

INSPECTION REPORT

DE LA SALLE SCHOOL

Basildon

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115237

Headteacher: Mr J Heffernan

Reporting inspector: Mrs G K Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 21 – 25 May 2001

Inspection number: 197119

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: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ghyllgrove
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Essex

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Father S Myers

Date of previous inspections: 17 – 21 November 1995 and 14 – 15 October 1998

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2901	Gulshan Kayembe	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
11414	Ann Bennett	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?
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English	
30699	Arthur Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
6432	Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science	
			Equal opportunities	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information technology	
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology	
12260	Graham Williams	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4430	Richard Eaton	Team inspector	Music	
			Special educational needs	
10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	History	

13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
31685	Valerie Girling	Team inspector	Art and design	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 11
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12 - 16
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	16 - 18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	18 - 21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21 - 22
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	22 - 23
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23 - 25
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25 - 26
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27 - 31
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	32 - 52

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 686 boys and girls on roll, the vast majority are white British, but about six per cent of pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly Asian and African-Caribbean. English is not the first language for about 3 per cent, and this is higher than in most schools, though nearly all are fluent in English. The school has a Catholic character though it describes itself as broadly Christian because only a third of pupils are Catholics. Pupils are drawn from a wide area in and around Basildon, but most come from the four wards nearest the school. The proportion of pupils who claim free school meals is above average. The overall attainment on entry is well below average, and lower in some years. This is aggravated by the high mobility of pupils in some year groups, such as the current Year 10. Many pupils begin with poorly developed personal and social skills. The school has an above average proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is about average. A significant minority of pupils on the special educational needs register have behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and improving school. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and often good or very good. Though performance in GCSE examinations is below national averages, pupils achieve well given their low starting points. The headteacher provides purposeful leadership, uniting the school community in its pursuit of further improvement. The school provides a safe and happy environment for pupils in which most thrive, though many in Years 7 and 8 display immature attitudes and lack self-discipline. The school successfully integrates pupils from many different backgrounds and provides the necessary support to ensure that the most vulnerable and challenging settle in well. Despite the school's considerable work on improving the rate of attendance, it remains below average and this hampers pupils' learning. Overall, the school uses its funds well and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils aged 14-16 make good progress and achieve well in GCSE examinations at the age of 16; results in national examinations for 16-year-olds in science and information and communication technology are above average.
- Over 60 per cent of teaching is good or better, and it is good overall for pupils aged 14-16.
- Leadership provided by the headteacher, senior staff and governors is good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about school and make good progress in developing their social skills.
- Strong commitment to getting the best out of all pupils promotes a positive learning environment and leads to good support for pupils' personal and academic development.
- Information to parents is good and the quality of annual reports on pupils' progress is very good.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities, including trips abroad, are good.
- School finances are well managed and good strategic use is made of money available to the school.

What could be improved

- Pupils' numeracy skills are weak and overall attainment in mathematics is well below average.
- Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory and not enough use is made of assessment information to help to improve pupils' learning.
- Though pupils make good progress in social skills, there are weaknesses in a number of aspects of their personal development, such as lack of opportunities for taking responsibility, immaturity and lack of self-discipline amongst many in Years 7 and 8 which have a negative influence on teaching and learning.
- Not enough use is made of computers in subjects of the curriculum.
- Attendance is below average and this holds back pupils' progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress, and good progress in some areas, in improving itself since the last full OFSTED inspection in 1995, when it was placed in special measures. A report in 1998 by HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) judged that the school had improved enough to come out of special measures. Overall, good progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning and standards of pupils' work following both of the above inspections. The quality of teaching is now much better, being satisfactory overall and with 61 per cent being good or better and 26 per cent being very good or excellent. Though standards remain below average by the time pupils leave school, they have improved well since the previous inspections. Most of the key issues have been effectively tackled, but the low attendance remains an issue, not enough work has been done to promote numeracy and use of assessment is at an early stage of development. Much work has been done on literacy with the result that pupils' skills in reading and writing are considerably improved.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	C

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

The table above indicates that the school's performance in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was better than the previous two years though remaining below average. However, compared with similar types of schools the school's performance was satisfactory. When pupils' GCSE results are compared to their prior attainment, performance is actually good. Pupils did particularly well in science and information and communication technology (ICT), where results were above national averages and in art, where they were in line with national averages. In French the results, though improved, remained poor. Results in English and mathematics were well below average. The school met its targets. Inspection evidence indicates further improvement in the standards of work since the 2000 results, particularly in English and French, though they remain below average. Progress is good in

Years 10 and 11, though overall progress in work in mathematics and numeracy is not as good as in the other core subjects.

In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2000, the results were well below average and a decline from previous years; however, these results reflect the lower academic ability of the particular year group. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of work for current pupils aged 14 are below average overall, which is an improvement from the most recent test results. Progress between the ages of 11 and 14 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress similar to that of their peers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are enthusiastic about school and in most lessons attitudes to learning are good. However, in a significant minority of lessons in Years 7 and 8, the attitudes of many are poor, detracting for teaching and learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well and all try hard to meet the high behaviour expectations of the school. However, many younger pupils do not behave well enough in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory, but pupils have limited opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. Many younger pupils are not sensitive to the impact of their actions on others. Relationships with teachers are good, but they are sometimes strained amongst pupils.
Attendance	Below average; much of the absence is condoned by parents.

Most pupils in Years 9-11 are motivated to learn and try their best in lessons. However, many in Years 7-8 lack strong motivation for academic work and, where teachers are not firm enough with them, make little effort to work hard or behave well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but good for pupils aged 14-16. In about 92 per cent of lessons seen the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better. In 61 per cent of lessons it was good or better and in 26 per cent it was very good or excellent. Of the eight per cent of lessons that were less than satisfactory, all but two were in Years 7 and 8.

In most lessons, planning is thorough and teachers' subject knowledge is well used to provide pupils with tasks which effectively meet their learning needs. Question-and-answer sessions are well managed and teachers provide clear explanations so that pupils understand what they are expected to do and what they are learning. Teaching in English

and science is good and it is satisfactory in mathematics. A considerable amount of work has been done to promote teaching of literacy in subjects across the curriculum. It is satisfactorily taught across most subjects and well taught in English and history. However, opportunities are still missed by subject teachers to strengthen pupils' skills in writing and discussion. Attention to numeracy is more variable, it appears most often in subjects which have a strong numeracy base, such as science and geography. Weaknesses in teaching include low expectations, which result in methods of teaching not being appropriate, and management and control of pupils not being effective. In the best lessons, expectations are very high, management of pupils is exemplary, the tasks and activities are highly relevant leading to purposeful engagement by pupils and pace is businesslike and brisk.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Provision of extra-curricular activities is good. Legal requirements are met in all areas except ICT. Provision for literacy is good but its effectiveness is satisfactory. Effectiveness of the school's strategy for numeracy is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and improving. The support provided by learning support assistants in lessons is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The 21 pupils with English as an additional language are largely fluent in English and do not require additional support for learning it. They make similar progress to others in the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. The provision at whole-school level, through, for example, assemblies, form tutor periods and the programme for personal and social development, is good overall, especially in relation to spiritual and social development. However, subjects do not routinely include opportunities for personal development in their teaching, hence limiting their contribution to it. Not all assemblies led by form tutors include an act of collective worship. Thus, legal requirements are not fully met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good support is provided to pupils to help them achieve their best, but overall assessment and use of assessment in subjects are unsatisfactory. At whole-school level, effective use is made of assessment data to set targets and monitor progress. Good procedures are in place to promote attendance and good behaviour.

The school's links with parents are effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall, with well-understood aims and values; a clear direction for future development is set with strong commitment to improvement. The senior management team work together well and arrangements for line management of heads of year and heads of department are good. However, line management is not used as effectively as it could be to develop the roles of middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in the work of the school. Governors increasingly ask searching questions and evaluate their role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. There is regular checking of the work of the school, including teaching and learning. However, follow-up on a day-to-day basis of weaknesses identified through evaluation is not rigorous enough.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Provision of staffing, accommodation and resources is satisfactory. The school spends money well for the benefit of pupils' learning and in order to get the best value from it.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The school expects their children to work hard • They feel that they can approach the school with a problem or query • The headteacher deals effectively with problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • Behaviour of pupils • Information about progress • How closely the school works with parents

Inspection evidence largely supports the positive views expressed by parents but does not support most of their concerns. The school has good working relationships with parents and information about pupils' progress is very good. It may be that the rather large number of telephone calls made to the school by parents on a daily basis, and which therefore cannot be answered as quickly as parents would like, contribute to the feeling that the school does not work closely with them or that they are not getting enough information about their child's progress. Homework provision in most subjects is satisfactory, though in mathematics, geography and ICT it needs to be improved. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, though in Years 7 and 8 many pupils behave badly when teachers are not firm enough.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science taken by pupils before they leave primary school at the end of Year 6 and the results of nationally standardised commercial tests administered by the school at the start of Year 7 indicate that the overall attainment of pupils when they begin at the school is well below average. In fact, the results of Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics are very low for most year groups. The results of all the different types of tests administered reveal some variation between year groups. Pupils currently in Years 11 and 8 scored more highly than those in other year groups, but even so their overall results were well below average. The results of pupils currently in Year 9 were very low indeed and for those in Years 10 and 7 they were only slightly better.
2. Given this backdrop of low attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievements, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 11, are good. Progress made though Years 10 and 11 is good and better than between Years 7 and 9, where it is satisfactory but could be better if pupils were more ready for learning. Their attitudes in these early secondary years tend to be rather immature and, though enthusiastic about school, pupils are not sufficiently well focused or self-disciplined enough in lessons to take full advantage of the opportunities they are offered for learning. Nonetheless, the firm support, guidance and encouragement they are given by all staff help them to make steady gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects.
3. Pupils' overall performance in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for 14-year-olds was well below that of most schools in 2000 and worse than the performance in the preceding two years, when it was below average. This drop reflects the lower academic ability of pupils in the 2000 cohort. Results in all three subjects were well below average. Comparisons with the performance of pupils in similar types of schools based on the take-up of free school meals was unfavourable with results being well below those of pupils in similar schools. However, given that the pupils' attainment on entry was very low, the results indicate satisfactory progress.
4. Improvement in the results of National Curriculum test results for 14-year-olds has, over time, been satisfactory. Over the last four years, English results have consistently been well below average, though between 1997 and 1999, the gap between the school's results and results nationally was narrowing at a good rate. Mathematics results improved from well below to below average between 1997 and 1998 and remained below average in 1999. Science results show the most significant improvement; though well below in 2000, in the preceding two years the results were in line with national averages, which was a considerable achievement given the pupils' backgrounds, in particular their attainment on entry.
5. Pupils' performance in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was below average but it was the best it has been since the previous inspection of 1995. Pupils did particularly well in relation to the proportion gaining one or more GCSEs at grades A*-G, which was above average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G was also relatively good and in line with the national average. In most subjects, the

proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-G was similar to the proportion nationally. The proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C was, however, well below average. When the results are compared with the results in similar types of schools, the overall performance of pupils at this school is average. However, the school's results are depressed by a significant proportion of pupils from other secondary schools who join after Year 9. The performance of pupils who have been at the school for longer is much better, being above that of schools with pupils from similar economic backgrounds. Their results show good achievement from their low starting points.

6. The trend of improvement in GCSE examinations over the last four years has been broadly in line with the national trend. Results show significant improvement from the time of the school's first inspection in 1995 and since the HMI inspection in 1998.
7. GCSE results in English have improved quite considerably over the past few years, though they were still well below average in 2000. Mathematics results for 2000 were also well below average, but in science they were above average. Pupils' performance has been relatively good in GCSE courses in science, music and physical education. Though in the most recent examinations of 2000, physical education results were well below average, in preceding years they have been above. The standards of work of pupils currently studying GCSE physical education reflect the good results of previous years. There has been good improvement in the art and design GCSE, where results are now in line with national averages. Results in the GCSE information studies course have been consistently above average for the last few years. Results in geography were well below average and they were very low in French but both show improvement, particularly significant in geography. Drama results are poor.
8. Though in many subjects the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C is below or well below average, the proportion gaining grades A*-G has been improving well and by 2000 was broadly in line with national averages in all subjects other than mathematics and drama.
9. The inspection findings broadly reflect the results of National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations, though the school has secured further improvement, most notably in English and French. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics remains well below average, though they make satisfactory progress from their very low attainment on entry. Standards of work in science are better, being below average rather than well below. With the exception of ICT, where pupils' standards of work are broadly in line with national expectations, attainment is below average by the age of 14.
10. By the time pupils are 16, their attainment in English is below average, in mathematics it is well below and in science it is above. Pupils' standards of work are also above average in ICT and music and in line with national averages in art and physical education. In most of the remaining subjects, pupils' standards of work are below average, but they are well below in geography.
11. Where standards of work are higher, pupils make better progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Progress is particularly good in science throughout the school, and very good between the ages of 15 and 16. Good progress is also evident in art, geography, ICT and physical education between the ages of 11 and 14 and in English, art, history, ICT, music and physical education between the ages of 15

and 16. The school teaches a GCSE in sociology and a vocational course in motor vehicle studies in Years 10 to 11. A GCSE course in travel and tourism has just started this year in Year 10. In all three of these, pupils make good progress and, in sociology and motor vehicle studies, pupils' achievements in examinations have been good. However, pupils make insufficient progress in designing work in design and technology between the ages of 11 and 14 though progress in construction is good. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress similar to that of their peers and achieve well overall. Often the standards of their work are higher than those of their peers.

12. In most subjects, weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills continue to be a major factor in the overall below average attainment of pupils by the age of 16. Though provision for teaching literacy has improved substantially since both the previous inspections, and this has had a beneficial impact on pupils' standards of literacy, it continues to be a major factor in their low attainment. In particular, only the ablest pupils have securely developed analytical skills or have acquired the ability to evaluate critically their own or others' writing. Whilst pupils undoubtedly make good progress in improving their skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening, too many subject teachers still miss vital opportunities for developing a capacity to write at length, or to analyse texts critically and extract information selectively. Pupils have developed good subject vocabulary through the emphasis given to this through the literacy strategy. At the same time, many subjects teachers are not sufficiently aware of how to develop pupils' higher order skills of analysis and communication through discussion and writing. Though aspects of numeracy are developed well in some subjects, such as science and geography, pupils' skills remain weak. There is insufficient emphasis on the development of the use of numeracy through the curriculum.
13. ICT skills are well developed through the specific ICT lessons, but not enough use is made of computers in other subjects. Thus, though pupils' skills are good overall, they tend to be within a narrow range of applications. Some aspects, such as control technology, are not sufficiently well covered to enable pupils to reach the required standards.
14. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate levels for their abilities. Many progress well, especially between the ages of 14 and 16. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are helped to consolidate basic literacy and numeracy skills well with the help they receive from learning support assistants. For example, Year 9 pupils made good progress in learning elementary number sequencing skills in one lesson. Written work of pupils with statements of special educational need demonstrates successful work in Year 9 on fractions, with pupils showing a sound grasp of simple calculations involving fractions, such as finding half of a fifth. Work of a Year 7 pupil demonstrated developing knowledge and use of adjectives and nouns. Good improvement was seen in the presentation of the work of a Year 8 pupil, though some pupils' written work was small in quantity and presentation was weak. The work of pupils in Years 10 to 11 demonstrates growing maturity of ideas and written expression. More of the written work has been completed by the pupils working on their own.
15. Overall, there has been good progress in improving standards of work since the previous inspections of 1998 and 1995. Pupils achieve well, given their very low starting points, but there is scope for further improvement particularly in the progress pupils make aged 11 to 14, in mathematics and through development of a whole-school approach to numeracy and continued emphasis on literacy.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' overall attitudes towards school are good, and this is fundamentally because of its caring, accepting environment. There is an increasing enthusiasm and take-up for extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and for the Essex Roadshow. Pupils have a strong sense of loyalty and belonging, and most enjoy school.
17. Around the school pupils behave in a satisfactory manner, although too many have little respect for their environment and are careless about litter and the condition of the dining room and toilets. Other pupils say that they find these attitudes annoying. In lessons, older pupils' behaviour is better than that of younger ones, but even here, there is a wide variation between groups and lessons. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were very good in almost quarter of lessons for pupils aged 11 to 14, and over a third of lessons for those aged 15 and 16. There was very little unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons for 15-year-olds. Pupil behaviour hindered learning in a sixth of lessons for pupils aged 11 to 14. The school has a significant number of pupils with challenging behaviour and, unless there is skilful teaching, their behaviour has a disruptive influence on the class. Poor behaviour and attitudes were most frequently seen in history, music, physical education and science lessons.
18. Pupils' relationship with their teachers is important in determining their behaviour in class. Where there is mutual respect, pupils behave well and are willing to work industriously. They tried really hard in athletics when the teacher used humour to make the activities fun. In a personal and social education lesson, the teacher used a poorly behaved pupil to good effect in a role-play, allowing him to be the centre of attention usefully. In some lessons, pupils cannot resist the temptation to misbehave: when the teacher's control is perceived to be weak, or when their noise level remains unchecked. Pupils respond very well when teachers make explicit their demands for behaviour as well as the challenge of the lesson. In design and technology, good teaching of the skills needed led to pupil enthusiasm and they were able to work well with reasonable independence. In history, the teacher captured the interest of the youngest pupils, who were able to sustain their concentration to the end of the lesson.
19. Many pupils arrive with poor social and personal skills, and need to learn these at school. They can be verbally abusive towards each other, and these comments can have a racial or bullying tone. Pupils recognise both as unacceptable, but lack the maturity to stop themselves saying such things. They depend on teachers for support, and to help them work out relationship problems with others. Those who are removed from lessons for interrupting the learning in class respect the authority of the headteacher, and are penitent when their poor behaviour is pointed out. The level of exclusions, which peaked at the time of the 1998 HMI report, has now dropped to a level that is similar to other schools nationally.
20. Although the proportion of Catholics at the school is currently only a third, pupils retain a respect for the times of prayer and reflection which they are offered in class and in assembly. The school reports that a similar level of respect and reverence is present during masses, liturgies and at other religious celebrations held by the school.
21. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the school community. The school and year councils are not functioning properly, and pupils knew little about them.

22. Attendance at the school remains unsatisfactory, although the amount of absence without reason has been reduced to a level comparable with other schools. The 1998 HMI report acknowledged the progress made by the school in taking strong action to improve attendance and punctuality. Punctuality has improved, as a result of using senior staff to monitor late arrivals. In spite of many initiatives and much effort, the level of attendance remains under 90 per cent and has varied by less than 2 per cent over the last five years. In the current year it is likely to be in the same range but lower than the previous year, partly because of winter illness. All the attendance information is now available on computer. Analysis of half-termly attendance during this school year shows that the picture is not all bleak. Each half term between one eighth and just over a third of all pupils registered full attendance. This core is outnumbered, however, by those whose attendance is less than 90 per cent, which ranged from just under a third to just over half of all pupils. Within this group are some who have not attended at all – up to 14 pupils in one half term. Much of this absence is condoned by parents. The relatively high number of pupils who change schools also has an effect on the rate of attendance.
23. Teachers are aware of the high level of casual absence in their subject as they regularly take class registers. However, in most cases, they are not actively monitoring the impact of this on pupils' progress. In the Year 10 art class, for example a fifth of all teaching sessions have been missed, and this has a direct impact on pupils' ability to develop the necessary skills and, hence, achieve a good grade.
24. The school is tackling the problem of attendance wisely and using a range of strategies including rewarding good attendance. These will continue to focus on pupils being responsible for their own attendance. A new innovation, an automated first day telephone call system for all absentees, has the aim of keeping attendance at the front of parents' minds. One of the difficulties faced by the school has been the regularity with which many of the parental contact telephone numbers become out of date.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and an improvement on the teaching found in both the previous inspections. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 92 per cent of lessons seen and good or better in over 60 per cent. Very good or better teaching was seen in about a quarter of lessons. Teaching was markedly better for pupils aged 15 to 16, where it was good overall, than for pupils aged between 11 and 14 where, from evidence drawn from observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' written work, the overall quality was satisfactory. Most of the less than satisfactory teaching took place in lessons with pupils in Years 7 or 8. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 9 and another in Year 10. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 11.
26. Teaching was good in English, art, geography, ICT and modern foreign languages. It was very good in science and satisfactory in mathematics. In the remaining subjects the overall quality of teaching was satisfactory, but in design and technology and in music a significant proportion of teaching for pupils aged between 11 and 14 was less than satisfactory. Inspection of pupils' work also pointed to unsatisfactory teaching of design to pupils in Years 7 to 9.
27. Teachers' planning is generally thorough and well pitched to meet pupils' needs. However, sometimes, as seen in history, too much content is planned. Teachers'

subject knowledge is good in most subjects. For example, modern language teachers make good use of the foreign language when teaching and this encourages pupils and provides working models of how the language is to be spoken. Subject knowledge is used well to ask probing questions and to extend and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. In English and science, for example, questioning helped pupils to think through key ideas and develop their knowledge base. In most subjects, resources used are interesting and captivate pupils' imagination and interest. Expectations of teachers are high in most lessons, and lead to challenging work being set for pupils. However, where teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory, expectations of work or of behaviour were usually not high enough.

28. In the best lessons, the methods used for teaching are lively and they are varied well so as to sustain pupils' concentration and engage them actively in their learning. Very good management of behaviour and well established relationships enable pupils to thrive as learners. Brisk pace keeps pupils well focused on their work and enables them to maintain a good rate of work.
29. In many of the lessons where teaching was less than satisfactory, and even in many lessons where it was satisfactory, weaknesses in pupils' attitudes and behaviour were significant factors that made teaching and learning less effective than they might otherwise have been. In many of these cases, pupils, mostly those in Years 7 and 8 (often low-attaining groups), took advantage of teachers who were not firm enough with them. Occasionally, pupils became too passive as learners or became noisy and distracted because the teaching methods used were not appropriate. For example, sometimes, teachers talked for too long giving pupils little opportunity to participate in their own learning or else moved too quickly from one activity to another so that pupils did not finish work and achieved too little by the end of the lesson. In some mathematics lessons, the introduction was weak and therefore the lessons faltered from the start.
30. One of the key features of lessons for pupils aged between 15 and 16 is the purposeful working environment created as a result of a good working partnership between teachers and pupils.
31. Basic skills of literacy are satisfactorily taught in most lessons. Whilst most teachers are well aware of the need to teach subject-specific vocabulary and do so fairly rigorously, other aspects of literacy are not always given such a high profile. For example, there are good opportunities for writing at length in history, but few such opportunities in science. Numeracy skills are not being effectively enough developed.
32. Pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn for one-to-one help and group work. The department at these times has an air of quiet, purposeful activity. It is well organised. In class, support assistants help pupils very effectively. Across many subjects, they help pupils in varying ways according to need. Pupils with special educational needs learn well making good use of their abilities. Work is suitable, being sometimes specially devised and sometimes open ended so that all pupils can take part and make progress. Work in both art and music is organised in this way.
33. Many Year 10 and 11 pupils with special educational needs take part in the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. Teaching on this course is good, and in the one lesson seen during the inspection it was very good. Pupils, some of whom find concentration difficult, worked well for a full hour, clearly enjoying the tasks. They benefit in terms of

life skills as well as developing their speaking and listening abilities and learning to work together. Good teaching is clearly helping these older pupils to gain positive and valuable experiences. Several of them showed some fluency on the computer, making their work look better through their use of ICT. Pupils gained in confidence almost perceptibly during one session.

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

34. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for all years and pupils have sufficient opportunities to build on their experiences of primary school and to take advantage of new subjects being offered at this stage. Despite the fact that ICT lessons are offered for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in the options system, there are weaknesses in the number of planned opportunities to use and develop computer skills in most subjects. In particular, there are no opportunities for pupils to learn about, or use, control technology or use to computerised systems for measuring changing variables such as temperature or pressure. Owing to these weaknesses, statutory requirements for ICT are not fully met.
35. The quality and range of the curriculum provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. All National Curriculum subjects together with religious education are offered and some pupils have the opportunity to take up a second language in Year 8. Drama is also on the timetable in Year 8. There are sound opportunities for pupils to gain a range of knowledge, skills and values.
36. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum provides satisfactory breadth and balance to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils follow a fairly traditional programme leading to GCSE. There are additional options for those who find that unsuitable. These include GCSE sociology and travel and tourism as well as a motor vehicle option. There are opportunities for some pupils to work towards the ASDAN youth award and a GNVQ intermediate course in ICT is available. A small number of pupils in the current Year 11 were offered a work-related link course at a local college. Further development of vocational courses may well enhance the curriculum provided for a significant number of pupils. Currently no second modern language is available within the options system.
37. A comprehensive literacy policy is in place and the school has worked hard to implement a wide range of strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills. The overall provision is good, but its overall effectiveness is only satisfactory due to the extent to which teaching in subjects other than English incorporates literacy objectives. Most subjects are developing pupils' subject specialist vocabulary well but there is greater variation in the extent to which subject teachers promote pupils' capacity to write at length or analytically and their ability to engage in discussion. The development of literacy across the curriculum has benefited from firm leadership by a member of the senior management team, as a result of which some very innovative strategies have been put in place. These include the use of tutor time to deliver key literacy objectives, a scheme of work that acts as a bridge between the end of primary and the start of secondary education, additional classes during the summer holidays and family literacy learning sessions. The development of numeracy across the curriculum has been hampered by the lack of high profile leadership at senior management level, and the school's strategy for numeracy is currently unsatisfactory. Tutor-time is used for teaching literacy and numeracy skills. In the few tutor-group sessions observed

where numeracy or literacy work was going on, the time was not always used most productively. This was more marked in numeracy sessions than in literacy sessions.

38. Pupils with special educational needs receive an appropriate curriculum. In some cases teachers modify it either by using different tasks or by using the same tasks at a different level or in a different way, or by making available additional help from learning support assistants. The previous inspection in 1998 made the support in lessons of pupils with special educational needs a key issue. The report stated that class teachers should make better use of individual education plans. The school has moved to address the issue but a further difficulty of organisation and paperwork began to slow progress. This too has now been rectified. Overall provision is at least satisfactory and is improving rapidly.
39. All pupils follow a satisfactory course in personal, social and health education, taught in religious education, science, form tutorials and special workshops and days when the timetable is collapsed and intensive and expert coverage of topics is provided. In Year 7 it is taught in separate discrete lessons. The programme covers sex and health education in an effective manner.
40. Schemes of work are mainly well prepared and meet the needs of all pupils. Most departments have effectively reviewed their schemes of work to meet the needs of Curriculum 2000. There are weaknesses, however, in mathematics, where updating is required, and in music, as the overall scheme of work is unsatisfactory.
41. The school has been successful in forging links with the local community. These include connections with the local business community, particularly with Year 10 work placements and the mock interviews for Year 11. There are satisfactory links with the relevant primary schools, which enable a smooth transition to take place on entry in Year 7. Pupils are provided with good advice and information on entry to the school and at the time of transition between Years 9 and 10.
42. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Activities effectively broaden pupils' learning experiences. There are many residential visits available to all pupils. These have recently included visits to New York, the Rhineland and the battlefields of the First World War. There are growing opportunities for participation in sport. A wide range of musical activities is available to pupils. Other school clubs, associated with subjects, play an important part in extending learning opportunities, as well as giving pupils additional cultural, leisure and academic activities. The after school club is a particularly good example.
43. The school's provision for the development of spiritual and social understanding is good and the development of moral and cultural awareness is satisfactory. There is a well-considered policy on spiritual and moral development but not on raising social and cultural awareness. Some subject contributions have not been thought out sufficiently and are often implicit rather than planned and, as a result, opportunities to allow pupils to reflect upon important issues are missed. An audit to identify opportunities in subject schemes of work followed by monitoring and evaluation of delivery would help develop understanding of this important aspect of personal education. This point was raised in the 1995 report and a co-ordinated approach to monitoring and evaluating provision has not been established.
44. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. They are able to reflect on beliefs and values in assemblies and in most form periods, through 'thoughts for the day', as

well as in English, music, physical education and art. They are given opportunities to develop an awareness of human values and vision through the examination of Christian and other beliefs. In some subjects, opportunities to develop spiritual aspects of work are missed. In mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, too little thought has been given to spiritual development. Assemblies and personal and social education lessons contribute positively by providing pertinent opportunities for reflection on spiritual matters, for example religious festivals, self image and awareness of matters other than the 'here and now'. Assembly themes and the guidance given to tutors for form periods are excellent. The daily 'thought for the day' built into form time, however, is not consistently and effectively practised. In some instances, implementation is far too cursory to have any real impact on pupils' spiritual or moral awareness. The quality of 'thought for the day' sessions needs monitoring and evaluating to ensure compliance with school policy.

45. The school's provision for moral development is satisfactory. Teachers act as sound role models for their pupils. The school actively fosters values such as honesty and fairness and pupils are clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. There are satisfactory opportunities in the curriculum to explore ethical and moral issues. Gospel and the La Sallian values are the basis of the school's moral code. Assemblies make a significant contribution by discussing a range of moral issues and in assemblies a number of topics raise pupils' awareness of matters such as bullying, rights and responsibilities, honesty and integrity. The personal and social education programme also contributes by providing opportunities for pupils to discuss appropriate moral issues. Good contributions are made in English and history. For example, ethical issues are explored in English, in the study of 'Great Expectations', and the morality of the 'Holocaust' is covered in history. Little has been done in some other subjects, particularly art or ICT, to identify opportunities to stress and raise awareness of moral issues.
46. The quality of life and daily activities of the school provide a caring and secure environment where relationships are founded on mutual respect and co-operation. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Many pupils arrive at the school with poorly developed social skills and much of the pastoral work carried out by heads of year, form tutors and senior staff is focused on promoting these skills, and in some cases developing the most basic social skills. As a result of this considerable work, the school community operates as a safe and reasonably harmonious society. In many subjects, teachers provide good opportunities for social development. In many lessons, pupils are able to work collaboratively and learn to respect the contributions of others. Social issues such as relationships, friendships and the development of social skills are covered very comprehensively in personal and social education and in assemblies. The school does provide some opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative, but there is room for these to be extended, both within the whole life of the school and in relation to pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning. This was also raised in the 1995 report and too little has been done to improve the situation. An understanding of the needs of others is encouraged through an extensive and very successful programme of charitable fund-raising. There are residential visits open to all years, as well as many other trips, both in and outside Great Britain, all of which help to develop social interaction. Extra-curricular activities also help to promote pupils' social skills. These are particularly strong in music. Work experience for three weeks in Year 10 is an effective way to inform and prepare pupils for the world of work.

47. Provision for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures is satisfactory. In art, they study a range of art and artists from around the world and across time. There are frequent opportunities to learn about both British and other cultures through western and other world music. In religious education, the major world faiths are studied and pupils are able to recognise the nature of our pluralistic society and the many faiths and cultures within that society. There is no whole school multi-cultural policy, but the school operates as an effective multi-ethnic community. There are links to Nigeria through the La Sallian network. There are an ambitious and well-supported number of visits to France as well as other trips abroad. Field studies in the local area and a number of other visits to galleries, museums and musical and drama events provide opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their own local heritage, as well as other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The school continues to work as a strong caring and inclusive community, welcoming pupils from other schools and working effectively with those who have difficulties. The Christian philosophy of 'love the sinner, hate the sin' is conspicuous among the staff, led by the headteacher's example. The calm manner in which he and other senior staff deal with pupils causing disruption, treating pupils as special and with individual needs, is exemplary. As a result, pupils understand what they have done wrong, but feel able to return to class with dignity.
49. Heads of year know their pupils well, and their role is well focused on both the welfare and achievement of pupils. There are good systems in place for monitoring and promoting both attendance and behaviour, and parents are increasingly becoming involved. There is a consistent whole-school approach, including governors, involved in turning round poor pupil behaviour. One parent wrote to the inspection team that she was grateful her child had been given a second chance. The school makes very good use of locally available support to meet pupils' individual needs, and a counsellor spends a day in school each week. Although small scale in relation to the need for social skills work and anger management, this is contributing to changing the culture within the school. Arrangements for child protection follow those agreed locally, and a senior member of staff has an overview of all pastoral matters. A proper balance is kept between rewarding good attendance and behaviour, and seeking to improve what is poor.
50. Arrangements for looking after pupils who are injured or unwell at school are satisfactory. Governors are clear about their role in relation to matters of health and safety, and are awaiting a full risk assessment audit from the local authority. A few matters of practical concern have been mentioned to the school. Appropriate arrangements for child protection are in place.
51. All pupils have homework guides specific to their age, and the school provides examination pupils with a good written revision guide. These pupils are offered appropriate and timely advice about subsequent courses.
52. Recent initiatives have resulted in the school's collecting a lot of information about pupils' academic ability and progress. The focus of assessment has been to provide information on and for pupils, and to improve their grades. Half-termly assessments for all, and work reviews for pupils aged 14 to 16 are completed in every subject, and teachers also keep additional data on pupils' prior attainment. This is used to provide a pupil's potential grades and target grades. Pupils' planners have very useful

sections to record this information, for both the pupils and their parents to use. Although most pupils seem to know their target grades and how well they are getting on in each subject, practice is inconsistent between departments, and not all teachers are making sure that pupils note these assessments. In this respect, the key issue from both the 1995 OFSTED report and the 1998 HMI report has not been met.

53. At a whole-school level, assessment information has been used to set the school's GCSE targets. However, at a departmental level not enough diagnostic work has been done to look at test and examination results as a whole and to use this information to alter the teaching emphasis and curricular content. Subject departments are not analysing their results sufficiently rigorously to identify areas of weakness, and insufficient attention is paid to the individual strands within each National Curriculum attainment target.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Parents are supportive of the school, and particularly of the headteacher. They have confidence in his ability to get things done. A quarter of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and they think that the school expects their children to work hard. They feel able to approach the school with questions or a problem, believe their children like school, and say that the teaching is good.
55. A large proportion of parents are concerned about the work their children were given to do at home. Evidence from the inspection suggests that the amount of homework is about right, but that pupils may not be spending enough time doing it. A fifth of parents are concerned about behaviour in class. The school does have some challenging pupils; it has good procedures in place to deal with such behaviour and is working hard to generate a work culture within the school, though this will take some time.
56. A quarter of parents do not feel they are kept well enough informed about how their children are getting on in school. Evidence from the inspection contradicts this. The school provides a very good range of information for parents. End-of-year reports are very good, with individual subject targets and clear guidance to the pupil on how to improve. There are half-termly assessments, the results of which should be written into the pupil's planner, although this practice is not consistent in all subjects. Twice a year, letters of praise or concern are issued, so that parents are updated on their children's progress. Parents' immediate anxieties may be alleviated if the letter also gave details of the action the school was to take as a result, and some idea of the number of such letters being issued. Written information for parents, such as the prospectus and the very clear and explicit year-specific homework booklets, is good.
57. Parents whose children have statements of special educational need are invited to their annual reviews. A few parents help regularly in school, with physical education and with music.
58. Very many parents telephone the school for information. A few complain that teachers do not return their calls. There is a good system for communicating messages, and the office staff makes efforts to put parents in touch with the correct person for their query. It may be that if the school bulletin were issued in a fixed and predictable pattern the number of such calls would be reduced.

59. Family learning workshops for literacy and numeracy were over-subscribed, although not all parents completed the course. These provided parents with an insight into how to help their children with their homework.
60. The school is working hard to improve the level of attendance. It is now enlisting parents' help by routinely telephoning them on a pupil's first day of absence. The importance of full attendance at school needs to be established and supported by the parents. Where parents are supportive, this three-way partnership between the pupil, parents and the school works well and serves the best interests of the pupil.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The quality of leadership and management of the school provided by the headteacher is good. He is well supported by his deputy and both are held in high esteem by governors and staff. There is good team work amongst the members of the senior management team. The headteacher sets a clear and firm direction for future development and has established a strong commitment from staff and governors to further improvement. The school's key aims and values are well understood and shared by all members of the school community. As a result, these aims and values are well reflected in the work of the school. Under the purposeful leadership of the headteacher, the school has been able to tackle effectively the key issues arising from its previous inspections.
62. Delegation of responsibilities is good and the line-management arrangements between middle managers and senior staff are well structured. There are also good procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, including teaching. There is a useful programme of subject reviews and the most recent review, which involved the English department, produced a particularly useful report with clear pointers for improvement. Whilst the line-management meetings are used well for providing support and general advice, they are not used effectively enough for managing change and for following up information from monitoring activities. Similarly, whilst the senior management team meets regularly and meetings provide a good forum for discussing and steering the future development of the school, there is not enough or immediate follow-up of information from on-going monitoring and evaluation activities. Nonetheless, the good monitoring and evaluation of the school help to identify clearly the key priorities for further development. Staff know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and use this knowledge very effectively to set the right priorities in the school improvement plan.
63. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and they organise their detailed work effectively through a number of committees. They are actively involved in the work of the school, partly through their committee work but also in other ways, such as taking part in the programme of subject reviews. Currently, the governing body is looking to increase the ways in which its members can participate more actively in the school's work and find out about the quality of educational provision more independently. Governors meet regularly, though some recent meetings have shown lower attendance than usual. Governors show good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
64. The special educational needs department is in a transitional period, with many new members in the team who, under the leadership of an assistant headteacher, have made major improvements both to the in-class support and to the administration of special educational needs. As a result, support in class has improved and individual

education plans are to hand in most departments. Teachers brief learning support assistants effectively so that they can be of maximum help. Whilst support staff are deployed well, some subjects, such as physical education, do not receive enough help from learning support assistants. The department is well placed to make further substantial improvements in the future.

65. The school has a good special needs policy and includes details of special needs provision in the governors' annual report to parents. The school is aware that the section did not contain all the appropriate details and will change it this year. Similarly, the department is sharply aware of the remaining needs with regard to individual educational plans and the new senior learning support assistant has their completion as a major priority.
66. Financial planning and management are good. Departmental spending is clearly tied to the school's improvement plan, and senior management and governors work very effectively together to monitor spending rigorously, and the governing body is provided with regular reports from its finance sub-committee. Financial procedures are well detailed, and the recommendations of the most recent audit report have been implemented. The principles of seeking best value are being satisfactorily applied.
67. The school manages its budget carefully to do what is necessary and cost-effective and, although it only has a very small surplus, it is prudently anticipating future increases in pupil numbers in order to build up a reasonable reserve. GCSE optional courses have enough pupils to be viable, and the GNVQ information technology course in Year 10 is proving popular with pupils. The school expects numbers to continue to increase. The budget for pupils with special needs is overspent but this is justified because money is well used for additional learning support, enabling pupils to achieve well. Most of the accommodation and resources at the school's disposal are very heavily used, but there is some inefficiency where departments such as science and geography have to move between scattered rooms, or where, in the case of the second computer room, lesson bookings do not materialise. At the time of the 1995 inspection the school budget was managed cautiously to cushion the effect of the falling pupil numbers and, in view of the low standards of pupil achievement, the school was judged to provide insufficient value for money. The increased standards of pupil achievement from low starting points found in the current inspection, coupled to rising pupil numbers, mean that the school is now providing good value for money.
68. Staffing is satisfactory and the school has sufficient teachers in most areas to teach the National Curriculum. However, teacher turnover in some areas such as mathematics and design and technology continues to be a problem, although the school is doing its best to attract and retain good teachers. Despite the introduction of more senior management posts, some senior staff, for example the deputy headteacher, are currently overloaded. Procedures for staff development, including induction for newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school, are good. The school has an appropriate policy in place for performance management of teachers and its implementation is proceeding well.
69. Accommodation is satisfactory and is appropriate for effective teaching and learning in most subjects. With growing numbers of pupils, the pressure on accommodation is increasing and the school now has firm plans to build further classrooms. Science and technology are taught in two buildings, which hampers the best use of resources and makes servicing by technicians less efficient. Physical education has good indoor facilities but the field is poorly drained and very uneven, which hinders outdoor

activities. The central location of the chaplaincy is ideal for its role in the spiritual life of the school. The school makes good strategic use of its resources. The library is well stocked. The computer resources overall are satisfactory and good for music. However, there are shortages of specialist software that restrict computer use by some departments, for example art and design and design and technology.

70. Generally, departments are well resourced for pupils with special educational needs, although the mathematics department needs more up-to-date resources. The special needs department itself has good, although not generous, space in which to work. Some of its resources need revising or replacing with newer and more suitable ones, but they are at least adequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to improve standards and educational provision further the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:

- (1) Improve standards in numeracy and mathematics by:
 - giving a clear lead from the senior management team to the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum;
 - developing more effective problem-solving skills amongst pupils;
 - improving the quality of teaching in mathematics;
 - making effective use of tutor periods where numeracy is taught;
 - monitoring effectively the teaching of numeracy in subjects and in tutor periods;(Paragraphs 10, 12, 31, 37, 40, 83, 85-88, 123)

- (2) Improve assessment and use of assessment by:
 - ensuring that there are rigorous procedures for assessing pupils in all subjects;
 - ensuring that the results of assessments are used effectively in all subjects to improve curricular provision;
 - ensuring that subjects examine pupils' performance in relation to the different National Curriculum objectives in order to find out relative strengths and weaknesses and use the information gained to tackle any identified weaknesses;
 - using senior managers and line management meetings to promote good practice in setting up assessment procedures and using assessment data;
 - making sure that all teachers are rigorous in their implementation of the school policy of recording individual assessments in pupils' planners;
 - promoting teachers' use of the computer-based assessment recording system to explore and analyse assessment data;(Paragraphs 52-53, 62, 106, 112-113, 121, 123, 132, 153)

- (3) Improve personal development of pupils, in particular to improve their behaviour in Years 7 and 8 and hence improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of behaviour in all lessons are high;
 - developing pupils' learning skills, including their capacity to work independently and to show initiative;

- identifying opportunities in subject schemes of work for the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and monitoring the effectiveness of teaching of these;
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and initiative around the school;
 - extending the provision for counseling to include a greater proportion of the pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties;
(Paragraphs 17-19, 21, 26-27, 29, 43-47, 49, 112, 118, 144)
- (4) Ensure that all subjects make use of computers and that legal requirements are fully met by:
- improving accommodation and resources so that regular, planned use of computers can be made in all subject lessons to meet statutory requirements for access to all pupils;
 - continuing to improve teachers' ICT expertise, through training, so they can make more effective use of facilities;.
 - ensuring that subject departments assess and monitor the pupils' progress in ICT, and encourage pupils to take more responsibility for tracking their own progress;
 - developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the uses and applications of ICT within society in Years 7 to 9;
(Paragraphs 13, 34, 67, 86, 93, 99, 106, 109, 127, 129, 133-134)
- (5) Raise standards of attendance by:
- continuing with current strategies to improve it;
 - continuing to discourage parents from keeping their children at home or taking them away on holiday during term time;
 - ensuring that subject staff monitor attendance closely and chase up pupils whose attendance is not regular enough and is affecting their work.
(Paragraphs 22-24)

In addition to the key issues above, the school should also tackle the following minor issues:

- Ensure that legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship are fully met. (Paragraph 44)
- Continue to improve all teachers' awareness of literacy issues so that every opportunity to promote literacy is effectively taken. (Paragraphs 12, 31, 37, 77, 80, 105, 112, 115, 149)
- Promote pupils' skills in investigative science more effectively and the contribution of science to pupils' literacy. (Paragraphs 80, 90-91)
- Raise the standards of design work in design and technology at Key Stage 3 by improving the quality of teaching for design work. (Paragraphs 11, 26, 100-103, 105)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	121
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4.1	21.5	35.5	30.6	6.6	1.7	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	686
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	182

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	272

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	21

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	51
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	9.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	64	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	15	23	26
	Girls	28	24	25
	Total	43	47	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	35 (44)	38 (53)	41 (55)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	6 (4)	17 (28)	18 (17)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	19	27	31
	Girls	33	26	27
	Total	52	53	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (53)	43 (62)	46 (43)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (4)	23 (24)	7 (27)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	65	45	110

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	16	57	63
	Girls	16	44	44
	Total	32	101	107
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	29 (16)	92 (85)	97 (93)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32 (27.1)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	1
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	10
White	650
Any other minority ethnic group	11

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	38.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	440

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	24.9
Key Stage 4	22.4

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1922228
Total expenditure	1922770
Expenditure per pupil	2802
Balance brought forward from previous year	1377
Balance carried forward to next year	835

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	686
Number of questionnaires returned	223

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	53	11	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	28	51	13	6	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	52	15	6	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	39	30	11	1
The teaching is good.	25	56	11	3	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	44	17	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	38	5	5	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	39	2	3	2
The school works closely with parents.	31	41	20	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	45	10	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	48	10	5	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	45	10	7	9

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

ENGLISH

72. Examination results at age 16 have improved greatly since the last two inspections. Over three years, the proportion of pupils gaining higher GCSE English grades (A*-C) has more than doubled. English Literature results show a similar improvement. Girls do better than boys, as is the case nationally, but boys are further behind boys' national levels for their gender than are girls. While pupils' English results are better than those they achieve in many of their other subjects, the proportion of those gaining higher grades is well below national expectations. On the other hand, results taken across all grades (A*-G) match the national picture. Drama GCSE results are poor, with no pupils gaining higher grades (A*-C). Results in National Curriculum tests taken at age 14 have been well below the standard expected nationally, and in comparison with those found in similar schools. They have remained at this level for three years. Again, girls do better than boys, but boys are further below national standards for their gender than are girls.
73. In their first three years in school, pupils make satisfactory progress from low starting points. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are below average, and this is an improvement on the most recent National Curriculum test results of 2000 as a result of the continuing impact of improvements in provision. Pupils gain self-assurance as speakers, listening well in class to their teachers and to each other's contributions. Although they tend to answer questions briefly, when prompted to do so, they speak at length to justify their answers or explain their thinking. For instance, one group considered together how a cliché such as 'scary' could be improved upon, suggesting and explaining why 'haunted' or 'derelict' were more precise alternative adjectives. In drama, work is satisfactory, but less well developed. Pupils lack the skills and range of experiences by age 14 to act out their ideas confidently, and to use space and movement to communicate to an audience. In English, pupils read aloud clearly but rather expressionlessly from their own work or from play scripts, but read a range of fiction for pleasure as a result of the school's efforts to encourage them to use the library. At age 11, they understand and explain underlying patterns in what they have read. One class, for example, identified the way in which well-known fairy tales follow common narrative structures, and employ archetypal hero-heroine characters. They went on to use their deeper level of awareness to write their own original stories in the same tradition. By age 14, the quality of written work seen in lessons is below that expected nationally but better than that reached in the previous year's tests. Pupils have plenty of ideas to write about, but find it difficult to order their thinking into properly constructed sentences and paragraphs. They make errors too often by spelling words as they sound, rather than according to the conventional pattern. Nevertheless, spelling has improved since the last two inspection reports. Boys' work is weaker than girls', especially in their writing. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Here, the dedicated support of assistants in many classes has a beneficial effect. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to others and attain similar standards.
74. By age 16, the work seen showed that standards had continued to improve to a level above that shown by last year's examination results, but was still below national expectations. In their last two years in school, pupils make good progress. They work thoughtfully and independently, for instance to analyse and summarise the key points of characters they have studied in a play. One group shared their knowledge of J B

Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' by using photographs of actors' faces to cast the play. They were effectively challenged by the teacher to justify their choices with reference to their knowledge of the characters involved, before going on to decide how characters stood in relation to each other. In drama, pupils improvise dialogue readily and reflect well upon what they have done. In one lesson, they worked well together to create scenes of argument and disagreement, before going on to discuss together the way in which different tones of voice could make the same word insulting or conciliatory.

75. Pupils' writing improves by age 16, so that they write confidently in a variety of styles, producing analyses of books they have read, letters, newspaper reports, and original stories. They enjoy what they read and are adept at communicating their deeper personal understanding of underlying themes and associations in books. For example, one pupil compared Inspector Morse with Sherlock Holmes, drawing attention to the mixture of professional expertise and personal vanity present in the characters of both fictional detectives. Elsewhere, pupils show a good grasp of the way in which poets use specific devices to achieve effects, for example by identifying the use of 'half-rhyme', 'couplets' and 'quatrains' in an anthology by Simon Armitage that they had studied. Nearly all pupils at this stage, including those with special educational needs, have a reasonable command of sentence structure and use paragraphs to order their thoughts logically. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to others and attain similar standards. Girls do better than boys, although the gap narrows significantly between ages 14 and 16. Approximately one in five lower-achieving boys continue to find difficulty in spelling correctly. Pupils with special educational needs are taught sensitively and make good progress as a result.
76. The teaching of English is good overall and has improved considerably since the last report. Almost half of all teaching seen was very good or excellent. Previous problems of organisation of lessons and the management of pupils have been tackled effectively. English teaching benefits from the good subject knowledge of the teachers, and the way in which they plan lessons to cover a variety of tasks in each lesson to keep pupils' interest. They question pupils well, challenging, probing and encouraging them so that they feel certain of what they have learned previously and confident to go on. The good teaching motivates pupils and the quality of their response and their learning is good in their first three years in school, and very good in their final two years when they are considerably more mature and co-operative. Pupils are always enthusiastic and ready to take part in work, apart from that which involves extended writing. Their readiness to listen to and discuss ideas in class helps their learning considerably. For example, one group of 14-year-olds showed enthusiasm and eagerness to answer questions about and share with each other their knowledge of traditional ballads, before going on to analyse and explain the structure of a modern poem with similar features. Their pleasure, sense of excitement, and readiness to concentrate all worked together to generate an atmosphere in which rapid learning took place.
77. Written work is marked consistently. Here, teachers give pupils appropriate encouragement and a clear indication of the level of effort they have made, but they do not always give sufficiently detailed advice about what they must do in order to improve further. In addition, there are too few opportunities for pupils to speak at length in front of the whole class, and to take part in small group discussions where they could learn to think and work together in a team. At the same time, drama teaching is satisfactory, with some weaknesses. It does not introduce pupils to the

wider range of physical expression, thinking and performance skills, which should enable them to develop their ideas and communicate to an audience confidently.

78. English teaching benefits from strong leadership. Lessons are planned well to use a variety of methods which capture pupils' imagination and curiosity. Resources are appropriate, but opportunities are not planned properly for pupils to use computers. Many of the staff have been recently appointed. The subject is now benefiting from a level of professional expertise and dedication, which was not available to the head of department previously.

Literacy across the curriculum

79. Since weaknesses were reported in the last two inspections, considerable efforts have been made to improve the teaching of literacy skills across the school. Under the effective leadership of a senior member of staff, these are having a positive effect on standards. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure through regular library sessions in their first three years, and this is followed up with tutors in morning registration time. Other special events, such as the 'readathon', in which pupils took part in a sponsored reading and dressed as characters from books they had enjoyed, all help pupils to appreciate the value and pleasure of reading.
80. Key subject-specialist words are displayed and referred to in most parts of the school, helping pupils successfully to understand, use and spell them with assurance. Several subjects make good use of reminder sheets to help pupils to think through ideas logically before they start to write. In other respects, teachers do not make enough demands on pupils to produce the quality of written work of which they are capable. They too often fail sufficiently to emphasise good standards of written presentation, accurate spelling, or to provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and think about their work before writing. It follows that the standard of work produced varies according to the expectations of each teacher. In science, for instance, pupils' books contain spelling and grammatical mistakes, and there is very little extended writing or opportunity to debate ideas or make presentations. In physical education, by contrast, course work by pupils studying for the GCSE examination benefits from sound spelling and sentence structure. In history, higher achievers lay out work well, using writing to evaluate and explain historical concepts, or to justify opinions with reference to evidence. At the same time, lower achievers are less thoughtful when they write, and make statements unsupported by evidence. Elsewhere, pupils work well on computers to word process information. Here, they also benefit from the opportunity to think out carefully how to communicate their ideas, as they edit and draft their writing at the keyboard. In mathematics, pupils listen well, both to one another and to the teacher, and hold sensible discussions to come to terms with mathematical ideas. In geography, pupils use language well to analyse information, making judgements and drawing conclusions based upon research, but find it more difficult to write at length about what they have decided.

MATHEMATICS

81. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are well below average national standards. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were very low in comparison with the national average and were well below average when compared with broadly similar schools. Results are marginally better for 14-year-olds than those results obtained at age 16. With the exception of results in 2000, results generally have improved gradually since the last inspection. This improvement is

broadly in line with the national trend. The pupils are generally about five terms behind the national average, with girls doing better than boys. Taking the results overall in comparison to national standards, pupils did less well in mathematics than in either science or English in 2000, but better than English in 1999. Progress, based on their attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 (ie at the end of their primary school careers), is broadly satisfactory.

82. GCSE results at higher grades A*-C in 2000 were well below the national average and well below the average when compared with similar schools. Since the last inspection, results have overall remained relatively consistent. The percentage entry for all pupils is above the national average but the performance at grades A*-G is well below the national average. Girls' results overall are better than those of the boys.
83. Attainment levels in work seen during the inspection at both age 14 and 16 were well below average and mirror the picture from the examination results. Pupils' achievements, based on their prior attainment, are broadly satisfactory and progress across the school is steady. Many pupils, including those of higher ability, lack the necessary confidence to succeed when faced with non-routine problems. Whilst the work pupils are asked to do covers a relevant range of mathematical skills, it is often completed without their fully grasping relevant mathematical connections. For example, pupils in a lower-ability Year 9 class, when dealing with data handling, were relatively accurate in gathering information but needed considerable support in recognising, reviewing or communicating simple mathematical links within their work. More generally across the years, many pupils have poor retention of what they have learned and this slows down their progress over time. Few opportunities exist for pupils to improve their mathematics by using computers outside the timetabled ICT lessons. There is little insistence overall on detailed note taking in exercise books, which would assist pupils when revising for examinations.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and much teaching observed in the inspection was good. Effective teaching displayed good planning and interesting introductions, effective pupil-teacher interaction, varied use of teaching strategies and a summary and review of learning at the end of the lesson. In a higher-ability Year 9 class, for instance, pupils were encouraged to participate actively in the lesson, relevant questions were posed, often laced with good humour, opinions were valued and misconceptions dealt with effectively. Pupils understood the work, which was related to handling data, and were encouraged to express themselves using mathematical terms. They understood the meaning of upper and lower quartile and a few knew the meaning of the inter-quartile range. All could refine raw data and plot and interpret their graphs successfully. In the higher-ability Year 11 classes observed, pupils were supported with very good revision material in preparation for the imminent GCSE examinations. The pupils were aware of the grades achieved in their mock examinations and largely understood what was required of them to achieve their targets. The work in one of these lessons focused upon number and algebra, which included recognising and solving an algebraic expression for the perimeter of a rectangle. Pupils understood the underlying principles of the problem and with help identified aspects of the extension work. Teaching was mainly on an individual basis and the pupils clearly appreciated the support the department gave them at this important time.
85. Where the teaching had shortcomings, it was mainly because the lessons began with weak introductions and therefore faltered from the start. In an introduction in a lower-ability Year 7 lesson, oral questions related to basic addition, subtraction and

multiplication were too difficult to remember and were more suited to a written solution. Pupils' learning remained restricted because scant reference was made to the main objectives of the lesson and therefore opportunities for engaging the pupils in the lesson were lost and interest remained low. In other instances, shortcomings were lessened by the good rapport some teachers had with the pupils. However, despite this, restricted teaching methods hindered pupils' potential for achieving greater levels of understanding and progress. Some of the lessons similarly failed to stress the need for neat methods of presentation and efficient ways of setting out solutions. This impaired learning, in particular that of the higher-ability Year 10 pupils whose need to demonstrate a more developed method of mathematical reasoning is of significant importance.

86. Learning by pupils with special education needs is broadly satisfactory overall. In many of the lower sets, teachers demonstrated clear knowledge of pupils' needs but individual education plans are not linked precisely enough to the teaching programme. In the two lessons observed, where a teaching assistant was present, her work was effective in promoting learning and she displayed intimate knowledge of the needs of the pupils. Additional teaching support is given to the lower sets in Years 7, 8 and 9 by extracting pupils on a rotational basis for individual attention. Monitoring of the effectiveness of this provision is necessary. Little evidence was seen of extension material for higher-ability pupils. The newly appointed coordinator for able pupils has already made changes and has identified the need for new teaching material, including computer software.
87. There has been some improvement since the last inspection. The department has experienced upheaval in terms of staffing which has undoubtedly weakened the impact of efforts to improve. Nevertheless, additional GCSE revision material, implementation of a new core mathematics scheme, and after school and holiday classes show that there is a growing awareness that raising attainment is the core issue. Use of detailed assessment data to help raise standards is not taking place. Current GCSE modes of assessment are not best suited to the needs of pupils at the school and new schemes of work, updated for the requirements of the National Curriculum 2000, linked with the National Numeracy Strategy have yet to be put in place. The capacity of the head of mathematics to co-ordinate strategies for the necessary improvements to take place is restricted. Her additional roles outside the department and the inability to delegate work within the department because of staff involvement with other whole school responsibilities, remain problematic. Raising levels of attainment within mathematics is a key issue for the school.

Numeracy across the curriculum

88. Standards of numeracy amongst pupils are low because promotion of these skills throughout the curriculum is not well co-ordinated or led. Science provides the best examples of the use of numeracy, with calculations on speed, resistance and simple examples of transposition of formulae. When units of measurement are used, teachers stress the metric multiples of tens, hundreds and thousands. The most detailed and effective use of numeracy was in the use of data handling, where pupils showed satisfactory competence in displaying results, plotting two variables, testing hypotheses and attempting to see trend patterns. However, skills in analysing and interpreting graphical information are weaker than pupils' skills in plotting graphs. In design and technology, basic numeracy is used with work involving mass, length, volume and the estimation of width of spaces. In geography, there is a good contribution to the development of numeracy skills. This includes a considerable use

of graphical representation, analysis of data and mapping skills with grid references and explanation of contour lines. In ICT simple formulae are used in spreadsheets but graphical representation is poorly presented and relatively underdeveloped. In the extended tutorial periods observed, where numeracy is promoted, development was unsatisfactory. The work was undifferentiated, unmarked and generally made too few demands of higher-ability pupils. Overall, the lack of a co-ordinated approach to numeracy across the curriculum is resulting in considerable variation between subjects.

SCIENCE

89. Pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests at age 14 was below the national average in 2000. In comparison with results for similar schools, attainment was below the average for those reaching the expected level, Level 5, or above, but average for those reaching the higher levels, Level 6 and above. Boys attain significantly better than girls at Level 5 and above, and at Level 6 and above girls do slightly better than boys, but there is no clear pattern over the past three years. Over a similar period, results have been better for science than those for English and mathematics. Pupils are making good progress towards their targets in Years 7 to 9. Almost two thirds of the pupils were entered for GCSE examinations in double award science and the remainder for single award science, in 2000. Recently, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at the age of 16 has increased and in 2000 was above the national average. There seems to be no established pattern here either in terms of the relative performances of boys and girls. However, girls seem to do slightly better than boys in the A*-C range, as they do nationally. All pupils from the 2000 cohort gained grades in the range A*-G which is slightly better than the national average. Similarly, pupils doing single award science in 2000 did better than the national average. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils in the group. From this year onwards, all pupils will be taught double award science, although some may finally attain a Certificate of Achievement in science rather than a GCSE grade.
90. From below average attainment on entry, pupils' make good progress towards their targets at the end of Years 9 and 11 although, generally, they are more successful in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years. Overall attainment is below average by the age of 14 and above average by the age of 16, broadly matching the results of national tests and examinations. Attainment in lessons varies but is mainly satisfactory or good and for a few pupils it is very good or excellent. For example, pupils in Year 10 were very successful at developing a range of practical and problem-solving skills in their investigation of a paper 'helicopter' as it fell to the ground. In another group, the impact of work on energy, force, work and power was clearly demonstrated as pupils devised practical outdoor activities for calculating their rate of work. Similarly, pupils in Year 9 showed very good progress in their investigation and understanding of the action of a range of antacids used to neutralise acid indigestion and in their quest for value for money. However, irrespective of ability, some pupils in Year 7 classes were less successful in their understanding of the reactions of acids and alkalis, and in their behaviour generally. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with that of others and those of ethnic minority background and dual heritage achieve equally well.
91. With a few exceptions, the quality of teaching is good and often very good teaching was observed. In addition, there were a number of examples of excellent practice. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use well with pupils. Teachers organise and prepare individual lessons

conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in the lesson with less-able pupils about reproduction in Year 7 and in the series of revision sessions with Year 11 pupils. In all lessons, aims and intended outcomes were displayed and known by the pupils. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. A good range of teaching and learning strategies is used and homework is largely well thought out, relevant and clearly extends the learning. Whole-class questioning is often used effectively and the pace of lessons is generally good. In good and very good lessons, most pupils are challenged very effectively and, as a result, they grow in confidence and make clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This is demonstrated particularly well where pupils are engaged with the formal aspects of planning investigations. However, on a daily basis, there is little engagement of pupils in informal, relevant investigative, problem-solving activity, especially in the lower school. Assessment is properly organised and effective and there are regular opportunities for assessment, such as end-of-unit tests and the outcome of practical investigations. Pupils' books and other work are regularly marked, sometimes with praise and supportive and informative comment, although the work of some pupils is not always completed. There are good links with out-of-school organisations and wider activities such as the visiting theme bus 'Women Into Science and Engineering' (WISE). There are also visits to such places as the Natural History Museum and London and Colchester Zoos. The quality of pupils' work on display throughout the science laboratories is good and some is excellent.

92. Behaviour in lessons varies, and to a large extent depends on the ability of the teacher to control the class. Expectations of most teachers are high and relationships are generally good so that even in lessons where pupils' behaviour is challenging teachers are able to engage them successfully and ensure that they make tangible gains in their knowledge and understanding. Some pupils take pride in their work and books are well looked after, and these pupils are keen, willing and attentive and approach work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment. In the upper school especially, the engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is high. This was illustrated well during a Year 10 lesson where pupils developed a good understanding about the nature of forces as a result of good teaching and their positive attitudes.
93. The new head of department provides strong leadership. She has a clear vision, enthusiasm and an effective management style, and supports and handles people well and with sensitivity. With an increasing pupil population and only four laboratories and two teaching rooms, accommodation is barely satisfactory both in quality and quantity. The laboratories are based in two separate areas, thus there is inevitably some movement of resources between buildings. In addition, apparatus and equipment are only just adequate though funding for resources is good. Technicians provide good support to the department. Teachers are developing skills in using computers in science and administration although there remains a serious shortfall of ICT in pupils' day-to-day experience in using them. Written work by pupils is often quite formal, and there is little opportunity for creative and imaginative writing and recording in science.
94. Considerable progress has been made since the earlier inspections of 1995 and 1998. The head of department has been in post for little over a year and the department is moving forward rapidly. Supported by experienced teachers in the department, and colleagues in the senior management team, she has successfully implemented a number of significant changes. Documentation is of exceptional

quality and major policies and procedures are now in place, thus providing helpful guidance for the work of the department. Schemes of work for both key stages have been completely revised, and additional resources and replacement textbooks for the new courses have been provided. Routines for periodic assessment and records of pupils' success are also firmly established. Individual learning plans and specific learning targets are being used, and pupils are kept well informed about their attainment and progress. However, information from assessment is not yet used well enough to modify planning and teaching and to improve the next stage of the learning.

95. Staff in science work well together and their new sense of belonging and their professional energy and commitment to science are strong. The key issues for the future are to continue to improve attainment, to deal effectively with challenging behaviour especially in Years 7 and 8 and to monitor and evaluate effectively the work of the department and its teachers.

ART AND DESIGN

96. Pupils' standards in 2000 were below average at age 14 based on teachers' assessments, and broadly average at age 16 based on GCSE examination results. These results of teacher assessments were similar to the standards of work seen during the inspection. The GCSE results at grades A*-C were broadly in line with the national average. Since 1995, the GCSE results have been improving steadily and the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-C has doubled since the last inspection. Pupils perform better in art than in almost any other subject in the curriculum.
97. Pupils' achievements and progress over time are good in relation to their starting point on entry to the school. Standards of drawing are high, reflecting the departments' emphasis on the teaching of basic drawing and observational skills. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of form, tone and proportion and their work demonstrates increasing control and depth of understanding as they progress through the course. Sketchbooks are used effectively at both key stages and some in Year 11 are excellent. Pupils are encouraged to research visual ideas in a variety of ways, including observational drawing and research on the Internet and then to select modify and refine them to produce final pieces. Pupils understand how to relate their own work to that of established artists and high attaining pupils annotate their research, making connections obvious. All pupils have experience in using a variety of media including pastels, paint and three-dimensional materials such as wire, withies, papier mâché and plaster. Most pupils in Years 10 have produced colourful, expressive portraits using chalk pastels. High-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 have developed striking three-dimensional faces showing expressions and have painted them in the styles of artists as diverse as Francis Bacon and Seurat. Patterns made by repeating motifs are developed in both key stages, using a variety of media including the use of ICT in Year 8, collage in Year 9 and high quality reduction lino prints in four colours in Year 11.
98. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages. Teachers have high expectations and teaching is well managed to ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve well. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge and skills. The confident way teachers demonstrate by example, and refer pupils to the work of established artists encourages further research and promotes the understanding of context – of how artwork they themselves produce relates to the work of other artists in the world. Teachers use recapitulation and evaluation effectively to consolidate

learning by asking pupils to review what has been achieved in class. Homework is used effectively to extend learning. Good relationships established by staff ensure that pupils behave well and their attitudes are conducive to learning at both key stages. Good relationships also create a pleasant atmosphere. Pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively together in pairs and in small groups and they do so in a most co-operative way.

99. Improvement since the last OFSTED inspection in 1995 has been good. Standards since the HMI visit in 1998 have been maintained. Schemes of work now fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and curricular provision is broad and balanced, though there is little evidence of work in textiles, such as silk painting, silk-screen printing and batik. Leadership and management of the department are good, and the head of department has worked effectively to move the subject forward. Development plans are appropriate and reflect the whole-school development plan. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development. However, not enough use is made of ICT. The department also misses opportunities to develop cross-curricular links with religious education, geography and history in order to make visits to places of interest multi-purpose and beneficial to all.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

100. In 2000, teacher assessments showed that by the age of 14 pupils' attainment was below national averages. Work seen in the inspection confirms this. Making skills, which are at national expectations, are better than pupils' design skills. Only in food technology are all elements of the design process well represented in work. In food and graphics, evaluation of finished products is a good feature. Design work in resistant materials is well below expectations because research is unfocused and evaluations are often incomplete or missing. Drawings are of a good standard but are not always annotated. Pupils learn about materials, their properties and uses to an appropriate level for their age and ability. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of control and structures are less well developed. There are too few opportunities to use ICT in lessons. Pupils can use a good range of tools safely and effectively in all areas. Pupils shape, cut and join materials to a satisfactory standard. Made products are well finished.
101. GCSE results were below national averages in 2000 for design and technology subjects at grades A*-C and at grades A*-G. GCSE grades in design and technology were a little above the school average of all subjects. These figures have remained static over the last three years. Results in graphics are at national averages; results in resistant materials are well below national figures. Girls, who tend to opt for graphics or food technology, far outperform boys, many of whom choose to study resistant materials at GCSE. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards in graphics and resistant materials but, in food technology, standards have risen. Designing skills and making skills are now of a similar standard. Research is a feature of work in food and graphics; it is detailed and extensive. In the very best projects there is not a strong enough link between the analysis of research and the next phase of product development. In food and graphics, pupils trial a sufficient range of ideas and evaluate them well before choosing one to make. However, final evaluation and ideas on batch and mass production of their finished products are less detailed. Evidence of designing in resistant materials is patchy with work often being at a superficial level.

102. Pupils' overall progress in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. They make satisfactory progress in their knowledge of materials. For example, pupils have learned the features of healthy food. Good progress is made in practical work. For example, a Year 9 class quickly learned how to accurately bend and form a plastic sheet using a heated element. However, progress in designing is unsatisfactory because there is too little research or development of ideas before a final article is chosen to be made.
103. In Years 10 to 11 in food and graphics, pupils show satisfactory progress with their making skills and good progress in designing. Pupils become increasingly proficient at using research to inform their designs. For example, pupils research food values to develop a new healthy snack product for the school canteen. But the type and range of research are too limited. For example, questionnaires are not sufficiently used to test market requirements. Pupils often model a good range of ideas before selecting a final product and this is seen in graphics, where pupils make mock-ups of their ideas for 'pop-up' greeting cards. In resistant materials, progress of many boys is unsatisfactory; too much work is unfinished, drawings are not annotated and presentation is of a poor quality. Progress at both key stages is accelerated for those pupils who use the workshops out of school hours.
104. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is good at both key stages because they receive targeted help from classroom assistants and often have work specially prepared for them. Progress of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to other pupils.
105. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are better in Years 10 to 11, where no unsatisfactory lessons were observed, than in Years 7 to 9, where teaching and learning were good or better in half of the lessons seen but unsatisfactory in one third. This partly reflects the difficulties in staffing that the subject is currently experiencing, with several non-specialists teaching the subject. But in lessons seen, teachers had at least a satisfactory grasp of design and technology and pupils' progress was not being adversely affected. The teaching of literacy skills through technology lessons is variable. In one third of lessons it is very good because teaching emphasises key words and spelling mistakes are corrected. In a small minority of lessons, pupils' literacy skills are hindered by the teacher mis-spelling words on the board and leaving mistakes uncorrected in pupils' written work. In the best lessons, expectations for pupils' work are high; targets are clear and the work is made exciting. Here, pupils respond with enthusiasm and make very good progress. In unsatisfactory lessons, targets are not set and introductions fail to enthuse pupils, who quickly lose interest. In the best lessons, methods enable pupils to quickly gain knowledge and understanding, for example through a teacher demonstration of a practical skill. In unsatisfactory lessons, plans do not include enough relevant activities for pupils and, because they spend too much time on one task, learning is unproductive. In all lessons, teachers' management of pupils is at least satisfactory and often good and this ensures good behaviour. Marking is regular and, in the best lessons, comments on pupils' work show clearly how they can improve. Homework is set regularly, and it appropriately extends or reinforces work from the lesson.
106. Pupils' attitudes towards design and technology are good. The curriculum does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum because it does not include the use of ICT. Not all pupils were given their first choice of a design and technology subject in their options and this equal opportunity issue is not fully resolved. Leadership is satisfactory. There is generous technical support for design and technology. Assessment procedures are well established but assessment information is not yet

fully used to improve standards. The department has made satisfactory progress in meeting the many issues raised in the last report.

GEOGRAPHY

107. This subject is soundly managed and satisfactory improvements have been made since the last two inspections in 1995 and 1998. Standards have risen at GCSE and pupils' attitudes in Year 9 have improved.
108. The GCSE examination results in 2000 were well below the national average for higher grades and just below for overall A*-G grades. While candidates did not perform as well in geography as in their other subjects, results were significantly better than in 1999 and 1998.
109. By the end of Year 9, overall attainment is below the national average. This, however, represents good progress across the three years in relation to pupils' level of attainment on entry. It is also an improvement on the situation at the inspection in 1995. Mapping, diagrammatic and graphical skills are being developed effectively. Pupils are able to carry out enquiry tasks on the themes and places studied. Good examples of these were seen in project work on Brazil, the Masai, and the shopping surveys carried out in Year 8. Pupils' literacy skills still display many weaknesses but knowledge and understanding of geographical processes have improved since the 1995 inspection. Listening skills are satisfactory, especially when teachers' expectations are high. Pupils' books display an appropriate body of work but very little evidence of the use of ICT.
110. By the end of Year 11, overall attainment is well below the national average, but pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting point in Year 7 and to teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. The data clearly indicate that some of the pupils who are weaker academically are making good progress. Learning is at least satisfactory and a significant number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 display effective enquiry and independent research skills. In all years, however, absence has a detrimental effect on the achievement of some pupils.
111. Teaching is good, overall, with a significant amount of good and very good practice. A very small percentage of poor teaching was observed and this was the result of poor planning and organisation, resulting in poor progress being made by significant number of GCSE pupils. Lesson planning is mainly thorough and clear aims are set and explained to pupils. In most lessons they are challenged to think and develop independent enquiry skills. A good range of teaching and learning strategies is used to motivate and maintain interest. This, combined with positive attitudes to learning from a significant majority of pupils, results in good learning taking place in many lessons. Good examples were seen in lessons on shopping hierarchies and the varying characteristics of tourist resorts. The methods used by teachers encourage pupils to ask geographical questions and to use subject-specific language appropriately. Appropriate tasks are set to meet most pupils' individual needs and effective support is given in lessons.
112. Teachers are providing an increasing range of practically based activities and this has a positive influence on learning. These opportunities are built up steadily and tested and consolidated in a range of case studies and tasks. While there are some opportunities for pupils to write in an extended format, for example in Year 9 on pollution of the River Rhine, they occur too infrequently. Marking overall is regular, but

increased attention needs to be given to providing pupils with more diagnostic comments both orally and in writing, to help them raise standards. Regular assessments are carried out to test knowledge and understanding. There are weaknesses in teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour in some classes which, when combined with weak classroom management and slow pace, reduce potential progress. This was a point made in the 1995 report and it continues to be an issue. Where teachers have high expectations of the quality of work and behaviour required, progress is good and sometimes very good. As a result, the quality of learning has improved since the last inspection. Pupils with special education needs are making equally good progress as others. Although higher-attaining pupils are making satisfactory and in some cases good progress, their performance suffers from the lack of provision of separate, more challenging tasks.

113. Geography is soundly led and managed and the department has tackled some of the weaknesses identified in the last two reports. Teachers need to improve formative comments in order to help pupils learn still requires attention, and the use of ICT needs to be developed to meet recent legal requirements. The subject would also benefit from the use of modern technology to record and access assessment data, to inform curricular planning and to identify individual progress and any under-achievement. Development planning lacks sharpness and homework is not always frequent or well enough structured to consolidate and extend effectively pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding. The sharing of good teaching strategies, particularly in the field of classroom and behaviour management, would be a useful part of the training programme for the department.

HISTORY

114. In all of the past three years, GCSE results in history have remained substantially below the national average in terms of A*-C grades and, with the exception of 1999, they have been below in terms of A*-G also. However, during these years the number entered for GCSE has been small and in 2000 only 14 pupils took the examination.
115. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment at the age of 14 is below average. Pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities of the periods they have studied, and they can place them in a chronological framework. All, including those pupils with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial material to answer simple historical questions, as was demonstrated by a Year 9 class working with Nazi propaganda posters. Pupils are familiar with the nature of historical evidence and know that history is based on such evidence, but their ability to analyse it is underdeveloped. The majority of pupils have satisfactory oral and listening skills but most have weak writing skills. Spelling too is weak and sentence construction is poor. However, by the end of Year 9, most can write in simple sentences to describe historical events. A few higher-attaining pupils can write more extensively, as was seen in some Year 9 essays on the life of a coalminer. The majority can also carry out simple research tasks using ICT to add to their knowledge, though only the most able can organise their findings appropriately.
116. At the age of 16, attainment reflects the results of GCSE examinations and remains below the national average. Evidence from scrutiny of work indicates that pupils have substantially developed their skills in analysing sources of historical evidence, though lower-attaining pupils show a poor grasp of this skill. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of twentieth century history have deepened. Higher-attainers can use their own judgements to support their arguments in extended essays: all can describe

or explain historical events in pieces of writing, though many do not sufficiently support their arguments.

117. Pupils arrive at the school with very low levels of literacy and few skills in the subject. In Years 7 to 9, they make satisfactory progress over time, largely due to focused teaching of basic skills and use of appropriate historical topics. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress to their peers because of well-focused support. Inspection of exercise books indicates that higher-attaining boys and girls are given more challenging work, though much of it is knowledge based. In Years 10 to 11, those pupils who continue to study history to GCSE make good progress in terms of prior attainment. There is no evidence to suggest a difference between the achievement of boys and girls at the end of the key stage, though the current Year 10 class is almost entirely composed of boys.
118. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection ranged from unsatisfactory to very good but, overall, the quality of teaching was satisfactory: it was good in Years 10 to 11. Pupils' learning largely matches the quality of teaching. The majority respond positively to their lessons, sustaining their concentration throughout the hour-long periods. Where unsatisfactory behaviour or attitudes were seen, pupils were insufficiently challenged or were required to sit passively for too long. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for their own learning when given the opportunity but the majority are dependent upon their teachers for their learning.
119. When teaching is very good, lessons are delivered at a good pace, pupils are challenged and lessons are planned to ensure that all pupils learn effectively. Appropriate stimulating resources are used to aid learning, as was seen in a Year 7 lesson on castles, when a video clip on castle defence was used effectively to aid learning. Opportunities are used to build effectively on previous learning, and teachers use a variety of methods which fully involve pupils in their own learning. Where teaching was less than successful it was because teachers devoted too much of the lesson to explanation and exposition, allowing pupils to remain too passive, or they planned too much content, leading to rushed tasks and insufficient learning.
120. Last year only a small percentage of pupils opted to study history beyond Year 9 and the current Year 10 group is small. However, there is currently a stronger interest in the subject and larger numbers of this year's Year 9 have opted to continue the study of history.
121. This is a well-managed department. There is a commitment to raise standards, which is reflected in the departmental ethos. The department has successfully addressed most of the issues raised in the last two reports. However, the department is not making sufficient use of its assessment data in order to improve the progress that pupils make in terms of specific historical skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

122. Pupils' achievements over time in ICT are satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11 due to good teaching and their own positive attitudes and behaviour so that they stick well to their tasks and help each other when necessary. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, work with purpose and commitment. When compared to national standards, pupils' attainment is average by the end of Year 9 but above average by the end of Year 11 in GCSE classes. A high standard has been maintained since the 1995 inspection.
123. Teacher assessments of 14-year-olds show that the percentage of pupils achieving at National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6 is above average. However, inspection evidence suggests that assessments are generous, and overall standards were judged to be average. Overall achievement over time is satisfactory, but it is good in communicating and handling information, including for pupils with special educational needs. The majority of pupils successfully incorporate photographs from the Internet and clip art into text using a desk-top-publishing program. Higher-attaining pupils group and manipulate objects well, including scanned photographs, in the desk-top-publishing program. Pupils develop satisfactory written literacy skills, and numeracy is reinforced through work on spreadsheet formulae, although at a basic level only. About three quarters of pupils have home computers and use them to extend their skills well. Others use computers at lunchtimes or after school.
124. Attainment in GCSE information studies in 2000 was above the national average for both girls and boys, maintaining the high trend since the last inspection. Over three quarters of all pupils entered for the examination obtained grades of B and C, and all pupils obtained pass grades. The number of A grades was much higher than in 1999, with girls attaining more A grades than boys, although boys' A*-C results overall were slightly higher than girls. Pupils' results in ICT were better than in most other school subjects and than in similar schools. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieved particularly well from relatively low attainment on entry to the GCSE course. Current Year 11 pupils are predicted to attain the same high standard as in 2000, though only two pupils are predicted to obtain A grades.
125. In work and Year 10 lessons seen, pupils develop a good level of competence in designing and producing business documents such as letters, memoranda, agendas and newsletters, but highest-attaining pupils do not fully develop their skills in databases and spreadsheets. All pupils improve their literacy through reinforcing key terms, and through drafting and editing letters and other business documents to develop a sense of audience. In lessons seen in all years, there was little group discussion about the uses and limitations of ICT.
126. In timetabled computer lessons seen in Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils showed good keyboard skills and readily understood most common technical terms. Pupils used the theory they had learned to load programs and files and work with interest and reasonable independence. In a very good lesson seen, higher-attaining Year 9 pupils designed very effective presentations, showing excellent skills in integrating photographs imported from Internet and graphs drawn from spreadsheets, linking slides very fluently. Several included animations of a high standard. Pupils do not always provide sufficient depth of description or evaluations of their work to make it clear to whom reports are aimed. Pupils with special needs, generally learning difficulties, produce competent databases about themselves and their friends but do not develop their word-processed descriptions or draft the results of group

discussions. The learning support assistant very effectively helps lower-attaining pupils complete their tasks, produces worksheets to help pupils, and checks that equipment works well.

127. Achievement for ICT in other curriculum subjects is unsatisfactory overall. Although departments can book computer rooms, the network of machines in the science block is not compatible with the main system, and most subject areas, apart from music and learning support, have only one machine. Four machines in the library are used well. Pupils' access to the Internet is limited in order to maintain effective control by teaching staff. In a good English lesson seen during the inspection, Year 8 pupils used word processing effectively to draft and edit their stories, and higher-attaining pupils were able to import graphics successfully to improve their presentation, showing the benefits of skills learnt in timetabled computer lessons. Little other evidence of the use of computers was seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 during the inspection, though work seen in several subjects such as religious education, history and design and technology showed good word processing and desk-top publishing skills.
128. In work seen in Years 10 and 11, GCSE pupils attain above national expectations, in both GNVQ (Year 10) and GCSE information studies (Year 11). This reflects consistently good teaching and increased networked computer provision since the 1995 inspection. Pupils produce well-displayed questionnaires for consumer surveys and letters applying for jobs. They design effective databases to search and sort staff records for a small business. They compile spreadsheets to show costs and profits for a coach company, and can vary the break-even points using formulae. Year 10 pupils on the new GNVQ part one course type well-presented letters, flyers (integrating text and graphics) and minutes of meetings, using a variety of software with confidence.
129. In GCSE subjects in Years 10 and 11 other than information and communication technology, attainment in statutory National Curriculum requirements is still unsatisfactory, suggesting little improvement from the 1998 inspection, apart from in music, where pupils make very good use of technology to compose and perform, within school and in local events. In several subjects, such as mathematics, science and geography, pupils still have too few planned opportunities to develop their computer skills in lessons because access to computers during lessons is sometimes difficult. In addition, externally-funded training for staff to improve their computer skills has not yet begun. Pupils do not practise control technology, use computer-linked loggers to interpret experimental data in science, or develop numeracy skills by using spreadsheets to model and solve problems in mathematics. However, in several subjects, such as geography, history and music, pupils use the Internet well to research information. Most pupils use word processing for essays, mainly on their home computers.
130. Overall, teaching observed in all years was at least good, leading to a good pace of learning, and in all Year 11 lessons seen it was very good. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, manage them well, and encourage positive attitudes to learning through their own enthusiasm and caring approach. Teachers expect high standards. They plan lessons well, set clear objectives, and continually review and reinforce previous work. Their very good subject knowledge helps them to explain topics clearly and to support individual pupils well, including able pupils and those with special educational needs. Teachers help lower-attaining pupils improve coursework projects by breaking assignments into smaller, cumulative tasks. Teachers reinforce

key terms to consolidate pupils' understanding of theory and help them to plan their own descriptions, with the use of writing frames.

131. Sometimes display and paragraphing errors are allowed to go uncorrected and this spoils pupils' presented work. Little group working to develop team-working skills was observed.
132. The pace of learning sometimes lessens when pupils have to use computers in the neighbouring room when classes are too large in Year 7. In less effective Year 7 lessons seen not all pupils took a full part because some were unable to see the teacher's demonstration or answer questions. Teachers generally set homework regularly for research, design and theory work in Years 10 and 11, although homework is not used in earlier years to encourage pupils to research the uses and limitations of ICT. Teachers' systems for assessing attainment and progress have improved since the 1995 inspection. There is a move towards setting rigorous targets for improvement for individual pupils but this system is not yet fully in place.
133. Courses are planned well to meet National Curriculum programmes of study, using the school's own worksheets which have clear instructions to help pupils. However, in Years 10 and 11 there is insufficient planned ICT in other subjects for the pupils not taking the GCSE or GNVQ options. Teachers supervise the popular computer club at lunchtimes, helping pupils to research from the Internet.
134. Overall improvement of ICT since the 1998 inspection has been satisfactory, but good since the 1995 inspection, reflecting consistently good teaching by subject specialists, improved networked computer equipment and better access, although the number of computers available for pupils' use in various bases, including the library, is still well below current national expectations. More time is needed to co-ordinate and assess pupils' ICT progress in other subjects. The department is well managed. A positive, co-operative working environment has been created. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, although the computer rooms are not always efficiently deployed for other subjects' use. Overall numbers of computers are increasing each year through government funding, and a satisfactory range of software is available, including supervised Internet access. Through its effective strategic planning, linked to school improvement, and use of external funds, the ICT department is well placed to support further improvements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

135. The GCSE French results for 2000 show an improvement since the time of the last OFSTED inspection in 1995, but remain well below the national average. Only a small proportion of the pupils entered for the examination reached the high grades A* to C. Those who took the examination did less well in French than the average of all other subjects. Girls achieved better results than boys. Evidence from lesson observations and the survey of written work shows that the overall attainment by the time pupils are 14 and 16 is below the national average. For 16-year-olds, this is better than the GCSE results of 2000 partly because pupils coming up through the school have a stronger foundation in French as a result of the significant improvement in teaching and management of the department since the last inspection. Attainment observed during the inspection is also better than the GCSE examination results of 2000 because a significant proportion of pupils, mostly low attainers, have been disapplied from taking a modern foreign language in Year 10.

136. Pupils' progress in French lessons is mostly satisfactory, and sometimes good. In Year 7, they acquire a knowledge of the basic vocabulary and grammatical structures, and begin to use the language orally and in writing. Progress made in individual lessons is not always sustained, however. By the end of Year 9, whilst the majority of pupils develop a satisfactory level of accuracy and fluency in their oral work, a significant number show a lack of confidence, and do not progress beyond the stage of repeating single words or phrases. Their pronunciation is unclear and uncertain, and they rely heavily on their teacher to prompt them. Written work is mostly well presented, and reaches a satisfactory level of accuracy. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although only in a small number of lessons do they receive learning support. The able pupils who take German as a second language make very good progress in the limited time available. In Years 10 and 11, the pupils who complete the GCSE course learn to understand the more complex forms of the foreign language, both orally and in writing. In many cases, their competence in using the language actively does not match their listening skills. Written work is mostly accurate, though there are relatively few examples of writing that is creative and imaginative.
137. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and it is often good. All of the full-time teachers are qualified specialists with good subject knowledge. They plan their lessons carefully and use a range of classroom activities to reinforce learning. Pupils of all abilities are given opportunities to progress. Teaching is conducted predominantly in the foreign language and, in the majority of cases, this secures a good oral response from the pupils, who become aware of their ability to communicate in French. In a minority of cases, pupils' response is hesitant and uncertain, and limited progress is made. ICT has begun to make a modest impact on teaching and learning. There is, overall, a marked enthusiasm for the subject, shared by the teachers and pupils alike. Homework is set regularly, and some of the marking is detailed, encouraging and helpful to pupils.
138. All pupils study French in Years 7 to 9, and the most able linguists also study German in Year 8. The time allocated to the subject and the size of teaching groups are mostly satisfactory. In Year 10, some 40 pupils follow a GCSE course in travel and tourism instead of French, and will continue with this course into Year 11. Thus, they study no foreign language at all during Years 10 and 11, which is at variance with the expectation of the National Curriculum, though the pupils have been appropriately disapplied from this aspect of the National Curriculum. In most schools, the proportion of pupils studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 to 11 is much higher.
139. The modern languages department has clear-sighted and purposeful management. Procedures are being developed to monitor carefully the attainment and progress of each pupil. Teaching accommodation and learning resources are good, and a positive learning environment has been created. Year 11 revision clinics support the work in lessons. There is a well-supported programme of visits to France. Since the 1995 inspection, there have been significant improvements in staffing, the quality of teaching, management and classroom behaviour. These have resulted in raising the esteem of the subject and improvements in the standards of work being achieved, though the latter have yet to manifest themselves in improved GCSE results. There is a clear potential to extend the curricular provision and to raise further the levels of attainment for all pupils.

MUSIC

140. Examination results in music at GCSE in recent years have been slightly below the national average but above the school average and results in similar schools. Work in the current Year 11 class indicates that the pattern may be similar this year. The present Year 10 pupils are also working at a level below that expected nationally for GCSE pupils at this time in the year. At the age of 14, pupils' attainment is below the national average but, again, above the level attained by pupils in similar schools. There are many extra-curricular groups but numbers in some of them are small. Few pupils play in the orchestra, for example. This is because the school currently does not have wind and string teachers and very few pupils are learning these instruments. The present group can play only very simple pieces and, in the rehearsal seen, pupils were tackling completely new work. The CDs of pupils' performance demonstrate a very good standard of singing in a popular style from the Roadshow.
141. Between the ages of 11 and 14, pupils produce good quantities of written and recorded work. They learn simple notation and how to turn this into music at the keyboard, although few become fluent and few read bass clef. Year 7 pupils, after a year on the course, can read simple rhythms and understand 'step and leap' in relation to melody. Many Year 8 pupils can distinguish different intervals and are aware that they will bring different feeling to the music. Only a small minority of pupils really understand what this means in musical terms, however. Many girls, particularly, enjoy singing in a popular style and sing well in tune. Some pupils have a good sense of rhythm. All pupils have the experience of working at keyboards; for example, Year 9 pupils can play a simple chord sequence on keyboards and incorporate a drum rhythm. However, few have fluent keyboard skill as such. Many of the most able pupils do not play well. Less able pupils concentrate more and produce work which is as good. Pupils have ideas about comparing pieces of music and have a basic understanding of why composers through the ages have written music in the way that they have. They have a good knowledge of the recent history of popular music. Year 10 pupils can invent a simple melody and have some grasp of how certain chords follow one another to make a satisfying piece. They are beginning to understand simple harmony.
142. At all ages through the two key stages, pupils find it difficult to express themselves about music. They do not talk easily about what they are doing. As at the time of the last inspection in 1995, pupils are not sufficiently practised in the invention and composition of music. Pupils with special educational needs are able to take a full part in the activities. They make good progress in many cases. All pupils can cope with the work at an appropriate level.
143. Pupils generally achieve at least satisfactorily. However, the lack of real commitment to lessons from many of the more capable Years 7 to 9 pupils leads to poorer achievement. By the age of 14, however, most have made satisfactory progress. Some, including lower-attaining pupils, work hard and achieve well against prior knowledge and attainment. A Year 9 class containing several pupils with statements of special educational need, for example, worked hard in their lesson to produce a fair performance of a chord sequence on electronic keyboards. Presentation of work, however, does not improve and in the majority of books is less good at the end of the key stage than at the beginning, when pupils clearly took much care over their work. Those working on the GCSE course make good progress to achieve well for their capabilities. Year 10 pupils with special educational needs made good progress in the

lesson seen, and learned how to construct a simple tune using the notes of the main chords.

144. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 14 and good for older pupils working towards GCSE. In the most successful lessons, pupils learn well because they are able to concentrate. In a substantial minority of lessons, the teacher does not manage pupils well and therefore cannot take full advantage of his other good teaching skills. In these lessons, behaviour deteriorates and pupils learn less than they could. Lessons are well planned, however, and the tasks set appeal to pupils, from the song writing in Year 7 to chord sequencing on keyboards in Year 9, but depend for success on pupils actually concentrating and getting on with the work. The teacher is committed to music and is able to convey his own enthusiasm to pupils challenging them well in the best lessons. Lessons move at a good pace unless poorer behaviour slows them. Work seen, as well as lessons observed, shows that with older pupils on the GCSE course the teacher's skills can be better used because class management is not such a big factor.
145. Similarly, the management of the department has some very good but some unsatisfactory points. There are very good opportunities for pupils to make music using keyboards and computers. Some high quality equipment is available and the head of department has high level skills to use this and help pupils to use it. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is available. However, documentation is sometimes thin and the schemes of work for music are unsatisfactory.
146. The department is physically very crowded. The main music teaching room and the computer room are too crowded. This detracts from the usefulness of the fine equipment in them. There is no current policy for music and the scheme of work is currently being updated. It shows a good and lively course with all the main requirements of the National Curriculum present but it is not complete. The head of department leads with some style and energy. However, with so much valuable out of school music, too much is happening for one person to manage and the result is less than crisp organisation of essential school music.
147. Since the last inspection, the department has maintained its good extra-curricular work, especially through the Roadshow. Pupils continue to be attracted to music because of the liveliness of the department. Some of the areas for development in 1995 still need attention, however. For example too little attention is still given to composition. The use of space would appear to be less good now than in 1995 when it was considered good. The department serves GCSE pupils better now but has not made advances in its provision for younger pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

148. When the pupils arrive at the school in Year 7, their attainment is well below average. Standards attained by the majority of the pupils in Year 9 are below the national expectation though a significant minority reach it. This represents good achievement through the key stage. A minority of pupils has satisfactory fielding and batting skills in rounders and a good understanding of rules and strategies. The majority of pupils know how to warm up correctly before exercise and understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8 have a good knowledge of the names of muscles and factors relating to fitness. A significant minority find it difficult to transfer newly acquired techniques into the next part of the activity because they do not have the self discipline to work consistently hard to the level that is

required to be successful. Their evaluative skills are also below average. However, the overall picture is improving progressively from Year 7 because the style of teaching has recently changed to that of educating the pupils about physical activities and principles.

149. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average at grades A*-C and above at A*-G. The pupils performed comparably well with their other subjects. Results since the last inspection have been in line with or above average and the pupils often attain better results in physical education than in their other subjects. The reason for poor results in 2000 was a change in teacher resulting in a lack of rigour in checking areas of weakness. Pupils currently taking the exam demonstrate average attainment. They have a good depth of knowledge and are able to link practical and theoretical aspects. Most write fluently and use technical language confidently. Pupils achieve well relative to their ability. Those in Year 10 are above average in their practical work. They have good ball skills and can use tactics effectively in games such as rounders. A significant minority of pupils' theoretical work is unsatisfactory. They have a poor recall of facts and are generally not confident in the use of technical language when writing or speaking. A minority have poor attitudes to the subject and are not prepared to work sufficiently hard to reach the standards that are required to pass the examination.
150. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are satisfactory. It is best in Years 7 and 8 where the new teaching methods are starting to have an impact. The tasks challenge pupils both physically and intellectually and teachers' expectations of behaviour and hard work are at their highest. The quality of teaching in Years 9 and 10, though satisfactory, is less effective due to a significant minority of the pupils' poor attitudes to hard work and the number of pupils who do not participate. Although the teachers have worked hard to reduce the number of non-participants, there are still too many and they are not sufficiently involved in lessons. In these lessons, the quality of learning and the pupils' achievement are less than can be expected. In the best lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge well to build up tasks logically, increasing the skills to transfer into the final activity. They use question and answer sessions effectively to make the pupils think about how to improve their work and recall knowledge from past lessons, using technical vocabulary. A good example of this was seen in a Year 8 sprinting lesson where pupils had to remember the difference between aerobic and anaerobic exercise and compare each with different events in athletics. As a result, the pupils had a greater understanding of factors affecting performance. The pupils responded well to the teacher's humour and enthusiasm, and tried hard to reach the expected high levels of performance. These high expectations are not consistent between teachers, and pupils do not always strive for better standards of work.
151. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the majority of practical lessons with tasks that are adjusted to their needs if required and they achieve well. Many of the pupils with behavioural difficulties are well motivated, respond positively to the teachers and often reach higher levels of performance than other pupils. In GCSE theory lessons, pupils with special educational needs are not given tasks that enable them to work at their own level. As a result, they lose interest gradually throughout the year and do not achieve well. Overall, the quality of teaching for GCSE is improving. Homework assignments are set regularly and encourage the pupils to do their own research. Marking of work is constructive and targets are set, resulting in improvements for those pupils who have the motivation to do well.

152. The recent increase in the range of extra-curricular activities is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents but is limited by current staffing arrangements. The pupils are now enjoying the opportunity to enter tournaments and compete against other schools in sports such as athletics, netball, gymnastics and girls rugby. The facilities and coaches in the local community are not effectively used to promote higher standards either in the curriculum in Years 10 to 11 or in the extra-curricular programme. Nor are they used to foster positive attitudes to sport for life or as an incentive to motivate those with less interest in physical education. The curriculum time in Years 10 to 11 has not increased since the last inspection and, although adequate, does not allow for a wide variety of activities or the opportunity for pupils to follow vocational courses such as the Junior Sports Leader Award.
153. Staffing and leadership of the department have been unsettled since the last inspection in 1995. Satisfactory improvements have occurred in teaching and in reducing the number of non-participants. GCSE results have been in line with or above the national average with the exception of last year. The notice boards are eye catching, informative and provoke thought about topical issues. The new requirements for assessment have been put in place, but are not yet used to measure accurately the pupils' progress from when they arrive in Year 7. The development plan is not sharply focused on how ideas can raise standards or how to measure their impact, especially from Year 9 onwards. The playing fields, whilst extensive, are in a very poor state of repair and are barely adequate for effective teaching of games and athletics. The lack of a permanent base for GCSE theoretical lessons creates difficulties in establishing a stimulating environment for the subject and also for the transportation of resources. A central office would assist in day-to-day organisation and in the sharing of departmental information.