

INSPECTION REPORT

HARLINGTON UPPER SCHOOL

Harlington

Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109673

Headteacher: Mr D Motion

Reporting inspector: Marianne Ellender-Gelé
2348

Dates of inspection: 9th – 11th October 2000

Inspection number: 223838

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13 –18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Bedfordshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Holland
Date of previous inspection:	12 th February 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This large comprehensive school has 1194 boys and girls on roll aged 13-18 of whom 300 are in the sixth form. There are, at present, eighty-six more boys than girls in years 9 to 11, and forty-eight more girls than boys in the sixth form. The school has increased its size since the last inspection and is popular. The attainment of students, when they join the school, covers the full range from very high to very low, although the proportion of students of high attainment is greater than average. Very few students (0.8%) are from minority ethnic groups, and only one needs support because English is not his first language. The proportion of students with special educational needs, 11.5%, is low. Only 1.6% have a statement of special educational needs, which is below average. Special provision is made for students with hearing impairment. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at 6%, is much lower than the national average. Most students come from a favourable social background.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Harlington Upper School is a very good school. The very effective leadership of the headteacher, senior managers and governors, creates a positive climate in which students want to learn. The school is managed very effectively and provides very good value for money. Teaching is very good. Challenging lessons and high expectations lead to very good learning and high standards. Overall, the school's many strengths far outweigh the areas to be improved.

What the school does well

- Standards are high, leading to well above average results in tests and examinations. Results continue to improve year on year and the school does well compared with similar schools. Results at A-level are very good, well above average.
- Teaching is a strength. Consequently, students enjoy their work and make very good progress. This is particularly evident in the sixth form, and in mathematics, science, geography and expressive arts.
- Students' behaviour is very good and relationships are excellent. Personal development is a significant strength.
- The headteacher, senior managers and governors provide very effective leadership.
- The school provides very good opportunities for social, moral and cultural development. Extra-curricular activities and the excellent experiences offered in art, drama, music and physical education contribute very positively to the growth of students' intellectual, creative and artistic skills.
- Financial resources are very well managed and the school provides very good value for money.

What could be improved

- Standards in information technology (IT) are too low. Students aged 13 to 16 do not practise IT skills sufficiently across subjects.
- Heads of subject departments are not sufficiently involved in whole school improvement strategies.
- There are some weaknesses in curriculum provision.

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

The school is already working on these aspects. They have been identified in the development plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Harlington Upper School continues to be a very good school, as identified in the previous inspection in 1996. Since then, significant progress has been made. Examination results and the quality of teaching have improved. Overall, there has been good progress in most of the areas identified for improvement. The issues of boys' behaviour and underachievement have been addressed. This has led to better results for them. Spiritual education and curriculum provision for art are now good. Time allocation for

information technology in Year 9, and for religious education in Years 10, 11 and in the sixth form, is now appropriate. Statutory requirements are met, except for a daily act of collective worship. Assemblies are held regularly and are of high quality. Assessment practices are now very good, except in information technology. Reports to parents meet current guidance, and have been improved. However, progress made in all subjects studied is still not clear enough. The monitoring and evaluation role of heads of department has been addressed in part. Whilst some improvement has been made, heads of department do not monitor teaching and learning consistently. There is no co-ordinated scheme for this to take place across all subjects.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results, and by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
End of Key Stage 3 tests	B	A	A	B
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	C	A	B	

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

In 1999, fourteen year old students achieved well above average results in English, mathematics and science. In the most recent tests of summer 2000, high results were maintained in mathematics and science, but results dropped in English. When compared with similar schools, results in English are below average. In science, they are well above and in mathematics they are above average. Work seen in lessons matches these high results. In English, some work lacks challenge for more able students, reflecting the relatively lower results. In the three core subjects, the overall trend in results at age 14 is rising in line with the national rise.

A significant strength of the school is the very good set of results obtained in external examinations at GCSE and A-level. In 1999, GCSE results were consistently well above average and above those of similar schools. Students did better than expected against their tests' results at age 14. Boys did particularly well. The trend in the GCSE point score is rising in line with the national trend. The most recent GCSE results, in summer 2000, improved by a further 5% at grades A*-C. This is a significant achievement. Grades achieved in design and technology, English language and literature, geography, German, mathematics, music, physical education, religious education and science were particularly high. Although still close to the national average, results were not as high in art, business studies, drama, French and history. There is a similar positive picture at A-level and for vocational qualifications. The 1999, results were above the national average and they were much improved in 2000. The school's average point score target was exceeded. Particularly high results were achieved in English, mathematics and science.

Students with special educational needs, and those who have hearing impairment, achieve well and make very good progress. They improve their reading, speaking and number skills and obtain creditable results in their examinations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are very positive about their learning and are proud of their achievements. Commitment in the sixth form is excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students are self-disciplined, courteous and friendly. Older students are excellent role models.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Students enjoy taking responsibilities, and they can be trusted. They work well together in a climate of mutual respect.
Attendance	Good. Attendance figures are above average.

These aspects are significant strengths and contribute to the success of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 13-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good	Very good

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

In the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory in 96% of lessons, at least good in 68% and very good or outstanding in 28%. Teaching was never poor, but there were a few shortcomings in 4% of lessons, representing one lesson seen in each of art, modern foreign languages and religious education and two lessons in information technology. Teaching in mathematics, English and science is good.

There is much high quality teaching across all subjects by enthusiastic teachers who show their enjoyment of teaching. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good. Teachers plan their lessons well and have high expectations of what students will achieve. Relative weaknesses are in the planning of a few lessons for lower attaining groups in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. This is because tasks are not broken down sufficiently or explained well enough. In Year 9 English and information technology, work is sometimes too easy. Overall, students make good progress and learn quickly, thanks to the interesting and demanding work they are given. Teachers meet the needs of students with special educational needs well. The teaching of students with hearing impairment is effective and they make very good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Planning in Year 9 does not take sufficient account of what students already know and understand. Form time is not always used well. Time for personal, social and health education is limited. Planning and assessment of information technology is weak. Curriculum choices for students, aged 14 to 18, are restricted; there is little alternative to GCSE and A-level courses.

Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Support is effective, leading to good progress for all students.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	One student receives additional support and is making good progress. Other students with English as an additional language are very competent in English and support is not needed.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	A significant strength. Many opportunities are provided across all subjects and outside the school day.
How well the school cares for its students	The school promotes very good behaviour. Arrangements for promoting good attendance are effective. Child protection procedures, with appropriate staff training, are all in place.

The high level of staff commitment to extra-curricular activities is a significant strength. These are particularly enriching in art, drama, music and physical education. Teachers provide many opportunities to support students' personal, social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. As a result, students develop into mature and responsible young adults, who appreciate and respect others' views and beliefs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff provide very effective leadership which gives the school a good sense of purpose and direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works very effectively with senior managers. Governors are very clear about their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The attainment of students is evaluated very well using test and examination performance results. The quality of teaching is not monitored consistently across all subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are deployed very well to support the maintenance of high standards. The school works hard to gain the best value from purchases and contracts.

Whilst leadership and management of the school are strengths, there is a need to develop further the contributions required of heads of department. This particularly applies to monitoring teaching and learning to ensure that there is a high standard in all classes.

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. • Teaching is good. • Results are high and progress is good. • Behaviour and relationships are very good • The school is led well. • Teachers are approachable and give much time to the many extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports are not sufficiently informative. • The school does not work closely with parents. • Some parents are not clear about what is taught and the range of activities provided.

Inspectors agree with the positive comments of parents. Parents are very supportive of the school. They are enthusiastic about the expressive arts provision, particularly music and drama. Inspection findings confirm that these areas are very strong. Reports to parents do not state with sufficient precision the strengths and weaknesses of individual student's achievements and progress. A good range of curriculum information is produced for parents, however, inspectors confirm that information for option choices and for the sixth form could be made clearer. Inspectors cannot substantiate the view that the school does not work closely with parents. A high percentage of respondents to the survey said that they would feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are high, leading to well above average results in tests and examinations at 14, 16 and 18. The school does well when compared with similar schools.

- 1 Results in the national tests at age 14, in **English, mathematics and science**, are well above average, and have risen at the same rate as the national trend. In summer 2000, high results were maintained in mathematics and science, but dropped in English. When compared with similar schools, results in English are below average. In science, they are well above and in mathematics they are above average.
- 2 **For students now in Year 9**, work seen in classes matches these high results. In **English**, speaking and listening skills are of a very high order. Students have extensive vocabularies and are able to articulate their views convincingly. Writing is above average standards and students present their work well. Reading is well above average throughout. Students of middle and lower sets, and those who have special educational needs, make very good progress. However, in Year 9, high achievers are not challenged sufficiently and they under-achieve against their potential. In **mathematics**, students achieve high standards. In top sets, students are confident and successful in dealing with complex problems in algebra, which enables them to achieve high standards. In other groups, students work at appropriate levels and make good progress. In **science**, students achieve well above average standards. Investigative skills are very good and students have a secure knowledge and understanding of important scientific concepts, which are used to explain their observations and predictions. Students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress across all areas of science.
- 3 A significant strength of the school is the very good set of results obtained in external examinations, **at GCSE and A-level**. In 1999, GCSE results were consistently well above national averages and above those of similar schools. Students did better than expected, against their tests' results at age 14. Boys did particularly well. The trend in the GCSE point score is rising in line with the national trend. Grades achieved in design and technology, English language and literature, geography, German, mathematics, music, physical education, religious education and science were particularly high. Although still close to the national average, results were not as high in art, business studies, drama, French and history. The most recent GCSE results, in summer 2000, improved by a further 5% at grades A*-C, from 57% in 1999 to 62%. This is a significant achievement, leading to the school exceeding its average point score target.
- 4 Students with special educational needs, and those who have hearing impairment, achieve well and make very good progress. They improve their reading, speaking and number skills and obtain creditable results in their examinations. In science, in Years 10 and 11, progress in lower sets is satisfactory overall but, on a few occasions, it is too slow because of inappropriate tasks and resources.
- 5 Results at **A-level** offer a similar positive picture. The 1999 results were above the national average and improved further in 2000. The school's average point score

rarely drops below 18, compared with a national figure of about 17.5. In 2000, the improvement is significant, with the best ever results and a point score of 20.8, exceeding the challenging target set. High results were achieved in English, mathematics, science, communication studies, geography and music. In other subjects, results are also high and match those expected considering the students' good standards on entry to the course. The levels of debate and conceptual understanding are particularly high in the sixth form. Students engage in challenging problem solving, they organise their work well and have high levels of research and investigative skills. In vocational qualifications, results are good, with almost all students gaining accreditation.

- 6 Across subjects of the curriculum, **literacy skills** are applied very well and students demonstrate high standards of grammatical knowledge and spelling. This was particularly noted in English, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. In these subjects the use of key words, correct sentence construction and imaginative writing is insisted upon; consequently skills are developed to high standards. Standards of **numeracy** are very good. Students can use number well in many subjects of the curriculum, for example in art, design and technology, graphics and music. Students demonstrate high levels of **understanding, artistic and creative thinking**. One particular strength is the way in which students use knowledge in one subject to improve their work in another. They can make links between the different aspects of their education and this leads to high achievements. For example, in German, they use their knowledge of the English language to improve their written work; skills learnt in drama improve the quality of diction and pronunciation; hence speaking and listening skills are developed to high standards. Students in Year 11 can make connections between their skills in art and those practised in graphics and design and technology.

Teaching is a strength and leads to high quality learning

- 7 Teaching and learning are significant strengths. Teaching in mathematics, English and science is particularly good. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 96% of lessons seen, at least good in 68% and very good or outstanding in 28%. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching was never poor, but there were a few shortcomings in 4% of lessons, representing one lesson seen in each of art, modern foreign languages and religious education and two lessons in information technology.
- 8 There is much high quality teaching across all subjects by enthusiastic teachers who show their enjoyment of teaching. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good because teachers stress the importance of accurate spelling, of the use of key words and of correct structures across many subjects. When appropriate, teachers make relevant reference to use of number and the need for precise calculating and measuring. The school meets the needs of students with special educational needs well. The good teaching of these basic skills leads to good learning across subjects. Students who have hearing impairment make very good progress, thanks to the effective support provided by specialist staff, observed working very effectively with subject teachers.
- 9 Teachers use time well in lessons and have high expectations of what students will achieve. Teaching is very effective because teachers focus on extending students' thinking. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students successfully drew frequency curves from data, responding to the challenges set. They relished this challenge and made the very best use of time. Fast progress was sustained during

the lesson thanks to the teacher providing excellent responses to students' questions, redirecting their energies to further challenges.

- 10 Planning, in almost all subjects, is a particular strength. Appropriate activities are sequenced effectively, to maintain pace and engage students' interest. They respond enthusiastically. This was the case in an English lesson where very good use was made of historical and cultural contexts, when illustrating and explaining textual features of a Valerie Bloom poem. The precise timing of discussions and whole class work aided the development of speaking and listening skills very effectively. This also led to better understanding of an unfamiliar text. In a volleyball lesson in physical education, swift changes of activity and good evaluations, by students and the teacher, ensured improvement of practical skills. Careful use of a video about hormones in a Year 10 science lesson challenged students to collect and evaluate selected evidence from the tape, linking what was seen to their own lifestyles. When planning a lesson, teachers ensure that resources are very appropriate. For example, in art, music was used to provide a stimulus for students to sketch ideas for the concept of "war". The teaching was good because students were encouraged to internalise the emotion of war for themselves through a carefully selected musical extract. This contributed to better learning.
- 11 On rare occasions, planning for lower attaining groups lacked precision. Tasks were not broken down sufficiently to meet students' needs, and were not explained properly. This was the case in one lesson in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Progress was slower than expected for some Year 9 English groups, when work set was too easy for high achievers. In information technology, longer term planning and assessment are not developed enough to build on students' prior knowledge and experience.
- 12 Students learn quickly at Harlington. They learn new skills and develop their understanding in lessons because of the interesting and demanding work they are given. They make substantial increases in knowledge of concepts and practical skills. In a Year 9 music lesson for example, an excellent range of well focused musical tasks, and rigorous but good humoured questioning of students, ensured that they made very good progress in appreciating, performing and understanding the off-beat rhythms of reggae. In many sixth form lessons learning was excellent, for example in Year 13 A-level biology, students planned and carried out imaginative investigations and research including food hygiene, body fat content and health and the effectiveness of detergents. In a mathematics Year 13 A-level group, the teacher set problems which students solved numerically and diagrammatically, developing further their strong ethos for independent learning and success.
- 13 A significant strength is that, in a very large majority of lessons, across all subjects, students sustain high levels of concentration, responding very well to the lead given by teachers and evaluating their own answers and performance. They enjoy interactive work, pursue topics further and thrive when given independence to research issues for themselves. At the end of lessons students are able to reflect on what they have learned and achieved. They test out ideas on others and examine critically their answers. This is particularly the case for older students in Year 11 and in the sixth form.

Students have very good attitudes to work. Their very good behaviour and excellent relationships are significant strengths.

- 14 In 99% of lessons observed, students' attitude was at least satisfactory and of these it

was good or better in 81% of lessons. Students are very positive about their learning, enjoy coming to school and are proud of their achievements. They are well organised and enthusiastic and are keen to join in with a range of activities in their lessons. They frequently show a clear sense of purpose, concentrating and listening well to teachers and one another. Students respond very positively to questioning and challenge and are interested, committed and cooperative. In almost all lessons they are hard working and purposeful. They are not afraid to have a go at something new, for example in a Year 11 top set in mathematics, they were solving quadratic equations and were appreciative of each other's contribution, even if it was wrong. In practical lessons they work very carefully, for example in a Year 10 textile lesson, students took considerable care when using delicate beads and sequins on cushions they were making. Many sixth form students are highly articulate and are very committed to their studies, demonstrating high levels of concentration and interest. They have very mature attitudes when discussing modern day issues in their general studies course. Response to expressive arts is excellent.

- 15 Behaviour is very good throughout the school and contributes significantly to the very positive learning environment observed in the vast majority of lessons. Even in the few lessons where teaching is less good, most students are self disciplined and get on with their work. Students are courteous, friendly and helpful, and feel confident and secure with their peers. The school has created a climate for good behaviour with an effective behaviour and rewards policy. It places considerable emphasis on attitudes and behaviour in the reports to parents. Misbehaviour is rare and exclusion levels are low and reducing.
- 16 Relationships between students are excellent and they are very supportive of each other in lessons. Most students readily take responsibility for their own learning and many, even in Year 9, are able to work independently. They enjoy being given responsibility, for example in a Year 10 volleyball lesson the warm up was led by a student and the rest were fully involved and motivated. Students with special educational needs, and those with hearing impairment, have very positive attitudes and are encouraged to become independent learners. There are high levels of mutual respect, for example in a Year 11 music lesson students were willing to take risks. They listen well to one another and are tolerant of differing viewpoints. There is a very good rapport between students and adults and they show respect for each other's efforts and ideas. By the time students leave the school they show considerable maturity and are well prepared for life beyond school.

The headteacher, senior managers and governors provide very effective leadership.

- 17 The school has a good sense of purpose and direction, which seeks to improve already high levels of attainment, good personal development for the students and a very positive ethos. This is the result of the very effective leadership provided by the headteacher, senior managers and governors. Staff respond to the lead that is given and this creates a thriving and active learning community.
- 18 Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have a wide range of knowledge and experience. They use this effectively in supporting the school by monitoring progress and action plans. Priorities for school improvement are identified and understood by the governors and they take an active part in school developments wherever possible.
- 19 Managers of subject departments or year groups are also effective in meeting their responsibilities. They are very committed to achieving the best outcomes within their

own areas. Their potential for leading developments and improvements across the whole school is not yet fully exploited.

The school provides very good opportunities for social, moral and cultural development.

- 20 The many extra-curricular activities, particularly the excellent experiences offered in art, drama, music and physical education contribute very positively to **social and moral development**. The programme enriches students' experiences and leads to better attitudes and standards in subjects across the curriculum. For example, the confidence developed in drama enables students to be very articulate when sharing points of view in English. In religious education students discuss and reflect upon war and peace, they are asked to appreciate others' moral code and values, such as the "right" and "wrong" in people's actions. Form time is used well in the sixth form to debate moral issues, and students were observed discussing, in a very mature way, the use of drugs. In Key Studies, excellent debates on citizenship lead to an improved understanding of society. In economics, students discussed government intervention and applied this knowledge well to the Dome project. In music, students learn how to listen to and respect the work of others. Students value these opportunities. They were observed helping each other and having much fun rehearsing their play and musical evenings. The wide ranging programme of physical education activities provides many opportunities for students to represent the school, take responsibilities for their actions and develop a positive team spirit. Students are encouraged to take part in community events, such as coffee mornings and collections for charity, as well as helping others, for instance as part of the mentoring scheme or preparing for assemblies.
- 21 **Cultural development** is promoted well. Students enjoy a large number of educational visits, and cultural events, including visits abroad. In art, the residential experience of sixth form students, who went to Cornwall, improved their knowledge and interpretation of art and its many forms. During the inspection week, there were many references to visits to churches, museums and other place of cultural interest. Students are encouraged to reflect upon their own culture. The school is very active in enriching their experiences and relating these to their local community. Students understand the many cultures and traditions which surround them. For example, in German an excellent discussion on terrorism, religion and culture was brought to life when a student made connections with events in the nearby town of Luton. In art, African, Mexican and other artefacts supported students' understanding of the topic of adornment. In English, Year 11 students were observed working on poems from other cultures leading to good understanding of the relationship between language and culture. There are many good opportunities provided in geography, for example when students discuss the environment and the impact on the minority groups in America.

The financial resources of the school are managed very well, thus providing very good value for money

- 22 The provision and deployment of teaching staff is effective and efficient. In particular, resources allocated to the sixth form are used well and advanced level teaching groups have a good number of students taking the courses. Class sizes throughout the school are planned to be appropriate to the needs of the students.

- 23 Learning resources are adequate, although some books and equipment will be in need of replacement in the next few years. A high level of investment is now being made for information technology equipment. There is a need to be clear about the longer term budget in order to make sure future requirements can be met. School planning, linked to improvement, is clear and described in the school development plan and the subject development plans. The costs of developments to meet the priorities are identified and taken account of within the careful budget setting process. Steps are taken to achieve the best value from its spending. A good example of this has been the substantial reduction of the school fuel bills by switching from oil-fired to gas heating. Considering the financial resources of the school, and the success that it achieves in attainment, quality of education and student development, the school is providing very good value for money.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in information technology (IT) are too low. Students, aged 13 to 16, do not practise IT skills sufficiently across subjects.

- 24 In recent years, progress has been made in updating the equipment so there is now a reasonable amount of access. However, budget allocations for IT have been historically low.
- 25 Students are now beginning to learn how to use the technology to assist their work in other subjects, and were seen to do so very well on a few occasions during the inspection. In a Year 10 design and technology lesson, students quickly mastered a computer aided design and manufacturing package to draw isometric projections. In a Year 10 German lesson, an appropriate program was used well to reinforce correct grammar and spelling. In the sixth form, especially in computing, skills are very good and information technology lessons are of a high standard. Teaching and learning in key skills information technology is good. There is an appropriate match between tasks set and students' prior knowledge. Relevant and demanding activities ensure that students make good progress and develop their IT skills rapidly. Students use IT well as a resource to support their work across the subjects studied.
- 26 Students enter Year 9 with above average skills in information technology. Overall insufficient progress is made in improving their skills and raising standards. The school has no reliable system to measure students' capability at ages 14 and 16. There is little knowledge of the progress made by an individual student from one year to the next. Activities, in the specific IT lesson in Year 9, are often set at a low level and repeat work completed by students at their previous schools. Teachers are unaware of what has been learnt already and therefore do not plan to develop higher levels of skills. For example, in a Year 9 IT lesson, too much time was spent introducing web sites and searching for a suitable site, a skill the majority of students had mastered previously. Standards in Year 11 are below those normally seen at that age. There is insufficient detailed planning to ensure that all students make at least sound progress in the full range of IT skills. The monitoring of teaching and the development of assessment and planning, are weak.
- 27 The school has embarked on a comprehensive training programme for subject teachers and is aware of the priority IT now commands in the development of the school.

Heads of subject departments are not sufficiently involved in the school

improvement strategies of the whole school

- 28 School improvement strategies are being developed by a group of teachers, which has been given good support by the headteacher. However, the way in which this group relates to the school management, and the impact of its work in all areas of the school are not yet clear.
- 29 In most subjects, monitoring performance through examination results is well established. There has been some activity to monitor teaching in the classroom by heads of department, but this has not been systematic across all subjects. Whilst heads of department may believe that they know the effectiveness of their own teachers, the use of established criteria, by which good qualities are judged across the school, is inconsistent.
- 30 There is an understanding that school improvement will be achieved by raising or maintaining the high quality of teaching. However, a co-ordinated approach to monitoring is not yet in place. There is not a whole school strategy within which heads of subject can act and work together. There is much high quality teaching in the school, but not sufficient is being done to share this good practice in order to raise teaching and standards of all teachers even further.

There are some weaknesses in curriculum provision.

- 31 There has been good progress since the last inspection. The requirements for religious education are now met for students aged 14 to 18 and a programme for information technology in Year 9 has been implemented. There is particularly good provision in music, drama and physical education. The range of extra curricular opportunities in drama, music and sport is a strength of the school, although the time available at lunchtime is limited. There are a number of areas, outlined below, where further development is required.
- 32 Curriculum planning for students in Year 9 does not build sufficiently on work they have already done in previous years. There are some good curricular links with the contributory schools, but the planning does not always take sufficient account of students' earlier experiences. This means that they repeat some work, particularly in personal, social and health education and in information technology. In English, work sometimes lacks challenge for the more able students, so that they are not making as much progress as they could.
- 33 Further development of the curriculum is needed to meet the needs of all students aged 14 to 18. Students, including those with individual learning needs, follow a broad and balanced course of study, but there are few opportunities for alternative accreditation such as the certificate of achievement when GCSE is not appropriate. There are no opportunities to follow alternative courses such as Part 1 GNVQ or any other courses with a greater proportion of work related learning.
- 34 In the sixth form, there is a good range of A-level courses and in both years good opportunities exist for students to enrich their programmes through complementary studies, key skills and general studies. Choice of GNVQ courses is limited and this area of the curriculum needs further development. Information for parents regarding the additional courses provided lacks clarity, for example the terms key studies and key skills are confused. Links with three local colleges are effective and students are made aware of opportunities offered by each.

- 35 Form time is not used well by all tutors. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught largely during tutor time at the beginning of the afternoon. It is planned to include relevant topics, but there is insufficient planning to build on work which students have already covered before coming to the school. Time does not allow some issues to be covered in sufficient depth, for example careers education. The teaching of the programme is inconsistent across tutor groups. Future planning needs to include the teaching of citizenship.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 36 In order to improve further the school should:

- (1) Raise standards in information technology at ages 14 and 16 by:

- planning the curriculum better in Years 9, 10 and 11;
- implementing assessment procedures to ascertain students' capability on entry;
- monitor progress across Years 9 - 11;
- improving leadership and management;
- and providing better access and resources.

(See paragraphs 24 to 27)

- (2) Strengthen the role of heads of subject in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

(See paragraphs 28 to 30)

- (3) Improve the 14 to 18 curriculum by:

- planning work in Year 9 to ensure that it builds on pupils' previous experiences in all subjects;
- broadening provision for 14 to 18 year old students;
- improving information to parents about courses offered;
- and making better use of form time.

(See paragraphs 31 to 35)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	117
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6%	22%	40%	28%	4%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1194	308
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	30	

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	115	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.1	School data	0.6
National comparative data	7.9	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
	1999	157	118	275

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	100	122	124
	Girls	105	96	99
	Total	205	218	223
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (81)	79 (74)	81 (75)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (62)	49 (47)	36 (45)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	120	122	137
	Girls	109	104	105
	Total	229	226	242
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (81)	82 (74)	88 (75)
	National	64 (61)	64 (62)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (64)	43 (47)	59 (45)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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
	1999	154	116	270

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	92	147	148
	Girls	62	112	113
	Total	154	259	261
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (61.5)	96 (95.6)	97 (96)
	National	46.6 (44.4)	90.9 (89.6)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	45.5 (44.3)

per pupil	National	38 (36.8)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	40	58	98

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	20.1	17.6	18.6 (19.1)	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	12	91.7
	National		72.9

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	5
Indian	21
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1138
Any other minority ethnic group	25

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	38	
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	488

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.5%
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28.0
Key Stage 4	23.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2821969
Total expenditure	2833612
Expenditure per pupil	2499
Balance brought forward from previous year	1531
Balance carried forward to next year	-10112

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1194
Number of questionnaires returned	267

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	49	3	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	44	44	4	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	58	4	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	53	13	1	7
The teaching is good.	27	60	3	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	45	16	3	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	43	4	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	1	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	20	47	19	3	11
The school is well led and managed.	40	46	3	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	46	3	1	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	45	7	2	19

Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100%

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were very positive about the school. They thought that their children liked school and that teaching is good. They commented on the high results and the good progress made overall. They confirmed that behaviour and relationships were very good and that the school is led well. They commended the work of the headteacher and of teachers who give much time to the many extra-curricular activities. Parents are enthusiastic about the expressive arts provision, particularly music. These positive views were reflected in the questionnaires and letters sent to the registered inspector. Inspection findings confirm the positive views of parents. A significant minority of parents find that reports are not sufficiently informative. Some parents do not feel sufficiently informed about the curriculum. Inspectors agree with these shortcomings. Some parents believe that the school does not work closely with them. However, a high percentage of respondents to the survey said that they would feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems.

