

INSPECTION REPORT

FREDERICK GENT SCHOOL

South Normanton

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112941

Headteacher: Mr Mike Ainsley

Reporting inspector: Ross Maden
2793

Dates of inspection: 5th – 9th March 2001

Inspection number: 192039

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mansfield Road South Normanton Alfreton Derbyshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr. Lionel Cannon
Date of previous inspection:	21 st January 1997

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30899	Ken Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Frederick Gent is a community comprehensive school educating boys and girls in the age range of 11-16. There are 861 pupils in the school, which is smaller than the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 14.3 per cent, which is broadly in line with the national average. There are no pupils who have English as an additional language. The school has increased in size since its previous inspection and draws pupils from the local primary schools in the South Normanton, Pinxton and surrounding areas. There are 184 pupils on the school's special educational needs register which is above average for a school of this size and 39 of these pupils have statements of special educational needs. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. The proportion of adults with higher education and the proportion of children in high social class households in the local wards are below the national average. The proportion of minority ethnic children and children living in overcrowded households are well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Frederick Gent is a good school with its many strengths outnumbering weaknesses. The school achieves high standards in most areas of its work. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Attendance is close to the national average. The quality of teaching is very good. There are very good arrangements to support all pupils. The school is very well led and has clear strategies for raising achievement. The school has made good progress since its last inspection. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The good progress made by pupils during their time in the school.
- The very good quality of teaching provided by dedicated teachers who have very good relationships with their pupils.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and the progress these pupils make.
- The very good quality of leadership within the school which results in outstanding efforts by all staff in their commitment to raise standards even higher.
- The very high quality of guidance and pastoral care to support pupils in their academic progress.
- The very good opportunities provided both in lessons and in extra-curricular opportunities for pupils' personal development, in particular the significant contributions pupils make in charity fund raising events.

What could be improved

- The size of the library is inadequate for the current number of pupils.
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not enable pupils to gain accreditation for their talents in information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and drama.
- The current accommodation is poor and has a negative impact on the standards pupils achieve.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in January 1997 satisfactory improvements in standards have been made. In 1996, 45 per cent of pupils gained 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C and in 2000 this had increased to 46 per cent. In 1996, 99 per cent of pupils gained 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G and this had increased to 100 per cent in 2000- well above the national

average. In both 1997 and 2000 attendance was close to the national average. There were more fixed term exclusions in 2000 than in 1997.

In tackling the key issues identified in the last inspection report, the governors have made good progress. There have been improvements in GCSE results for French and standards have been raised in ICT. Improvements have been made in the number of teachers using ICT to support learning. The marking and grading of pupils' work has improved and is no longer a weakness. The lack of continuity and progression of learning in modern foreign languages across the key stages is no longer an issue. The quality of accommodation for music has improved. Subject departments have provided more opportunities for spiritual development but the school is still unable to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school is well equipped for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

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

Pupils' results in national tests at age fourteen in the year 2000 were in line with national averages. They were above national averages in science but below in English and mathematics. Girls perform more highly than boys in English, as they do nationally, but boys' performance in mathematics and science matches the girls' performance. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects was below the national trend. Compared to schools with pupils of a similar background, pupils in this school achieve results which are well below average in English. In mathematics they achieve results which are close to the average and results in science were well above average. Pupils' attainment at the age of fourteen in design and technology is above national averages and is in line with national averages for all other subjects.

Pupils' results in the most recent GCSE examinations were close to the national average. However based on averages over the last three years the proportion obtaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-G, at 100 per cent, was very high in comparison with the national average and over the last three years was well above the national average. Pupils' grades in English and mathematics were below the national average but results for science were above the national average. Girls significantly out-perform boys in English language at GCSE level and outperform boys in mathematics and science. Pupils' achievements in GCSE were above average compared to schools with pupils of a similar background. Their results at GCSE when related to their prior attainment at the age of fourteen indicate that progress was very high in comparison with similar schools. Pupils achieved particularly high GCSE results in French, German, English language, design and technology, science and music when compared with pupils' results in other subjects. In 2000 results in mathematics, humanities and English literature were comparatively lower than for other subjects. The trend in pupils' average points score over the past three years is above the national trend. Over the last 11 years, with the exception of 2000, there has been a consistent improvement in the proportion

of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C. The school's targets for attainment at GCSE are challenging but are based on an accurate assessment of pupils' prior attainment. In relation to their prior attainment pupils are making very good progress in science. They are achieving well in all their other subjects except for history where they make satisfactory progress. By the age of sixteen, pupils are making very good progress in science, achieving well in other subjects except for ICT and history, where achievement is satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school and make the most of the opportunities the school provides for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good. They understand and accept the school rules. There is little need for direct supervision of pupils moving around the school, reflecting the high level of maturity of most pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. They have very good relationships with members of staff and most are developing effectively as mature and confident adults.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and is in line with national averages. Most pupils have a good record of attendance and are punctual to their lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The percentage of lessons judged to be satisfactory or better was 100 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The percentage of lessons judged to be good or better was 81 per cent and the proportion of very good and better teaching was 26 per cent. The quality of teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 than it was in Years 7 to 9.

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science was good. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching was very good in science. In all other subjects teaching was good. Literacy skills are effectively promoted by most teachers. Numeracy skills are satisfactory. The good quality of teaching makes a major contribution to the significant levels of progress pupils make in the school. Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations of them. Effective planning of lessons ensures that the needs of pupils, at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are met effectively. The good quality of teaching leads to the good levels of learning. Pupils acquire appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding and there is a good pace to learning in most lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 there is a restricted range of GCSE courses. No vocational courses are offered and insufficient time is given to religious education to meet the needs of the 'Agreed Syllabus'. Careers education and curriculum links with primary schools are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The learning support department provides a wide range of detailed information to subject staff, who are aware of pupils on the special educational needs register, and work hard to meet their needs. Support staff are well deployed and used effectively, with the result that pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the school and achieve well in GCSE examinations.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision the school makes for pupils' moral and social development is very good. It makes satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development of pupils. In addition to opportunities, provided in lessons, for pupils' personal development, further opportunities are provided through a wide range of extra-curricular activities and in the school's significant efforts in raising funds for charities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a safe and caring place for pupils. The quality of individual support for pupils is very high.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school works well in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership within the school is very good. The headteacher provides clear leadership for raising standards. Recent changes to the senior management team have strengthened the leadership for pupils' welfare. A particular strength is the high quality of middle management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil most of their responsibilities effectively. There are some shortcomings including the statutory requirements for reporting to parents and the failure to provide sufficient teaching time for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	One of the strengths of the school is the effectiveness of the evaluation of the work of the school. Analysis of test results is very good and this information is used effectively to monitor individual pupils' progress throughout the school.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its limited resources. In targeting resources to meet the needs of the school, the principles of best value are applied. The continued deterioration of the school buildings is a major cause of concern. Learning resources are limited but used effectively. There is an appropriate number of teaching and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum.

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 has high expectations for pupils to work hard. • Pupils make good progress. • The good quality of teaching. • The school is helping children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set. • To be kept better informed about their children's progress. • For the school to work more closely with parents. • An increase in the range of extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors agree with parents on the issues which please parents most. Pupils make good progress in their academic and personal development because of good teaching and very good levels of support and guidance. Inspectors judge that the amount of work set for homework is appropriate. The school complies with legal requirements to keep parents informed about their children's progress but shortcomings exist in the quality of some of the information provided in pupils' annual reports. Inspectors judge that the range of extra-curricular activities is good and pupils take advantage of the out-of-school activities to develop their particular sporting, musical and academic interests. Inspectors judge that there are sufficient opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' results in national tests at age fourteen in the year 2000 were in line with national averages. They were above national averages in science but below in English and mathematics. Girls perform more highly than boys in English, as they do nationally, but boys' performance in mathematics and science matches the girls' performance. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects was below the national trend. Compared to schools with pupils of a similar background pupils in this school achieve results which are well below average in English. In mathematics they achieve results which are close to the average and results in science were well above average. Pupils' attainment at the age of fourteen in design and technology is above national averages and is in line with national averages for all other subjects.

2. Pupils enter the school with wide range of abilities. There are many higher achieving pupils but the overall pattern of attainment on entry is below the national average. At the age of fourteen, pupils achieve higher standards than might be expected in many subjects. Pupils' progress in science is very good. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils achieve higher standards than might be expected in all other subjects except for ICT and history, where achievement is satisfactory.

3. Pupils' results in the most recent GCSE examinations were close to the national average. However, based on averages over the last three years, the proportion obtaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-G was very high in comparison with the national average, and over the last three years was well above the national average.

4. Pupils' grades in English and mathematics were below the national average but results for science were above the national average. Girls significantly outperform boys in English language at GCSE level and outperform boys in mathematics and science. Pupils' achievements in GCSE were above average compared to schools with pupils of a similar background. Their results at GCSE, when related to their prior attainment at the age of fourteen, indicate that progress was very high in comparison with similar schools. Pupils achieve particularly high GCSE results in French, German, English language, design and technology, science and music when compared with pupils' results in other subjects. In 2000, results in mathematics, humanities and English literature were comparatively lower than for other subjects. The trend in pupils' average points score over the past three years is above the national trend.

5. By the age of sixteen, pupils are making very good progress in science, achieving well in other subjects except for ICT and history, where achievement is satisfactory. It is clear from the proportions of pupils gaining five or more A*-C and A*-G grades that there was satisfactory achievement, in relation to their earlier attainment. Within the overall pattern of achievement by pupils at the age of sixteen, there are some variations between different groups of pupils. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school and often achieve better GCSE results than might be expected. This is reflected in the outstanding achievement of 100 per cent of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A*-G in the last two years. The achievement is the result of good teaching and, in particular, teachers' high expectations of these pupils, in terms of their attitude, behaviour and achievement, backed by effective support where necessary. Teachers in the learning support department monitor their progress closely and they work to

targets, as do their peers. At the time of inspection, there was no formal provision for gifted and talented pupils across the school, although individual departments such as art and design, music and modern foreign languages have begun to identify these pupils and make extra provision for them.

6. Standards of literacy are significantly below average when pupils enter the school. The very high proportion gaining grades at GCSE indicates that considerable improvement is made. This results mainly from the work of the English and special needs departments, with assistance from most subjects of the curriculum, so that pupils' skills in reading and writing improve. There is no whole school policy to offer shape and balance to these contributions, but some strengths have resulted from the increasing understanding that teachers have of the literacy hour now provided in primary schools and a recognition of the need to build upon the progress made. In all subjects, teachers ensure that pupils understand, use and correctly spell the words they need to know in their lessons. Pupils are encouraged to write for a wide range of purposes, with frequent opportunities for writing lengthy pieces in most subjects, though not in geography or history. Opportunities for creative writing in both verse and prose are provided in English, art and design, modern foreign languages, religious education and science. Pupils in a Year 11 class applauded the reading by a teacher of Phyllis McCormack's poem 'A Crabbit Old Woman' which moved them emotionally and demonstrated to them the power of language.

7. The school is currently developing a whole-school numeracy policy. Three of five whole staff training sessions, planned for the year, have already been held in order to raise awareness of the ways that numeracy can be promoted throughout all departments, and in tutor time. The Millennium Project, through its Maths 2000 noticeboard, puzzles of the week and facts of the week, evident throughout the school, helps raise the interest and awareness of pupils, and has an impact on their learning. A bridging structure has been developed with feeder schools and this, with the introduction of a commercial scheme linked to the National Numeracy Strategy, has an impact on the improvement in numeracy. Currently a small number of pupils are withdrawn from classes for intensive numeracy and literacy work using 'SuccessMaker'. In modern foreign languages, pupils use mental arithmetic, but have difficulties when using the 24 hour clock. Pupils, using spatial concepts, draw nets and convert them to '3D' models in design and technology. They handle statistical information in everyday contexts when analysing poverty in religious education, and performing a fast food project in design and technology. Year 10 and 11 pupils have difficulty when using statistics in examination questions in humanities. Science pupils are able to change the subject of a formula. The use of graphs and charts is evident in many areas but more accuracy is required in their usage within the humanities.

8. Over the last 11 years, with the exception of 2000, there has been a consistent improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 GCSE grades A*-C. Since the previous inspection, the very high proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-G has been maintained. The school's targets for attainment at GCSE are challenging but are based on an accurate assessment of pupils' prior attainment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils demonstrate the same good attitudes and behaviour that existed at the time of the last inspection. This is also a general view held by parents. Most pupils make the most of their time in school and participate in activities with interest and enthusiasm, for example, pupils enjoy science throughout the school, because of the high quality of work, which motivates pupils to work hard and take a pride in what they do. Levels of attendance are high at the wide range of extra-curricular activities available.

10. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually good because the vast majority of pupils understand and respond well to codes of conduct. Pupils responded well to the positive styles of teaching and the high levels of interest in the work, so that lessons were rarely interrupted by disruptive behaviour. This is especially so for older pupils in Years 10 and 11. Examples of unsatisfactory classroom behaviour from a few pupils in Years 8 and 9 were managed well by the teachers. Pupils are generally polite and courteous to others and also treat their environment with respect. When pupils are moving around the school their conduct is good and most pupils require little direct supervision to behave well. The number of pupils excluded from school is typical of similar schools.

11. Relationships and personal development are good and relationships are very good between pupils and members of staff. High levels of co-operation with each other and with teachers creates an environment in which the pupils learn well. Few tensions are readily apparent between pupils and most develop a mature and sensible outlook during their time in school.

12. Most pupils mature well during their time at the school and they take readily to areas of responsibility, such as, senior student, peer listener and reception duties. Advantage is also taken of clubs such as Amnesty International and Young Enterprise, which provide an avenue to social and moral issues in the wider world beyond school. Pupils' attitudes to learning improve as they move through the school.

13. The average attendance for 1999/2000 was 92 per cent and in line with that of other schools. Attendance is satisfactory for all groups of pupils. Unauthorised absence was 0.7 per cent also close to the national figure. A change in the way the attendance of pupils of Traveller families is recorded has made direct comparisons with previous years difficult. Pupils are generally punctual and organised ready for the start of sessions, which makes for a prompt start to lessons.

14. The behaviour of pupils with special educational needs is usually good in lessons. They are interested in their work and keen to succeed, particularly in the 11-14 age group. Small groups of pupils are withdrawn on a rota basis from one or two lessons a week for intensive support in literacy and numeracy. Groups using the 'SuccessMaker' software package are not always pupils on the register, but pupils who occasionally need a boost in these critical areas. They are usually open about the nature of their difficulties and respond well to the pressure of small-group teaching. The introduction of the 'Success Maker' computer software package has helped pupils achieve a degree of independence, as the package makes pupils take responsibility for both the work they do and the recording of their progress. They can be seen working with concentration and application and gaining a good degree of satisfaction from the monitoring of their own performance. Relationships between pupils with special educational needs and with adults in the school are good. The school operates an effective policy of inclusion and pupils with special educational needs are free to participate in all school activities. This was well exemplified by a pupil with cerebral palsy who took full part in a computer-aided presentation in a geography lesson, to the extent of addressing the class by means of a prepared script. Pupils with special educational needs

take positions of responsibility, for instance by participating in the senior student scheme.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. Teaching is good overall and has significantly improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. During the inspection the quality of teaching of 100 per cent of lessons was at least satisfactory. Of the 146 lessons observed 1 per cent were judged to be excellent, 25 per cent very good, 55 per cent good, 19 per cent satisfactory and no lessons were judged to be less than satisfactory. In the previous inspection only 91 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better.

16. The good teaching is having a clear impact on the quality of learning throughout the school and pupils are making good progress. Pupils enter the school with a pattern of attainment that is worse than the national pattern and, as a result of good teaching, pupils at the ages of fourteen and sixteen achieve higher standards than might be expected in several subjects.

17. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of teaching is very good in science. In all other subjects teaching is good. The good quality of teaching makes a major contribution to the significant levels of progress pupils make in the school. Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations of pupils. Effective planning of lessons ensures that the needs of pupils, at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs are effectively met. High quality of teaching leads to good levels of learning. Pupils acquire appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding and there is a good pace to learning in most lessons.

18. Literacy skills are satisfactory. Only in English and in a few subjects are pupils themselves asked to read aloud. It is only in a minority of subjects that pupils are able to develop language skills through participation in discussion. Good practice is insufficiently established across all subjects so that pupils learn to write with greater accuracy, improve the organisation of longer pieces of writing and become more able to recognise the implications of their reading.

19. Numeracy skills are satisfactorily taught and most pupils have the ability to apply them in mathematics and in other subjects. A policy is being worked out to provide guidance and support for all teachers in developing pupils' numeracy skills.

20. In ICT the quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good. The teachers involved have a secure knowledge of the programs being used and support the pupils effectively in their learning. Good planning and preparation ensures that the pupils continually develop their skills and knowledge to an ever-rising level. The Year 7 curriculum gives pupils a good grounding in ICT. Most subjects have prepared coherent programmes integrating ICT into their teaching. Areas such as music have experienced software problems but are managing to overcome these and make good use of the available facilities. Design and technology makes good use of ICT within equipment limitations as they have no computer aided manufacturing equipment and little is yet in place for computer aided design work. In most other subject areas use is developing well. Subject areas are planning effectively the use of ICT and work closely with the head of department for ICT.

21. A feature of most lessons is the constructive purposeful relationship between teachers and pupils. This enables pupils to feel secure and confident enough to answer and ask questions. Most teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils are generally well behaved but when challenging behaviour does occur teachers manage these situations well.

22. Teachers plan very well for most lessons and make good use of a limited range of resources. Lessons in all subjects include a variety of activities, which helps to maintain the momentum and pupils' interest. Pupils respond well to the lively pace of most teaching.

23. A feature of many lessons was the strong subject knowledge and expertise displayed by teachers. This was often coupled with a real enthusiasm for the subject, which rubbed off on pupils. Teachers' explanations were mainly clear and accurate and ensured that pupils worked purposefully and productively.

24. In all year groups where teachers had high expectations of pupils, they set demanding and challenging work. This was particularly evident in Years 10 and 11 and in such cases resulted in pupils making good progress in their understanding and skills. In some history lessons, there was a lack of challenge to meet the needs of all of the pupils. Pupils show satisfactory interest in their lessons in Years 7 to 9 at Key Stage – it is good in Years 10 and 11. They concentrate well in lessons and when given the opportunities work well independently.

25. In many subjects teachers mark pupils' work carefully and most teachers provide clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve.

26. Several parents raised concerns about the amount of homework set. The inspectors' judgements are that the setting of appropriate homework is good. Teachers follow the published homework timetable.

27. Pupils with special educational needs are taught almost entirely in classes in which they are integrated with their peers so that they all experience the same overall good quality of teaching. Teachers are aware of their needs, as indicated in pupils' individual education plans. They modify tasks and materials appropriately in most subjects to make them more accessible to these pupils. This is done particularly effectively in modern foreign languages, English, art and design, religious education, and mathematics. This aspect of the teaching could be refined still further in some areas. Pupils' learning is further assisted by learning support teachers and education care officers who help pupils, individually or in small groups, within the classroom. Support of this kind is most effective when the support teacher is used to work with other pupils while the specialist subject teacher works with the special educational needs' pupils. In such lessons these pupils are virtually indistinguishable from their peers who are not on the register. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 10 English lesson, where the specialist teacher and the support teacher interchanged their roles seamlessly to the benefit of all pupils. In the small group withdrawal sessions, the quality of teaching is good. Specialist teachers work sensitively with pupils, encouraging them and challenging them to work at higher levels. The department supplies information about pupils' performance in these sessions to curriculum areas, but as yet there is no formal feedback from subjects to the department about the effectiveness of this intensive withdrawal work in raising levels of pupil performance.

28. Detailed systems have been developed to provide the Traveller pupils with distance learning material, with support from the local education authority. Inevitably there are problems of continuity, but the school's efforts are recognised and appreciated by Traveller parents.

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

29. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are satisfactory. However, there are weaknesses in the provision for Years 10 and 11. The school places a strong emphasis on equal opportunities and equal worth, and all pupils have equal access to the full curriculum. Special provision is made for Traveller children. They are provided with workbooks from each curriculum area. These are completed and returned to the school for marking, when they are unable to attend the school.

30. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the curriculum is satisfactorily broad, balanced and relevant. Following a curriculum review, the time allocated to religious education in the lower part of the school is now adequate to cover the required syllabus. However, there is insufficient time provided in English to enable the requirements of the National Curriculum to be delivered in depth. The co-ordination of the teaching of ICT has improved since the previous inspection and pupils now receive their curriculum entitlement.

31. In Years 10 and 11, pupils all study a common core of nine GCSE subjects and a course leading to key skills qualifications. There is no religious education module in Year 11 so that the school does not meet the requirements of the 'Agreed Syllabus'. The range of GCSE courses is narrow and restrictive. There are no opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation for their talents in ICT, physical education, religious education or drama. There are no vocational courses. The options within the design technology course are limited. There is no opportunity to continue with electronics or systems and control. Progress and continuity of learning have been improved in modern foreign languages but there are still weaknesses in humanities.

32. The programme for pupils' personal and social education is good and planned well for the stages of development of pupils. Work is appropriately based upon the guidelines of the Health Promoting Schools initiative and lessons are enriched by the positive commitment of teachers to this area of pupils' work. The quality of careers education is very good and pupils are very well prepared to make the most of opportunities after their schooling. Careers guidance is very well managed and linked effectively to the work of the local careers advice service. All pupils have access to a period of work experience to match their individual aspirations for education, training or employment.

33. The provision of extra-curricular activities during lunchtimes and after school, is good and pupils appreciate this. Sporting activities include basketball, hockey, football, netball and vaulting. They are open to all, regardless of personal skills or standards. Musical groups include woodwind, brass, recorder and choirs. Other activities involve art and design, drama and ICT. There are flourishing Christian, Amnesty International and Youth Action, environmental and Young Enterprise groups. Pupils benefit from additional support in the full range of subjects outside normal lesson times. Pupils take part in a variety of outside visits, for example to theatres, concerts, art galleries, the House of Commons, university lectures and school field courses. A Year 7 weekend, a Year 8 camp, senior student management training and visits to France and Germany offer opportunities for residential experiences. An activities week is held each year and a visiting poet has been into school to hold workshops.

34. The school has established constructive links with its wider community, which greatly benefit the pupils. Good links exist with local employers who participate in the work experience programme. Visiting speakers, such as school nurses, magistrates, the police and visitors from a local disability unit, contribute to the personal, social and health education course. The Business Centre located at the school provides a valuable resource for the community. It supports local people obtaining qualifications and employment and provides a training resource for local companies.

35. The school works very closely with its partner primary schools. The successful 'Bridging Project' work in English, mathematics and science has improved the continuity and progression of learning between the primary and secondary schools. Activities, such as scientific investigations are planned, which are started by the pupils in Year 6 and developed further in Year 7. Liaison work has taken place in religious education, ICT and design and technology. The physical education and music departments provide extra-curricular activities for primary pupils. Year 6 pupils visit the school for a 'taster' day and their parents are invited to join their children in the afternoon. This careful preparation for transition builds the confidence of the Year 6 pupils before they arrive at Frederick Gent School. A number of key staff visit the primary schools to meet the pupils and to gather assessment and curriculum information. This enables them to support pupils effectively when they begin in Year 7. The school's involvement in the Pinxton Project has contributed to raising standards.

36. The school holds a parents' information evening on post-sixteen opportunities, attended by local schools and colleges. Pupils are also able to visit these institutions for 'taster' days. Pupils are well supported in making informed choices for their further education and training.

37. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all aspects of school life and have access to the same curriculum as their peers. There is some curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils. Some departments make use of extension activities and materials, but the identification of and provision for these pupils have yet to be developed fully and formally across the school. There is a need for greater awareness on the part of teachers of the needs of these pupils. Pupils with special needs also take full advantage of extra curricular opportunities provided, for example a wheelchair-bound pupil going to school camp, and others taking part in trips abroad.

38. The provision the school makes for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall. The spiritual development and multi-cultural development cross-curricular groups in the school have produced some good material and ideas for teachers but these have not been consistently implemented across the school.

39. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Awareness of the need to take opportunities for spiritual development is written into many departmental schemes of work but only a few have developed these well. English, religious education, history and geography offer many opportunities to discuss and consider issues of conscience within the curriculum. Other areas have yet to develop such opportunities. There are very few opportunities given to pupils for quiet contemplation and reflection within subjects. Assemblies are generally good experiences for the pupils. Many pupils are involved in planning and leading assemblies, and do so with skill and enthusiasm. The collective worship element in tutor time is still patchy and is still unsatisfactory.

40. The provision made for the moral development of pupils is very good. There is a clear code of conduct and teachers have high expectations of pupils. They are taught to understand right and wrong and these values are re-enforced through the pastoral system and by tutors across the school. The personal and social education programme, religious education and English give opportunities for discussion of moral and social issues. Staff provide very good role models for pupils and pupils are encouraged to discuss and evaluate their own behaviour. In ICT opportunities are given for pupils to discuss the implications for society of the introduction of more and more computerisation and also the moral dangers of open access to the Internet.

41. The social development provision for pupils is very good. There are some opportunities given formally for pupils to take responsibility especially within form groups. Pupils often plan and take assemblies. There is generally a high level of social awareness amongst pupils, and the Amnesty International Club, in particular, involves pupils in actively supporting those less fortunate than themselves. The school has a very good record of involvement in fund-raising activities. Pupils work together well in pairs and groups in many subjects. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities including music, physical education, and two Christian groups. There are also many visits to local places of interest, theatres and art galleries. Departmental representatives on the cross-curricular citizenship group raise awareness of citizenship issues.

42. The provision made by the school for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Religious education gives good opportunities to explore and discuss cultural issues from a religious perspective. In art and design, pupils examine art work from a variety of cultures. In Year 10 for example pupils study and research African carvings and their meanings. Foods from a variety of cultures are considered in food technology. Foreign travel, visits to the theatre and art galleries and visits to local places of worship all widen pupils' experience. In other areas of the curriculum opportunities are missed to make pupils aware of other cultures.

43. Since the last inspection the school has improved its provision for the spiritual development of pupils but it needs to incorporate more of the work of the spiritual development committee into its planning of assemblies and across all subjects of the curriculum. It still does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school now offers very good levels of support and guidance that contribute significantly to the progress pupils make in both their academic and their personal development. The improvements planned at the time of the last inspection are now well established, and the effectiveness of the guidance team has been enhanced considerably by a computerised information system. As a result, information about pupils' attendance, behaviour, attitudes to work and areas of academic attainment is better organised and promotes prompt action by heads of year groups and tutors.

45. Teachers know their pupils well and offer appropriate individual support during lessons and in the way work is marked. There is also effectively targeted support from classroom support staff. Assessment procedures remain generally good and information is used well by departments to develop and improve the curriculum.

46. Measures to promote good behaviour continue to be successful. Pupils express no concerns about bullying and have confidence in the school to deal with incidents effectively. A behaviour support teacher provides valuable support for pupils experiencing difficulty coping with school discipline. Attendance is monitored well and a system for telephoning home for unexplained absences provides the earliest indication of developing problems.

47. There are effective procedures for the welfare and safety of pupils. Reporting and recording procedures for health and safety site inspections and day-to-day matters are in place but the governing body is not yet sufficiently involved in this area of work. A recent independent audit of risk assessment in departments has established a basis for safe practice across the school. Arrangements for child protection are effectively led by a trained designated teacher to oversee practice in the school and there is an adequate knowledge of procedures amongst the staff.

48. Pupils with special educational needs are identified by their primary schools, with whom the school enjoys good relationships. The needs of these pupils are therefore well understood before they join the school and their transition to secondary education is eased. The school's policy for further identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs is well developed and implemented. After identification pupils are well supported and advised in their academic and personal development. Special needs staff support other staff in target setting for their pupils; subject teachers work with special needs staff in developing appropriate materials and implementing individual education plans. A variety of external agencies, with which the school enjoys good relationships, further supports its work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. There is an effective partnership with parents, which contributes positively towards pupils' learning and development. Parents generally feel the school performs well in many important areas of its work, for example, in the high expectations of the pupils to do their best, in the good progress they make, in good teaching, in helping pupils become mature and responsible. These positive views of parents are confirmed by the inspection findings.

50. Some parents would like to see improvement in homework, information about progress, involvement with parents and more extra-curricular activities. Concerns about homework, closeness of working with the school and extra-curricular activities were found to be unjustified. Homework is generally used well to support work in school and there is good provision for activities outside lessons. The school provides adequate opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning through a student study guide, organised meetings and the general accessibility of key staff. Concerns about information on pupil progress are partially justified.

51. Reports on pupils' progress are very detailed about attainment and progress, but humanity subjects are not always reported separately and ICT is not reported for Years 8, 10 and 11. Targets for improvement are discussed with parents at consultation evenings, but these targets are not always sufficiently focused on areas of learning and frequently place too heavy a focus on effort. The quality of information about the life of the school is now good and the prospectus is much improved, although it does not indicate national attainment figures against which to compare the performance of the school.

52. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in all stages of assessment and there is good attendance by parents at annual reviews. The pupils' study guide is a useful vehicle for day-to-day communication, and pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to make full use of them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The quality of leadership within the school is very good. The headteacher provides clear leadership for raising standards with a focus on improving standards of teaching and learning. Recent changes to the senior management team have strengthened the leadership of pupils' welfare. A strength of the leadership is the presence of members of the senior management team around the school. They are well known to pupils and pupils have confidence to approach them if they have any concerns.

54. The quality of curriculum and pastoral leadership is very good. Recent changes have resulted in improvements in the monitoring of pupils' academic and pastoral development. The responsibilities undertaken by individual teachers are mainly appropriate, but the workload of the teacher responsible for four National Curriculum subjects is excessive.

55. The learning support department is very well led and managed by a co-ordinator who has a clear vision for the development of the department's work, and who is growing in stature in the role. Lines of management and communication are clear. The position of the deputy headteacher as the special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that special educational needs retains a high profile at senior management level, while the learning support co-ordinator takes responsibility for the day-to-day operation of policy and practice. The recent appointment of a senior education care officer means that the team of education care officers has formal co-ordination, access to training, and are represented in management meetings. This structure has been accepted as a model of good practice by the local education authority.

56. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. Members of the governing body meet regularly. They are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory duties with the exception of providing sufficient time for teaching religious education at Key Stage 4, and in providing pupils with a daily act of collective worship.

57. Statutory requirements of the Code of Practice are met, with the exception of the annual report by governors to parents. The section of the report which deals with special educational needs does not cover the requirements in full. There are weaknesses in reporting the success of the policy, any changes to it and any consultations with the local education authority. There is a lack of information on how resources have been allocated to and amongst pupils with special educational needs, and the effectiveness of the policy with regard to identification, assessment, provision, monitoring and record-keeping, and the use of outside agencies.

58. The school's strategic plan appropriately identifies priorities for raising standards. One of the outstanding strengths of the school is the shared commitment by teachers to improvement. The timetable for implementing some of the priorities seems generous. In practice, the long time scales are used effectively to enable maximum participation by staff in policy development. When priorities have been agreed by the governing body teachers have the opportunity to join the working teams who have the responsibility for implementing initiatives. The allocation of resources to departments is determined by heads of department, who agree the formula and determine the proportion of funds to be used for specific initiatives. The priorities in the school's strategic plan for the period 2000-2002 include: the

development of learning using ICT; the implementation of Curriculum 2000; improving the transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3; maximising achievement in Year 11; improving the use of monitoring data in school self-review; developing teaching and learning; literacy and numeracy and accommodation.

59. One of the strengths of the school is the high quality of the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning. The analysis of test results is very good and this information is effectively used to monitor individual pupils' progress. In helping to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, the local education authority provides some very effective support and analysis.

60. The school is well placed to respond to the demands of performance management. The policy for performance management, agreed by the governing body, sensitively builds upon the good practice in monitoring and evaluation. The management expertise is in place to provide the school with the means to raise standards further.

61. Overall staffing levels are good. The school has, in most areas of the curriculum, sufficient staff to teach the National Curriculum. There is a good balance between experienced and less-experienced teachers within the school. The ratio of pupils to teachers is below average and the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom is low in comparison with other schools nationally. The reason for the low contact ratio is due to the number of timetabled meetings for teachers to meet in departments. This is an effective strategy for improving teaching and learning and for the time dedicated to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. There is also a very low level of staff absenteeism in the school. Overall staffing costs are close to the national average. The support for pupils with special educational needs is provided by a good blend of experienced and newly-qualified teachers supported by a team of eleven education care officers, who are required to conduct the monitoring of pupil performance and give detailed feedback to the learning support staff. There is an appropriate number of technicians to provide support for practical subjects. The number of administrative staff, including the librarian and premises staff is below the national average for a school of this size. The hard work and commitment of non-teaching staff makes a valuable contribution to the work of the school. Opportunities have been provided for non-teaching staff to receive professional development.

62. Staff development is well organised. The induction programme and the support provided are appreciated by teachers new to the school. Full records of in-service courses attended by staff are maintained and judgements about the quality of training are kept. Teachers attending courses are required to evaluate the impact of the training on changes within their teaching. In-service training is matched to meet the needs of the school, departments and individuals. Most staff have received training in the use of ICT to support learning in their subjects. Those who have received training are confident in the use of computers.

63. The expenditure per pupil is below the national average. Finances are managed effectively. The most recent auditor's report identified many issues and the governing body has accepted all of the recommendations it contained. The school has an appropriate fund to meet contingencies and unexpected expenditure. Specific grants, including those for special educational needs and the standards fund are spent effectively on the purposes for which they were intended and in line with the priorities for the school's development. The

school is very effective in applying the principles of best value in allocating resources to the school's priorities.

64. Overall, there is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Specialist teachers teach most lessons although there are some lessons in mathematics, history and design and technology taught by non-specialist teachers. These teachers are well supported by mentors and there is not an adverse effect on standards. An imbalance between male and female teachers allocated to Key Stage 3 physical education, creates difficulties in the delivery of the curriculum in settings or groupings best suited to meet pupil needs. Good professional development underpins the work of the school, as for example, in relation to the development of numeracy throughout the school. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of new staff, including newly qualified teachers, who receive very good formal and informal support, for example, from other staff acting as mentors. Students, who are training to be teachers, benefit well from the school's support. For students with special educational needs, specialist staff are appropriately qualified and well deployed. Support staff are well managed and used effectively, and there are good training opportunities. The quality and performance of administration, clerical, technical and library staff provides good support for the efficient day-to-day running of the school.

65. Since the last inspection new music and ICT areas have been provided and facilities enlarged for the library. Rooms for mathematics teaching are now mainly grouped together. The continued deterioration of the school buildings is a major cause for concern. The school is overcrowded. Corridors are narrow and there are restrictions, within the main building, on through-movement by pupils. External routes and individual, external classroom entrances are frequently used. Attempts have been made to improve the decoration and appearance of the interior of the buildings, but the external condition of pathways and grassed areas, particularly after wet weather, along with the effects of current major building work, destroy attempts at cleanliness of the floors within each building. Rotting fascia and window frames, and leaking flat roofs, without replacement, or repair, do not allow cost-effective external or internal decoration. The lack of recent, internal decoration, although countered in many areas by attractive wall display, creates a depressing atmosphere for pupils, teachers and caretaking staff. Major leaks in the heating system have caused concerns three times in the last twelve months. The size and suitability of many teaching areas including science, special needs, history and technology design areas is unsatisfactory. The size of the main staff room and dining area for pupils are too small for a school of this size. Improvements to the main entrance to the school, for both pupils and cars, and the development of the car park are currently being undertaken, along with the building of a new classroom block, and the replacement of wall panels on one side of a double storey classroom block.

66. The quantity, range and quality of resources to support teaching and learning are adequate in most departments. The percentage of school expenditure on learning resources is below average when compared to other schools. Since the last inspection extra resources have been placed in the mathematics department with the purchase of graphical calculators, and a substantial investment in ICT. The ratio of computers does not match the national average but the machines have improved, in quality and quantity. The school has developed an acknowledged expertise in ICT, and machines are developed and built in house by technical staff who have made a significant contribution to the overall quality of hardware in the school. Connections to the Internet allow pupils to do individual research. Although the use of a computer area can be reserved, there is a shortfall of computers within the work areas for design and technology, where computer aided manufacturing equipment is required, in science, for data logging, and of computer software in modern foreign languages. There is a lack of overhead projectors, blackout facilities and a wide range of film, artefacts display material, and a fieldwork budget to support learning in the humanities area. Recent injections of funding have been put into the purchase of 'SuccessMaker' and good quality, art

history books. There is a lack of textbooks in mathematics and in history in Year 9, and a shortage of a wide range of reading materials in the modern foreign languages and the special needs areas. The school makes very good use of its limited resources. Although the library has been improved since the last inspection, its size is inadequate for the current number of pupils and its projected future use. It is currently being developed as a resource centre, providing library and ICT facilities, with connection to the Internet, and also acting as a classroom, a photocopying area, for all staff and pupils, and a careers information base, using both the computer and hard copy. The limited space has necessitated high-rise shelving for the stock of books. The area is very efficiently organised by dedicated librarians who are currently entering the existing stock onto a database to ensure maximum stock control. Currently, the stock of fiction is low. Non-fiction books are well managed and are easily identified using the school index system. There is a collection of video-tapes and daily newspapers to support pupils' independent research and learning. The external entrance for pupils means that mud is being regularly trodden into the room and staff are constantly having to combat dust settlement on shelving and books.

67. Since the last inspection the school has made some progress in improving resources and in improving the accommodation. Much remains to be done. Overall the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Improve the accommodation for the library.
(Paragraph 66)
- (2) Improve the breadth and balance of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 by:
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to follow courses leading to accreditation which meet pupils' needs;
 - enabling pupils to gain GCSE examination success in ICT, drama, physical education and religious education.(Paragraph 31)
- (3) For the governors to work with the local education authority to improve the quality of accommodation by:
 - improving the size of some teaching areas;
 - seeking improvements to reduce the amount of dirt and mud entering buildings.(Paragraph 65)

In addition the governing body may wish to include the following less important issues for consideration within the action plan:

- ensure that the annual report by governors to parents fulfils all the requirements of the Code of Practice (paragraph 57);
- develop a formal system by which curriculum areas can feed back to the learning support department on how effective the intensive support has been in raising levels of performance (paragraph 27);
- develop systems to identify and provide for gifted and talented pupils across the school (paragraph 37).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	146
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0.7	25.3	54.8	19.2	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	861
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	123

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	39
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	184

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.4	School data	0.7
National comparative data	5.9	National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	83	87	170

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	53	54
	Girls	54	54	55
	Total	88	107	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (53)	63 (64)	64 (55)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (21)	36 (32)	35 (19)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	47	51
	Girls	64	64	59
	Total	107	111	110
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (52)	65 (66)	65 (67)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (22)	38 (45)	44 (41)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	60	66	126

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	19	60	60
	Girls	39	66	66
	Total	58	126	126
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (57)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	38

per pupil	National	38.4
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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	4
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	853
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	47	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	247

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	22.6

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 829 725
Total expenditure	1 800 422
Expenditure per pupil	2 237
Balance brought forward from previous year	25 487
Balance carried forward to next year	54 791

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	861
Number of questionnaires returned	439

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	55	8	6	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	53	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	58	12	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	53	16	5	2
The teaching is good.	33	57	5	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	49	15	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	39	8	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	47	16	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	31	52	7	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	54	5	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	47	15	4	11

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

ENGLISH

69. Results of tests taken in 2000 by pupils aged fourteen were below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or better was lower than in mathematics and science. The trend of improvement has been below the national trend. Girls achieved more highly than boys by a margin similar to the national difference. At GCSE, the proportion gaining grades A*-C was below average in English and well below in English literature. In both subjects, the proportion gaining grades A*-G was above national figures, particularly in English literature where the proportion of pupils entered was well above national average. Results in English were above the average attainment of students in other subjects for which they were entered. Girls achieved more highly than boys reflecting the national difference. Results at GCSE were below those of earlier years but were better than reasonable expectation based upon assessed levels of ability when these pupils entered the school, particularly for those whose reading skills were well below average.

70. Standards of work seen of pupils aged fourteen are below average, mainly because of the nature and frequency of weaknesses in writing. Pupils develop good listening skills. They are attentive to teachers and usually to each other, although some exceptions were noted particularly in Year 8. Pupils speak clearly and with growing confidence both when giving short answers and when required to speak at greater length. Although some are reluctant to read aloud, most read accurately though only a minority demonstrate good understanding. Higher-attaining pupils can make clear judgements about what they read. They can recognise the implication of important details and recognise how writers gain their effects. The majority, who are middle- and lower-attaining pupils, are usually much more dependent upon the guidance of teachers to gain an understanding of more than the main sense. At the age of fourteen, the unusually high number of pupils who entered the school with weak reading skills have made considerable progress, because of the encouragement received in lessons and the very good quality of the specialist help they receive. Skills of writing have also improved and most pupils are able to write in ways that are appropriate to a variety of purposes and audiences. Many examples were seen of creative writing of good quality, especially in verse. The quality of written work of almost all pupils, including many with otherwise good writing skills, is reduced by errors in the spelling of words in everyday use and failures to write in sentences and satisfactory paragraphs. Pupils are competent in the use of computers for word processing and produce attractive designs, often using both text and illustrations for cover sheets for extended topics. Their successes increase their pride in their English work and develop further their skills in ICT. Although drama is not taught as a separate subject, pupils gain experience of performance, for example in Year 9 when exploring the meaning of Macbeth's thoughts after the murder of Duncan and how they might be communicated effectively to an audience. In some lessons, they gain in skills and understanding from opportunities for role play and improvisation as they explore how people react to experiences described in literature or newspapers.

71. At the age of sixteen, pupils demonstrate a similar balance of skills. They listen attentively to teachers and to each other. At all levels of attainment, they are now confident in working together in groups to gain understanding or to reach a shared decision. They draw upon wider vocabularies in both speech and writing and most understand how they can gain the interest and understanding of those who hear or read their work. Members of a Year 10 class representing a wide range of personalities and levels of attainment all contributed to a sometimes heated debate on whether or not land used by the school should be sold for commercial use. In this and other lessons involving older pupils, good progress was made

because of the confidence that pupils have developed in themselves, their teachers and each other, especially when working in collaboration. Pupils read with greater confidence and with satisfactory understanding at least of the main sense. Many, however, continue to depend upon the guidance of teachers to recognise what is implied. The quality of writing is improved by more ambitious use of vocabulary and greater variety of expression. It is reduced by the persistence of spelling mistakes, particularly confusion of words with similar sounds, single or double letters and mistakes reflecting features of local speech. Other common weaknesses, even, sometimes, in the work of otherwise talented writers, concern faulty construction of sentences and paragraphs.

72. Standards of literacy are significantly below average when pupils enter the school. The very high proportion gaining grades at GCSE indicates that considerable improvement is made. This results mainly from the work of the English and special needs departments with assistance from most subjects of the curriculum so that pupils' skills in reading and writing improve. There is no whole school policy to offer shape and balance to these contributions but some strengths have resulted from the increasing understanding that teachers have of the literacy hour now provided in primary schools and a recognition of the need to build upon the progress made. In all subjects, teachers ensure that pupils understand, use and correctly spell the words they need to know in their lessons. Pupils are encouraged to write for a wide range of purposes with frequent opportunities for writing lengthy pieces in most subjects, though not in geography or history. Opportunities for creative writing in both verse and prose are provided in English, modern languages, religious education and science. Pupils in a Year 11 class applauded the reading by a teacher of Phyllis McCormack's poem 'A Crabbit Old Woman' which moved them emotionally and demonstrated to them the power of language. Such experiences are rare outside English and in only a few subjects are pupils themselves asked to read aloud. It is only in a minority of subjects that pupils are able to develop language skills through participation in discussion. Good practice is insufficiently established across all subjects so that pupils learn to write with greater accuracy, improve the organisation of longer pieces of writing and become more able to recognise the implications of their reading.

73. In English, pupils make good progress from generally below average levels of attainment when they enter the school to standards which match the national average by the time they leave. This represents a good level of achievement. It happens because teachers have the skill and determination to help pupils at all levels of attainment to achieve their potential. Particularly in Year 8, the attention-seeking behaviour of a small minority occasionally reduces the effectiveness of teaching and their own learning and that of their class-mates. Pupils become more strongly motivated as they move through the school, because they gain in confidence and know that their achievements are valued. Positive attitudes, especially among older pupils, develop from the good relationships they have with each other and with their teachers. The current Year 7 is notably enthusiastic, well-behaved and making good progress with some evidence of building well upon skills developed in their primary schools. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, sometimes exceptionally so, because their needs are clearly identified and well provided for by teachers within the classrooms often with help of good quality from learning support assistants. Withdrawal from lessons for specialist help when needed is provided for pupils of all ages. It is organised so that it is effective with minimum effects upon progress in the subjects from which pupils are occasionally withdrawn.

74. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages and often very good. It is never less than satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and never less than good in years 10 and 11. Teachers plan lessons carefully, often with several related tasks to be completed within testing time limits. This provides pupils with a variety of activities, so that they more easily sustain good levels of interest and concentration and make efficient use of the time available. Teachers link their lessons clearly to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance, and explain tasks clearly so that pupils can begin confidently. They make good use of questions, both to confirm that pupils understand and to develop that understanding further. Since the previous report, pupils have gained from being encouraged to spend more time thinking and exploring for themselves rather than mainly hearing the explanations offered by teachers. Almost all pupils respond positively to the high expectations that teachers have of their effort, behaviour and attainment. Also they respond well to the enthusiasms of teachers for aspects of language and literature so that, for example, potentially unexciting spelling tests become enjoyable when linked to popular television programmes. The department is considering how it might contribute to the development of whole school methods of improving the accuracy of spelling and other features of pupils' writing. The quality of both teaching and learning are restricted when lessons take place in the library. When pupils have library lessons, the space is cramped and supervision is restricted by high, old-fashioned shelving. Pupils' learning is also adversely affected by the use of the library as a print room and as a thoroughfare by other teachers and pupils during the time they are being taught. The previous report commented upon the high quality of teachers' assessment of pupils' written work. Teachers identify the strengths of pupils' writing and the means of further improvement, sometimes in considerable detail, but not all marking and assessment are of this quality.

75. The work of the department benefits from a strong sense of shared aims and aspirations. Leadership is energetic, purposeful and determined to meet the needs of all pupils. The department has the determination and the capacity to raise pupils' standards of attainment. The curriculum has good breadth, balance and relevance to the needs of pupils. Units of work reflect the department's view of English as an integrated subject, covering skills of language, literature, media studies and drama, which both makes effective use of and extends pupils' skills in ICT. The time available for teaching the subject is below the national average.

MATHEMATICS

76. In 2000, the performance of pupils in national tests at the age of fourteen was broadly in line with the national average when compared to all schools and also when compared to schools in similar contexts. Progress through the key stage was good, taking account of attainment on entry. The performance of pupils in mathematics was not as good as in science but better than in English. During the period 1998-2000 pupils' results fell below the national average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Since 1998, the trend in results, of both boys and girls, is below but parallel to the national trend. In 2000, teacher assessments were close to the national average.

77. In the 2000 GCSE mathematics examinations results were well below national averages. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-G was very close to the national percentage. Pupils' performance in mathematics was not as good as either English or science, and was only better than humanities and English literature. Year 2000 results had been predicted, because of prior attainment, to be lower than the improved results in the subject, since the previous inspection. Girls performed better than boys.

78. During this inspection, the standards of work seen in lessons, and in a scrutiny of work, are average for pupils at the age of fourteen, and are in line with national expectations.

Pupils have made good progress, because they have improved on their attainment on entry to the school. Throughout Year 9 very good teaching has an impact on pupil learning. Year 9 pupils competently use computer software, and having written procedures can generate simple shapes. Higher-attaining pupils extend their work to create polygons and stars. In an investigation, pupils roll dice to confirm their understanding of probability, and why certain totals occur more frequently than others. Lower-attaining pupils, each enacting a highest or lowest temperature for places in the world, increase their understanding of positive and negative numbers as they position for places in a class line. Some of these pupils have slow reaction when deciding whether a number called out by their friends is higher or lower than the one held on paper in their hand. Year 8 pupils, having compared the length of time for model trains to travel over a length of track, draw line graphs to determine and compare speeds. The choice of time scale and the accuracy of their time measurements, presented difficulties for a number of pupils in this mixed ability group. In another group, higher attaining pupils can correctly describe and perform translations on a co-ordinate grid. Year 7 pupils, studying averages, understand the difference between mean and median, and are able to determine both from a group of numbers. Other pupils, using their understanding of number machines to determine output, use inverse operations to determine the input of simple numbers. Pupils with special educational needs, with the support of staff, make mainly good progress.

79. Standards of work seen during this inspection are in line with national standards for pupils aged sixteen. Year 11, middle-attaining pupils, in their revision for forthcoming examinations, are confident when factorising simple algebraic expressions. They understand the differences between linear and quadratic equations, and can apply the rules of negative numbers in their workings. Lower-attaining pupils are able to write probability as a fraction, and know that the total outcomes add up to 1. Year 10 pupils build upon their previous knowledge of transformation. Having plotted their own shape, transformed the shape, and copied the first and final image on a fresh axis, they challenge their partner to successfully identify the transformation. Lower-attaining pupils are able to plot co-ordinates in four quadrants, and can graph the equations of simple algebraic formula. They are able to successfully link this knowledge with their knowledge of transformation. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

80. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of teaching was good and was never less than satisfactory. In one third of the lessons seen, all in Year 9, the quality of teaching is very good. Throughout Year 9 very good teaching has an impact on learning. In Years 10 and 11 teaching was never less than good and was on occasion, in Year 10, very good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Within their specialist area, mathematics teachers contribute to the development, not only of numeracy but of ICT and literacy skills. Teachers make an impact on learning when they set precise objectives at the beginning of lessons and discuss outcomes in a plenary. This did not occur in every lesson. The planning of activities within lessons is good and is based mainly on the national numeracy strategy framework. Levels of work are mainly appropriate for pupils in mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3, however, some difficulties arose when teacher expectations for a group of Year 8 pupils were set too high. In the best teaching, teachers' enthusiasm and liking for the subject is infectious, and pupils learn quickly, as for example in Year 9 when studying probability, using a race game, or developing an understanding of negative numbers. Time management is good and each lesson contains a variety of activities. The quality of marking is very good. Teacher comments are useful to pupils, and National Curriculum levels are regularly indicated on pieces of work. These support pupils' knowledge of their own learning. Teachers make good use of homework, to reinforce and extend learning. For example in Year 8, in their study of rotation, pupils described their observation of the movement of stars the previous evening. Support staff, when attached to specific pupils, and initial teacher training students, give valuable support to

pupils.

81. Overall, pupils' attitudes are good in both key stages. Attitudes are never less than satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, attitudes are never less than good and, are on occasion, very good in Year 10. Relationships between pupils are mainly good, and are good with their teachers and support staff. Behaviour is good, and the need for raised teacher voices is infrequent in the majority of lessons. On a rare occasion in Year 7, the outbursts and behaviour of one pupil made unwanted demands on support staff and teacher and unsettled other pupils. For the most part, pupils are attentive to the teacher and keep to task. They work co-operatively when sharing text, apparatus or computers. Nearly all pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and usually respond positively to teacher comments related to their work.

82. The leadership of the department by the head of department is very good, as is the efficient delegation of management responsibilities amongst the department. The monitoring and evaluation of the department and teaching are good. Targets set for pupils should be made more precise. Self-evaluation of the department includes questionnaires to random pupils. There are strong links with feeder schools. The very wide range of ability, particularly in some Year 8 classes and the gender seating of pupils require further investigation. Resources are adequate but the sharing of texts is necessary in many classes. Classroom and corridor displays are attractive, are of a high standard and are relevant. When building work within the departmental area is completed the department should closely audit its resources and their storage areas. Since the last inspection the school has successfully tackled nearly all the issues raised in relation to accommodation, teaching, the curriculum, management and resources. The format of lessons is now following the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, to have a greater impact on pupils' progress, there should be a common approach by all teachers. The Millennium Project has raised the profile of the department throughout the school. After the last inspection, new teachers were recruited to make the department all specialist, but recruitment problems have meant that this could not be maintained during the current year. The mentoring and pairing of newly qualified teachers and non-specialists by specialist members of the department is very good and could be further developed if some very good practices were shared throughout the whole department. In efforts to improve the attainment of Year 11 pupils, since the last inspection, lunchtime subject clinics are held. There is now a good use of investigative work and ICT, especially in Key Stage 3, but the amount of problem solving work could still be increased.

SCIENCE

83. The results of the national tests taken by Year 9 pupils have steadily improved over the last three years. In 2000, the results were just above the national average for all schools and well above the average for similar schools. Boys and girls performed equally well. The results were higher than those in mathematics and English. In GCSE in 2000, the percentage of A*-C grades was above the national average for all schools and well above the national average for similar schools. The proportions of the year group entered for GCSE and attaining at least a G grade were both above the national average. Girls performed better than boys compared with their respective national averages. The trend in

results reflects the pupils' previous performance in the Year 9 tests, and is one of steady improvement. Science was one of the higher-achieving subjects in the school.

84. Pupils make very good progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 and their achievement is very good. They begin Year 7 with attainment below the national average, but at the age of fourteen, standards of work seen are average and are consistent with the results of the national tests. Pupils have a good understanding of the processes involved in a scientific investigation, including the concept of 'fair test'. They have good planning skills and can record experimental observations and measurements accurately. Year 9 pupils can use scientific concepts to explain everyday phenomena. For example, most pupils can use kinetic theory to explain melting and boiling, or the selective absorption of nutrients in the digestive system. Lower attaining pupils can recall their knowledge, but their ability to apply it in new situations is less well developed.

85. Pupils make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 in their knowledge and understanding of science and in their skills. At the age of sixteen, the standards of work seen are above the national average and their experimental and investigative skills are good. This is consistent with the results in GCSE examinations. High-attaining pupils have very good investigative skills. Average-attaining pupils have very good planning and observation skills but their ability to analyse and evaluate their results is weaker and needs further development. The planning and measurement skills of lower-attaining pupils are significantly better than their knowledge of scientific facts. They display good attention to accuracy. Carefully structured teaching enables all pupils to develop their understanding of scientific concepts. Year 11 pupils are able to extend their application of the kinetic theory to an explanation of the cooling curve of a solid, having first designed and carried out the investigation to produce the cooling curve. Pupils have an understanding of the contribution science makes to society, and for example, can discuss the principles of cloning and genetic engineering, the conservation of energy and alternative energy sources and of the contribution science makes to society.

86. Literacy skills are weak on entry to the school but there is good development of literacy in science with an emphasis on the correct use and spelling of scientific terminology. A wide range of writing styles is used. Pupils' poems on the rock cycle are displayed in one laboratory. Numeracy skills are generally sound, although low-attaining pupils have weak graphical skills, particularly when working out the scales of graphs. Numeracy is well developed in science. Pupils are competent in using computers to collect and analyse data. ICT is well used in the development of science skills.

87. Pupils with special educational needs progress at the same rate as the other pupils, due to good support from teachers and support assistants. The developing use of writing frames helps pupils to structure their work. More enrichment in different types of science activities outside the syllabus and more work involving problem solving and the application of knowledge to new situations would provide more challenge for the higher attaining pupils.

88. The very good progress and achievement is due to good teaching which promotes good learning. Overall, teaching is good in Years 7 – 9. About one third of the lessons seen were good and one third was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In Years 10 and 11 all the lessons seen were good or better with nearly three-quarters very good. A strength of the teaching is the very good relationships between the teachers and the pupils, which engender very positive attitudes and interest in science. Teachers manage their classes very well and insist on high standards of behaviour. Good subject knowledge and understanding is evident, even when teachers are not teaching their own science specialism. Lessons are planned well and the aims are made clear to the pupils, which helps to focus their learning. Imaginative homework exercises are used to reinforce classwork. The

teaching is structured carefully in small steps and pupils are given a great deal of help in organising their written work and in the development of study and revision skills. These strengths were seen in a Year 9 lesson on neutralisation. The teacher was very aware of the different needs of the pupils, supporting the low attainers and challenging the thinking of the higher attainers. The pace of the lesson was focused and directed by the teachers, who ensured pupils worked hard. At the end of the lesson good use was made of a question and answer review of what pupils had learnt. Pupils' learning was very good. They had a clear understanding of the difference between acids and alkalis and what happens when they are reacted together.

89. The pupils make better progress when working individually or in small groups, when the teacher is able to spend more time talking to individuals. The teachers' expectations are generally appropriately high but in some lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, teachers do not match resources and activities well enough to meet the learning needs of the higher-attaining pupils. When this is done well, as in a Year 10 lesson on the relationship between pressure and force, activities differ according to the pupils' attainment levels. The class worked through several examples together, step by step, then used a worksheet with questions of graduated difficulty. Low attaining pupils gained confidence as they practised questions involving the direct use of the relationship formula and high attaining pupils were challenged by the questions involving the application of the pressure – force relationship, and made to think about their work. The teacher had high expectations of the pupils and ensured they all worked at a productive pace. Pupils were very well motivated, took responsibility for their own learning and made very good progress. In some lessons however, tasks are the same for pupils of all attainment levels so that they are not all challenged sufficiently and, in consequence, make less progress. Written work is marked regularly but comments are not specific enough to show the pupils how to improve their work.

90. The pupils enjoy science and the teaching motivates and captures the pupils' interest. Pupils collaborate well with each other in practical work. They behave well, have good listening skills, sustain concentration and come to lessons prepared to work. However, some pupils lack confidence in their own ability and do not readily volunteer answers to questions posed by the teacher, which has a negative impact on their progress.

91. The department is very well led and managed. There is a good strategic plan with appropriate targets for improving standards. The monitoring of teaching in the department needs to be more rigorous in order to share good practice and provide all pupils with a more consistent learning experience. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, as is the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning. Traveller children are provided with workbooks, which they complete and return for marking, when they are not able to attend the school. Resources are adequate and well organised by the laboratory technicians, who provide valuable support to the science teaching. The science accommodation is in two separate buildings, which leads to inefficiencies in the use of resources and technician time. The preparation areas are very cramped with inadequate storage space. The laboratories are badly in need of refurbishment and provide a poor learning environment.

92. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards in public tests and examinations have shown steady improvement. There has been an overall improvement in teaching and learning. Pupils make very good progress throughout the age range. Pupils' independent learning skills and the use of ICT have been developed and the provision of textbooks increased. The department has the capacity to improve further, because of thoughtful leadership, together with a very positive team spirit and commitment to raising achievement. The science staff are extremely dedicated and hard working and give freely of their own time to give extra help to pupils in science.

ART AND DESIGN

93. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was in line with the national average, and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G was above the national average. Girls performed better than boys. This is a fall from the standards in 1998 and 1999 but is in line with the pupils' performance across all other subjects.

94. The standards of work of pupils by the age of fourteen match national averages. By the age of fourteen pupils use sketchbooks to collect images, experiment with techniques and develop their ideas. For example, Year 9 pupils record information about a local artist working in mosaics and develop work influenced by his approach. They have some understanding of the purposes of art and design and, with increasing technical skills, they can select and manipulate images for their own purposes. For example, Year 9 pupils study public art and design from ancient times to the present day. They devise and use questionnaires to gauge the views of friends and families towards public contemporary art and design. They develop their own large-scale collaborative pieces and identify suitable places to install them. In her sketchbook, one pupil identifies artwork previously produced by the school that is displayed in a local shopping centre. Lower-attaining pupils present images and information about artists and their work without interpretation or evidence of understanding.

95. By the age of sixteen, all pupils can sustain study over an extended period. The use of sketchbooks is well established as a valuable tool to develop their ideas and to relate their own work to artists' work. For example, a pupil makes studies of Picasso's 'Weeping Woman' in a variety of media and develops designs for a textile piece, successfully relating factual information about Picasso, his personal relationships and the Spanish Civil War to her own work. Because pupils record specialist language and definitions in sketchbooks, even lower-attaining pupils are able to describe the elements of the work using appropriate, specialist language. For example, words such as rhythm, movement, balance and proportion are used in pupils' written responses to artist's work. They can describe the elements of a piece of work, what they think it is about and how it makes them feel.

96. Good progress is made in the acquisition of drawing skills over Key Stage 3 because it is systematically taught and regularly revisited. From line drawing with rudimentary tone in Year 7, pupils develop more sophisticated drawing techniques with line, tone, texture, varied mark making, and techniques such as resist. Because they are regularly asked to respond to the works of artists, pupils are able to talk and write about it with increasing confidence. From simple description and response, pupils demonstrate in their written work a fuller understanding of who makes art and design and for what purposes, including contemporary artists and craftspeople. Pupils acquire skills and techniques in a sufficient range of media and techniques. Pupils continue to make good progress during Key Stage 4 both technically and in their knowledge and understanding of art and design. They can use ICT to access information about artists and their work from the Internet. Higher-attaining pupils are able to synthesise information and incorporate it in their response to images, both written and visual. Lower-attaining pupils use printouts from gallery websites to compile information but are less able to analyse it and use it effectively to develop their own work. Across both key stages, pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make equally good progress. Girls' progress is better than boys during Years 10 and 11, because of girls' commitment to their personal research and attention to the presentation of their work.

97. Teaching is consistently good in all years and is a strength of the department. In one Year 7 lesson seen it was very good and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers' subject knowledge and varied expertise results in well-planned work, which builds on pupils'

previous learning. Lessons are always well resourced and teachers use demonstrations, good quality reproductions and well-chosen examples of work, including their own, to teach new skills and stimulate pupils' creativity. In a Year 10 lesson a teacher uses his own degree course sketchbook to show how pupils can bring their varied interests and backgrounds into a project based around 'Myself'. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic about their work and sustain their effort. They are well behaved and relationships are good between pupils and teachers and with each other. Pupils are taught specialist language, which they use in lessons, and can recall relevant artists' names. Lesson tasks are clearly defined and often displayed, so that pupils know what they must achieve in a given time. This produces well-paced lessons and pupils make good use of the available time. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' work is over-prescribed and the research and development is structured in a set pattern. A more open approach would especially encourage higher-attaining pupils to develop an individual style earlier.

98. The leadership and management of the department are very good. It is a strength of the department. In the short time the department head has been in post, every aspect of curricular planning has been attended to and he has built a strong, supportive team of teachers. However, on-going assessment and the recording of pupils' attainment in years 7 to 9 is insufficiently developed and should reflect the latest requirements for the end of the key stage. The inadequacies of the accommodation are seriously limiting the range and scale of work that pupils can attempt, particularly in three dimensions. Useful storage areas have leaking roofs that render them unusable. The range of specialisms that are represented amongst the art and design staff means that the department is well placed to offer a greater range of endorsed specialist courses at GCSE, enhancing curricular provision for the 80 per cent of pupils who study art and design in years 10 and 11.

99. Good progress has been made since the time of the last inspection. The teaching of drawing has improved and is well planned, with carefully structured lessons. Imaginative planning has enabled ICT requirements to be delivered in both key stages and is becoming a powerful means of accessing good quality images and information. However, pupils are not yet using it sufficiently to generate their own images and amend, modify and manipulate them. Pupils' use of sketchbooks is now firmly embedded in department practice in both key stages and is making a positive contribution to the development and quality of their work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

100. GCSE results in 2000 were well above average. For all technology subjects, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades was above the national average. All pupils entered gained at least a GCSE grade G. This is an improvement on the already high standards reported at the last inspection. When considered individually, the results for each subject within the curriculum area show that food technology and graphic products courses achieve well above average results and this has been a consistent pattern in recent years. Resistant materials results have risen to be a little over the national average, a considerable improvement on 1999 figures. Girls achieve significantly better results than boys, well above

average. Boys results are at the national average. All pupils achieve better results in technology than in many other subjects.

101. In work seen, standards for pupils at the age of fourteen are above average. Pupils are introduced to a good design methodology in Year 7 and begin to develop good skills of gathering and analysing information in support of a project. For example, Year 7 pupils use the stimulus of a visit to a theme park as a starting point for an 'amusements' project. From this, pupils are able to generate a variety of ideas leading to a product suitable for sale in a souvenir shop. Pupils are able to combine research skills with good technical knowledge and practical skills. Pupils in a Year 8 resistant materials group, for example, were confidently using a range of hand and machine tools to make a pick-up device based on a "lazy tongs" mechanism. All pupils had conducted research into mechanisms, produced a range of ideas, made choices and had used modelling techniques to test their idea. Pupils develop good graphic skills. Higher attaining pupils are able to use good 2 and 3 dimensional drawings to express their ideas. For example, Year 8 pupils using levers and linkages to make moving figures were able to show clearly through their drawings how the movement would take place. Pupils make good use of ICT skills to generate images, process text and improve the presentation of work and, in pupil folders, there is a good balance between computer work and hand-produced graphics. One lower-attaining pupil in a Year 8 graphics group for example, had used the Internet to download images for his work on pop-up books, scanned them into a school computer and used them in conjunction with hand drawn work. Pupils with special needs are able to give good responses to all the stages of designing and making because of the structured way in which design projects are presented to them.

102. Attainment for pupils aged sixteen is above average. Higher-attaining pupils are able to compile detailed comprehensive design folders with a combination of clear, hand-drawn and computer-generated techniques. For example, one pupil in a Year 11 food technology lesson had an extensive folder containing good research and analysis skills, produced to a high standard almost entirely by computer. Pupils collect and use information well. They make good use of questionnaires, write letters to relevant organisations and use the information appropriately in support of their projects. Pupils undertake individual and challenging projects which make them think but which give them a reasonable expectation of successful completion. For example, pupils in a Year 11 resistant materials group had made attractive educational toys for young children to a high standard and were engaged in drafting thorough evaluations of their work. They had gained valuable insights into the needs of their target group through detailed research. Whilst lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, produce less sophisticated and detailed work they are enabled by the clear course structure to make an appropriate response to all the assessment criteria. For example, a lower-attaining pupil in a Year 11 graphics group had an untidy folder but had covered all the key assessment areas and created a well-made project on Halloween masks. Standards of modelling skills in graphic products, and construction skills in resistant materials, are good.

103. Achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils make clear progress in relation to their level of ability on entry to the school. For example, pupils in Year 7 use structured writing and drawing frames to guide their work to design souvenirs for an amusement park but by the end of the key stage the majority are able to assemble design folders with greater independence and individuality. Pupils in a Year 9 food technology lesson, for example, were able to sequence their work and produce a detailed plan of action including 'built-in' quality control and health and safety checks. The folder of one Year 8 Traveller pupil indicated that, although he was able to produce some imaginative graphic, work there were significant gaps in the continuity of his work due to intermittent attendance. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils are able to build on earlier experiences to extend practical skills. They work with a greater degree of independence when conducting research and increasing maturity in the

care they exercise in their work. Pupils with special needs receive good assistance and make progress in line with their peers. For example, with the help of a learning support assistant, one Year 11 pupil was able to draw a chart to an acceptable standard and begin to use it to evaluate his work.

104. Pupils enjoy work in technology areas and this contributes to the mainly positive attitudes seen during the inspection. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils co-operate well with teachers and with each other. In a Year 8 resistant materials group, for example, pupils shared equipment willingly and were prepared to help each other with practical tasks. Pupils readily consult teachers and act upon the advice they receive. They listen attentively when required and concentrate well on practical work.

105. Teaching in all years is good. Three quarters of lessons seen were good, the remainder satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers work hard to establish and maintain good relationships with pupils. Lessons are well planned and pupils are given clear targets and explanations, which enable them to understand what is expected of them. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to extend pupils' answers and ensure that learning has taken place. Teachers actively support individual pupils and skilfully manage a wide range of practical activities. Where teaching is only satisfactory the lesson structure does not provide sufficient opportunity to review and consolidate learning or the work does not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. Teachers are aware of the special needs of those pupils with individual education plans and give appropriate support during lessons. The quality of teaching is monitored by the head of department and the practice of mutual lesson observations has been valuable in identifying and sharing good practice. The willingness of teachers to work across all the material areas provides good role models for pupils and helps to break down the stereotypical images of what boys and girls are able to do. The amount of technician time is insufficient to allow effective deployment across all technology areas.

106. Very good leadership and management of the curriculum area has led to the development of a good team spirit and a shared commitment to develop the subject. The weekly bulletin and timetabled meeting are both effective in communicating information and in supporting common procedures. Schemes of work are constantly reviewed and matched to national curriculum requirements. The broad and balanced curriculum in years 7 to 9 includes modules on control technology and electronics but there is no opportunity for pupils to continue with this work during Years 10 and 11. At present pupils do not have the opportunity to work with computer-aided manufacturing equipment although it is intended to remedy this through the school's valuable co-operation with a local technology college. The recent introduction of computer-aided design software is beginning to improve the quality of design presentation. Detailed assessment procedures lead to the compilation of comprehensive profiles for each pupil. National curriculum levels are not used in daily assessment and pupils do not know what level they are working at. High standards of teaching and learning are maintained despite the poor condition of accommodation for the subject. Because of many changes over the years, the grouping of rooms is now inconvenient and makes efficient management difficult. Rooms are poorly maintained, in need of decoration and, despite the best efforts of staff in creating colourful displays, do not provide a stimulating environment for pupils. This is a particular problem in food technology and makes it difficult for teachers to impress upon pupils the need for hygiene when preparing food. All areas are dirty.

107. Since the last inspection; GCSE results have improved and the department now has a detailed development plan. The school has not made sufficient progress with the introduction of computer aided manufacturing equipment. In all other respects the high standards noted in the last report have been maintained.

HUMANITIES

108. The school provides history, geography and religious education through humanities courses in both key stages. The concern raised in the last inspection report relating to the organisation of the course with major blocks of teaching in a subject in Key Stage 3 resulting in long breaks in continuity in each subject has been reviewed by the department. No action has been taken except to increase the time provided for religious education in Year 9. Pupils' progress is at least satisfactory in all three subjects by the end of Key Stage 3 and in geography and religious education it is good. There is, however, a lack of continuity in the history module currently being taught in the humanities GCSE course, with its high social history content not building well on the Key Stage 3 history course. This will be remedied when the department transfers to a different GCSE syllabus next academic year.

109. The proportion of grades A*-C grades in recent GCSE humanities examinations has been below the national average. Few pupils attain the highest grades. Girls perform better than boys, but in line with the national difference in achievement. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school the humanities results have been well below the average since the change of syllabus two years ago. Previous results were well above the national average. The recent trend has been one of decline that is against the national trend. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G in recent examinations has been broadly in line with the national position. All pupils at the school take the subject in both key stages.

110. The humanities department is ably led and competently managed by an experienced head of department. Documentation is generally good and the department is well organised and administered. Staff work well as a team and there is outstanding commitment to the improvement of the subject and capacity to succeed. There is a lack of a subject development plan for each of the subjects in the humanities department. This needs to be a longer-term operational plan that is fully costed and reviewed and evaluated annually. Regular, timetabled department meetings within the school day help to ensure a commonality of approach in such areas as marking and assessment. There is as yet however, no strategies developed to ensure that the generally good teaching observed is consistently transferred to similar quality learning. Staff development is sound but there is need to evaluate its impact on teaching and learning.

GEOGRAPHY

111. In lessons observed most pupils achieve standards which are in line with the national average by the age of fourteen and above it by the age of sixteen. On entry, attainment is below the national average with pupils' knowledge and basic geographical skills very limited. The good teaching and positive attitude of pupils to their studies results in consistently good progress over Years 7 to 11. However in some classes low-attaining pupils are not given sufficient time to consolidate their learning in written tasks. Nevertheless, their progress is also generally good, as they receive effective support from the class teacher and from the learning support assistants when these are provided. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound grounding in geographical skills. Most can use and interpret maps competently but need more practice in the construction and analyses of graphical representation of statistical data. Knowledge of place is good but understanding of spatial patterns is under-developed. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of physical and human processes that impact on the environment. There is good understanding of the issues

associated with the geography topic studied in the humanities GCSE course entitled "development and conflicts." The analysis and interpretation of statistical data, while generally satisfactory does need further practice to ensure more secure understanding by pupils when taking external examinations. The best individual investigatory project work undertaken for GCSE is of a good standard.

112. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. Some two thirds of the teaching observed in the subject was good or very good. Teaching overall was good at both key stages. Teachers are very committed, caring and supportive of pupils within their charge. Relationships are very good and form the bases of the high standard of discipline that is evident. The best teaching has been very carefully and imaginatively planned and is underpinned by a very secure knowledge of the subject taught. The lessons have purposeful aims that identify clearly the knowledge, understanding and skills that are to be covered during lessons. Teaching is well structured and has a clear focus. There is a considerable emphasis on the development of pupils' self-knowledge of their learning through individual research and other enquiry approaches to their studies and this is strength. This was well exemplified in a Year 9 lesson where pupils using resource materials and working in groups analysed why so many people died in the Nevada Del Ruiz disaster and so few in the eruption of Mount Etna? Most lessons are challenging, have brisk pace and are expressly designed to meet pupils' needs through tasks of varying difficulty. Lessons are usually practical in form and the most effective have a strong visual element that have a noticeable impact, enhance pupils understanding and improve the quality of their learning. These lessons are challenging, have brisk pace and are productive. This was well exemplified in a very good Year 7 lesson with a mixed ability class where the teacher drew together pupils recent local fieldwork investigations focused on the landuse of selected streets in South Normanton and set it expertly in the context of study and aims of the lesson. Then using the television screen demonstrated how maps can be annotated to depict changes over time and how ICT can be used to plot landuse patterns from pupils' fieldwork data. Pupils working on their own on the computer were very competent in plotting the computer-based mapping of their fieldwork results and annotating maps. Some were able to begin to explain the geographical significance of the patterns that emerged which was exceptionally good for this stage of their course.

113. However, there are occasions when learning generally would be further enhance if lesson aims were shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and tested at the end of lessons to ensure that learning is effective. The lack of a standing world display map in each specialist room prevents pupils gaining a greater understanding of geographical patterns and processes. Limited use is made of local ordnance survey maps and the use of actual examples rather than theoretical models would also help pupils' learning at Key Stage 3. Whilst the development of literacy skills is generally satisfactory there is need to extend writing skills at Key Stage 3. Fieldwork undertaken locally in South Normanton, the Peak District and Lincoln greatly enhances study and provides real enrichment. However, there is no study of physical landscape or an area outside the local area at Key Stage 3. The use of ICT has been considerably developed since the last inspection and the subject application including useful purpose designed programmes is of very good quality.

114. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive in most classes and many pupils display a real interest and enjoyment of their studies. They work well, are attentive, and generally want to do please their teachers. Pupils respond well to teachers' questions and oral work is of a high standard. Pupils have very good relationships with their teachers and in many instances a real rapport exists. This positive relationship contributes noticeably to pupil progress. Behaviour is almost always good and often very good.

115. Staff teaching make an effort to keep up to date with developments in the subject but

there is no programme of professional development and training. Most teaching occurs in specialist rooms but these rooms are very restrictive for individual learning using geographical source materials. Some colourful wall displays including pupil work help to provide a pleasant learning environment but adjacent areas are often in need of repair and refurbishment. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are some significant shortfalls such as the need for an overhead projector, a large whiteboard, blackouts and a standing display map in each teaching room. There is need of a fieldwork budget and the computer weather station needs repairing.

116. The department has taken appropriate action on issues identified for improvement in the previous report.

HISTORY

117. Most pupils achieve levels of work that are just below but broadly in line with the national averages by the ages of fourteen and sixteen. On entry to Year 7 the standard of work is below the national average. There is satisfactory progress during both key stages. Low-attaining pupils and pupils with special learning needs in Years 7 to 9 are well supported in lessons by teachers and learning support assistants and make good progress. Higher-attaining pupil's progress is satisfactory. However, tasks set for them need to ensure that higher level skills are developed more consistently in extension exercises if they are to achieve good progress. By the age of fourteen, pupils have a sound grounding in historical skills but their interpretation of historical sources is not adequately developed. Most have a satisfactory knowledge of the main historical events studied but too often they do not appreciate their place or significance in the overall context of study and within the chronological framework. This was exemplified in a Year 9 lesson when pupils drew a timeline of the main events leading to the outbreak of World War 2 but with limited understanding of their relevance. By the age of sixteen, pupils generally have developed further their historical evidence base. They are however, often just beginning to analyse and interpret the significance of the topic "conflict and solution" within the context of the course. Much of the difficulty relates to the heavy sociological nature of the history module studied in the humanities GCSE course, which does not build well on the National Curriculum course modules in history taught in Years 7 to 9.

118. Teaching is at least satisfactory. When taught by experienced and specialist history teachers it is often good or very good. Most teaching is good. Teachers work conscientiously and hard in support of pupils. Classroom management and control is mostly very good and provides a sound foundation for learning but on occasions it is fragile when pupils are chatty and the teacher needs to be more assertive. Lessons are always well prepared with clear objectives that are usually explained to pupils and consolidated on the board so those pupils are clear of the focus of work in the lesson. The teaching provides good opportunities for the development of literacy skills with the re-enforcement of key words and in some classes opportunities for pupils to read aloud. Best teaching is characterised by skilful questioning, with carefully selected questions of varying levels of challenge being asked, that involve pupils across the ability range. These lessons also ensure that pupils develop historical enquiry skills by researching material for themselves and that there is a full understanding of the chronology of events. The sequential, step by step teaching approach taken by teachers provides good opportunities for clear understanding of the work covered in lessons and thus aids learning. Together with lively and energetic presentation, these qualities result in productive learning. This was well exemplified in a Year 7 lesson where the teacher introduced the lesson on how the power of the throne in England had been challenged in medieval times and how parliament was established. This was done through a very good recapitulation session with the lesson being placed by the pupils in its historical setting as they responded to the teachers skilful questioning. Pupils' answers indicated a good

knowledge and understanding of previous learning. Teaching went on to emphasise the significance of the chronology particularly the family tree line of Henry II using the visual impact of a time line chart. Understanding was further enhanced with local examples used that were within pupils' experience through their knowledge of events in nearby Nottingham through the Robin Hood story. Relationships were excellent and the lesson had brisk pace, good challenge and high expectations.

119. In some lessons there is a weakness when the main teaching points are not consolidated and re-enforcement visually on the board to ensure a greater class understanding of work covered in discussions. Some low attaining pupils need more time for written work to be completed during lessons. At times, there is need for teachers to allow pupils to undertake more research and enquiry of their own so that pupils have a greater understanding of the importance of the varying types of historical sources. Too often pupils copy textbook and other material without refinement and with insufficient understanding. There is a lack of stimulus materials particularly film and audio and visual aids in some lessons. Many pupils particularly in Years 7 to 9 have real difficulty in retention and recall of knowledge which often occurs because of a failure of pupils to link events and gain an understanding of the significance of their study within a wider historical context.

120. Pupils' attitude to their studies is good. Most work conscientiously on task set and generally listen and concentrate well in lessons. Behaviour is usually good and often very good. Good constructive relationships exist between teachers. Pupils when working in groups relate well with each other: they respect each other's views and are supportive of one another. Oral work in the form of individual responses to teachers questioning is usually good but class response needs nurturing.

121. The curriculum is broad-based. Fieldwork is integrated as part of the educational experience offered and includes visits to Lincoln cathedral and the Beth Shalom Holocaust Education Centre. This first hand experience is invaluable and has had a significant influence on the quality of their studies in the subject. The use of ICT has developed since the last inspection and is integrated into some topics in Years 7 to 9. There is need of further development to ensure a coherent programme exists across both key stages. Teachers mark work thoroughly and in a helpful way that points out what pupils' need do to improve their work. It is a major positive influence on pupils' progress in the subject. Accommodation for most lessons is in specialist rooms but it is very inadequate with the temporary mobile classroom particularly poor. Significant efforts have been made by staff to make teaching rooms attractive by displaying pupils work and other historical source materials on classrooms walls but with limited success. The appearance of some rooms and adjacent corridors is shabby and often very dirty and not a suitable learning environment for pupils. Resources are satisfactory overall but there are serious shortfalls, in that the need to share a textbook in Year 9 reduces the pace of learning in lessons. Equipment in each specialist teaching room needs upgrading to include as basic teaching facilities an overhead projection, a large whiteboard, blackout, and more films, videos and artefacts on topics taught so that visual stimulus materials are more widely available in lessons.

122. Most of the concerns raised at the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

123. Improvements since the last inspection in ICT have been good. Pupils in their first year at the school have lessons that build on the skills they already have. In their second and subsequent years in the school pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of ICT through all subjects. Currently there are no courses leading to GCSE or GNVQ qualifications in ICT.

124. At the age of fourteen standards of work produced by pupils is comparable to that seen in most schools. They have a good understanding of the hardware available, being able to log on and load up programs with little more than brief instructions from the teacher. They work with standard, commercially used software covering the main applications, for example databases, spreadsheets and word processing. Throughout Years 7 to 9 pupils become increasingly aware of the benefits and uses of ICT in their schoolwork. They also develop a sound understanding of consequences of technological advances on the wider community. They think about not only how society is affected by computers but why certain things happen such as the problems of computer viruses. By the time pupils reach the age of sixteen they have had the opportunity to explore more fully the range of computer applications available. They regard the computer as a useful and necessary tool to be employed when required but they do not regard it as the only option, and therefore they are developing well as discerning users. The vast majority of final year pupils gain an ICT competency certificate in word processing, databases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing. This is gained through the compilation of a portfolio of work taken from a range of subjects; for example spreadsheets in mathematics and database use in humanities. Only a tiny percentage of pupils fail to gain any certificate. Lower-attaining pupils usually gain certificates in at least two of the four areas. The level of attainment for pupils with special educational needs is equally good.

125. Pupils enter the school with a varied range of experiences but on average at a level below that expected for pupils of a similar age. However the level they achieve by the time they reach fourteen is equivalent to that seen elsewhere, or above in the case of the higher achieving pupils. Year 8 pupils in geography are able to use 'PowerPoint' to make presentations on the weather. They can introduce a range of animations recognising the strengths and weaknesses of their presentations. They analyse critically the work of others in a mature way commenting not only on the geographical content but the quality of the presentational techniques used. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress. Pupils who quickly master the activities presented are able to investigate the more complex features of the software in use, for example Year 7 pupils using desk top publishing features of 'word' were introduced to the 'group/ungroup' command when displaying information in the form of a newspaper front page. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have covered all areas of ICT and make use of it to enhance their coursework for GCSE. The level of understanding in the use of certain applications is more limited, for some, which reflects their experiences in the lower years. Overall, however, their achievements match the national average for their age.

126. The quality of the teaching seen in Year 7 was at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers involved have a secure knowledge of the programs being used and support the pupils effectively in their learning. They introduce the lessons by reviewing previous sessions, which reminds pupils of what they already know, and through appropriate questioning testing pupils' understanding. In the best lessons, pupils are managed well enabling good learning. Good planning and preparation ensure that the pupils continue to develop their skills and knowledge to an ever-increasing level. Pupils are provided with clear explanations of what is expected and respond well. The level of retention of knowledge is evident in their ability to move quickly onto task. Teachers make the best use of the equipment available to them; some pupils have to share computers, which does at times impede progress. An example of the good co-operation between schools was seen when a projector used for 'PowerPoint'

presentations had been borrowed from a primary school nearby.

127. Where lessons were less effective teachers did not organise the class to ensure full attention prior to introducing or reinforcing learning points. In some lessons, the structure was not clearly defined and therefore insufficient pressure was applied to ensure that pupils' achieved at the appropriate level, however in most lessons the pace was adequate. Teachers make good use of the very competent technician support and are equally effective in the deployment of other support staff; this clearly benefits pupils with special educational needs. Teachers did not set tasks to meet the individual needs of pupils within mixed ability teaching groups.

128. The vast majority of pupils have very positive attitudes towards ICT. They use and apply their understanding well and are productive and competent, demonstrating high levels of concentration in the majority of lessons. The equipment is well used at times other than formal lessons. Pupils are proud of their achievements and show a keenness to talk about their work, showing their understanding of the needs of others through sharing their expertise. Relationships are good between pupils and between adults and pupils.

129. Pupils work independently, being prepared within the level of their capability to seek to overcome problems themselves or with the help of peers. However, they understand when to make use of the expertise of the teacher or the technician. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to and do participate fully in their learning. Levels of behaviour are generally good.

130. The Year 7 curriculum gives pupils a good grounding in ICT with initial concentration on the basic skills. As no timetabled lessons are provided in Years 8 and 9, most subjects have prepared coherent programmes integrating ICT into their teaching. Departments have a very positive approach to the use of ICT. Areas such as music have experienced software problems but are managing to overcome these and make good use of the available facilities. Design and technology makes good use of ICT within equipment limitations as they have no computer aided manufacturing equipment and little is yet in place for computer aided design work. Art and design uses ICT imaginatively and provides pupils with a powerful means of accessing good quality images and information. In most other subject areas, use is expanding; designated teachers from each subject area work closely with the head of ICT to develop suitable material. Assessment of attainment in ICT is managed through the same mechanism but is yet to be fully developed. The school is in the process of making changes that will allow pupils to gain key skills accreditation from September 2001. The school meets the statutory requirements for ICT.

131. The department documents recommend an approach that is designed to 'educate users and to nurture responsible attitude.' There are checks in place and pupils are well aware that their Internet use can be, and is, monitored. Most pupils follow the code well and make appropriate use of the Internet. The quality of reports is affected by the use of computer generated statements. The statements whilst valid in themselves do not fairly represent the performance of the individual pupil.

132. The department benefits from a highly competent and committed head of department who has a clear vision. He is assisted by technical staff who not only support learning effectively but have also made a significant contribution to the overall improvements in the quality of hardware in the school. Although the ratio of computers to pupils does not match the national average of approximately 7:1 it has improved both in quality and quantity. Much of the hardware has been built on site. All teachers involved in the provision of ICT have a keen desire to succeed. Those responsible for the specialist teaching have a good range of skills and support each other very effectively. Teachers across the school have developed their level of expertise to enable appropriate and relevant cross-curricular use. The increased demand for access underlines the advances made in subject use. Whilst the subject leader is effective in his role, he carries an excessive responsibility, leading in two other subjects. This prevents him from carrying out monitoring of teaching in this important subject.

133. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection but the main ICT suite is cluttered and lacks effective ventilation. Furnishing is basic, with many chairs in a poor state of repair; there are insufficient workstations to allow one per pupil; together they have an effect on standards. The technical support staff does not have separate accommodation, which has an impact on security and safety. The school is beginning to make greater use of technology in other areas, for example in the deployment of staff, and will have a computerised library system by the start of the next academic year.

134. Since the previous inspection standards have improved, and national expectation are met in both key stages. Co-ordination has improved although there is still further progress to be made in overall monitoring, particularly of teaching. Effective use of ICT across subjects has improved along with staff expertise. Attitudes remain good, as do relationships. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good or very good. Further improvement is necessary in assessment procedures.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

135. Half the pupils study French and half study German as a first foreign language in Year 7. In Year 8 all begin the language they did not study in Year 7 as a second language, and they continue with both languages in Year 9. They continue their first foreign language in Years 10 and 11, and can also do their second foreign language if they wish. French GCSE results were below national standards in 2000, but above in 1998 and 1999. German results have been well above national standards in recent years. GCSE results in both languages have been higher than standards in similar schools, except in French in 2000. They have also been higher than most other subjects in the school. Teacher assessments for pupils aged fourteen were above national standards in both languages in 2000. A significant number of pupils in the current Year 9 in March 2001 have already reached level 5 in French or German in listening, speaking, reading and writing, in line with national standards. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 showed pupils working just above national standards.

136. In all years pupils are stronger in listening, speaking and reading, and weaker in writing. When listening to the teacher speaking German, a Year 10 class could tell the teacher whether she was talking about past, present or future events. When speaking, pupils in a Year 8 French class were able to ask 10 other pupils which school subjects they preferred and why, and note the results. Pupils in a Year 10 French class were able to read information about television programmes and understand it so they could answer questions about it. Pupils in a Year 11 French class were able to take on the role of a person who had been on work experience, and write about his experience. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing: however, pupils make unnecessary errors

in grammar and spelling. Pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. The errors pupils make in written work, are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards. Girls usually attain better results than boys, but boys attain much better results than in most other schools. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, or ability. Pupils have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French and German skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. Pupils spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities have been incorporated successfully into schemes of work, and are used by teachers. Pupils have good access to computers, and use them well when they have the opportunity, particularly to access foreign language resources from the Internet.

137. The overall quality of teaching is good. In all years the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, often good, and sometimes very good or excellent. Almost all of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in French and German, project their voices clearly, and have good accents. They use the foreign languages for parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English. Some use overhead projectors well, but others do not use them sufficiently. They use other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good, but a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: however, sometimes they do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the pupils' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is good, and meets the needs of these pupils as well. Teachers manage classes well. For example, in a Year 8 German class, pupils enjoyed singing a song about days of the week. The teacher then asked questions about activities after school, and the pupils worked in pairs asking each other what they did after school. Finally, they stood and mimed swimming, playing football and going to the cinema, as they said the German. In a Year 9 German class, the teacher opened a suitcase of holiday clothes, and taught them the vocabulary items. Pupils came to the overhead projector to match the English meanings to the German words. Pupils then folded a sheet of paper into a small book, and put holiday items on each page. In both these lessons, the pupils were actively involved throughout, worked very well on the different tasks, and made good progress. Teachers produce very good resources. For a Year 7 German class the teacher had drawn an entertaining comic strip and recorded a dialogue on tape: he played the tape, and pupils filled in the gaps in the speech bubbles in German. For a Year 8 French class the teacher prepared a reading passage and questions at three different levels of difficulty, and used larger print on one sheet to help lower-attaining pupils.

138. Most pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is at least satisfactory and often good or very good in all years. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most pupils, including the most and least able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages.

139. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of pupils in French and German. The department is

very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team. The department lacks sufficient textbooks, readers, magazines, and computer software. Visits to France and Germany encourage social interaction and personal responsibility, and improve language competence. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work and the foreign languages by teachers, lack of resources, and the errors pupils make in written work are preventing pupils from achieving higher standards.

140. The department has addressed all the issues raised in the previous report. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, and this has improved standards at all levels.

MUSIC

141. In GCSE music in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was well above average and significantly better than for most subjects in the school. All pupils achieved at least a grade G. The small number of entries each year make comparison with national statistics unreliable.

142. Standards in work seen in lessons at the age of fourteen are average. Pupils in Year 9 can compose using notation with confidence. They perform quite complex syncopated parts that they have composed, listening carefully to fit the parts together with good ensemble. As pupils come into the school with a very mixed experience of music, this represents good achievement, with pupils making at least good progress through the key stage. There are several factors why good progress is being made. Good teaching challenges pupils to establish good rehearsal techniques, particularly through the special performance course written by the head of department. Pupils continue to practice recorders and keyboards for homework. There is a generous time allowance for lessons in Years 7 to 9 and pupils now have the facility to work undisturbed in small groups in much improved accommodation. Progress is much better where class size is restricted to smaller manageable numbers for this practical subject, as was shown in Year 9 lessons.

143. At the age of sixteen standards in work seen are above average. They compose and perform well and are confident in their use of notation. Listening and appraising skills, not as strong as performing and composing, are slowly improving, because they are being rehearsed more often, and a plan is developing for their improvement. Overall, pupils make at least good progress through the key stage and this again represents good achievement. Use of computers is having a positive impact on raising the standards of composition, because pupils can hear and amend their work immediately. Greater use of computers in Key Stage 3 is planned as and when more become available. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through both key stages with the assistance of learning support staff, and they frequently thrive in this practical subject, when they realise how successful they can be. Higher achievers and those with special talents in music also make good progress and are challenged by appropriate work they are given to do in class.

144. Teaching is good overall and in one third of the lessons seen it was very good. It has several very good features. All teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and are enthusiastic and able practitioners, providing the pupils with good role models. They challenge pupils to achieve well, establishing good rehearsal techniques and promoting a desire in the pupils to achieve polished standards of performance. Objectives for the lesson are clear and as a result pupils work hard with purpose and interest in most lessons. They concentrate well and work productively at a good pace when working individually, as in a Year 7 lesson on composing a melody on recorders and keyboards. Here, the established and hard-working ethos, together with their confidence with notation enabled them to press forward with their task unsupported by the teacher. Teachers' relationships with their pupils are very good and they encourage their pupils to work co-operatively in small groups, which results in good collaboration when composing and performing. This was particularly evident in Year 9 classes where they were composing and performing an extended piece of Latin-American music in groups. In this lesson pupils organised their rehearsals well and had divided the tasks efficiently among the group. Teachers provide individual pupils with good advice on how to improve their work but need to extend this by encouraging the pupils to assess themselves so that they can make their own decision about how to improve and set themselves more focused targets. For this they will need to have and discuss clear criteria for assessment. At present pupils generally do not know their grades, or what they have to do to improve.

145. The department is clearly focused on the improvement of standards and there is already evidence in Years 7, 8 and 10 that these are rising through close monitoring of teaching and learning. Schemes of work are under constant review to maintain challenge as standards rise. This includes providing appropriately challenging work for those pupils with special needs and special talents. There is a clear plan for improvement and development. The teachers, very ably led by the Head of Department, work hard even beyond class teaching time to provide pupils with a stimulating, challenging and enjoyable experience. This includes composing and arranging music for the good range of extra-curricular activities, including a fine brass ensemble and a highly competent a cappella group of singers, who learn quickly to sing unaccompanied music with style and expression. The department also provides a full range of useful information for pupils to access on the school web site. Good instrumental lessons are provided covering a range of instruments.

146. Since the last inspection there has been improvement across the board. Standards have improved at both key stages. Teaching is at least good in all cases, providing more challenge and greater pace but also opportunities for pupils to consolidate their work. Through a shared commitment to improving the department, the school has provided more appropriate accommodation to support the raising of standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

147. Attainment is in line with national averages. Currently there are no nationally accredited course results against which to judge pupils in physical education.

148. By the age of fourteen attainment matches national averages and this represents clear improvement since pupils entered the school. Standards reached in badminton, for example, are above average after only a short period of learning with both boys and girls well able to sustain effective rallies. In soccer, standards are much more variable and the range of attainment is wide. Within this age group levels of personal fitness are good. In all years pupils know well how to prepare for physical activity and have a good understanding of the benefits of regular exercise.

149. By the age of sixteen attainment is above the national average. Standards of personal fitness are good amongst most pupils across the age group. In games, well over half the boys and girls are able to play to a good standard, typically in soccer and netball. Passing skills are particularly well developed in games and this makes a significant contribution to overall teamwork.

150. In Year 7 to 9 all pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. In activities, which are new to many, skills are already well developed. For example in dance, both boys and girls are able to perform a set routine with considerable accuracy of movement. There is however a clear difference in the progress of boys and girls and especially when pupils are required to create their own routines to compliment those already learned. Girls do not do as well as those in similar schools where dance is taught in single gender groupings. Boys do not do as well as girls. Conversely, in basketball, boys achieve higher standards than girls.

151. Older pupils build quickly on these foundations especially where the arrangements for lessons enable activities to be taught in single gender groups. Girls are making good progress in trampolining and most are now sufficiently confident to be moving forward to more challenging routines. In soccer the principles of teamwork are more widely adopted amongst players who are more mature and understand more readily the need to practice 'set plays' as well as play the full game. The more gifted and talented pupils achieve sufficiently high standards to enable them, both as individuals and in teams, to play a broad range of sports and games at representative level.

152. The quality of teaching in all years is good. It is never less than satisfactory and in 75 per cent of lessons it is good or very good. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to devise tasks and set learning objectives clearly in most lessons. Pupils consequently have a clear idea of what to do in order to improve. Most work positively and eagerly and derive considerable enjoyment from their lessons. The relationships between teachers, especially those who are more experienced, and pupils are very good. It stems from mutual respect and the realistically high expectations that teachers have of all pupils allied to high standards of behaviour, effort and appearance in physical education lessons. Positive and constructive feedback to pupils is a regular feature of most lessons. When this is combined with the energetic and encouraging style employed by teachers, pupils achieve well and sustain their enthusiasm for the subject. The regular commitment of the specialist teachers to the extra-curricular programme of sports and games is valued mostly highly by pupils and their parents. This extends and enriches the opportunities for pupils to experience a broader range of physical activities. This is a clear strength of the department and the school.

153. The work of the department is well organised by a capable and committed leader. Documentation is good and provides very clear statements of policy and practice. At present there is little formal monitoring of the subject's effectiveness. National Curriculum requirements are met in both key stages, though the school allows insufficient time in Years 7 to 9 for all aspects of physical education to be taught in depth. In comparison with schools nationally, pupils have 25 per cent less time. Currently there are no opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation in physical education at the end of Year 11. There is, at the present time, a serious imbalance between male and female specialist staff. This makes it difficult to deliver the programmes of study in settings or groupings best suited to meeting pupil needs and especially in Years 7 to 9. Achievements of both boys and girls are depressed when set against national expectations for example in dance. Timetable arrangements do not allow the department to achieve a good match between pupil needs and staff strengths. The provision of specialist accommodation is adequate, though grass areas are continuing to shrink. The condition of specialist facilities is unsatisfactory; the outdoor hard play areas are unsafe, the

surfaces are uneven and loose. Indoor teaching spaces are decidedly dirty, drab and depressing.

154. Since the last inspection overall standards have been raised. Achievement in lessons is good, as is achievement over time. Pupils' attitudes remain positive and the quality of teaching is much improved. There are good plans in place to further develop arrangements for assessment and when the school introduces physical education as a GCSE subject, the focus of all elements of the departments work will be significantly sharpened.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. Pupils take a common humanities examination at GCSE, within which there is a religious education module, but none do a discrete religious education GCSE course. No judgement can, therefore be made on attainment at the end of Year 11 because no pupils do religious education beyond the single module in Year 10.

156. By the age of fourteen, pupils' attainment is in line with the average for pupils at the end of this key stage. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism is average for this age. They can identify the main events in the life of Jesus and in particular the events of Holy Week. They are able to recount the main beliefs of Islam, Judaism and Hinduism but their understanding of the significance of these beliefs is below average. Pupils ability to reflect on what they have learned is above average as are their skills of evaluation and expression. They can read from a number of sources, evaluate them and draw the main points together to form a reasoned argument. They still have difficulty in distinguishing the difference between fact, belief and opinion.

157. The attainment of pupils in Year 7 is well below average and pupils make good progress across Years 8 and 9. They consistently add to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. In a Year 9 class pupils were effectively learning how immigration had affected society in the past and how religion and life-styles adapt to new cultures. They develop their skills of investigation and evaluation and are acquiring the ability to interpret stories and the significance of artefacts. In one Year 7 class information from the Internet was used to stimulate pupils' discussion of the significance of icons to believers in the Orthodox Church.

158. In Year 10 religious education consists of one module within the humanities GCSE course. There is no provision in Year 11 and this means that there is no real progress across the key stage and pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average for pupils age sixteen.

159. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs in Years 7, 8 and 9 is in line with expectations. They make good progress across Years 7 to 10.

160. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 10 is good. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and this makes pupils feel secure and ready to ask and answer questions. Good questioning skills enable teachers to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Artefacts are used to very good effect and make the experiences for pupils real. In Year 8, pupils saw and handled a Seder cup and a puja tray. In Year 7, they were able, by using the computer, to have a 'virtual' tour of a variety of churches. These practical demonstrations enable pupils to have first-hand experiences that develop their understanding of religion. Teachers meet the needs of the higher and lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs through the use of worksheets graded in difficulty and extended pieces of homework. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of behaviour and in standards of attainment. ICT is used very effectively within some lessons

but there is a need for all staff within the department to have training to develop the potential of this technology. Some non-specialist teachers are unnecessarily tentative about their subject knowledge, and in some cases, high-attaining pupils are not being given opportunities to deepen their understanding of religion. The teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development by offering a variety of opportunities to consider other cultures and to discuss beliefs and values. Provision for the social development of pupils is good. Pupils are effectively encouraged to work together and to listen to one another. Opportunities are given to hear and evaluate each other's beliefs and values and to discuss them. Pupils learn what a variety of religions teach about right and wrong. Moral issues are sensitively raised and discussed within the groups.

161. A considerable amount of hard work has been put into developing the new schemes of work and assessment criteria and these are good. There is a good team spirit amongst the teacher, which enhances the feeling of well-being in the department and results in pupils enjoying the experiences provided for them in the religious education courses.

162. The quality and range of curriculum opportunities provided in Years 7 to 9 are very good. The size of rooms limits activities that can be attempted but teachers use their ingenuity to overcome some of these problems. The rooms are in a bad state of cleanliness. Many of the artefacts have to be cleaned each time they are used due to the amount of dust on shelves and tables. In Key Stage 4 there is only one module of religious education within the humanities GCSE course, which means that statutory requirements are not being met. The provision of a short course in GCSE would enable the school to comply with statutory requirements.

163. The issue of insufficient time mentioned in the last inspection report is still not resolved satisfactorily at Key Stage 4. In all other areas the school has made good progress since the last inspection. Time has been increased at Key Stage 3; there is good support for pupils with special educational needs and the use of ICT has improved.