scrutiny of pupils' written work in German confirms that some higher-attainers write well. They produce essays on school and friends, letters of application for jobs and letters about holidays. This written work is accurate and contains present, future and past tenses and a good range of structures. The written work of many average-attainers covers a similar range but contains more errors. Lower-attainers in German copy vocabulary and write sentences to practise structures. A scrutiny of work in GCSE French confirms that most high and some average-attainers produce work in line with national expectations, but occasionally pupils make careless mistakes.

131. Although standards in Year 9 are below average, assessment records for English show that the attainment on entry of these pupils was also below average. As a result, most pupils, including the gifted and talented, achieve appropriately in Years 7 to 9. They develop the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing satisfactorily. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their previous attainment in French and German. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and good progress when supported by learning assistants.

132. Teaching in French and German is satisfactory and results in satisfactory learning. In some lessons, teachers use the foreign language extensively to the benefit of pupils' listening skills. On the whole, lessons are well prepared and taught in a lively way and at a brisk pace, with very good use of resources. Effective use is made of deadlines to motivate pupils and keep them on target. Work is marked promptly. Most lessons are well-matched to the needs and interests of pupils, with frequent changes of task and good coverage of the four skills. This enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to learn satisfactorily. All teachers test key vocabulary in French and German on a weekly basis, which helps pupils to progress. There is usually a productive atmosphere in lessons. Effective use is made of overhead projectors, textbooks, cassette recorders, and resource sheets. In a minority of lessons observed teaching was unsatisfactory, as in Year 8 French lesson for high-attaining pupils where the lesson lacked pace and challenge and pupils' standards were much lower than they should have been. There are no computers in the department, although teachers book ICT rooms, so that pupils can prepare posters for display, redraft coursework and research on the Internet.

133. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good in both languages. Most pupils are eager language learners, and want to show what they can do. In some classes they take part enthusiastically in language games and communicative activities. They were keen to play a memory game in a Year 9 German lesson, for example. Many pupils concentrate well, participate well in oral work and settle to work quickly. Occasionally, pupils, particularly in Year 11, lose concentration.

134. The trips to France and Germany and the variety of cultural activities organised within the department make a good contribution to the cultural development of some pupils. The leadership and management of the department are good and teachers work well together. Assessment policies and procedures are good and ensure that pupils' progress is well monitored. Most pupils are clear about National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, which helps them to make progress. The department offers extra lunchtime lessons to support pupils wishing to improve their GCSE grades and is liaising with a local school to organise an Easter revision course. The department has very good resources and accommodation, which have a positive impact on raising standards. Nearly all pupils take two languages in Years 8 and 9 with the result that many average and lower-attainers do not have sufficient time to progress to the higher National Curriculum levels in both languages; no pupils take two languages at GCSE. Modern foreign languages is an option this year in Year 10 and the school is thus in breach of statutory regulations. The department makes limited use of the resources in the library, missing opportunities to extend pupils' independent study and reading skills.

135. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall although there has been improvement in some areas. The use of assessment data to track pupils' progress is now more effective. Results in GCSE German have declined and in French have improved, although they remain below national expectations. Pupils are now entered for the coursework option at GCSE and this is raising standards of written work.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The teachers' knowledge and command of the subject is excellent.
- The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the subject are very good.
- The planning for the music curriculum is good.
- The department is very well resourced.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation, which is inadequate for some aspects of the work.

136. In 2001 teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show that results were average with over half of the pupils working at the expected standard of National Curriculum level 5.

137. The number of pupils studying music in Years 10 and 11 has been small for a number of years and it is not appropriate to make any comparison with national standards. However, almost eight in ten pupils entered in 2001 achieved a pass at grade C or higher at GCSE, and this is higher than national figures.

138. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. There is little information about pupils' attainment levels on entry to the school in Year 7, but, overall, the evidence is that pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. By the end of Year 9 many pupils are very capable on keyboards. They make very good performances of twelve bar blues chord structure and some show their understanding by making very good improvisations. In pupils' work files there is much evidence

of their initiative in making individual research around topics, for example the history of keyboard instruments.

139. Standards in the present Year 11 are above national expectations. Pupils in Year 11 are very competent in using computer programs as a tool in coursework composition. A group of three boys used two guitars and a drum kit in an interesting and very effective improvisation, which showed good feeling and understanding of how such pieces are put together. Many pupils show excellent instrumental competency in group music making in all years.

140. Achievement is good throughout all years. Many lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and enjoy the activities. In Year 10, boys put together an extended twelve bar blues structure and improvised very effectively in this type of composition. They achieved well. There is also much evidence of the high achievement of higher-attaining pupils, particularly those having instrumental tuition. In the lessons observed, pupils with special educational needs were actively involved and, generally, made good progress.

141. The standard of music teaching in all years is good. Lessons are well planned and move at a good pace. Equipment is well used, so that the pupils are engaged in purposeful and challenging activities. Assessment procedures are effective and record keeping provides ready information about pupils' progress. The teachers' knowledge and command of the subject is a key factor in the pupils' enthusiastic responses to the teaching. The work sheets produced by teachers are of the highest quality, both in their content – in extending musical technique and imagination – and, most strikingly, in their excellent production. The very good development of pupils' language, to describe music, features very strongly in the often purposeful classroom discussion about their work; pupils' evaluation of each others' compositions and performances being a very natural part of the lesson. As a result of this good teaching, learning is also good. Work is often well presented and shows some excellent standards of word-processing. Behaviour is generally very good and almost all pupils show a very positive attitude towards the subject. In all years, pupils show obvious enjoyment in their achievement and are keen to share this enthusiasm. There is much evidence of fine listening skills and awareness of the quality of sound. In group activity within a large class, however, sound levels can quickly rise so that pupils are not able to appreciate the dynamics and finer points of performance and composition fully. This is because groups have to work in close proximity because the classroom is too small.

142. Curriculum provision in music and monitoring of pupils' performance are good. The provision of facilities for using ICT in music in Years 10 to 11 is very good. In Years 10 and 11 many pupils show considerable competence in using technology as a tool in their coursework composition. The teaching in this area is very good and well informed. Although some development of ICT skills was observed in Year 9, the department still needs, and has plans, to acquire some more resources before ICT can make an effective impact within Years 7 to 9.

143. The department is well led and managed. The organization of all aspects of the curriculum is good, with good opportunities for pupils to take part in musical activities. A strong feature of the leadership is that so much music is specifically arranged for the pupils to play. The band, for example, involves a good number of instrumentalists who enjoy the challenge of playing standard big-band classics in arrangements made particularly for them. Many pupils are involved in the current music-theatre production of 'Titanic' and singing groups and recorders are well supported. School concerts involve pupils of all abilities. It is a testimony to the leadership that the pupils' enthusiasm for their music lessons is so evident.

144. Improvements since the last report have been good. There have been major improvements in resourcing, with three computers, which enable pupils to make good progress in using ICT in music.

The range and quality of electric keyboards has been updated and extended. Standards in Year 9 and the general enthusiasm for music, exemplified in the very good behaviour and attitudes of nearly all the pupils, have improved considerably. The number of pupils taking music has gone up and several of them show excellent instrumental competency in group music making.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well particularly in the GCSE courses.
- Extra-curricular activities enhance learning opportunities effectively.
- The Junior Sports Leadership Award course encourages pupils' personal development and independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- The expectations of teachers of lower-attaining pupils.
- The teaching of the skills of literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT within physical education.

145. Pupils enter the school with skills and understanding that are below average in physical education. In 2001 teacher assessments standards at the end of Year 9 were above average compared with schools nationally. These results indicate more boys than girls at level 5 and above but were found to be inaccurate on the evidence of work seen during the inspection.

146. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In 2001 GCSE results were broadly average when compared with national results. Significantly more boys than girls choose to take physical education at GCSE level and pupils do better in physical education than they do in most of their other subjects. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment, although less well in 2001 than in 2000.

147. The work seen during the inspection showed that the standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 are below average when compared with national results. This judgement is lower than the teacher assessments because teachers were over-generous in their monitoring. Year 7 pupils' coordination and awareness of body position and tension in balance in gymnastics is below expected levels but they gradually acquire the skills and understanding to improve their performance and by Year 9, some pupils work to expected levels. For example, in a basketball lesson, pupils were able to build on previous learning to improve their attacking techniques. High-attaining pupils had good spatial awareness, which helped them achieve good dribbling skills. Low-attaining pupils lacked good hand/eye coordination, and so their dribbling was less accurate.

148. The standard attained by pupils at the end of Year 11 in the GCSE course is average. In a Year 10 class pupils showed good skills in basketball. They had a secure knowledge of the essential rules of the game and anticipated play well to intercept the ball and make strong effective passes. By Year 11, theory work shows a satisfactory understanding of the effect of exercise on the body. Higher-attaining pupils use correct terminology and are technically more accurate than lower-attaining pupils.

149. In Year 11, standards in the general physical education lessons provided for all pupils are average overall. Well-motivated pupils in Year 11, doing their Junior Sports Leadership Award (JSLA), are working above what might be expected of pupils nationally. There are good examples of pupils working independently. They planned and presented physical activities suitable for Year 6

primary pupils who visited the school and made constructive criticisms of one another's work for evaluation and improvement.

150. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. High-attaining pupils do well because teachers are aware of their strengths and challenge them. Their team and individual skills are above average. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve less well than might be expected because they have a weak understanding of key words. Lower-attaining pupils are not challenged enough and expectations are not high enough in some lessons.

151. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the Year 11 JSLA lesson, very good teaching and learning resulted from good planning and organisation. Pupils' very good attitudes and high level of concentration enabled them to focus effectively on the learning objectives and the evaluation of them. Pupils' learning was good in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, where the teacher's good planning and high expectations improved pupils' quality of movement and inspired their adventurous spirit. Opportunities for learning are greatly enhanced by the good provision of extra-curricular activities. Weaknesses relate to teachers' expectations, planning and their management of pupils in Years 7 to 9. In a Year 9 gymnastics lesson, targets were set but the teacher did not check if they had been achieved, and so some low attaining pupils did not learn effectively. In a Year 9 basketball lesson, the teacher talked over the noise of pupils bouncing balls so other pupils could not hear. Too many non-participants, mainly girls, are not engaged sufficiently in learning and disrupt the teaching. Literacy and numeracy are incidental within lessons, rather than planned for. This makes learning more difficult for lower-attaining pupils who do not understand key words.

152. Management of the department is satisfactory. Procedures are satisfactory but there is no development plan with clear objectives showing how the skills of literacy and numeracy will be taught, how pupils will be given access to computers or how teachers' expectations will be standardised as a means of improving pupils' learning. Resources are very good, and they are used well. There is quality equipment and good books for pupils to use in the department and in the library. Some digital equipment is available but there is insufficient access to computers to enable the department to meet National Curriculum requirements. Accommodation is satisfactory in physical education, where teachers make best use of the facilities available to them but the sports hall has poor acoustics and has no adjacent changing facilities. In bad weather this results in a dirty floor for activities. Teachers make the best use of the facilities available. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Assessment is now adequate and more time has been allocated to Year 10 lessons; this enhances learning opportunities and GCSE results have improved. Results are now consistently in line with the national average. Teachers have higher expectations of higher-attaining pupils but their expectations of lower-attaining pupils are still not high enough.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Some teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in religious education throughout the school.
- The increase in timetabled provision in Years 10 to 11 to enable the local Agreed Syllabus to be covered in full.

- Assessment and self-assessment, by introducing the locally agreed levels of attainment for religious education.
- The monitoring and support of teaching and learning across the department's provision.
- The use of ICT within religious education.

153. GCSE results for 2001 were well below national expectations. This is a considerable fall from the situation at the time of the last inspection, when results were broadly in line with national expectations.

154. Standards in Year 9 are below national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils write extended accounts of aspects of Christianity and Islam and letters to the press complaining about unfair practices in world trade. They draw on the religious perspectives they have studied to make a moral case. Average-attaining pupils' completed work fails to reach expected levels, as their literacy and presentation skills do not match the oral contributions seen in lessons.

155. Standards in Year 11 are well below national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils in the GCSE group write sustained accounts about the effects of pollution, demonstrating their understanding of our responsibilities as 'stewards' of the planet. Others' accounts were not as insightful. Although they presented strong opinions, their arguments failed to take account of the religious dimensions expected in the work of GCSE candidates. Standards of work in the core religious education provision for all pupils in Year 11 fall well below the expected standards. For example, pupils' work on disabled access, failed to reflect any of the religious teaching they ought to be employing to inform and develop their understanding of major contemporary issues. This weakened the standards of higher-attaining pupils, whose work showed considerable sensitivity and understanding. All the work of the core groups for religious education in Years 10 and 11 indicates that they cover much less of the local Agreed Syllabus than is recommended and this contributes to attainment which is lower than that expected.

156. Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. Higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve well. Pupils seen in a top set Year 7 class, for example, showed considerable enthusiasm for their study of Islam. Their exercise books, and the work displayed in the religious education classrooms, reflected a high level of motivation and learning of basic beliefs and practices. Similarly in Year 8, in work seen on the life and example of Jesus, higher-attaining pupils were able to recount key episodes and remark upon their significance for us today, in their study of commitment and sacrifice. Average and lower-attaining pupils are underachieving. They are held back by weak writing skills. Although many show understanding of sacrifice in their own lives and make short presentations to the class, they cannot develop these ideas as well on paper. The marking of the various aspects of writing and presentation in the exercise books of this year group is inconsistent and so pupils do not fully understand how to improve. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when adult support is at hand to help them access the learning materials and lesson tasks. In many lessons teachers miss opportunities to adapt the work to match the range of pupils' attainment. For example, in a lesson seen in Year 10, several pupils spent over half the lesson trying to complete the drawing of a grid to record their answers, and in that time made no learning gains in religious education. Similarly gifted and talented pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

157. The teaching observed ranged from poor to good. It was unsatisfactory overall. Good teaching was characterised by good subject knowledge, pupil enthusiasm, accessible materials, focused activities and clear objectives. For example, a top set Year 9 class focused on a banana's journey from its tree to the tables of Stanway pupils, as they considered the fairness or otherwise of international trade. The teacher encouraged them to discuss their ideas in small groups, which resulted in a strong interest and understanding. The lesson built well on knowledge learned previously by the pupils about

Christianity and Islam, relating it to the cultivation and trade of the banana. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, pupils wasted too much time. For example, in a Year 9 lesson with a lower-attaining set, one group of girls chatted throughout and by the end of the lesson had only a few copied notes and the beginning of a poster to show for their efforts. Too little use is made of film, audio aids or ICT resources. In some lessons, some pupils used their laptops for writing and sometimes creating diagrams but this prevented them from developing their handwriting and presentation skills along with the rest of the class. As a result of this unsatisfactory teaching, learning is also unsatisfactory in Year 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. Lower-attaining pupils are hampered in their learning by lack of interest and distraction, with incomplete work and often-unfinished records of class and homework. Too little use is made of the library as a resource for religious education, although there is an attractive range of texts recently purchased by the librarian to assist pupils, in particular those with reading difficulties.

158. The time allocation in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but in Years 10 to 11 there is not enough time to teach all aspects of the local Agreed Syllabus. There is not enough use of computers and National Curriculum requirements are not met. Schemes of work do not adequately support the work of teachers, which is particularly significant as there are many non-specialists teachers of religious education.

159. The management of the department and improvement overall is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection there have been several changes in management and standards have fallen. The recommendations of the last inspection, particularly with regard to matching tasks and activities to the needs of particular pupils have not been dealt with. Little attempt has been made to spread good practice amongst teachers.