

INSPECTION REPORT

FAILSWORTH SCHOOL

Failsworth

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105735

Headteacher: Mr David Johnson

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynn-Jones

2918

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th May 2002

Inspection number: 192871

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brierley Avenue Failsworth Manchester
Postcode:	M35 9HA
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr John Johnson
Date of previous inspection:	December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	ML Glynn-Jones	Registered inspector	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3534	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
22695	RA Cardinal	Team inspector	History Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
17269	J Johnson	Team inspector	Science	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
29510	N Mayfield	Team inspector	Music	
2473	A Nicholl	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23569	D Nicholl	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography	
17923	M Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a popular community comprehensive school in Failsworth, an urban area on the borders of Manchester. It is a member of the Oldham Excellence in Cities Partnership. The school became a Specialist Sports College in September 2000, is an Investor in People and has recently gained the Sports Mark Gold Award. With 1447 on roll, it is much bigger than most secondary schools; there are more boys than girls in each year group. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority families is lower than in most schools in metropolitan authorities; the number speaking English as an additional language is very low, none of whom is at an early stage of English fluency. Pupils are mainly drawn from areas of Failsworth where levels of disadvantage are high. This is not reflected by the number eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Both the proportion of pupils with special needs and the proportion with full statements are below the national average. The range of special needs includes learning difficulties and dyslexia; a small group with behaviour difficulties and a small number with sensory or physical impairment. When pupils joined Year 7 in the current year their attainment was average as measured by their Year 6 test results, although other testing shows a below average range of ability. In previous years, pupils' attainment when they joined the school was below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This good school is led with vision by the headteacher, supported very effectively by the chair of governors. Specialist college status is handled imaginatively to raise the aspirations of young people and their families and strengthen educational opportunity in the local community. This is reflected in the significant improvement in attendance since the last inspection, so that the rate has now reached an average level. Overall, standards are below average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Year 9 results are rising faster than national results. Year 11 results are keeping pace with the national trend of improvement and in 2001 showed good achievement from Year 9. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils benefit from the school's good relationships, good leadership and management overall, and the commitment of staff and governors. Failsworth provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Strong vision for improving educational opportunity guiding the development of the school
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 to 11, much of good quality in Years 7 to 9
- Good achievement in Years 10 and 11
- Good provision for pupils' personal development
- Good relationships between all members of the school community
- Good range and quality of activities outside lessons, very good in sport and music
- Good workshops with parents to support pupils' personal development.

What could be improved

- Too many pupils gaining no GCSE grades
- Management systems not strong enough to ensure equally good provision across the very large school
- A tail of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9
- The negative attitudes and unsatisfactory behaviour of a significant minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9
- Pupils' unsatisfactory punctuality
- Requirements not met in Years 10 and 11 for the curriculum for religious education and for the small number of pupils specialising in dance rather than the full physical education curriculum followed by the majority.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in 1996 is satisfactory. Attendance has improved significantly, but punctuality has not. GCSE results are rising at much the same rate as national results, but, in relation to pupils' prior results in Year 9, show a good gain overall. The school has been successful in achieving Sports College status, the Sports Mark Gold and the Football Association Charter Mark, and the Investors in People award. On the issues of assessment and the range of Year 11 options, the improvement is satisfactory. On the issue of daily worship, although satisfactory arrangements have been set in place, these are not put into practice across the whole school. The proportion of very good teaching has increased, but so has the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. There is insufficient improvement overall in the issues raised at the last inspection in design and technology, geography, modern languages and religious education.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	D	E	E

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

- GCSE results are keeping pace with the trend in national results.
- 2001 GCSE results were above average compared with all schools that achieved similar Year 9 results in 1999.
- Subject results at the higher GCSE grades in 2001 were significantly above average in single science, French and physical education; and broadly average in history and information and communication technology (ICT).
- In 2001, pupils did less well in mathematics, business studies, geography, sociology and Spanish than in their other GCSE subjects.
- GCSE targets were met for average points, not met for the grades gained overall, but considerably exceeded for higher grades. The targets for 2002 were moderately challenging.
- In the work seen, the strengths by the end of Year 11 are in art and design, French and physical education, where standards are above average.

- Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 2001 were average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science.
- Overall however, results in Year 9 are rising faster than the national results.
- In the work seen in the three subjects, standards reflected the 2001 Year 9 test results.
- In other subjects, average standards were seen by Year 9 in art and design, ICT, music, physical education and religious education.
- By Year 9, pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory overall, while good in English, art and design, history, ICT, music and religious education, and unsatisfactory in science.
- By Year 11, achievement is good overall and in the majority of subjects, while satisfactory in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and music.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall; the majority shows good attitudes in lessons and school activities, although many pupils are unpunctual and travel between sites is often rather leisurely.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall: a significant minority, mostly in Years 7 to 9, offers disruptive behaviour in some lessons, undermining the good behaviour of the majority; pupils manage the movement inside the buildings well and behaviour in assemblies is exemplary. The exclusions rate is falling as good provision gets underway to support pupils at risk of being excluded.
Personal development and relationships	Good: good relationships are a school strength; most pupils develop the ability to work independently by Years 10 and 11; many develop good teamworking through participating in sports and music activities. A small minority shows a lack of responsibility and thought for others.
Attendance	Attendance is now satisfactory; because pupils' punctuality is poor, the overall judgement, which takes account of punctuality, is unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

- Teaching and learning are good in English and satisfactory in mathematics; in science they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
- Some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Years 7 to 9, although much is good or better.
- Excellent teaching was seen in five lessons, four of them in Years 7 to 9.
- Very good teaching and learning in ICT and music are a strength.
- Teachers manage their classes very well in English, ICT, music and physical education, but this is a weakness in mathematics in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' methods meet all pupils' needs well overall, but need strengthening in science in Years 7 to 9, and in mathematics where better use of time and resources is needed.

- In modern languages, assessment and marking are not carried out equally well for all lessons.
- The teaching of literacy skills is good but unsatisfactory for numeracy skills.
- Pupils generally put good effort into their work and this is consolidated well in Years 10 and 11.
- In mathematics, pupils do not set themselves a good pace for work; in science, they do not have a good enough understanding of how well they are getting on.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the range of opportunities has improved and the strategies for literacy are good; extra-curricular activities are a strength. Provision overall is unsatisfactory because the requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11 for religious education and for a small number of pupils in physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall; with strength in music. Good school-wide arrangements; pupils benefit from the good use of learning support teachers and assistants so that they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory; because the number of pupils involved is extremely small, they were not seen in all subjects; they are helped to learn well in English and art and design.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall and for moral and social development; otherwise satisfactory. The school's 'Fair Play Plan' and good relationships effectively underpin and support pupils' development of personal responsibility as members of a community. Provision is limited for multi-cultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall, with good arrangements for child protection and effective ways of achieving good behaviour. Although there is mostly sound, often good monitoring of pupils' progress in subjects, the good school-wide arrangements are not put into practice consistently. The school has improved attendance well but the monitoring of attendance needs strengthening.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good: links with parents are good and they give active support. Overall, parents receive helpful information about their child's progress although annual reports are not equally informative about children's progress in all subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall; there is a strong vision for the school's development and clear strategies for achieving long-term objectives; some lack of clarity about delegated responsibilities weakens arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall; a shared vision and a strong steer are developing the school's work; responsibilities are carried out with commitment and thoroughness, except in relation to meeting requirements fully for the curriculum, worship and the contents of the annual report.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; very good in relation to big issues; there is a good framework for review and evaluation, but there is insufficient attention to monitoring and evaluating the day-to-day work of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall; good in most subjects with strength in ICT; staffing and resources are satisfactory overall, although there are staffing difficulties in mathematics; accommodation is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses affecting the curriculum in art and design, geography and music and the very poor condition of the design and technology building on the lower school site. The refurbished learning resource centres and the provision for physical education are a strength. Good attention to best value.

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 expects their children to work hard. • Their children make good progress. • The interesting range of activities outside lessons. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school if there was a problem. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework arrangements being carried out consistently across subjects. • Better information about how well their child is doing. • The school working more closely with parents.

The inspectors agree with parents' positive views. However, the team disagrees with parents' critical comments. They find that generally, homework arrangements are working satisfactorily in all subjects and are good in art and design and design and technology. They judge that the information provided for parents is good and that the school makes every effort to work in partnership with parents. The communication systems need to be more closely monitored however, to check that they are effective enough and that information is sufficiently clear, particularly in children's annual reports.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Years 7 to 9

1. When pupils join Year 7 their attainment overall is below average, with fewer pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels than happens nationally. By Year 9, standards in the work seen are below average and achievement is therefore satisfactory. In nearly all subjects, pupils at least maintain their standard over Years 7 to 9. In science, however, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because pupils do not do well enough to maintain their standard on entry. The main reasons are some weaknesses in teaching and marking, and a lack of appropriately challenging work especially for higher attainers; the department timetables its most experienced teachers with Years 10 and 11. Pupils join Year 7 with average standards in physical education, higher than in other subjects, and they maintain these standards by Year 9; their achievement is satisfactory. They would be helped to improve their performance more effectively in physical education by better use of assessment and feedback in lessons to help them be clear about how to improve. In French and Spanish, new subjects in the curriculum from Year 7, unsatisfactory teaching and learning in a third of the lessons limits progress. Teaching is not effectively monitored in modern languages and pupils' achievement is not tracked well enough. Standards are below average by Year 9 and pupils' achievement in both languages is satisfactory.

2. In five subjects, pupils do well enough from the start of Year 7 to raise their attainment to an average standard by Year 9. In these subjects, achievement is good: they are English, art and design, ICT, music and religious education. Very good teaching and learning are the main reasons in ICT and music. Teaching and learning are usually good or better in English, and never less than good in art and design. Successful group work and excellent schemes of work support pupils' achievement in religious education. In history, pupils' work shows that they achieve well over Years 7 to 9, but not well enough to reach an average standard. Their achievement is supported well by teaching that is often good. But, it is limited by insufficient use of assessments to target improvements and the fact that teachers do not have opportunities to learn from each other's good teaching skills.

3. The improving Year 9 results are largely due to the improvement year-on-year in English compared with all schools. In mathematics and science, the improvement has not been sufficient to raise the standard in comparison with all schools nationally.

Years 10 to 11

4. By Year 11, pupils show further improvement so that overall, they reach standards that are average. In three subjects, art and design, modern languages and physical education, standards improve to above average. In history pupils reach an average standard by Year 11, securing the improvement shown by Year 9. In music and religious education, average standards are maintained.

5. In mathematics and design and technology standards remain at a below average level and achievement is satisfactory. The reasons are partly to do with staffing in mathematics and partly the result of weaknesses both in the management of the subject and the management of the department by the school. Although two extra staff have been employed and support given by senior staff, pupils' work shows that these measures did not ensure that all pupils received equally effective teaching. In design and technology and geography, heads of subject have recently been appointed. In each subject, appropriate developments are being set in place, but are not yet showing through in the standards of work achieved by

pupils. Pupils' standards in science improve over Years 10 and 11, although they are still below average, and pupils' achievement is good at this stage. In English, the average standards reached by Year 9 are not sustained by Year 11, where the work seen showed below average standards. This judgement is based on the scrutiny of work. The school's own 2002 target in English for pupils gaining grades A*-C is 35 per cent, which would be well below average. The inspection finding suggests a better result.

6. In 2001, almost all pupils on the GNVQ course in leisure and tourism were successful in gaining a qualification, a third achieving a merit at intermediate level.

Years 7 to 11

7. Pupils' achievement is better over Years 10 and 11 than over Years 7 to 9 because teaching and learning are better. Both teaching and learning show a consistent quality in lessons across all subjects. No lessons were less than satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, while in Years 7 to 9, there were 13 unsatisfactory lessons, across six subjects. Pupils' attitudes are a contributory factor. In two lessons in Years 10 and 11, one in English and one in mathematics, pupils showed less than satisfactory behaviour and attitudes to their work. But, in Years 7 to 9, this was true of 18 lessons across nine subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is helped by the effective assessment which results from teachers' expertise in assessment at GCSE. National Curriculum assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not as effectively handled. This reduces the effectiveness of the guidance pupils receive on making improvements.

Literacy and numeracy

8. Overall standards in literacy are average. Most pupils seldom give extended answers to teachers' questions in lessons. They listen well and follow instructions because these are given clearly, for example, in history, ICT and physical education. Pupils' skills are better developed in silent reading than they are in reading aloud. Written work is adequate in most subjects. Year 7 pupils who find language work difficult are given targeted literacy lessons. In these, they use ICT effectively to build on their basic skills, so that they make good progress in both reading and writing. Because opportunities to use numerical skills are missed and there is no co-ordination of numerical work, pupils do not understand as fully as they should the wide range of situations in which numerical skills are used. Consequently, they do not fully understand the importance of numeracy to their lives.

Additional needs Years 7 to 11

9. Pupils with special needs make good progress. Of the sixteen Year 11 pupils on the special needs register in the previous year, fourteen gained GCSE passes. Twelve pupils with a wide range of special needs gained a grade in all their subjects. All twelve achieved a minimum of six GCSEs, with four pupils achieving nine and five achieving eight GCSEs. Pupils withdrawn from lessons for support, including those withdrawn for literacy support and those older pupils receiving extra support for examination courses and basic skills make good progress. Pupils on the special needs register who attend the learning support unit make good progress. They make good progress in English, history, ICT, modern languages, music, physical education and religious education. Their progress in other subjects is satisfactory. Those taking modern languages in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress.

10. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress overall. This overall judgement masks some variation between subjects. They make good progress in English, art and design, history, ICT and music, but unsatisfactory progress in science and design and technology. The main reason for the variation is the difference in the quality of planning work which is suitably challenging.

11. The very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in English. There is no evidence to suggest that they do not achieve as well as other pupils in all other subjects. They are helped to learn well in English and in art and design; in geography, their learning is satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils show satisfactory attitudes towards school. Most are prepared to work hard and feel a sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of additional activities the school provides. There is a high participation rate in sporting activities. Pupils from ethnic minorities and those with special needs are fully integrated into the school community.

13. Relationships between pupils and pupils' relationships with staff are good. The school works hard to establish a constructive working partnership between staff and pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to collaborate in group work and they willingly share and support each other in their learning. Pupils in Year 7 for example, working in mixed-ability teams, used dictionaries to find the meaning of words while studying the poem 'Macavity: The Mystery Cat' by T S Eliot. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings on a range of moral and social issues. Generally, when encouraged to do so, they listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of their peers, although some find this difficult, particularly when the views expressed differ from their own.

14. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory overall. Behaviour in the majority of lessons seen was at least satisfactory, good in about two thirds, and very good in about a third. On a number of occasions, attitudes and behaviour were excellent. However, a significant minority of pupils, mostly in Years 7 to 9, offers challenging behaviour in class which disrupts the lesson and other people's learning. This resulted in unsatisfactory behaviour in 15 lessons and poor behaviour in five. Where this occurs, it not only slows the progress of the minority but also the progress of other pupils in the class, a concern expressed by some parents and some pupils. Pupils are helped to respond in a self-disciplined way when teachers put the school's Fair Play Plan (code of conduct) into practice, but the plan is not applied equally well across the school, a point on which pupils commented. Not all teachers show the same high expectations of behaviour. Around the school, in assemblies and at lunchtimes behaviour is generally good, sometimes exemplary.

15. Outside lessons, particularly when moving between the two sites, pupils report that occasionally bullying behaviour does occur. Most incidents are effectively dealt with when reported to staff. Both pupils and parents expressed concern that, on occasions, incidents reported by pupils have not been taken seriously by some members of staff.

16. Since the previous inspection, the figures for fixed-term exclusions have remained much the same. In the current academic year, the number of pupils excluded for a fixed term has fallen. The school is more able to support pupils at risk of exclusion since the opening of the Ben Brierley Centre (a support unit) and the appointment of learning mentors and pastoral support workers. Exclusion figures are monitored to check for any differences in the groups of pupils involved. For example in the previous academic year, the proportion of black boys excluded was higher than for any other group. The reasons have been identified and strategies put in place to rectify the situation. Six pupils, all boys, were permanently excluded last year, a reduction since the last inspection.

17. Pupils show satisfactory initiative and personal responsibility. The school's sports council provides a forum for pupils to represent their year group's views. Pupils take responsibility by acting as librarians and receptionists. The school is part of a pilot scheme

with the local council to reduce litter. As part of well-organised action by pupils in the lower school, small groups enthusiastically monitor those who drop litter by taking a photograph of the offenders for 'displaying and shaming'. While this is making an effective contribution to pupils' understanding of citizenship, the amount of litter dropped by pupils around the grounds, and on the path between the two sites, shows a general lack of care for the external environment. Some pupils openly smoke outside the school buildings and on the path between sites. They provide poor role models for younger pupils.

18. Many pupils represent the school in the wider community by performing with one of the bands or taking part in sporting events. A Year 7 pupil has been chosen to represent the school at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. He will carry the Commonwealth baton containing the Queen's speech on its way to the stadium for the opening ceremony. Year 10 pupils who have completed the Junior Sports Leader Award are planning a Mini Commonwealth Games for primary school children. The leaders are delivering training sessions for the children who will take part.

19. Attendance levels have risen significantly since the previous inspection and are now average, with below average unauthorised absence. However, overall, attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. The main reason for this is the number of pupils who arrive late for the start of the day and for lessons. In the twenty registration periods observed during the inspection, the average attendance was below 80 per cent, the rate varying from 50 to 88 per cent. On the days when personal and social education lessons (the preparation for adult life course) and assemblies took place, many pupils did not arrive until half-way through the first lesson. Pupils show no sense of urgency when moving between lessons or between sites, a challenging feature of life in a two-site school. No staff are in evidence to hasten their movement except in the main foyer at the upper school. Lateness occurs after break and lunch-times. Pupils are not always challenged by teaching staff when they arrive late for lessons, and on occasion teaching staff do not arrive on time to register their tutor group or start their lesson. This sets a poor example for pupils to follow. Pupils on the upper school site do not always sign in if they are late in order to avoid being placed on a late detention. During the week of the inspection, post-registration truancy was high and attendance at afternoon registration was 20 per cent lower than in the morning in all age groups. However, there is no evidence that this was anything but an exceptional occurrence. The school is aware of the need to establish more effective systems for registering pupils' attendance and punctuality throughout the day and is looking to a computerised system to achieve this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The picture is mixed. The quality is satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of lessons, a slightly lower figure than reported at the last inspection. All the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is at least satisfactory. The weaker teaching is in Years 7 to 9, where in 13 per cent of lessons the quality is less than satisfactory, including two per cent in which the quality is poor. None-the-less, at each stage, there is good teaching or better in about two thirds of lessons, much the same as reported last time; and very good teaching or better in about a third, an improvement since the last inspection. Four of the five excellent lessons seen were in Years 7 to 9.

21. There are a number of factors contributing to this finding. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, this mostly involved experienced permanent staff; in about half these lessons, permanent teachers new to the school were involved. The pupils served by the school have a wide range of talents, but include a significant minority who experience difficulty in meeting the expectations for self-disciplined behaviour and 'fair play'. Some pupils offer extremely challenging behaviour on occasion. Many teachers handle this range of pupils' response skilfully. The systems in place to manage teaching and learning take due account of the size

of the school and its two-site operation, as well as of the need for professional development and thorough-going subject review. But the arrangements in each subject for monitoring teaching are good only in physical education and religious education; most other subjects have satisfactory arrangements. The reports on teaching included in senior staff reviews are not sharply enough focused to stimulate improvement. These circumstances lead to weaknesses being perpetuated rather than resolved. One further factor is the difficulty of recruiting mathematics teachers and the need for stronger action, responsive to need, to prevent the disruption to pupils' learning caused by a succession of supply staff.

22. Excellent teaching and learning were seen in English, art and design, history, ICT and physical education:

- *Research T. S. Eliot, 'Macavity'*. A fast-moving Year 7 lesson in English had pupils working in groups and organising themselves to meet the challenge of finishing first. Class management was very effective; pupils were encouraged not to call out while the teaching actively involved them so that it was difficult to be off-task.
- *Constructing teapots in Year 9* In art and design, the rigour of the teacher's approach raised pupils' motivation; they showed respect for the standards expected. Very good learning targets for the session were looked at during the lesson to refocus pupils' thinking. Improvements were made because of the quality of teaching and the pressure from other pupils, both reflecting the high expectations.
- *Year 10 history; the Munich Conference*. The teacher used a 'Call my Bluff' exercise to focus on key vocabulary such as 'axis' and 'appeasement'. Pupils showed enjoyment of the work and confidence in their ability to research issues independently. Their outstanding enactment of history, through a conference debate, promoted very good understanding
- *Interrogating databases in a dating agency in Year 7 ICT*. The teacher used highly effective methods to consolidate previous learning and check pupils' understanding. This involved miming and then speaking a definition. Pupils were inspired by the methods and the very clear explanations which guided them through different stages in learning. Gifted and talented pupils were provided with appropriate extension work so that they made excellent progress. Very effective support for pupils with special needs ensured that they made good progress and experienced the delight of success. Pupils responded very positively because of their excellent relationships with the teacher.
- *Year 8 sprinting in physical education*. Pupils were eager to learn. They responded immediately to the teacher's effective 'guided discovery' and excellent knowledge of the subject. The teacher's skilful observation was used to provide detailed feedback on key points of skill. The technical model presented was immaculate.

23. Nearly all the skills of teaching are judged to be at least satisfactory overall in all subjects, and often good. However, the 13 lessons in which unsatisfactory practice was observed, while affecting a minority of lessons, are nonetheless significant in their negative effect on pupils' achievement. In these lessons, the weaknesses combined to reduce the standard of teaching and learning. However, in many lessons judged to be satisfactory, one or more of these weaknesses were evident which reduced the quality from 'good'.

24. Where teaching was poor in mathematics, pupils' very poor attitudes to the subject in Year 9 stopped them learning effectively and the teacher did not intervene effectively to rectify this. For example, lateness, swearing and some feigning of an Asian accent were not followed up. Pupils did not arrive ready for work; the task was too easy and not explained clearly enough to prevent pupils losing their willingness and concentration even further. Poor teaching in science got off to a ragged start and allowed shouting out to go unchecked, so that at times the noise level was near to being intolerable. Pupils' concentration was poor; apart from six hard-working pupils, the rest of the class learnt virtually nothing. The teacher ignored clusters of boys and girls quietly chatting throughout. In French, the teacher's

management of behaviour was poor, at times resorting to shouting over the top of pupils' noise and shouting at individuals. The work was not matched to individual needs.

25. In Year 7, unsatisfactory teaching and learning in mathematics resulted in little development of skill because the pupils were not on task and the teacher did nothing to check this. On another occasion, the Year 8 mathematics session started seven minutes late and two pupils were allowed to continue to chat unchecked throughout the lesson. The school's structure for lesson planning was not followed. The teacher did not explain the aims of the work so that pupils were not aware of what they were learning. In Year 8 science, pupils were confused by imprecise instructions on the worksheet. The teacher was not confident in the topic, and when asked for clarification, did not explain. Year 9 pupils underachieved in geography because their poor attitudes prevented them from learning satisfactorily and the teacher did not establish a situation in which they could learn. In Year 7 geography, despite a late start because some pupils were late, pupils settled well to the first task. But the main work was unchallenging. In Year 9 Spanish, many pupils were late for the lesson, showing poor attitudes in response to the teacher's admonitions. They did not apply themselves to their work. In this lesson, the teacher followed the school's 'Fair Play Plan' throughout but was unable to handle the particular circumstance of pupils changing groups in mid-term. These changes involved pupils moving to groups whose work was different and at a different level of difficulty. There was very limited learning in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils' behaviour deteriorated as the lesson progressed. A Year 9 French lesson started late because of assembly. Although pupils behaved well, their learning was unsatisfactory because the work was not sufficiently challenging. In Year 7 physical education, the target skills were not learned because of lack of clear explanations and demonstrations by the teacher and some misbehaviour by pupils as a consequence.

Special needs

26. Specialist teaching is good. For example, in a Year 10 support lesson, five pupils all received targeted individual support. The support was well-matched to specific needs which were linked to examination requirements, including the calculation of volumes in mathematics and drawing graphs to represent demand and supply in business studies. A characteristic feature of the teaching of pupils withdrawn for literacy support is the good challenge provided. In one Year 7 lesson, ICT was used well to develop reading, spelling and comprehension skills. On another occasion, pupils were set a variety of challenges to develop their thinking skills. In both lessons, pupils were encouraged to persevere with challenging tasks rather than seek easier alternatives.

27. Support staff are effectively deployed. In a Year 7 history lesson, pupils worked in groups with each pupil contributing to the drawing of a castle from memory. A learning support teacher worked with one group, ensuring that pupils with special needs made a full contribution to the activity. In a Year 7 ICT lesson, the learning support assistant was effective in targeting pupils' difficulties with co-ordination so that they were able to interrogate databases and make the same progress as other pupils in the lesson. In a Year 9 science lesson, pupils changed the length of 'helicopter' wings to calculate the time taken for the 'helicopter' to fall. The learning support teacher was very effective in supporting pupils to carry out both the practical activity and the recording of results.

28. In the most effective class teaching, there is a high level of challenge for pupils with special needs. In a Year 9 history lesson, video sequences were examined in detail to help pupils gain an understanding of attitudes towards volunteering for military service in World War One. Effective management of pupils is another characteristic of effective teaching. In a Year 10 English lesson, individual pupils were well managed through the teacher's encouragement to keep them focused on lesson tasks. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, there were very clear expectations of attention and behaviour, together with good

resources for pupils that clearly established key learning points. In a Year 9 art and design lesson, questions and advice were very well directed towards individual pupils so that they made good progress in their work in sketchbooks. Teaching was less effective when the management of classes was not strong and when work was not well matched to pupils' needs. In a Year 8 Spanish lesson, work was not well matched to pupils' needs and in a Year 7 French lesson, class-management was ineffective. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, assumptions made about pupils' level of skill resulted in an unsatisfactory match of the work to their needs. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, low expectations resulted in poor behaviour and unsatisfactory learning.

Vocational courses

29. Teaching and learning were good in a Year 10 lesson in GNVQ leisure and tourism where pupils worked in groups to create and deliver presentations on marketing strategies. The focus of work and the tasks were highly appropriate to the criteria for GNVQ. They were strongly based upon real situations in the world of work. A good balance between co-operation and competition was evident and good procedures helped pupils to evaluate the work of their own and other groups. Teaching maintained a good balance between facilitating independent efforts and providing guidance on such matters as presentational skills. The quality of the presentations was enhanced by the good availability of computers with a PowerPoint program. The great majority of pupils responded well to the challenges set. This resulted in a purposeful lesson, in which pupils showed commitment to their own presentations and interest in and respect for the presentations of other groups.

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

30. Learning opportunities are satisfactory. Planning for the curriculum is satisfactory with a developing range of courses to meet the needs and interests of pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' learning is strengthened through good implementation of the literacy strategy across the school. This is not yet achieved for numeracy. Arrangements for the development and use of ICT skills across all subjects are effective. However, the curriculum is judged unsatisfactory as a whole because in Years 10 and 11 requirements are not met for all pupils to study religious education or for those pupils taking dance to receive an appropriate physical education curriculum. The issue of religious education persists from the last inspection.

31. In Years 7 to 9, the required subjects are taught with broadly appropriate allocations of time. Planning to ensure that learning builds on previous work is satisfactory overall, with strengths in English, music and physical education, and in art and design in Years 10 and 11. There are satisfactory arrangements between the school and its primary partners aimed at raising standards. However, although in the past all members of the English, mathematics and science clusters (departments) have observed literacy and numeracy teaching in primary classes, currently links are weak. This remains an issue from the last inspection. In Years 10 and 11, the range of options meets the interests and aptitudes of the majority and includes vocational courses: intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism and in art and design. All current Year 10 pupils are following an examination course in physical education.

32. Lunchtime and after-school revision classes in most subjects help pupils prepare for their GCSE examinations. Study skills are offered to pupils as part of the learning resource centres' programme. Pupils' success at GCSE is due in part to the mentoring they receive from teachers who freely volunteer their own time to give support.

Additional needs

33. School-wide provision for special needs is good with both learning support teachers and assistants deployed well. Within subject areas provision is satisfactory. Pupils who encounter the greatest difficulties are withdrawn from some lessons to work with learning support teachers who meet their literacy and other learning needs well. Both teachers and assistants are timetabled to support individual pupils in different subjects. English, mathematics and science are appropriately given priority in allocating support, together with practical subjects where some pupils have difficulties with co-ordination. Additional support is provided in Years 10 and 11 for individual pupils encountering difficulties with particular examination courses. However, the level of support available means that in some lessons pupils with behaviour difficulties are not supported adequately. Links with colleges provide individual pupils with good additional opportunities.

34. The school makes good provision for a small number of pupils who find it difficult to follow the normal curriculum. These pupils are carefully identified and receive extensive support and mentoring through the Ben Brierley Centre, a 'department' in the school. Pupils are involved in the planning of their individual timetables which may involve work-related courses in local colleges. Arrangements for gifted and talented pupils are being developed. These pupils have been identified and are able to study ten GCSE subjects, but beyond this, provision is limited.

Inclusion

35. The school is making substantial efforts to include all pupils fully in every aspect of school life. There is a clear commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum, with an emphasis on social inclusion. Both are supported well by the good relationships between all members of the school community. There is racial harmony throughout the school and good relationships between different social groups. However, in practice, there are inequalities in the day-to-day experiences of pupils. While the school is aware of the effect of staffing difficulties on particular groups of pupils, strong enough action has not been taken to rectify this, for example, in geography. The time allocations for modern foreign languages do not ensure equality of experiences for groups taking French and Spanish because the allocation is lower for Spanish.

36. There are constructive links with local primary schools, particularly in music and through the availability of the learning resource centres to primary pupils. The School Sports Co-ordinator Initiative is building very successful links through teachers from Failsworth working in local schools and a well-developed programme organised by the sports co-ordinator. It strengthens links with the local community and the business community.

Personal and social education, preparation for adult life course, careers education

37. The preparation for adult life programme is well-planned and covers the aspects of pupils' personal development that the school should provide. It is taught by form tutors. Health and sex education is taught well by a specialist team that includes community nurses. Because the lesson-time for preparation for adult life varies according to which half of the lesson is used for assembly, pupils do not receive equal access to this area of the curriculum. The quality of teaching varies considerably depending on the expertise and commitment of teachers. Some tutor groups are disadvantaged by this.

38. Careers and vocational education is satisfactory overall. Currently it is restricted to Years 10 and 11. The range of provision in Years 10 and 11 is very good, involving post-16 providers, training agencies and employers. Two weeks work experience is organised in Year 10. Tutors have received no training in careers education and this affects the quality of teaching.

Extra-curricular activities

39. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities. Most subjects provide extra study sessions to support GCSE course-work. A range of sports activities is included within the very good provision for physical education. These activities were well attended during the inspection. Provision for music is very good with a community band, school band, swing band, wind band and choir all meeting regularly. The learning resource centres on each site are well-used for study skills and other activities. ICT facilities are used frequently. A small drama club and a popular dance club meet regularly. Year 8 pupils have a social club.

Pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

40. Overall, the school provides well for pupils' personal development. There is good moral and social education and satisfactory spiritual and cultural education. The ethos of the sports college effectively supports the all-round development of individuals, but there is no policy for promoting all the four areas across subjects.

41. Religious education provides strongly for spiritual reflection in Years 7 to 9. For example in Year 8, pupils looked at experiences which change people's characters and considered their own potential for change. Such opportunities are absent in Years 10 and 11. In English, the study of poetry on such subjects as bereavement and the wonders of nature, explores a range of human emotions. Other subjects develop pupils' appreciation of their personal insights on life, except for science, design technology and geography, where opportunities are missed. The school is not providing a daily act of collective worship. The aim of the sports college is to create a culture of success that raises pupils' self-esteem and celebrates their achievements through displays around the school and awards at presentation evenings. It provides a positive atmosphere, with an emphasis on self-belief and respect for others, in which pupils can grow and flourish.

42. The school promotes pupils' moral development well across the curriculum. In the absence of a daily assembly, the school has devised a programme of 'Thoughts for the Day'; the thought for each week is prominently displayed around the school. Morning registrations start on the moral note these provide. However, the way the 'Thought' is handled varies from teachers simply reading it and passing on quickly to pastoral matters, to teachers engaging pupils in thought-provoking discussion. Assemblies develop the moral themes effectively, such as the Year 9 and 10 assemblies, which demonstrated with humour the need for friends' help and advice when it comes to fathers' parenting. The 'Fair Play Plan' states clearly the expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most teachers reinforce the rules positively through the system of rewards and sanctions.

43. The school does much for pupils' social development. In many subjects, the style of teaching gives opportunities for social interaction through work in pairs and small groups. Drama strongly promotes interpersonal skills and teamwork is essential in physical education. In lessons on preparation for adult life, pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They practise democracy through electing representatives to the year councils and to the school/sports council. The meeting observed was a model of efficient organisation and thorough preparation and resulted in purposeful discussion. It included a report on Year 8's litter campaign. The council decides which charities to support and there is a good response from pupils, raising over £1700 in the current year for Christie's hospital and the mayor's appeal for disadvantaged children.

44. Opportunities for cultural development are satisfactory. There is a strong sporting culture in the school and over half the pupils participate in a wide range of after-school sports activities. Over a hundred pupils are travelling to Spain with teams in the coming summer. Music offers a full programme of extra-curricular bands, choirs and music workshops and has a record of successful competition in the borough's Schools' Music Festival. Drama and dance clubs are well attended, the latter including opportunities for Asian dance. There is good provision for cultural visits in English, art and design and modern languages. However, there is scope for developing further the opportunities for multicultural education. Such cultural links as exist are connected with sport, for example, the physical education department has established close links with a school in Ghana and collects trainers for its pupils. The lack of religious education for all in Years 10 and 11 restricts the extent to which the school is able to promote religious tolerance and understanding of different cultural traditions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. There are satisfactory procedures overall for child protection and pupils' welfare, within which the specific arrangements for child protection are good. The school has suitable arrangements for children in the care of the local authority. Satisfactory health and safety arrangements are in place. However there are significant concerns that the school needs to address.

- The lack of a crossing on the main road between the two sites puts pupils at risk. This was pointed out at the previous inspection and followed up by the school, although not successfully.
- Inadequate supervision of pupils travelling on the path between the two sites at lesson-change and at lunchtime.
- The lack of systems to ensure that the whereabouts of all pupils are known by the school.

46. The support and guidance that pupils receive are satisfactory. Pupils' transfer from primary school is managed effectively. Pupils settle quickly in Year 7 and feel well supported in their early days in school. The special needs co-ordinator maintains strong links with primary schools. Pupils are tested on entry to Year 7 and in subsequent years, and the information is used well to assess individual needs and plan provision. Those identified as having literacy difficulties, or whose social skills need developing, are given extra support through early morning sessions in the learning resource centre. Preparation for pupils' choice of direction post-16 are good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a good programme of careers education that prepares them well for making decisions about their future career options. The links with Connexions (careers advice), further education colleges and training agencies support the school well in this area of its work.

47. Pupils' academic performance and personal development are unsatisfactorily monitored because the good system set up is not being put into practice consistently. Within individual subjects, the monitoring is satisfactory overall, with weakness in modern languages and good arrangements in English, mathematics, geography, ICT, music and religious education. Reviews of the progress of pupils with special needs are thorough and include regular checks of their subject targets. However, these targets vary in quality and sometimes add little to the general targets in pupils' individual education plans.

48. The procedure for recording pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory and does not meet requirements. There are no systems in place to ensure that the school knows the whereabouts of all of its pupils throughout the day. The formal register is not taken at the beginning of the morning session as required, but at the beginning of the first lesson; the school's procedures do not formally identify a time for the closure of registers. The procedures in the upper school for latecomers in Years 9 to 11 to sign in are often not

followed by pupils.

49. Good behaviour is promoted and monitored well by the school's procedures. The range of rewards for good work and behaviour is valued by pupils. An annual awards day for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and their parents is a celebration of success. An achievement day is held for Year 11 and there is a sports presentation evening for the whole school. The 'Fair Play Plan', based on the yellow and red card system, is easily understood by pupils. Pupils know what is considered acceptable behaviour and the sanctions that will be applied if they misbehave. Referrals to the remove room are planned in advance, supervised by senior staff and monitored. The Ben Brierley Centre is contributing effectively to provision. There is a clear approach to tackling bullying, although it is not consistently applied by all staff. Pupils are clear about what action to take if incidents occur.

Assessment

50. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment. In all years, these are good in geography, history, ICT, music and religious education. Otherwise, procedures are satisfactory, although in art and design, modern languages and physical education they are good in Years 10 and 11. In addition to meeting the requirement to assess pupils' standards at the end of Year 9, there is regular testing in most subjects. There has been good improvement in the way the results are recorded, with almost all subjects now making reference to National Curriculum levels. These records are the basis of the ten-weekly reviews. Assessment is handled best in Years 10 and 11, because in most subjects staff have developed expertise in meeting examination requirements.

51. There is some inconsistency between subjects in the way in which use is made of the information available from assessments, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The school is not making use of its procedures to evaluate, school-wide, whether teaching and learning are helping pupils to make enough progress. Its systems for ensuring that information from pupils' assessments is available in a useful and accessible form for each class and each year group, and for checking that this is achieved, are not yet working smoothly.

52. Since the last inspection, there is good improvement in the arrangements for assessment to support the progress of individual pupils. However, the information gained from pupils' results and assessments is not being used sufficiently to check that planning for subjects is appropriately matched to pupils' needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Ten parents attended the meeting before the inspection and ten per cent of parents completed the questionnaire on parents' views. Their views show that they are generally satisfied with what the school provides.

54. Links with parents are good. Pastoral staff ensure that regular contact is established with parents of pupils who are causing concern. Letters of congratulation are sent home to celebrate pupils' achievements. Good information is provided for parents about their child's progress. The ten-weekly progress checks give parents an evaluation of their children's attitude to work and the level they are working at compared with their predicted standard. However, annual reports on children's progress are not equally helpful across all subjects. Some do not make clear to parents what their children have studied, how they are getting on and what they need to do to improve their work. The prospectus is well produced and inviting, but there are some omissions from the required contents of the governors' annual report.

55. A range of 'Partnership Evenings' (parents' meetings) for pupils and their parents is held during the year at which the attendance is very good. These include an annual consultation evening for parents to discuss their child's progress with subject staff; a 'settling-in' evening with tutors in the Autumn term and an evening focused on choice of GCSE options and post-16 provision. This is a very good feature of the school's work. There is good attendance at the workshops aimed at helping parents understand what their child is learning and how they can help them. For example, a workshop on revision helped parents to set a sensible revision timetable with their child. Links are good with parents of pupils with special needs. Parents are invited to the twice-yearly reviews of progress.

56. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning. Most willingly collaborate with the school to resolve any difficulties that occur. Many parents actively support the school in a variety of ways, not just in fund-raising. For example, they support school events, help with school drama productions, accompany school trips and transport pupils to after-school events. The majority of parents ensure that both homework and coursework are completed to meet deadlines. However, a significant minority does not ensure that children are punctual to school. By contrast, parents have contributed effectively to the improved attendance rate.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The school's development since the last inspection reflects the strong leadership of the headteacher and chair of governors and their vision of strengthened educational opportunity for the local community and raised aspirations among young people and their families. The sports college initiative is central in providing a framework of values and opportunities to realise this vision. Every opportunity is currently being taken to achieve the next stage of the vision for Failsworth's future.

58. Management by the headteacher and other key staff is good overall. The systems for managing this very large school, operating on two sites, take appropriate account of the challenge of achieving effective communication and exercise of responsibility. Both of these are supported by the grouping of subjects and pastoral areas of work into clusters involving similarly sized groups of staff. In practice, the effectiveness of clusters as a strategy for quality assurance varies. It is affected, for example, by the range of subject disciplines or range of responsibilities represented. There is a lack of clarity about the delegated responsibilities of senior staff and some weakness in the school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness. The feel is not so much of clear delegation and accountability but of 'being left to get on with it', although often with strong support at a personal level. This gap in management systems was shown, for example, in the decision taken in modern languages to change pupils' groups. Senior staff did not learn of this until a parent contacted the school.

59. Now in its second cycle, there is an established monitoring, evaluation and review procedure. Well-written and well-presented reports show thorough professional observation of teaching and management in a cluster, with the range of practice recorded in detail. Each report is a major agenda item for the governors' curriculum committee. However, the potential value of the process as a tool for raising pupils' standards and achievement is weakened in two ways. First, the evaluations of each review do not give unequivocally clear and sharply focused judgements about the weaknesses needing to be tackled in teaching and management. Second, the review cycle lasts over too long a period of time to achieve momentum in change and development if interim measures are not planned. Monitoring, evaluation and review procedures should have resulted in effective monitoring of all areas of work by managers of and within clusters to achieve equally good provision across this very large school, the process itself serving as professional development for staff. However, the quality of the 'monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching' is judged to be no better

than satisfactory overall, while good in physical education and religious education and unsatisfactory in modern languages. The school is rightly dissatisfied with the monitoring, evaluation and review procedure as it stands and is reviewing the arrangements.

60. The governing body works tirelessly for the school within its local community. Governors show enthusiasm and commitment and carry out their responsibilities well. Minutes of meetings are of high quality and an interesting read, showing thorough consideration of issues and strategic planning to effect improvements. However, not all statutory requirements are met: for the curriculum in physical education and religious education, for collective worship and for the contents of the governors' annual report to parents. The vision for Failsworth shared by the chair of governors and the headteacher very firmly underpins all the governing body's deliberations. There is a strong determination to use all the school's funding, which is high, for pupils 'now', and confident and efficient financial management to bring this about. The finance and premises committee rigorously scrutinises all items of under- and over-spend. Spending on buildings and grounds is relatively high which is not surprising given the very poor state of some parts of the building, but which is also reflected in good recent refurbishment, for example of the learning resource centre on each site. The spending on administrative staff is relatively high. This is partly in response to the demands of a two-site school and the community's involvement in the sports college initiative. It also aims to relieve teaching staff from administrative tasks which are not essential for them to carry out. While there is evidence of effective and supportive work by administrative staff, the school's procedures that they service need sharpening, particularly for attendance.

61. There is good attention to issues of best value. For example, cost, value and quality have been key criteria in taking on the management of catering. The school works closely with other schools in the local education authority to compare levels of provision and consider relative achievements. From its own analyses and consideration of national data, the school has a clear understanding of the areas of underachievement. However, although in relation to long-term objectives the demands the school makes of itself are high, there is insufficient demand to ensure that day-to-day provision is equally good for all pupils all of the time. There was consultation with staff, governors and parents about the recent change to the school day.

62. Provision for special needs is managed well and the involvement of curriculum areas in progress reviews ensures a school-wide approach to special needs. Governors are appropriately involved. The special needs co-ordinator keeps staff fully informed, meeting regularly with key groups. There is good progress in implementing the revised code of practice. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

63. Staffing is satisfactory overall. Generally, there are enough well-qualified teachers to teach the subjects on the curriculum. In many subjects, the experience and expertise of staff are having a positive effect on learning. However, in mathematics, continuity in learning has been affected by the high turnover of teachers, a consequence of difficulties in recruitment. In geography, long-term absence of teachers in the recent past has caused disruption, one class in particular having a very large number of temporary teachers. The situation was not managed effectively enough to minimise the effects on pupils' learning. For example, by ensuring that specialist full-time staff take responsibility for planning, monitoring and 'delivering' lessons across all classes or combined groups, while temporary or non-specialist staff undertake a supervisory role in other sessions, supported by senior staff. Technical support is sound in science, design and technology and physical education, but there is a lack of technical support for art and design and this is unsatisfactory. There are sufficient learning support assistants to work with pupils with special needs. Lunchtime supervisors have received useful training in behaviour management, but none in dealing with issues of

child protection and this is unsatisfactory. There is a good programme to support newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. The school provides a good environment for initial teacher training.

64. The required procedures for performance management are followed; the first cycle, over 18 months, is not yet complete. Effective professional development is provided for the staff as a whole. For example, the effects of the sessions on literacy can be clearly seen in lessons. However, the arrangements for individual staff are not always firmly linked to the school's development plan. Teachers evaluate the courses they attend, but there is no procedure for monitoring the effects of training on the quality of teaching and learning.

65. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The school has a better than average supply of computers to which pupils have good access. In art and design there is a very good range of artefacts to support multicultural understanding and computers are used effectively. In music, computers are used very effectively for composition and the department has a mixing desk to extend the interest and range of work pupils undertake. The good range of orchestral instruments, including pitched and unpitched percussion, is helpful in raising pupils' expectations in practical lessons.

66. Systematic improvements are being made to the school's buildings, notable among them the refurbishment of the learning resources centres on each site, although these are too small. The range of accommodation for physical education is very good. There are adverse effects on pupils' learning in the arts block. The rooms for art and design have an unacceptable level of heat-gain in good weather and a music room cannot be fully used in wet weather because the roof leaks. The use of the sports hall on the upper school site is restricted in wet weather while the school waits for the solution in the next phase of building for sports. There are insufficient specialist geography rooms in the school, two at the upper school and one at the lower school. All the geography staff teach in different rooms across the school which are at a distance from the humanities centre. Specialist resources have to be transported for each lesson as storage is inadequate, with adverse effects on lesson activities. The design and technology block is out-of-date and the external fabric of the building in very poor repair. Accommodation for drama lacks specialist equipment such as lighting. Overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory.

67. The learning resource centres in the upper and lower schools are a great asset to pupils' learning in a wide range of subjects. They are extensively used by teachers to plan and deliver lessons. For example, pupils use the centre in religious education lessons to design and make board games to help them learn about different faiths such as Buddhism. The seniority of Year 11 pupils is recognised by the provision of light refreshments when they stay on Friday evening to extend their study. Morning clubs are supported by teachers who contribute specialist expertise, such as drama. Pupils are welcomed into the centres to study during lunchtimes and do so enthusiastically because they are supported well. These centres are managed very well and are much appreciated by staff and pupils. The school acknowledges that it has fewer books than usual but there is ongoing replacement and addition. Teachers are consulted about new books and existing provision so that range and quality are being continuously improved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. To substantially strengthen the school's realisation of its vision for the achievement of the young people it serves, the headteacher and the governing body should give rigorous and focused attention to the following priorities for action.

- (1) Improve results in GCSE examinations further by:
 - ensuring that the management of subjects and pastoral clusters is carried out to an equally good standard across the school
 - ensuring that senior managers and heads of clusters and subjects have a thorough and detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning in the areas of their responsibility
 - ensuring that the quality of Year 9 teacher assessments is as good as the quality of assessments for GCSE
 - ensuring that the marking of work gives specific advice about how to make improvements
 - strengthening the systems for tracking pupils' progress to ensure that trends can be rigorously scrutinised, for example, in relation to attendance
 - improving punctuality and improving attendance further.

(Paragraphs: 1, 2, 5, 21, 23, 48, 52, 58, 59, 70-73, 76, 79, 83, 85-88, 91, 93, 97-100, 103, 104, 106, 107, 115-117, 120, 123-126, 130, 147, 148, 152, 154, 165, 173)

- (2) Strengthen the management systems to ensure that equally good provision is made across the school through:
 - deploying the senior management team so that it is able to have an up-to-date knowledge of the quality of provision across the school
 - ensuring that the job descriptions of all staff with a management role make clear their routine responsibilities and accountability for quality assurance
 - implementing routine procedures to ensure that members of the leadership team are able to exercise their responsibility for the cluster(s) with which they are aligned
 - implementing a school-wide programme of sharply focused monitoring to ensure that weaknesses are picked up and timely action taken to bring about improvement.

(Paragraphs: 2, 7, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 35, 37, 38, 47-49, 51, 52, 54, 58-61, 103, 125, 130, 148, 149, 151, 152)

- (3) Improve teaching in Years 7 to 9 through:
 - sharply focused monitoring of lessons and pupils' work to identify where support and professional development are needed, so that targets and timeframes for improvement can be set and regularly reviewed
 - ensuring that thorough attention is given to inducting all staff new to the school into the procedures for registration, the fair play plan, lesson-planning, marking and assessment, particularly temporary and supply staff
 - ensuring that suitably challenging work is planned for pupils' different levels of attainment
 - ensuring consistent quality in teachers' management of pupils' behaviour across the year groups.

(Paragraphs: 2, 7, 21, 23-25, 28, 51, 59, 64, 91-94, 96, 101, 103, 120, 127, 135, 135, 148, 151, 152, 154, 175)

- (4) Improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour in Years 7 to 9 by:
- ensuring that teaching is consistently good across the school
 - ensuring that the fair play plan is implemented by all staff
 - building on the successful mentoring programme now in place to support vulnerable pupils
 - building on the successful partnership with parents.
- (Paragraphs: 7, 14, 21, 24, 28, 33, 75, 81, 89, 91, 99, 101, 109, 110, 118, 119, 126, 150, 154, 177, 178)
- (5) Achieve satisfactory punctuality by:
- implementing registration procedures as required
 - raising expectations about time-management across the school
 - continuing to work with families to make improvement.
- (Paragraphs: 19, 48, 56, 60, 89, 153)
- (6) Meet requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and seek a solution for meeting fully the requirements for physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- (Paragraphs: 30, 60, 169, 173, 174, 180)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	151
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	39	51	43	10	3	0
Percentage	3	26	34	28	7	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - 11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1447
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	238

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	202

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	159	130	289

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	96	79
	Girls	86	68	64
	Total	173	164	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (52)	57 (62)	49 (45)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (11)	28 (31)	12 (17)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	85	51
	Girls	58	71	41
	Total	121	156	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (14)	54 (53)	32 (53)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (1)	30 (28)	9 (22)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	146	126	272

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	57	125	132
	Girls	46	108	115
	Total	103	233	247
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (35)	86 (88)	92 (94)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.2 (31.5)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	38
Indian	7
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	1386
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	13	1
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	2	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	183	2
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 - 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	91.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Education support staff: Y7 – 11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	599

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – 11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – 11

Key Stage 3	26.7
Key Stage 4	21.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4 170 661
Total expenditure	4 166 734
Expenditure per pupil	2 920
Balance brought forward from previous year	32 541
Balance carried forward to next year	36 468

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	33
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	41

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	10
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1447
Number of questionnaires returned	151

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	58	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	3	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	43	11	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	52	19	7	2
The teaching is good.	27	55	8	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	37	19	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	45	7	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	48	18	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	34	49	5	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	55	4	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	34	6	1	1

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Lessons planned well so that most pupils make good progress
- Very good management of behaviour and learning in nearly all lessons
- Good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Good leadership of a team of teachers, many with other school responsibilities.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of strong strategies for improving girls' attainment
- Not all pupils are given individual learning targets or advice on how to reach them:
- The need to strengthen strategies for reducing the disaffection of a significant minority of pupils
- Links with the 'partner' primary schools not effective enough.

69. At the time of the inspection, one of the full-time teachers of English was on long-term absence due to illness. The timetable was reorganised to ensure that specialist teachers taught examination classes.

70. By Year 11, standards are below average overall. Higher attainers produce work of a quality expected by the highest grades at GCSE. Achievement over Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Most pupils listen well to the teacher in class discussions and generally show respect for each other's views. Few give extended answers at first, however, although teachers' further questioning draws out more complex ideas from pupils in the higher teaching groups. Year 10 PowerPoint presentations on witchcraft in 'Macbeth' show above average understanding of the themes in the play. Higher attainers write detailed and perceptive commentaries on the poems, novels and plays that they study. In media studies, many analyse the way in which different papers present the news; they show how newspaper articles, such as one by Polly Toynbee on animal experimentation, make use of layout and illustration to back up the persuasive text. The comments by the majority of pupils show sound understanding of themes and content in poetry and prose, but less appreciation of the author's use of language and imagery. Written work is generally presented well, and final drafts are often capably word-processed.

71. In GCSE examinations in 2001, pupils' results were below the national average in English but close to the average in English literature. Since 1997, there has been a steady rise in the results achieved in both subjects, particularly by boys.

72. By Year 9, pupils are working at a broadly average standard and their achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good. However, the work in Year 8 is at a below average standard. The speaking and listening skills shown by the majority of boys and girls in Year 7 are average. Although pupils express themselves clearly, they rarely extend their ideas beyond simple phrases or statements, except when doing a planned presentation. They are generally better at listening to the teacher than they are at listening to each other. In one Year 7 lesson, pupils used dictionaries very effectively to check out the meanings of words used in 'Macavity'. In another, several pupils read aloud at sight from 'When the Whales Came' with clarity and expression. Higher attainers write above average responses to challenging literature such as

'Beowulf' and the Greek myths, putting themselves in the shoes of the main characters. Most pupils show sound understanding of the plot and characters in the books they read. Those with special needs make effective use of 'spidergrams' and frameworks for writing to help them organise their responses to the varied literature that all pupils study. By Year 9, higher attainers write mature essays on demanding themes such as bereavement and mass hysteria. Much of pupils' original writing is lively, although a minority still finds spelling, paragraphing and punctuation difficult. When writing for different purposes and readers, many pupils can adopt an appropriate style and tone. Their studies of the images on film show good understanding of the techniques used for presenting sports on television and in the trailers for popular films.

73. The standards seen reflect the Year 9 test results in English in 2001, when boys' results in particular were close to the national average. In 2001, the test results in mathematics were below average and in science they were well below average. Over recent years, there has been a steady and significant rise in the results of both boys and girls.

74. Across Years 7 to 11, good progress is made by pupils with special needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language. They learn well as a result of the good teaching. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged well and write mature essays.

75. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory overall, but there are significant variations between classes in Years 9 and 10. In most classes, particularly those for higher attainers, there is a good level of interest and commitment to work. However, there are several classes in which the negative attitude of a significant minority of pupils makes the work of the teacher and other pupils unreasonably difficult. Where this occurs, teachers have to spend too much time on managing the attention-seeking and challenging behaviour of a minority. As a consequence, all the pupils make less progress than the carefully planned and presented lessons should achieve, in spite of the teachers' best efforts. A further factor that reduces progress in some classes is the small number of girls, who are less ready to contribute to class discussion or offer answers when they are in the minority. Where the numbers of boys and girls are well balanced, there is more opportunity for both to participate and to learn from each other.

76. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and in more than a third of lessons the quality was very good or excellent. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, which gives pupils confidence in their teaching. Lessons are well-planned and provide a sequence of activities that builds on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. Very good management of learning and behaviour creates a good working atmosphere, even when a significant minority of pupils is unwilling to co-operate. Nevertheless, relationships between teachers and pupils are usually good-humoured and purposeful. Teachers know their pupils well, and provide individual help and appropriate tasks for those with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language, ensuring that they make good progress. Pupils' books are marked regularly with encouraging comments, although specific advice on how to make improvements is rarely given. As a result, some pupils continue to make basic errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation.

77. English is led and managed well. The large team of well-qualified teachers shares a very clear sense of direction and a strong commitment to improving standards. The scheme of work incorporates the detailed study of language encouraged by the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are encouraged to use the same organised approach to coursework that is required by the GCSE examination. By providing all pupils with a rich and varied diet of literature and language in various forms, including non-fiction and the media, the subject makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. The performance of individual pupils and groups is tracked well and parents receive detailed information about their children's achievement. There are two suites of English rooms, one on each site. The accommodation is well-furnished and good display celebrates pupils' work and helps to reinforce their understanding of the technical vocabulary of the subject. Resources are of a good quality; video players, the school's ICT facilities and the learning resource centres are used well for work in the subject.

78. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Drama

79. Since 1997, drama has been a popular subject in Years 10 and 11 for both boys and girls. Results at GCSE until 2000 were consistently above average. Following several changes in staffing, the results in 2001 were below average overall, average for boys but below average for girls. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 10 are below average, although the progress in the lesson was good. When working in whole-class activities, the pupils reach an average standard in their awareness of each other after practice. When working in smaller groups, however, pupils co-operate less well and find it difficult to take the initiative in exploring a script. Generally, the girls read aloud at sight with more expression than boys. Most pupils can make some deductions about the meaning and purpose of the lines in a complex script. By the end of a double lesson, pupils' performance shows much improvement.

80. By Year 9 standards are average. Year 9 pupils in one class, designing a set for 'Homebird', showed sound understanding of basic theatrical vocabulary. They came up with an ingenious solution to the problem of frequent changes of scene. In another Year 9 class, where pupils were improvising a short story, they improved their performance through self-evaluation, helped by the constructive comments of others. In Year 8, higher attainers presented a dramatisation of 'The Car Trip' in which they used voice, gesture and facial expression to good effect. Year 7 pupils portrayed sand-sculptures based on 'The Ancient Mariner' that made very good use of sound-effects and silence.

81. Teaching is good, and often very good. Firm insistence on the disciplines of studio drama encourages the pupils to work together well and helps them to make progress. Good planning and carefully chosen resources enable pupils to build effectively on their previous experience and knowledge. Because the teachers have good expertise in their subject they provide good models for their pupils. Their comments on pupils' work are constructive and challenging, and led to the level of performance being raised in all the lessons seen. When pupils make suggestions, these are always seriously considered, so that they feel able to take risks and develop their own ideas. Evaluation, central to drama activities, is encouraged well. Most pupils respond well to the good standard of teaching; they are starting to take the subject seriously and enjoy it. If they do not behave well, teachers use the fair play plan effectively to maintain a good working atmosphere.

82. Drama is led and managed well and makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. However, the accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory. Lessons are timetabled in spaces which lack the lighting, staging and wardrobe facilities necessary for the study of stagecraft.

Literacy

83. For several years the school has recognised the importance of developing literacy skills through all subjects in the curriculum. Good provision is now made in most subjects. Speaking and listening are particularly well encouraged in modern languages and drama, where pupils show growing confidence in expressing their thoughts and feelings through the spoken word. Paired discussion and sharing of tasks are often included in ICT lessons. In

history and religious education, there are very good group-discussion activities that culminate in presentations to the class. The key words needed in the study of design and technology, ICT and physical education are displayed well and in most lessons, teachers actively encourage their accurate use. Research projects in history and ICT help to develop pupils' independent reading skills and their use of CD-ROMs and the Internet as sources of information. In some subjects, pupils are helped to organise their work through outlines for writing, although these are not always adapted for different levels of attainment. Note-taking is an integral part of learning activities in science and ICT. The range of writing includes letters and newspaper articles in history, and persuasive pieces in media studies. Except in English and design and technology, marking does not focus sufficiently on spelling, grammar and punctuation.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The perseverance displayed in the face of severe staffing difficulties
- Effective mathematical investigations.

Areas for improvement

- Less teaching which is good or better than in most other subjects
- Teachers' lack of knowledge of what Year 7 pupils learnt in their primary schools.

84. Since September 2000, the school has experienced considerable difficulty in filling a number of teaching posts. Although no class has been left without a teacher, some appointments have been temporary and some classes have been taught by non-specialists. One consequence has been that some pupils have had many changes of teacher. Another is that managerial time has been diverted to attend to this issue at the expense of some further development of the subject.

85. Standards of work by Year 11 are below average. The highest attaining pupils in Year 11 apply trigonometry in three dimensions. They factorise quadratic equations, but are not confident in applying their knowledge to more extended problems. There are more boys with above average attainment than there are girls. Pupils of average attainment know the angle properties of parallel lines and they can calculate the area and circumference of circles. But their graphical skills are unsatisfactory and they are only competent at the earliest stages of algebra. These pupils experience difficulties carrying out an investigation to its conclusion. Lower attainers perform simple transformations but do not use vectors. They can substitute values into a linear formula. They have a limited understanding of 'significant figures' when rounding numbers, but do not fully understand powers.

86. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grade C or above, and the average points score was below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade was average, although a higher proportion did not take GCSE than was true nationally. For boys, the proportion gaining a higher grade was considerably higher than that for girls. Over recent years, results at the higher grades have risen faster than they have nationally, but the proportion of pupils gaining a grade has fallen, while nationally this figure has risen. The average points per pupil have risen at the national rate.

87. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen are below average. Higher attainers apply Pythagoras' theorem and can use standard form. They know how to calculate the range of a set of data and understand the different averages. These pupils can change the

subject of a formula and know the difference between dependent and independent events for probability. However, they cannot yet factorise quadratic equations. Pupils of average attainment are beginning to use algebra. Lower attainers still have difficulties with basic arithmetic operations and are only just beginning to develop the skill of reading tables. These standards reflect the results of the national tests in 2001 which were below average. However, over the last five years, results in these tests have risen faster than the national rate. There is no difference between boys' and girls' standards, either in work seen or in national tests.

88. When pupils enter Year 7, their attainment is below average. Their achievement is satisfactory because these standards are sustained as they move up the school. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress because they are taught in smaller groups and teachers set appropriate work for them. The school has only recently identified pupils with special gifts in mathematics. No special programme has yet been devised for them, although a small number of activities has been organised for these pupils. They make satisfactory progress. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils.

89. Pupils show satisfactory attitudes towards mathematics. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory. In some classes, pupils are keen and eager to learn, listening attentively both to the teacher and other pupils. They are confident about contributing to class discussions. In these lessons, pupils' attitudes contribute significantly to their learning. In other lessons, pupils arrive late, apparently for no good reason. They indulge in talk unconnected with their work and do not appreciate the need to work quickly. On occasion, a minority show very poor attitudes to their work. In a small proportion of lessons the behaviour of one or two pupils disrupts the learning of others. Many pupils arrive at lessons without the books or equipment that they know they will need. While many pupils show great pride in their work through its presentation, a similar number present their work untidily and do not take care of books.

90. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In a third of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better, and in one lesson, the quality was very good. However, in a quarter of lessons, teaching was less than satisfactory and was poor in one of these. The best teaching is not confined to mathematics specialists, while specialists teach some unsatisfactory lessons. Good teaching moves forward at a lively pace and challenges the pupils appropriately. One teacher captivated the interests of Year 8 pupils by playing the role of a factory worker when introducing an investigation. Not only did this amuse the class but also helped them to gain a good understanding of what they were to investigate. In this class they confidently formed and tested hypotheses of high quality.

91. Some teachers use assessments well so that pupils know exactly what they have achieved and what they should concentrate upon to improve. Pupils respond positively to this information and their work improves. Other teachers do not mark work frequently enough, or give pupils enough information on what is good about their work and how to improve. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of a wide range of resources for pupils working individually, for groups and for the full class. These lessons make good use of discussion and descriptive writing so that pupils not only develop their mathematical skills but also those of writing, speaking and listening. Some teachers rely far too heavily on the textbook so there is little variety to lessons. A Year 8 group were given work from a textbook on proportions which was too difficult for them. Although they could read the words in the textbook, they did not understand some of the vocabulary and could not work out what the book asked them to do. Many exercise books do not have spelling errors identified by the teacher. The best lessons all feature pupils using their mathematical skills to find things out. This leads to pupils

extending their mathematical knowledge. Some teachers do not challenge unsatisfactory behaviour and so pupils' learning is disrupted and pace and productivity lost.

92. Learning, including the learning by pupils with special needs, is satisfactory. Pupils learn best when they understand why they are doing the work. Year 7 pupils learnt why smaller units of measurement are used by measuring a floppy disk. They could see that the disk was not a square, but the length and the breadth were the same when they measured in centimetres. Pupils respond well to investigations. They enjoy testing out their ideas and rapidly develop their skills of thinking. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities for such work. The learning of some classes has been impaired by many changes of teacher.

93. The mathematics cluster (department) is managed satisfactorily. Of necessity, much managerial time has been taken in attempting to mitigate the effects of staff changes and difficulties in recruitment. This situation has continued for well over two years. The measures have been partly successful in that no class has been without a teacher. However, the management has not spent time developing consistent practice between teachers and enabling good practice to be shared.

94. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. Standards have risen. An improved scheme of work has been produced and this is now linked to the assessment of pupils. Teachers now assess pupils' work more accurately. However, some teachers have inappropriate expectations of what pupils should be able to do. In some lessons, teachers set work which requires skills that pupils have not yet learnt. Other teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently. After the last inspection, links were established with primary schools, but these have not been sustained. Consequently, teachers of Year 7 classes do not know what pupils have learnt before the age of 11. This means they cannot plan appropriate work for their lessons.

Numeracy

95. The strategies for developing pupils' numeracy skills are unsatisfactory. The school does not have a policy for using and developing numeracy throughout all subjects. A post to develop this work has recently been established and there are definite plans for all teachers to be trained about teaching numeracy before the end of the school year.

96. In some subjects, pupils do have good opportunities to practice and develop their numerical skills. In science, they draw graphs of the results of experiments and then develop the skill of interpreting this information. They gain good practice in using formulae, for example in calculating molecular mass and rates of acceleration. In design and technology, pupils practice the need to measure accurately. In other subjects, including art and design and modern languages, teachers are not yet aware of the contribution their subject can make to the development of pupils' numeracy.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good subject leadership
- Improving GCSE results
- Thorough preparation of pupils for scientific investigations.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of challenge for the most able pupils
- Lack of curricular links with primary schools
- Marking lacks targets and guidance to help pupils improve their work
- Unsatisfactory provision of fume cupboards.

97. Standards of work are below average by the end of Year 11. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils have good experimental skills. For example, in an investigation of the conditions which affect the rate of reaction between marble and hydrochloric acid, all Year 11 pupils can plan and record their results well. Higher attainers give a detailed evaluation of their investigation and suggest how it might be improved. This careful attention to investigative work and a well-structured revision programme, along with timetabling experienced teachers for Years 10 to 11, contribute to the good achievement by the end of Year 11. Lower attainers in Year 10 know the position and shape of the kidneys and their role in cleaning blood. The progress made by pupils with special needs is satisfactory. Higher attainers are underachieving, however, because teaching is not sufficiently matched to their needs.

98. GCSE results for double award science were below average in 2001, but have improved steadily over the last three years. However, proportions achieving the highest grades are well below average. Departmental analysis shows that some higher attainers in Year 10 are currently working at a lower grade than the predicted grade from their prior attainment. Girls do slightly better than boys. The small group of pupils entered for single award science in 2001 did slightly better than expected. Results in science are similar to those in English and mathematics.

99. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below average. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. Higher attainers in Year 7 cope easily with aspects of work at an average standard, but have insufficient opportunities to do extension work to challenge them to achieve higher levels. The notebooks of lower attainers have many gaps. When there is learning support from an assistant in lessons, pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. Weak teaching in some Year 7 and 8 lessons hinders progress. Results of practical work are summarised orally but there is no strategy to ensure that pupils have a correct record of their conclusions. Written exercises on radiation do not challenge pupils. In one lesson, poor management of pupils' behaviour meant that only a few pupils concentrated on the tasks set. In Year 9, lessons do not provide sufficiently challenging work for pupils in the higher attaining groups. For example, in work on food chains and on the particulate nature of matter, there were no questions which required pupils to think about the concepts involved. Marking does not always guide pupils adequately on how to improve their work. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils.

100. In 2001, the Year 9 test results were well below average compared with all other schools. Boys performed better than girls. These results show unsatisfactory achievement compared with pupils' standards when they joined the school. Results in science are below those in English and mathematics. Standards in basic skills and in ICT are satisfactory.

101. Pupils show good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons, but where teaching in Years 7 and 8 is less strong, or there is temporary, cover or supply teaching, pupils are sometimes inattentive and on some occasions, misbehave. Pupils work well in small groups during practical work; they follow the directions given and behave well, although they are sometimes noisy. In several lessons where differing tasks were allocated based on pupils' attainment, the pupils worked well, sometimes on their own initiative.

102. In Years 7 to 9, overall, teaching is satisfactory and results in satisfactory learning. Overall, most teaching is satisfactory, but the quality ranges from good or very good to a small number of unsatisfactory or poor lessons. Most teachers have good knowledge of their subject. Teaching of basic skills is satisfactory, but there is little focus on improving written English. There is no focused approach to teaching numeracy. In some Year 7 lessons, thinking skills are developed. Lesson-planning mainly follows the school's policy. The best lessons are tightly structured with excellent management of pupils and a range of tasks. This leads to high levels of interest from pupils, enthusiasm to answer questions and very good levels of concentration. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not identify the targets for learning clearly. They tolerate high noise levels during practical or group work and give insufficiently precise instructions, which lead to very poor concentration by pupils and a slow pace of work. Despite poorly managed learning, in one lesson a small group of pupils were able to learn for themselves from the textbook. Pupils with special needs learn well when a learning support teacher is present, for example to help them to collect and interpret experimental data. Gifted pupils tackled an alternative question with enthusiasm in one lesson but usually they are insufficiently challenged by the work set, so that their progress is unsatisfactory.

103. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. Teachers know their subjects well. In the best lessons, they use their expertise to design challenging tasks that promote pupils' interest and enable higher attainers to develop their understanding, for example of the factors influencing control of water levels in the body. Although planning is good, tasks are not always designed to enable the highest attaining pupils to achieve well. This is exacerbated by the large numbers in the highest groups. The management of pupils is good and in the better lessons, very good working relationships between teachers and pupils lead to high levels of interest and concentration. Good pace in lessons ensures that pupils' concentration is maintained. Pupils know the level of their work relative to examination requirements but are unclear what they need to do to gain higher marks. Where there are small groups, this helps teachers to match work for lower levels of attainment. Consequently, pupils with special needs learn well at this stage. However, absence and gaps in notebooks adversely affect continuity of learning. In general, teachers set homework regularly, but it is not sufficiently focused. For example, a task of 'find out about photosynthesis' can cause some pupils to be daunted by the task and others to be confused by the detail that their search produces. While teachers mark work regularly and give helpful assessments of the level of work, praising where appropriate, they give little guidance on how to improve work.

104. Leadership and management are good. The head of subject has raised staff morale and implemented a strategy to raise achievement successfully. She and the co-ordinator for Years 7 to 9 have a strong commitment to the school, a clear vision of how to improve the department, and have utilised a range of strategies to improve teaching and learning. They are currently not receiving sufficient support from senior managers to enable them to resolve staffing difficulties. For example, there is insufficient time for sharing good practice and for developing links with feeder schools; planning lessons in the absence of staff and working

with a number of supply teachers is taking unacceptable amounts of time. The time allocated to science in Years 10 to 11 has recently been decreased and now is lower than the recommended allocation. Excellent individual records of attainment and calculation of added value are available. However, there is insufficient analysis by whole year group, for example according to gender and ethnicity, or to identify which attainment groups are underachieving. Lessons do not routinely plan for inclusion and on occasions, teachers are unaware of underachieving pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Accommodation is generally satisfactory. Teaching resources, including the library and availability of computers, are satisfactory, but there is only one fume cupboard. While it is desirable to have such provision on both sites, it particularly disadvantages teaching in the upper school. Across the school, pupils do not get an equally good deal in science because of the differences in provision.

105. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. GCSE results have improved steadily each year. Teaching has improved overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in terms of scientific investigations and graphical work. Although books are now marked regularly and include supportive comments, the guidance is related almost exclusively to presentation of work rather than its scientific content. Curricular links with primary schools are not sufficiently developed.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Good achievement by the majority of pupils
- Individuality of approach at GCSE/GNVQ level
- Good use of ICT in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory accommodation
- Lack of technical support
- Insufficient attention to literacy, numeracy and ICT skills for pupils in Years 7 to 9
- Unsatisfactory arrangements for teacher assessment at the end of Year 9.

106. By Year 11, standards are above average, with significant strengths in the use of research and in the development of ideas. This standard shows in the work stimulated by a visit to Chester Zoo and in the decorative surrounds for mirrors that utilise a range of techniques and materials. Written work is less strong with few annotated notes to explain ideas or how decisions are made. While most pupils achieve well, a few quite talented artists do not due to their poor attendance. No Year 11 lessons were seen during the inspection because pupils were sitting their GCSE examinations. In the GCSE art and design course, the quality of surface-modelling and variety of mirror-shapes used, as well as the controlled, decorative use of silk-painting techniques, revealed very good levels of commitment on the part of pupils.

107. During the period 1999 to 2001, results at GCSE were average for a graded pass and below average for the higher grades. In 1999 and 2000, no pupils gained the highest grades. In 2001, pupils achieved as well as they did in their other subjects. Girls did better than boys. Pupils in these year groups use ICT well for research as well as for capturing and manipulating images. Good leadership and management has brought about improvements in the courses so that all pupils are challenged appropriately and their needs are met. The introduction of the GNVQ Intermediate art and design and the GCSE media studies courses

has proved very popular and is successfully contributing to the raising of achievement for all groups of pupils.

108. Pupils enter the school with below average skills. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils have achieved well and their attainment is average. This is the result of good teaching. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils and they learn well. In the lessons seen, Year 9 pupils were learning to use papier-mâché and cardboard to model teacups, saucers and teapots. They used a range of two- and three-dimensional techniques, working individually and in groups and taking responsibility for their own actions. Some worked in the style of the artist Hundertwasser, while others considered modern pop icons such as footballers, comedians or singers when decorating their models. While higher attainers planned their pattern of working in advance, middle and lower attainers did not, and learned from their mistakes.

109. Pupils' attitudes are good overall and their behaviour satisfactory. A significant minority of pupils in Year 9 show poor attitudes to school. They are late to lessons, chew gum and waste time. By contrast, the majority are well-behaved and keen to improve the quality of their work. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. Having to travel between two sites is a challenge for those pupils with poor time-management skills or low motivation. In such circumstances, teachers have to work hard to ensure that learning is good overall. A seating plan with pairing of boys and girls leads to much calmer working procedures than when boys and girls sit separately. From studying course and examination work in Year 11 however, attitudes appear better by this stage, with pupils working hard to present their work well.

110. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are always good and in Years 10 to 11 are often very good and occasionally excellent. There is a strong team of staff who work well together. The teaching of art techniques and artists' styles is often very good. Lessons are well-planned and class-management is good. As a result, Year 7 pupils produce confident drawings from books when researching cultures. Pupils are given support when researching the Internet. Their drawing from real objects is less confident however, and the lack of a map in one lesson left some pupils unsure whether Egypt was in Africa. Boys answer teachers' questions willingly but girls are often reticent. Occasionally, teachers fail to notice this and opportunities are missed for encouraging girls to voice their opinions. Year 8 pupils work well in mini-sketchbooks to develop scratching and printing techniques as they create designs from local buildings. They do not have opportunities for using ICT within lessons. There are missed opportunities for tracking achievement over time because pupils' work is rarely dated. While key technical words are on display, no dictionaries are provided for pupils to look up spellings when needed. Opportunities for using numeracy skills, while identified by the teachers, are not recorded in pupils' sketchbooks. Where in-class assistance is available, pupils with special needs make good progress. But where it is not, as in a Year 8 class, progress slows and behaviour problems surface.

111. Year 10 GNVQ pupils use digital imagery well to plan panels for a mural as they record aspects of the Failsworth area. Digital cameras and scanners are used for producing and manipulating images. In the media studies course, there is very good argumentative and diary writing in the work of gifted and talented pupils. A group of gifted and talented boys on this course spoke well and revealed deep understanding and interest in music, web-sites and video-production. The particular needs of these pupils are considered well because of the teacher's real enthusiasm for the subject and very good knowledge and understanding of media techniques. Lower attainers in Year 10 do not find it easy to sustain concentration for a two-hour afternoon session. Peaks and troughs are evident in their motivation and progress.

112. The leadership and management of the subject and the arts cluster (faculty) are good. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, with trips to galleries planned. Good provision is in place for gifted and talented pupils, but no classes are provided for Year 6 pupils from primary schools. Procedures for assessment are good at GCSE and GNVQ, although the inadequate time allowed for marking examination work and the limitations imposed by the school on the head of department's work as a moderator are counter-productive for raising awareness and ensuring the best standards possible. Assessment in Year 9 is unsatisfactory: there are no arrangements for moderation to ensure accuracy in assessing levels at this stage. Although there are four specialist art and design rooms, including a ceramics area, no technical support is available, and this is unsatisfactory. Very good book resources, computers and cultural artefacts are available. The accommodation, although freshly painted, is unsatisfactory. The roof leaks, posing a problem for pupils' work, and two of the art and design rooms are too hot for comfortable working in the afternoons. The split site means that the expressive arts subjects, of which art and design is one, are not located together; drama is based at the lower school site. This creates problems for communication and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Health and safety requirements are that the kiln room should be provided with a lock and a warning light to show that the kiln is in operation; this needs attention. The ceramics teacher has not been on a recent health and safety course on the safe use of clay and glazes in a school environment.

113. Good improvement has been made in ensuring that the issues raised by the previous inspection have been dealt with. Better working conditions now exist. Standards are better for Year 9 pupils and more use is made of computers in Years 7 to 9. Statutory requirements are met.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Above average GCSE results in food and textiles
- Very good planning in food and textiles
- Good teaching which promotes pupils' interest, good attitudes and good behaviour
- Good leadership and management and a good plan for future development.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in electronics, graphics and resistant materials
- Lack of clarity in the teaching scheme for pupils in Years 7 to 9
- Not enough use of data to evaluate individual progress
- Lack of arrangements to ensure the accuracy and consistency of assessments.

114. Standards by Year 11 are below average. They are highest in textiles and food technology and weaker in electronics, graphics and resistant materials. Pupils begin Year 10 with below average attainment. They make sound progress in lessons and over Years 10 and 11 their achievement is satisfactory. They all have an understanding of the designing and making process. They can specify a design brief and develop and express their ideas in a way that results in a finished product in their chosen subject. Pupils of all levels of attainment are able to manufacture items. Higher attainers make products of very high quality and prepare portfolios that underpin their designs and include evaluations of their work. Almost all pupils can produce appropriate supporting materials to indicate how they have achieved their final design. However, lower attainers do not provide detailed evidence to indicate how they have planned and evaluated their design. In food and textiles, very well-planned teaching schemes focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, pupils

understand clearly what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades. In resistant materials and graphics, the teaching schemes do not have the same degree of clarity or provide the same level of support. Pupils with special needs are well-integrated into lessons and make similar progress to other pupils.

115. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average. Pupils performed as well in design and technology as they did in other subjects. Since 1999, GCSE results have fluctuated. The results in food and textiles are consistently better than the results in other design and technology subjects. In electronics, for example, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades varies considerably from year to year. This reflects the considerable differences in pupils' attainment when they begin the course. The performance of boys in 2000 and 2001 was significantly worse than that of girls.

116. In the work seen, standards by Year 9 are below average. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with below average levels of attainment. They make satisfactory progress in lessons and over Years 7 to 9 their achievement is satisfactory. By Year 9, they can cut, shape and join so that they can make a range of articles in different materials, including cloth, wood, plastic and metal. They have knowledge of the essential nutritional value of foods and can cook simple dishes. They have a simple understanding of aspects of electronics. They understand the process of design and have been introduced to the basic techniques of drawing so they can communicate their design ideas. Higher attainers produce articles of good quality and express their ideas clearly. Lower attainers can all make items of an acceptable quality but they find it difficult to communicate the design process and their ideas clearly. Pupils with special needs are well-integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils.

117. In 2001, the standards shown by teachers' Year 9 assessments were well below average. In 2000, the teacher assessments showed below average attainment. The school is unable to provide reasons for this difference because of staff changes and a lack of data on these assessments. Overall, results for boys were significantly lower than those for girls. This is because the girls pay greater attention to the detail and quality of presentation of their design work so that more of them reach higher levels.

118. Attitudes to the subject are good and pupils behave well in almost all lessons. This leads to effective learning. Pupils show appropriate respect and a sense of responsibility for the workshops and the equipment they use. Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are good. On occasion, when behaviour and attitudes were unsatisfactory, it was because there was a significant proportion of pupils with special needs in the class and no additional support had been provided. Good teaching in this instance ensured that pupils made satisfactory progress in the lesson.

119. Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality is always at least satisfactory, and sometimes very good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and use this effectively to support pupils when they make objects in class. Lessons are always planned well and materials and the room prepared in advance of pupils' arrival. Planning is best for food and textiles lessons. For example, in a Year 10 food lesson, the teacher had planned several different activities. The pupils were working on a design brief for a meal. Different groups of pupils were involved in a range of activities and the resources needed for each group had been planned for and provided. Each pupil had been set a number of individual tasks. These were matched to the progress they had made by the end of the previous lesson. They were displayed for everyone to see and pupils were expected to cross off each task as they achieved it. In this lesson, the teacher had high expectations and pupils responded by working very effectively. This is true in almost all lessons. Often, there is a

feeling that every minute must be used to the full, so that pupils' productivity is good. The teaching methods used are chosen well. As a result, pupils are interested in what they are asked to do, concentrate well and develop increasing levels of independence as they move through the school. Resources are good and used well to ensure that pupils acquire appropriate skills. Teachers manage pupils very well and have high expectations of good behaviour. In a Year 9 textiles lesson, pupils arrived at the lesson with poor attitudes and began to behave badly. The teacher's patient and measured approach eventually created the conditions for pupils to work independently, designing and making a shirt for themselves. Pupils' learning was satisfactory because the teacher had prepared individual objectives for them. Teachers monitor pupils' activities and provide help and support when needed. They also ask questions that extend and challenge pupils as they work. These actions encourage pupils to work hard. Homework is used well, both as a preparation for the next lesson and to extend and develop work begun in class. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' special needs and provide appropriate support.

120. Basic skills are taught well and all teachers place good emphasis on making sure that pupils understand and can use the key words, specific to the subject. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to talk at length about their projects. Pupils weigh and measure in a variety of contexts and these activities help to promote their numeracy skills. A new computer suite has allowed an increasing emphasis to be placed on ICT and how pupils might use this to analyse and display their work. Currently, pupils do not use computers to the extent envisaged in the National Curriculum, but planning is in hand for these requirements to be met. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging and motivating comments. The best marking provides a commentary that shows pupils how to improve their work. However, this is not the practice of all teachers and does not ensure that pupils achieve as well as they might over time.

121. The department is led and managed well. The head of design and technology and most of the teachers have been in post since the start of the academic year. The weaknesses in the subject have been accurately identified and a good development plan written to overcome them. The quality of teaching schemes across the different strands of design and technology varies. As a result, pupils are not provided with appropriate opportunities to reach the higher National Curriculum levels or the higher GCSE grades. Work is in hand to prepare new teaching schemes. Data from assessments are used to predict results. However, this process is not yet sufficiently developed to detect why boys are performing less well than girls, or to account for the differences in the results of different subjects or groups of pupils. Teachers do not know enough about the content of the design and technology courses in the 'partner' primary schools or what pupils can or cannot do in the subject when they join Year 7. The processes used for Year 9 assessments are not moderated thoroughly enough to ensure that a consistent standard is applied by different teachers. New processes are being introduced for assessment and for recording individual attainment and have the capability to improve the situation. Teachers have a list of pupils who are gifted and talented but a special programme for them has yet to be thoroughly developed.

122. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in design and technology since the last inspection. Standards have not improved. Teaching was reported as good then and this was also true during this inspection. The last inspection reported that steps were being taken to raise attainment in GCSE examinations, but for the last three years results have remained below average. The major weaknesses in the department have been identified and steps are being taken to rectify these. The department has a significant number of new teachers

who are beginning to work together as a team. Overall there is good potential for further improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Significant improvement in the 2001 GCSE results
- Good procedures for monitoring teaching
- Good procedures for assessing pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of consistency in applying teaching strategies to raise standards
- Inadequate arrangements to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged by teachers' absence
- Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

123. Standards in the work of current Year 11 pupils are below average. In their coursework, pupils ask appropriate geographical questions and follow suitable lines of enquiry, for example, when comparing two local shopping centres. The work of higher attainers shows better detail and explanation. The standards of many students are reduced by mistakes in spelling and grammar and failure to describe features and processes fully. GCSE results in 2001 were well below average. They were however, a significant improvement on the previous year, when they were very low. Because a lower proportion of pupils takes the subject than in most schools, there were too few girls for a statistical comparison of their performance with boys' results. The department acknowledges that the 2001 results did not fully represent pupils' standards and is improving its procedures to ensure that pupils are entered for the paper that gives them the best chance to show their capabilities.

124. By Year 9, standards are below average. Most pupils produce coherent written work that shows some basic knowledge of physical processes such as the causes of earthquakes and of human processes such as migration. Few have a strong understanding of, for example, the contrasts within countries such as Brazil, or the impact that climatic and cultural factors have upon the lives of such peoples as the Maasai of Kenya. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2001 show below average standards. In these assessments, boys did a little better than girls, which is the reverse of the situation in most schools.

125. Samples of work show that pupils join Year 7 with standards in geography that are below average. Because they maintain standards at this level, achievement is satisfactory for most pupils, including those with special needs and those with special gifts and talents. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils. However, achievement is unsatisfactory for a significant minority who have had a high number of temporary teachers.

126. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory. The best response shows when the subject is presented in interesting ways. On these occasions, the majority of pupils pay attention, show interest and are willing to contribute ideas and answers during discussions. In many lessons however, the concentration, attention and effort of a significant minority of pupils are unsatisfactory. In a few lessons, a higher proportion shows unsatisfactory attitudes, or worse, by failing to pay attention, often talking when the teacher

or other pupils are speaking, and showing low effort in their work. In many lessons, a higher proportions of pupils is absent than would normally be expected.

127. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. However, in a small number of lessons, it is unsatisfactory. Although most lessons have strengths, these tend to be different individual strengths. There is a need to identify the strengths that exist in the department as a whole and ensure that they have a more consistent effect on lessons. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and the quality is more consistent across the department. A good balance is often achieved between helping students to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills, and improving their examination technique. A Year 10 lesson made good use of earlier assessments to identify an area in which pupils had experienced difficulty. In a few lessons, there is a helpful link with previous work and learning targets are clearly stated, so that pupils have a good idea of what they need to learn. In a few lessons, teachers give useful support to pupils, to enable them to improve their answers. The help given to individual pupils in their written work and the regular setting of appropriate homework are consistent features across the department. The teaching helps pupils to maintain their standards, although imaginative strategies to support them in making improvements and the provision of work well matched to individual needs are generally limited. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is ineffective in stimulating less well-motivated pupils to pay attention and carry out the intended amount of work. Because work is inadequately monitored in these lessons, teachers do not have a clear idea of which pupils are failing to complete tasks. Work samples and discussions with pupils show that teaching and learning have often been unsatisfactory in lessons taken by temporary teachers. On the limited occasions when learning support assistants are present, pupils with special needs receive good support.

128. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. In most lessons, teachers ensure that pupils learn appropriate terms for the subject. Structured outlines are often provided to help pupils with extended writing. These are not always used to the best effect however, for example to provide additional help for pupils with special needs, or greater challenge for higher attainers. The library provides a good resource for the subject, for example by preparing useful collections when topics are researched. There are opportunities for pupils to present information graphically, for example Year 10 pupils used statistical data to identify contrasts between Mexico and the USA. The subject would make a stronger contribution to literacy and numeracy if the planning was more systematic and based on a clearer awareness of pupils' needs. For example, many pupils enter the school with weak listening skills and need organised strategies to help them improve. Satisfactory opportunities are planned for students to use computers in all years.

129. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Only a small number of areas were identified as needing improvement and there has been insufficient progress on these. GCSE results, which were below average, are now well below. There is still a need to improve resources for different levels of attainment and pupils still have to share textbooks in some classes. In addition, some areas that were previously strengths are now weaker. Teaching and pupils' attitudes, which were good, are now satisfactory.

130. Following the recent appointment of a new co-ordinator, the leadership and management of the subject are now satisfactory. Since the appointment, there has been as much improvement as could be expected in the time. Much effort has been devoted to improving the schemes of work. There are good systems for monitoring teaching, but these are not yet being followed up by strategies to improve its quality and consistency. This is a priority if the department is to become a strength in the school. The good procedures for assessing pupils' work and setting individual targets now need to be built on to ensure that there is equally good analysis of the performance of whole classes that would identify ways in

which teaching plans could be improved. During the current academic year, the department has not been adequately supported by the school in managing a situation in which temporary cover for long-term staff absence has been necessary. Although steps have now been taken to improve the situation, in a number of classes pupils are underachieving because of inadequate teaching.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Good planning of the curriculum
- Pupils achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use of the results of assessments to guide planning
- Lack of planned opportunities for gifted and talented pupils
- Ideas and observations of good practice not shared between history teachers.

131. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 11. Results in 2001 were above average. In the previous two years, results were similar while showing a rising trend at the higher grades. Boys' results in 2001 were better than girls' results, although only girls achieved the highest grade. Achievement is good. Pupils develop good skills in writing in different forms and in using historical sources. Higher attainers write clear explanations of how Hitler created a totalitarian dictatorship. They assess the extent to which the Battle of Britain was a turning point in World War Two. Lower attainers evaluate what life was like under the Nazis. In their coursework on segregation in America, pupils identify sources that are for and against segregation. Higher attainers use sources to analyse discrimination against black Americans and comment on the limitations of sources used. In their coursework, pupils write about the extent to which American migrants achieved a better life. They use sources well to identify 'winners' and 'losers' although they are less confident in assessing what alternative sources would be useful. Pupils' skills in interpreting sources are stronger than their skills in applying their knowledge to the question. Independent study skills are weaker when pupils are seeking new information from a variety of sources. They are not methodical, for example in scanning text or when using an index to search for relevant information.

132. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 9. Achievement is good in relation to pupils' knowledge and skills when they started in Year 7. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils. Year 7 pupils develop skills in making comparisons over time, for example through comparing Roman society with the feudal system and the structures within the school. Higher attainers use different sources to draw conclusions as to whether the middle ages were a time of peace or danger. Lower attainers describe the opposing armies at the Battle of Hastings. By Year 9, all pupils have made good progress in developing skills in using sources, including those with special needs. They investigate the working and living conditions of mill-children, working conditions in coal-mines, living conditions in new industrial towns and life in the trenches. Lower attainers have a good basic knowledge of the features of the great powers at the start of World War One. Pupils with special needs use terminology well to describe a battle. Higher attainers quickly grasp why the Gallipoli campaign failed and why it was regarded subsequently with such bitterness. Independent study skills are a weaker area for some pupils at the end of Year 9. For others, a narrow range of basic vocabulary limits their achievement.

133. Pupils' attitudes are good. Pupils in all year groups collaborate well in group activities. In one striking example, pupils worked very well within groups, each representing different countries as they tried to form alliances to respond to Hitler in the build up to World War Two. Pupils' behaviour is good in the great majority of lessons. Their level of interest is more variable and is best in lessons where there is a challenging pace.

134. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is some very good teaching. One excellent Year 10 lesson was seen. No Year 11 lessons were seen. Teaching is characterised by secure knowledge and good planning, so that lessons have a clear structure. Resources are used well so that pupils have good opportunities to develop the skills of historical enquiry. Pace and challenge are used effectively in the teaching of higher attainers and, to a lesser extent, in the teaching of lower attainers. In some mixed-ability teaching in particular, there is a lack of pace and challenge.

135. In Year 7, ICT is used well to introduce a topic on castles. In a group activity, pupils studied a picture of a castle for a brief period before reproducing it from memory. The method challenged both higher and lower attainers to develop their thinking skills. In another Year 7 lesson, there was an over-emphasis on class discussion as the principal method for learning which did not sufficiently challenge all pupils. However, in Year 8, higher attainers were challenged in discussion of the slave trade to see the topic in its wider context, with references to African and American cultural traditions and to racism and prejudice. In another lesson on the same topic, lower attainers produced a board game about the slave trade. They gained a good understanding of the nature of the slave trade and presented their ideas well. Sometimes the teaching over-emphasises presentation at the expense of the quality of the subject content.

136. Higher attainers in Year 9 were very well prepared for writing a newspaper article on the Gallipoli campaign, with a range of resources that emphasised the importance of combining fact and opinion. On another occasion, video sequences were used well to enable lower attainers in Year 9 to gain a good understanding of people's attitudes towards recruitment in World War One. Other Year 9 pupils studied the measures introduced by the wartime government to 'defend the realm'; they classified activities that were forbidden. In Year 10 lessons, group-work is used well. Good planning and organisation provide a clear structure for pupils to research various features of the home front in World War Two. On occasion, there are specific tasks for gifted and talented pupils that are integrated well into other group activities. Good opportunities for using ICT are provided by the research, although some pupils are less skilled in using ICT to present their ideas. In two Year 10 lessons, one very good and one excellent, pupils re-enacted history in group-work. Each group represented a country. They devised strategies, made speeches in role, and form alliances in response to Hitler's threat to the Sudetenland.

137. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong team of specialist staff who provide a consistently good standard of teaching so that pupils' achievement is good. However, good practice is not shared effectively to help raise standards further. The current curriculum is well planned with recently revised schemes of work that provide a clear framework for planning lessons. Resources have been developed well to provide pupils with a wide range of activities and experiences. Regular assessments are used effectively in providing feedback to pupils, but results are not used to help determine how the curriculum should be developed further. Improvement since the last inspection is good, with good teaching and achievement sustained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Effective provision for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum
- Efficiently organised work involving all subjects
- Very good management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of day-to-day assessments to set short-term targets for improvement.

138. In work seen, standards are average by Year 11. Pupils compile well-organised folders of coursework which show depth and detail in research. They use a good range of skills to present information, for example when they develop promotional materials for a music festival. They show understanding of spreadsheets when they model costs for the event. Pupils solve problems in marketing and other aspects of business through developing corporate images for letters and creating web-pages to raise awareness of events. Lower attainers have faults in writing, and their skills of problem-solving are not developed well. They complete a good quantity of work however, showing interest and involvement in tasks. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils continue to develop their ICT skills and knowledge by using them in other subjects. They communicate information effectively using animated computerised presentations accompanied by oral presentations, for example in English when they study Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. Pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to others in lessons. This is because teachers are aware of their needs and support them effectively, for example by providing enlarged text for those with visual impairment and supporting individually those with weak literacy skills. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not make the same progress as other pupils.

139. In the 2001 GCSE results, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades matched the national average overall. There has been a small improvement each year for the last three years. The most significant rise has been in boys' results which are now above the national average, indicating that the methods used to raise the attainment of boys have been successful. At the time of the last inspection, the standard reached by boys was below average. Boys are now attaining more highly than girls.

140. In work seen, standards are average by Year 9. Pupils use computers confidently and have a sound working knowledge of computer applications which they use in other subjects of the curriculum. For example in French, they use desktop publishing techniques to write about themselves and their families. They illustrate the work with imported graphics and make effective use of lettering and page layout to make the text look interesting and to communicate information clearly to the reader. Pupils use computers effectively to research topics. For example in religious education, they explore the Internet to find out more about wealth and poverty in different countries. Through this, they also consider the moral implications of the topic and gain an insight into the lifestyles and beliefs of others. Because teachers use effective teaching methods, pupils have a good knowledge of the terminology used in ICT such as that used in creating and using databases and they communicate information accurately when they speak about their work. Lower attainers make more errors with the spelling of everyday words and they cannot always communicate successfully in writing what they know and understand. Achievement is good. Pupils make most progress in Year 7 where they have separate lessons in the subject and learn to use new equipment and

a good range of terminology for the subject. Pupils benefit from a well-structured scheme of work and well-structured lessons so that they build skills and knowledge logically and in relevant contexts. For example, they improve their skills and knowledge for desktop publishing and presentation as well as for research when they complete projects about the Commonwealth Games. There is a well-organised system for pupils to continue to develop their ICT skills and knowledge through other subjects in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' assessments in recent years indicate that pupils have reached average standards by the end of Year 9. In the current year, the time allocation for teaching ICT has been reduced significantly. Teachers are responding positively by using teaching methods which help pupils to retain information between lessons, sometimes for as long as a month because of holidays. However, the longer term effects of this reduction in time cannot yet be assessed. Pupils with special needs make progress similar to that of other pupils because teachers use methods and materials which are matched to their needs. These lead to higher self-esteem and confidence as well as improvement in the subject. A good example of this was seen in a French lesson when pupils improved their language skills when using computers.

141. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning in ICT. They take part enthusiastically when teachers use novel ways to help them to remember work from previous lessons. For example, they used actions and words in sequence to learn a sophisticated definition of databases and their use. They settle down and focus on work quickly because teachers begin lessons with exercises which help to develop literacy skills and immediately engage pupils in purposeful and enjoyable activities. Pupils behave very well and respect equipment in ICT rooms. Both boys and girls concentrate well on their own work and when they work in pairs.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Sometimes it is good and occasionally it is excellent. Teachers have very good expertise in the subject which they communicate clearly to pupils, together with their own enthusiasm. They establish very good relationships which earn them trust and respect and encourage pupils to participate in activities confidently. The displays of pupils' work further indicate the value teachers attach to pupils' achievements. In the best lessons, excellent teaching methods are used to help pupils to understand and retain new learning. Teachers prepare their lessons well, structuring them to build skills and knowledge, and with good attention to previous learning. Expectations of what pupils will learn are clearly explained at the start of lessons with a clear anticipation that pupils will achieve well. Learning is checked at the end so knowledge and understanding are reinforced. Teachers give pupils very good guidance for structuring their examination projects in Years 10 and 11 and effectively teach them to manage their own time. The variety of activities included in lessons leads to pupils maintaining interest and concentration. Teachers are not fully conversant with the requirements of the new Code of Practice for pupils with special needs but have a good instinct for supporting them and identify targets in the subject which help their literacy and numeracy targets. Teachers have successfully developed methods to improve the attainment of boys. Through introductory exercises at the start of each lesson, teachers make a good contribution to pupils' literacy development and thinking skills. Higher attainers are well known to teachers who provide work which is appropriately challenging for them. Teachers of other subjects make an effective contribution to pupils' development of ICT skills and knowledge.

143. The subject benefits from very strong leadership. Staff work together effectively as a team and teachers new to the school are very well supported. There is a very strong commitment to improve standards and to continue to develop innovative teaching methods to achieve this. The contribution of other subjects to developing pupils' ICT skills and knowledge is very efficiently organised. The different elements of the programmes of study are distributed between departments to ensure the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Work is assessed by teachers of other subjects and results are collated by the ICT co-

ordinator. The department's priority to increase the range and challenge of assessed tasks in Year 9 is appropriate, particularly for control, where inadequate resources restrict attainment. The leaking roof in one specialist room is a hazard when rain falls.

144. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching and learning has risen and the standards attained by boys in particular have improved. Resources have improved in quantity and quality and the learning resource centres are very effectively used to support pupils' learning in ICT through a good number of subjects. The need to develop more efficient means of monitoring progress on a day-to-day basis and to set targets for improvement is acknowledged.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Very good preparation and support for the GCSE examination
- Above average GCSE results in French, well above average for boys
- Higher GCSE grades than might be expected for lower attainers in French and Spanish
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11
- Good attitudes to languages among most pupils, especially Years 10 and 11
- Good opportunities for pupils to practise speaking in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Below average attainment in Years 7 to 9
- Unsatisfactory teaching and learning in some groups in Years 7 to 9
- Insufficient formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
- Insufficient analysis of data to identify strengths and areas of weakness in teaching and learning.

145. Half the pupils in the current Year 8 to 11 began to learn French when they joined the school while the other half learned Spanish. In the current Year 7, all pupils learn French. In Year 9, higher attainers are introduced to a second language, and in Year 10 pupils have the option of continuing with both languages to GCSE.

146. By the end of Year 11, standards in the work seen are above average in French and average in Spanish. Overall, pupils' achievement in languages in Years 10 and 11 is good. They are entered for a modular GCSE examination which involves four tests during the two-year course. Teaching is focused very clearly on raising pupils' attainment. The department has worked hard at determining exactly how pupils can gain the highest possible grade. Teachers have produced very useful booklets for each module. These give pupils valuable practice and advice for improving the skills that are tested. Pupils are given a mark for each module and are told what GCSE grade this is leading to. There are good processes for reviewing pupils' progress both within the department and overall in the school. These are effective in encouraging pupils to work to improve their results. In general, lower attainers and those with special needs make very good progress. Teaching methods are adapted well for their needs and teachers set realistic but challenging targets for them. Higher attainers have gained some very good grades: a pupil was congratulated by the examination board for scoring among the five highest marks in the country. Those with a talent for languages make good progress.

147. In 2000, for the first time, all pupils in the school were entered for a language in the GCSE examination. Since then, the results in French have been above average and were better in 2001 than in 2000. Pupils gained better grades in French in 2001 than in their other subjects. Boys' results in French were significantly above average while girls' results were broadly average. This is the reverse of what is found in most schools. The department's analysis of results is not yet detailed enough to determine why this is so. In Spanish, results were below average in 2000 and average in 2001. Pupils' grades in Spanish in 2001 were slightly lower than their grades in their other subjects. Girls' results were better than boys' results, to the same extent as they are in most schools. The reasons why results in French are better than those in Spanish have not been fully explored by the department. In the lessons seen, teaching was stronger in French than in Spanish. The time allocated for the second language is lower than for the first language.

148. By Year 9, the standards seen during the inspection are below average in both languages and reflect the results of the Year 9 teacher assessments in 2001 which were below average overall. The head of subject and the teachers put less emphasis on standards in Years 7 to 9. The teaching schemes and the assessment materials used do not give pupils sufficient access to the higher National Curriculum levels. Teaching is weaker overall in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. At times in classes containing pupils of all levels of attainment in Years 7 and 8, teachers do not plan to ensure that suitable work is provided for higher and lower attainers. The department has not collected and analysed the results of the formal teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. As a consequence, this important data has not been used to help raise pupils' attainment.

149. Throughout the school, pupils' skills are best in speaking. The department's policy of spending at least the first ten minutes of every lesson on oral work gives pupils excellent opportunities to learn thoroughly the basic questions and answers they need for the GCSE examination. Standards in listening are also relatively good, following from the emphasis on speaking. They could be improved if teachers used the language pupils are learning more consistently for giving instructions and explanations during lessons. Reading and writing are relatively weaker. To some extent, this is a result of pupils' weak literacy skills. For example, they cannot work out the meaning of a French or Spanish word that is similar to an English word because they do not know the English word. Pupils in one class did not realise that 'grave' in Spanish meant 'serious' in English because they had not heard the English word used in this way. Teachers make good use of some of the techniques of the National Literacy Strategy to help pupils to write accurately in the foreign language. Their skills in writing could be further improved by more consistent opportunities to produce longer passages in French or Spanish and less emphasis on copying.

150. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to languages are satisfactory overall. In about two-thirds of lessons they are good or very good, but in about a third, unsatisfactory. Attitudes are always good or very good in Year 10. Boys and girls are equally interested in their work. Lower attainers and those with special needs have very good attitudes; they work very hard in lessons where the teacher has ensured that work at a suitable level has been provided for them. In some lessons, however, teachers do not consider their needs sufficiently in the planning and some pupils behave badly as a result. Where attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory it is sometimes the result of unsatisfactory teaching. But at other times, it is in spite of the best efforts of teachers to interest and control pupils. In some lessons in Year 9 it is due, at least in part, to recent changes in the teaching groups. Many pupils resent being moved to a different group. Teachers are faced with pupils they do not know and there has not been time to build good relationships. On the whole, relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils are good. But, where attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory, often relationships are not good. Most teachers successfully encourage pupils to think about their actions and the impact these have on others. They insist on the importance of courtesy,

for example, listening with respect while others are speaking. Pupils mature as they move through the school and by Years 10 and 11 are taking responsibility for their own learning and progress.

151. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. For pupils in Year 10, the quality is always good and sometimes very good. In Years 7 to 9, while teaching and learning are often good or better, in about a third of the lessons seen, the quality was less than satisfactory. Teachers generally have a good command of the languages they teach. This gives a good model for pupils to copy when speaking. However, in one lesson, the teacher's lack of expertise in the language had an adverse effect on pupils' learning. In the better lessons, the activities chosen, the teacher's enthusiasm and the speed with which one activity is followed by another challenge and inspire pupils. They work hard and show obvious interest in and enjoyment of their lessons. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, at times it is because the teaching methods used do not gain and hold pupils' interest. Teachers' expectations are always high in Year 10, but in Years 7 to 9 they are too low at times and do not help pupils to reach higher levels of attainment. There is a programme of regular tests at the end of units of work. After these tests pupils are required to write targets to help them improve their work. This is helpful in making them aware of how well they are doing. However, the use of assessment in lessons and the marking of pupils' books are not carried out equally well by all teachers. In the better lessons, teachers use a variety of methods to ensure they know how well pupils are learning. There is some good practice in marking. Some teachers write comments to tell pupils how they can improve their work, but not all do so. The booklets the department has produced for Years 7 to 9 provide useful homework activities which allow pupils to practise and consolidate the work done in class. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall. Teachers make a good contribution to the teaching of literacy. They regularly use numbers in various forms in teaching languages, but there is as yet no school-wide numeracy policy for them to work to. There is some good work in ICT, but this is not yet taking place as frequently as required by the National Curriculum. The school has recently identified gifted pupils. The department has just begun the planning to cater for their needs. There is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not receive sufficient help to enable them to make the same progress as other pupils.

152. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall, with some considerable strengths but also some significant weaknesses. The head of subject provides clear direction for the work in languages and promotes high standards overall. Teachers work well together as a team and are committed to building good relationships with pupils based on mutual respect. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' learning are insufficiently rigorous. Teachers have therefore received insufficient support in working to overcome areas of weakness. The review of the department carried out by senior managers in the school has not been formally followed up to ensure that areas for improvement are acted upon. Insufficient use is made of ICT to analyse data with a view to improving standards, especially in Years 7 to 9.

153. Resources for teaching are satisfactory except that some cassette recorders and overhead projectors are not working well and need to be replaced. The department uses suitable books to encourage pupils to read for pleasure in the foreign language, but resources in the library are currently insufficient. There are plans to increase the number and range of these resources. There is good use of displays of pupils' work and resources to aid learning. Both teachers and pupils have to move between the two sites for lessons, which results in time being wasted at the beginning. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory because they do not give the required information on what pupils know, understand and can do.

154. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. At that

time, standards were described as average for pupils in Years 7 to 9. They are now below average. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, standards have improved to above the national average. Teaching then was always satisfactory. In this inspection, in about a third of lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 teaching was unsatisfactory and one lesson was poor. Pupils' attitudes were always satisfactory, but now they are at times unsatisfactory. The arrangements for pupils to learn a second language were then described as unsatisfactory and they still are. One lesson a week in Year 9 gives insufficient preparation for GCSE for all but the highest attaining pupils. Consequently numbers continuing with their second foreign language to GCSE are very low.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good social and cultural education in extra-curricular activities
- Pupils' very good attitudes
- Very good resources
- Very good leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of singing in lessons not high enough
- Not enough use of assessment levels in lessons.

155. By Year 11, standards are average and pupils' achievement is good. There is a wide range of attainment, with strengths in performing and composing using ICT. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In 2001, all pupils gained a grade, 12 out of 19 gaining the higher grades, and three gaining A*.

156. Pupils come to the school with a wide range of attainment and by the end of Year 9 their standards are average. Achievement is good. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress and there is no evidence to suggest that pupils who speak English as an additional language do not progress as well as other pupils. Pupils show satisfactory skills in performing in ensembles. A minority can play keyboards with two hands. Pupils have satisfactory musical knowledge but standards of singing are not high enough. The difference between the performance of boys and girls in the Year 9 teacher assessments is similar to that seen nationally. Overall, the results of these assessment are average

157. The attitudes of all pupils are very good. Behaviour is very good and pupils value the challenges offered to them. They are enthusiastic about their work. Teaching ensures high levels of involvement and this leads to an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual respect.

158. Teaching and learning are very good. There is some non-specialist teaching by full-time staff but none was observed during the inspection. No Year 11 lessons were observed as the pupils were on study leave. The pace of teaching is swift, but inclusive and sensitive to individual needs. Teachers have very good expertise in the subject and their lesson-planning is very detailed. They make very good use of ICT and resources to support pupils' learning. Very effective use is made of ensemble rehearsal and probing questioning. Teachers manage the pupils very well. Work is regularly marked and teachers make good use of assessment. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. These good features in the teaching ensure that all pupils learn very well. They make tremendous efforts to perfect their work and are highly productive. GCSE pupils show high levels of independence and skill in their work. They are fluent when discussing what they are doing. Satisfactory use is made of homework

and there is sound teaching of basic skills. There is good provision for pupils with special needs and for those with particular talents in music; they make good progress.

159. A Year 7 lesson on rhythm began with effectively targeted rapid-fire questions. The work of individuals was monitored very well through frequent evaluation, individual tutoring and group-work. Each group was given a conductor to direct the rehearsal. Pupils focused well on their work and made rapid progress in composing and performing rhythms. The lesson ended with games that thoroughly tested pupils' musical knowledge. A Year 8 lesson on 'blues' featured very good subject knowledge and detailed planning. Very effective use was made of ICT to demonstrate blues structure and very high expectations were maintained. A detailed course booklet gave pupils a range of tasks matched to their level of attainment and their work was regularly evaluated. As a result, all pupils had a very clear understanding of the topic. They worked very hard to perfect their performing and their confidence increased in leaps and bounds. In a Year 9 lesson on film music, very good use was made of sound-tracks at the start to encourage pupils to reflect on musical atmosphere. A detailed discussion of different kinds of film music ensued. As a result, pupils knew exactly what they had to achieve in practising the music to 'Rocky' and could define what their problems were. They were given very good tutorial and technical support on keyboard technique and worked at a cracking pace.

160. Teaching was very good in a Year 10 lesson on 'chance' music. Pupils' assumptions about composition were significantly challenged in a task which required them to redraft melodies composed by the throw of a dice. The teacher made very good use of simple rhythmic practice to test pupils' knowledge. Highly effective tutoring focused on individual needs. Pupils made very good progress and could review their work with increasing confidence.

161. The subject is led and managed very well. There is an inclusive approach that makes high standards of teaching, learning and extra-curricular opportunities available to a wide range of pupils. The aims of the school are represented very well in the work in music. Good use is made of assessment to review the appropriateness of the curriculum. Most staff are well-qualified for their work, although there is some non-specialist teaching. The quality of resources for the subject is very good, particularly for the teaching of ICT, and good use is made of ICT in day-to-day work.

162. The school makes a significant contribution to the cost of instrumental lessons. As a result, a good proportion of pupils study a wide range of musical instruments. The school bands, the community band and the choir achieve high standards and are attended well. They make a very strong contribution to the cultural life of the school and the community. Concerts are very well attended. The accommodation for music is poor and limits the use of one classroom, particularly in wet weather, with adverse effects on the activities in lessons.

163. There is very good improvement since the last inspection. This is true of pupils' standards by Year 9 and Year 11, growing numbers of pupils taking GCSE, time-tabling of the subject in Years 7 to 9, the quality of resources and development planning, as well as the quality of leadership.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good leadership promoting the high profile of the subject in the school
- Good GCSE results showing an improving trend
- Good teaching and learning with pupils keen to be involved in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment not used sufficiently as a tool for improving performance, especially in Years 7 to 9
- Not enough use of ICT to encourage pupils as independent learners
- Lack of balance and structure in the curriculum.

164. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are average. Pupils prepare carefully for activity and have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how to do this. They have satisfactory skills with which to perform in a number of activities such as swimming, athletics and tennis. A strength is their ability to observe and comment on the performance of others as part of the process of improvement, and the teaching methods encourage this. Pupils co-operate well, supporting and encouraging one another and working safely in activities. They join the school with average standards of attainment. Teachers establish a good climate for learning and pupils are enthusiastic. Their achievement is satisfactory.

165. No lessons of physical education were observed in Year 11. Standards are above average for pupils choosing the GCSE course as shown by their folders of work, discussion with pupils and predicted examination grades. In 2001, results were well above average for higher grades and slightly below average for the overall pass rate. The proportion of pupils entered was higher than it is nationally. There was no difference in performance between boys and girls and overall pupils achieved well, generally gaining a grade higher in physical education than in their other subjects. Results in physical education have risen over the last three years and were the highest in the school in 2001. As part of the sports college initiative, the school has increased the time for physical education in Year 10 and started all pupils on an accredited course. Standards in Year 10 are average across a range of practical and theory courses, with pupils achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

166. There is good equality of access and inclusion in physical education. All pupils, including those with identified needs, benefit from the clear demonstrations and explanations given when teachers introduce a new skill. Lessons are clearly structured and teachers encourage and support all pupils equally. Assessments show that pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Pupils identified as talented in physical activity achieve well through extra-curricular activities and regional and national competitions. In lessons, however, they are not set sufficiently challenging tasks. Physical education makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

167. Pupils have good attitudes and behave well in lessons. They are keen to take part and this is encouraged by the well-established expectations and consistently applied routines of the department. Participation in the very good extra-curricular programme is high and this is reflected in the Sports Mark Gold award achieved in the current year. A number of pupils go on to take post-16 courses.

168. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Almost half of all teaching is at least good and a third is very good or excellent. A very small proportion was unsatisfactory because activities were not structured well to develop pupils' skills. A strength is the very good management of pupils and equipment so that lessons run smoothly, efficiently and at a good pace for learning. Planning is good. Lessons start with a clear explanation of what is to be learned, incorporate activities that develop skills, and lead to a clear review at the end. In this way, pupils of all aptitudes make progress. By the end of an excellent sprinting lesson in Year 8, pupils had identified and put into practice the key points of an effective start to a sprint race. This was the result of well-structured teaching, taken at a good pace. Teachers use a range of methods that interest and motivate pupils. These include activities that require pupils to observe and comment on a performance. In making these judgements, the pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers use questions well to probe pupils' understanding and this makes a good contribution to pupils' skills of speaking and listening. However, few opportunities are given for them to apply their skills of numeracy in activities. Pupils have opportunities to use video cameras in lessons, but ICT is not used sufficiently to develop their independence, for example through research topics. Teachers have good expertise in the subject and use this well when commenting on pupils' work and when encouraging involvement. Occasionally these comments are too general and do not focus sufficiently on helping individuals to improve. Insufficient use is made in lessons of detailed assessments so that pupils do not always have a clear picture of how well they are doing overall. Homework is set regularly and extends the work started in lessons. In examination work, marking is regular but does not give sufficient detail of how pupils can improve.

169. The good management and leadership of the subject support the high level of commitment from the team. Pupils are proud of the sports college status and the subject has a high profile. The school is using the sports college Initiative in a positive way to raise standards across all subjects. A high level of demand is made upon the subject manager by the requirements of managing the department and responding to the sports college and other national initiatives. The level of staffing is good and the numbers of non-specialists reduced since the last inspection. Many of the teachers have responsibilities elsewhere both in the school and in promoting the very good links with 'partner' primary schools. The bold initiative of accreditation for all in Years 10 and 11 has resulted in a number of pupils taking dance. Those who do so do not receive their full National Curriculum entitlement in physical education. The curriculum overall has a strong emphasis on games. Assessments in Years 7 to 9 have been inconsistently carried out by teachers and do not reflect an accurate picture of the standards pupils attain at the end of Year 9. A new system of assessment has been introduced in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, assessment of pupils' progress is more accurate, particularly in examination groups. The accommodation is very good and supports a wide range of activities. However, the gymnasium is showing the effect of heavy use and a long-term problem of a leaking roof in the sports hall presents a health and safety issue in wet weather.

170. Improvement since the last inspection is good because of the reduced use of non-specialist teachers and the improvement in the proportion of very good teaching. The size of teaching groups has been reduced through the use of sports college funding and GCSE results are rising.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching methods and some inspiring teaching
- Good teaching that connects religious ideas with pupils' own experience
- Effective development of ICT to support pupils' learning
- Thorough assessment of standards and monitoring of pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Requirements for religious education not met in Year 10 and 11
- Not enough opportunities for extended writing for higher attaining pupils
- Project work not planned to suit lower attaining pupils.

171. By Year 11, standards are broadly average for pupils following the GCSE course. Year 11 pupils were on study leave during the inspection week but it was possible to interview two pupils with their work. Their exercise books showed good achievement over the course and their revision programme has been comprehensive and geared to answering examination questions. They are confident that their preparation has equipped them to perform well in the examination. Achievement is good in the group, with most pupils exceeding the grades predicted for them at the start of the course. This is confirmed by the marks they have gained for their coursework essays. Similar progress was evident in the work of most Year 10 pupils in their systematic study of St. Mark's Gospel. However, some pupils are not explaining in enough detail the significance of Jesus' words and deeds, nor arguing sufficiently different points of view on moral and social issues.

172. GCSE results improved steadily from 1998 to 2000, although the number entering fell by two thirds in that year. In 2001, the lowest entry in recent years of only nine pupils

173. suffered serious disruption to teaching and recorded the worst results. The current Year 11 class is similar in number and ability to the class of 2000 and all the indicators are that they will achieve average results.

174. Only ten per cent of pupils choose to study GCSE in religious studies, which means that the vast majority are denied their entitlement to religious education. All that is taught is one three-week module on the theme of racial prejudice, as part of the preparation for adult life course in Year 10. In the lesson observed, stimulating teaching enabled pupils to make very good progress in learning how the seeds of race hatred can lead to genocide, but one lesson was insufficient time for a study of the Holocaust.

175. By Year 9, standards are average. Pupils have acquired a systematic knowledge of the basic beliefs and practices of Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism and have learnt aspects of other faiths through studying themes that cut across them all. The syllabus expects all pupils to study the six major religions represented in Britain over their five years of secondary education. As pupils' learning is truncated after Year 9, they cannot achieve this breadth of learning. Consequently, there is a deficiency in their knowledge and understanding of Islam.

176. Year 9 pupils show good understanding of Buddhist teachings about the four noble truths and the eight-fold path in the high quality 'karma' board games they have produced, using ICT techniques to good effect. However, the time spent on the exercise has reduced the amount of reflective writing and argument they have been able to produce. In lessons,

higher attainers were making good use of Internet sites to research aspects of world poverty but lower attainers needed a sharper focus to their enquiry to avoid irrelevant web searches. In general, the successful use of group activities enables all pupils, including those with special needs, to participate fully in lessons and make good progress in understanding moral issues, such as racial prejudice. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the group-work investigating the problems that people from a different culture experience helped all pupils to recognise the dangers of stereotyping. There is no evidence to suggest that gifted and talented pupils and those pupils who speak English as an additional language do not progress as well as other pupils.

177. In general, pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good. They enjoy the style of teaching, which starts with pupils' own experience and enables them to explore religious ideas through a range of learning activities. For example, Year 7 pupils enjoyed finding out about activities to which their classmates are devoted, as a prologue to understanding religious commitment. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups and are honest in stating their views and acknowledging any prejudices. They take seriously the regular opportunities for reflection, exemplified by Year 8 pupils who, at the end of a lesson on conversion, spent time meditating on an aspect of their own character they would want to change. Behaviour is mainly good, except for minor interruptions to the flow of some lessons, mainly in Year 9. Serious attitudes and high motivation are evident on the GCSE course, where pupils receive a great deal of tutorial help from their teachers.

178. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and some teaching is inspired in the way it develops pupils' spirituality. The small amount of non-specialist teaching is satisfactory, coping with challenging behaviour from some Year 8 boys. Teaching is consistently good or better on the GCSE course, preparing pupils thoroughly in examination techniques. The main strength of the specialist teaching is the emphasis placed on activities that enable pupils to gain spiritual insight into what religion means for believers. Detailed planning for lessons from excellent schemes of work includes a variety of learning styles to stimulate pupils' thinking. Sometimes the pace of the lesson is not quick enough to make best use of the planned activities. Story-telling is used to poignant effect, as in a successful Year 8 lesson based on an Oscar Wilde short story, which helped pupils explore emotions leading to changed character.

179. Teachers give pupils ample opportunity to reflect on their learning, enabling them to see moral situations from different standpoints and work out their own position. In particular, teachers handle topical issues such as racism very skilfully, challenging stereotypes and helping pupils to appreciate how it feels to be the victim. Good use of investigative techniques, using reference books and the Internet is developing independent learning effectively, although the loose structure of some project work allows pupils to choose undemanding tasks. Teachers manage pupils well, engaging pupils actively in learning and building good relationships, although these are strained with some disaffected pupils in Year 9. Homework is set regularly and marking is thorough.

180. Leadership and management of religious education are good, the head of subject setting very high teaching standards that cater for both the intellectual and personal development of pupils. Teamwork in the department is very good, ensuring that all pupils benefit from a common approach to learning and the stimulating subject displays in both classrooms. Recent revisions of the Year 7 and 8 schemes of work are excellent, providing detailed guidance for lessons. The proposed review of Year 9 needs to tackle the limited coverage of Islam in the programmes of study for Years 7 to 9. ICT is being developed well to support learning in all years. Assessment procedures are rigorous and produce accurate profiles of pupils' levels of attainment. However, the criteria used for assessment are not made explicit to pupils, though these would help them when they review their work and set

themselves targets. Use of the criteria would enable teachers to be more specific in their comments on assessed work and in pupils' reports.

181. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory as the school has made no attempt to meet its statutory obligation to provide a general course in religious education for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. In terms of the current remit of the department, progress has been satisfactory and standards have been maintained through an unstable period of changing personnel. The department now has the capacity to move forward.