

INSPECTION REPORT

PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Heswall

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105101

Headteacher: Mr S J Hyden

Reporting inspector: Ms J McKenna
2485

Dates of inspection: 25th - 27th September 2000

Inspection number: 223850

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Irby Road Heswall Wirral
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Howard-Davies (Acting)
Date of previous inspection:	29/09/1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Pensby High School for Girls is of average size with 821 girls on roll, aged from 11 to 19. The sixth form is organised jointly with the neighbouring boys' school. Until 1999 the school was a selective secondary modern, and its pupils came from those who did not attain the 'grammar school standard' on the selection tests administered by the local education authority. In September 2000 it was redesignated a comprehensive school, and became open to pupils of all abilities, although grammar schools that can select by ability still exist in the area. The profile of pupils entering the school in 2000 is similar to that in previous years. On entry a large proportion of pupils has attained the standards expected of 11 year olds. There are relatively few pupils with very low levels of attainment and almost none with very high levels of attainment. The school has very few pupils from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average, the majority having moderate learning difficulties. A Unit for pupils with visual impairment, which currently supports five pupils, is shared between the girls' and boys' schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average, and the areas served by the school are more advantaged than the national average. The school was awarded beacon status in September 1999.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pensby Girls is a very effective school. Leadership is strong. There is a clear determination to provide the best possible education for pupils and a commitment to continuous improvement. The very good management and good teaching result in pupils achieving high academic standards. High levels of self-esteem and confidence are successfully promoted amongst pupils. Pupils and their parents are very positive about the school, which provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Academic standards are high. The school's overall results at GCSE are well above the national average and are very high in relation to similar schools. Standards are particularly high in science, history, art and drama.
- The pastoral system is very effective, reflecting the strong commitment to the personal development of pupils and the monitoring of their progress.
- Relationships are extremely good. Pupils have very positive attitudes and values and behave very well.
- Strong leadership and effective management make a major contribution to the high standards achieved, with evaluation and monitoring procedures a particular strength.
- There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching.

What could be improved

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped throughout the school and statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4.
- Teachers do not encourage pupils to exercise enough initiative and independence in their learning, and there are weaknesses in teaching in a minority of lessons.
- The statutory requirements to provide religious education (RE) for all pupils in the sixth form, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils are not met in full.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in 1995, effective leadership has helped to ensure that both the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils have improved. Other strengths have been maintained. Action has been taken on most of the key issues identified last time. Evaluation and monitoring is now very strong. The problems with the library have been tackled, although it remains small for the size of the school. The special educational needs issues have been addressed, with the co-ordinator having received training as suggested.

Although there have been recent improvements in the provision for ICT it is still underused across the curriculum and statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4. A second modern foreign language has not yet been introduced but this is planned for next year. RE is not provided for all pupils in the sixth form, and, although all pupils participate in an act of collective worship on some days, not all take part on a daily basis. Progress in relation to the key issues, therefore, is mixed but overall, progress since the previous inspection is good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved 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
GCSE examinations	C	B	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	E	

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

GCSE results have steadily improved over recent years and in 1999 the average points score per pupil, and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at both A*-C and A*-G grades, were well above the national average. These results are comparable with the top five per cent of similar schools nationally and are very commendable. GCSE results in science, history, art and drama are also consistently well above the national average. The results in other subjects vary, although most are usually around the national average and sometimes above. Results in French and graphics tend to be lowest. The GCSE results were predicted to drop in 2000 as that cohort of pupils had lower prior attainment, but the decrease was greater than predicted. This was largely due to a significantly greater decrease in French than in other subjects. The school is appealing against the results in French and if successful this would bring the overall results closer to the predicted 62 percent.

The overall results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well above the national average and in the top five percent of similar schools. Results were highest in English; they were lowest in mathematics, although still in line with the national average and well above similar schools. In 2000, the results in English dropped slightly but the results in mathematics and science increased from those in 1999.

The average points score per pupil gained at the end of the sixth form has been below the national average for some years and in 1999 was well below, dropping again slightly in 2000. These results nevertheless represent high standards for the pupils concerned, once their prior attainment is taken into account.

The school's well above average GCSE results are improving in line with the trend nationally. Challenging targets for attainment are set each year based on detailed knowledge of the individual pupils concerned, and are usually met. Pupils throughout the school make good progress overall in their learning.

During the inspection good levels of achievement were seen in many lessons and in pupils' work. In English, pupils achieve good standards of reading, writing, spelling and grammar but creative and imaginative skills and their ability to interpret a wide range of texts are less strong. In mathematics, pupils have well developed basic arithmetical and computational skills but their ability to apply their knowledge to solve problems is less strong. Very good levels of knowledge and understanding were demonstrated in science. Practical and investigative skills are also good, although the skills of predicting and evaluating could be better. Standards in ICT are not high enough.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards the school and are proud to belong to Pensby Girls.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good around the school and in great majority of lessons, where there is almost always full commitment to learning.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are extremely good, with mutual respect evident between pupils and their teachers. Pupils are self-motivated, have high expectations of themselves, and are caring towards others.
Attendance	Attendance is good with virtually no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching within the school. Of the lessons observed, 96 percent were satisfactory or better, 27 percent were very good or better and 4 percent were unsatisfactory or worse. Good and better teaching is seen in most subjects within the school and with pupils of all ages. Teaching is particularly strong in science, history, art and drama, where GCSE results are high, and also in music, physical education and in the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses. Teaching in most other subjects is more mixed. In English and mathematics, although teaching in a majority of lessons is good or better, some is just satisfactory and in English, a poor lesson was seen. Teaching in technology is mainly satisfactory but occasionally better and in French is satisfactory. A poor lesson was also observed in personal and social education. The school gives good and successful attention to meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well promoted in English and mathematics and across the curriculum. Strengths of the teaching include very high expectations of pupils, teachers' good subject knowledge which is used to make lessons interesting and understandable and informative feedback to pupils. A common weakness in the teaching is that insufficient attention is given to promoting some of the more complex skills that require pupils to think independently, such as creative and imaginative work and the application of knowledge to solve new problems. In a minority of lessons, teachers' organisation and management skills and ability to make lessons interesting are less strong than in the better lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A broad and balanced curriculum is in place across the school, except for the weaknesses in ICT and RE in the sixth form. The sixth form curriculum is particularly broad with a good range of academic and vocational courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The needs of pupils with SEN are adequately catered for in the small teaching groups and pupils with visual impairment receive good support.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good efforts are made to promote these areas through the pastoral and academic curriculum. Not all pupils experience an act of collective worship every day as statutorily required.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff value and know pupils as individuals, and monitor their progress very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong leadership focussed on providing the best possible education for pupils. The collegiate approach and effective management structures serve to ensure that all staff are working towards the same goals.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to the school and they work hard, following the lead provided by the headteacher. Statutory requirements are met with the exception of those relating to ICT, RE and collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is an impressive commitment to self-evaluation with well established, rigorous procedures regularly carried out by senior managers.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes careful use of the resources available to it and applies the principles of best value in its decisions about spending. It provides good value for money. There are pressures on accommodation, which sometimes adversely affect pupils' learning, especially in physical education.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects pupils to work hard. Parents feel comfortable approaching the school. The school helps pupils to become mature individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of extra-curricular activities. The amount of homework that pupils receive.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They say that in all areas the school has high expectations of pupils to which their children respond well, and these result in high academic standards and good personal development. Parents feel welcome in the school and are comfortable about approaching staff, who, they report, address issues and concerns quickly and effectively. Ten percent of the parents who returned questionnaires disagreed that pupils received the right amount of homework although whether too much or too little is not specified. Ten percent also indicated that they believed the school could provide a better range of extra-curricular activities for pupils.

The inspection findings endorse the positive views of parents. The school does have high expectations of pupils, and it achieves good academic and pastoral standards. The school places a high value on all pupils and sees relationships with their parents as very important, welcoming their involvement. The inspection found that the school takes homework very seriously, with teachers setting good and appropriate tasks which reinforce pupils' learning in class. Whilst the school provides some extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, the range could be broader.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Academic standards are high. The school's overall results at GCSE are well above the national average and are very high in relation to similar schools. Standards are particularly high in science, history, art and drama.

1. Academic standards achieved by pupils in the school are high. GCSE results have steadily improved since the previous inspection, until, in 1999, 69 percent of pupils gained five or more A*-C grades at the end of Key Stage 4. This is well above the national figure of 47 percent. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades was 99 percent, and the average points score per pupil was 44. Both of these are also well above the national figures of 91 and 38 percent respectively. These results place the school in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. They are very commendable and indicate good progress being made by pupils within the school.
2. Pupils perform consistently well in particular subjects at GCSE. The subjects where results are highest, and well above the national average, are science, history, art and drama. Results in other subjects vary, although most are usually around the national average, sometimes above. In English, results fluctuate around the national figures, but unusually, results in literature are not as high as those in language. In mathematics, results are usually around or just below the national average. Pupils usually perform less well in French and graphics than they do in their other subjects.
3. The GCSE results in 2000 were lower than in 1999, with 55 percent gaining five or more A*-C grades. A drop had been predicted, as records in the school had shown that the particular cohort of pupils had lower prior attainment than previous ones. However, the decrease was greater than predicted. This is largely due to the fact, that, although results in almost all subjects were lower, there were significantly greater decreases in French and business studies than other subjects, although business studies only involved a small number of pupils. The school believes that the French grades are inaccurate however, and has appealed against the results. If successful, this would bring the overall results closer to the predicted 62 percent.
4. In 1999, the results obtained by pupils in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in the three core subjects overall were well above the national average. Results were well above average in English, above average in science and in line with the average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools nationally, the results in English, science and in the three subjects overall were in the top five percent, and in mathematics they were well above average. In 2000, results improved in mathematics and science, but dropped slightly in English. These results also represent high standards and good progress being made by pupils.
5. The average points score per pupil gained at the end of sixth form has been below the national average for some years, and in 1999 was well below the national average, dropping again slightly in 2000. These results nevertheless represent high standards for the pupils concerned, once their prior attainment is taken into account, as a significant proportion of the highest attaining pupils at GCSE leave the school to pursue their sixth form studies elsewhere.

Indeed, a very positive feature of the sixth form is that the broad curriculum, which includes a good range of advanced and intermediate GNVQ courses as well as A levels, attracts pupils with varying levels of prior attainment back into sixth form study. Precise numbers studying individual subjects in the sixth form fluctuate and are often small, and are therefore not reliable enough to give an informed view of relative standards across subjects.

6. During the inspection good levels of achievement were observed in many lessons and in pupils' work. In English, pupils have good basic reading and writing skills and standards of accuracy in spelling and grammar are good. Presentation skills are of a high order. The pupils' standards of imaginative and creative writing and their ability to interpret a broad range of texts in literature are not as high. Although many pupils can speak with confidence, especially on a one to one basis and when giving brief factual answers, a significant number of pupils lack the confidence to talk publicly at any length, particularly when being asked to give explanations, express opinions or use specialist terminology correctly.
7. In mathematics, pupils achieve good basic arithmetical and computational skills, especially at Key Stage 3. Their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve new problems and in mathematical investigations is less strong, and this is particularly evident at Key Stage 4.
8. In science, pupils acquire very good levels of scientific knowledge and understanding at very steady and progressive rates across the biological, physical and chemical aspects of the subject. They are able to use correct terminology. They also demonstrate some good practical and investigative skills. Some of the more complex skills of predicting, hypothesising and evaluating when undertaking their investigations, whilst of a good standard, could be higher.
9. At Key Stage 3, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the basic elements of the ICT curriculum. At Key Stage 4, pupils who opt to study ICT to GCSE in Key Stage 4 are achieving satisfactory standards. The ability of many pupils to apply their skills for practical purposes across the curriculum, however, is limited.

The pastoral system is very effective, reflecting the strong commitment to the personal development of the pupils, and the monitoring of their progress.

10. The school has a very strong commitment to ensuring that pupils develop positive self-esteem and confidence and to eradicating the feelings of failure that many pupils experience at the time of entry to the school. They do this extremely well. The school motto is 'Happy girls achieve'. The school places great emphasis on ensuring that all pupils feel themselves to be valued members of the school community and that staff care about them as individuals. There is a well-established pastoral structure within the school, which ensures that form tutors have a good knowledge of individual pupils and that other pastoral staff have a good overview of relevant groups. Pupils feel that there is always a member of staff whom they can approach with any problems, confident in the knowledge that issues will be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Parents also praise the commitment of staff and the extent to which they are approachable and responsive.

11. A particular strength of the pastoral system is the way it is involved in the regular tracking of pupils' progress across the curriculum. Each half term all academic and pastoral staff undertake a joint exercise, monitoring the progress being made by each pupil in all of their subjects. Heads of year, who co-ordinate the activity, identify strengths and any apparent problems, and initiate appropriate action. This is an important means by which the school helps to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential. The school also sets challenging targets for attainment each year based on detailed knowledge of the individual pupils concerned.
12. A personal and social education curriculum is in place, which covers a variety of issues all important to pupils' personal development. It has recently been reorganised to improve its effectiveness. Some good lessons were observed which made a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of some sensitive issues and which helped them to develop informed opinions. However, some less effective lessons were observed, including one which was poor, where the teachers' unskilled handling of the subject matter resulted pupils gaining little of value. The monitoring of the quality of teaching of the personal and social education course is less rigorous than the monitoring of subject teaching.

Relationships are extremely good. Pupils have very positive attitudes and values and behave very well.

13. Relationships within the school are extremely good. There is a strong sense of warmth and caring towards pupils and a mutual respect evident between adults and pupils that is impressive. Staff provide very good role models for pupils, and older pupils for younger pupils in turn. Activities such as shared reading, when sixth form volunteers work with younger pupils to help them develop their reading skills, are examples of older pupils demonstrating a sense of care and responsibility towards their younger peers.
14. The girls have extremely positive attitudes towards the school and are proud to belong to Pensby Girls. They feel that teachers care about them as individuals and that they want them to be happy and to achieve as well as they possibly can. Pupils respond very well to these high expectations and in turn have high expectations of themselves, applying themselves very well in lessons and concentrating hard. Many talk with pride about having achieved standards that they had not believed themselves to be capable of. Many parents commented that their daughters are self-motivated, for example spending hours ensuring their homework is done well, even on Friday evenings! When pupils are given opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example through prefect duties, they do so with maturity and efficiency.
15. The school provides a very ordered and structured environment for pupils both in lessons and around the school. Pupils know the clear boundaries which define acceptable behaviour within the school and work within them without question. Their behaviour is very good both around the school and in the great majority of lessons, where there is almost always full commitment to their learning. The exception is on the part of a small minority of pupils in a small minority of lessons where the teachers' classroom management is weaker than that which pupils are used to and where, as a result, fewer demands are made of them.

Strong leadership and effective management make a major contribution to the high standards achieved, with evaluation and monitoring procedures a particular strength.

16. The headteacher provides strong leadership to the whole school community. He has a very clear commitment to ensuring the school provides the best possible quality of education for the pupils, both academically and personally and a clarity about the means by which this will be pursued. He has the full support of committed deputy headteachers and senior managers and there is a strong sense of shared purpose on the part of all staff. The collegiate approach, effective management structures and a good school development plan serve to ensure that the whole school is working towards the same ends. Channels of communication are good and the effective line management system results in senior staff being well informed about practice within the school. Governors are committed to the school and work hard on behalf of the pupils. Most of their responsibilities are discharged appropriately, but there is an over-reliance on the headteacher for direction.
17. Particular strengths of the management systems are the monitoring and evaluation procedures that are carried out within the school, especially at senior level. A wide range of well established, rigorous practices are regularly undertaken, designed to ensure the school is living up to its high ideals. This includes regular, comprehensive faculty reviews which include analysis of documentary evidence, examination results and pupils' work, observations of teaching and interviews with staff and pupils. These result in a report for faculties that identifies strengths, areas for development, and targets for improvement. The second round of such reviews, due to start shortly, will focus on improvement in relation to the targets. Senior staff also look at the work of all pupils in Key Stage 3 and targeted pupils in Key Stage 4 every year, resulting in oral and written feedback to pupils with targets for improvement and points for individual teachers and faculties to consider. Heads of faculties have the responsibility of monitoring within their faculties although the means by which they do this is up to them to determine. Some, such as in English and science, are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their faculty. The science report, for example, reveals a detailed and rigorous analysis of the effectiveness of the faculty and how it might be improved; not all show a similar degree of insight and imagination. Nevertheless, the time and effort put into evaluation and monitoring overall within the school demonstrate an impressive commitment to self-evaluation and school improvement. This is further demonstrated by the continuing development of this work through the school's beacon status.
18. A high value is placed on staff within the school, as evidenced by the commitment to maintaining the teaching staff necessary to have six classes in each year group, thus ensuring smaller than average class sizes. Staff are held accountable for their performance and appraisal is well established within the school, but they are supported through good induction and staff development procedures. A priority has been given to supporting teachers with a view to improving the quality of teaching and the school has provided training in this area. Its effectiveness can be seen in part in the improvement on the already good standards of teaching identified at the previous inspection. Some very good appointments of key teaching staff since then have also contributed to this. Non-teaching staff also make a good contribution to the life and work of the school.

There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching.

19. The quality of teaching within the school is good overall for pupils of all ages. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, 96 percent were satisfactory or better, 27 were very good or better and 4 percent were unsatisfactory or worse. A high proportion of teaching, nearly two thirds, was good or better.
20. The quality of teaching is reflected in the standards attained by pupils. Some good teaching was seen in most subjects. Teaching was particularly strong in science, history, art and drama, all subjects where GCSE results are consistently good, and in music. Teaching in physical education was also strong although deficiencies in the accommodation for this subject adversely affect pupils' learning on occasions, especially in wet weather. Teaching in most other subjects was more mixed. In English and mathematics, a majority of the lessons were good or better, with a excellent lessons seen in mathematics but some lessons were just satisfactory and in English a poor lesson was observed. In technology and particularly in French, the quality of teaching was mainly satisfactory rather than good or better – these are subjects where GCSE attainment is less good than in other subjects. Teaching in the GNVQ subjects was strong, and an excellent lesson was observed in this area.
21. In the high proportion of lessons that are good or better, certain features are common. One of the most noticeable is the very high expectations teachers have of pupils. Pupils know that their teachers believe that they can do well and this results in self-belief on their part. They respond to this by applying themselves extremely well to their work and making a concentrated effort in their lessons. Teachers give very clear explanations of the purpose of lessons and this enables pupils to understand the demands being placed upon them. Many teachers have good subject knowledge, evident in the breadth and depth of insight and illustration they bring to their teaching. Some teachers use very imaginative approaches to capture the interest of pupils. For example, in a science lesson where Year 10 pupils were being taught about energy loss from the food chain, the teacher organised a demonstration with pupils throwing paper balls representing energy which other pupils attempted to catch with mixed success, thus illustrating the energy loss very graphically. In a lesson with potential for considerable chaos the teacher's very good management ensured that the demonstration was fun and effective and it served to consolidate pupils' understanding of the scientific concept being taught very well. In a mathematics lesson on 'bearings' with low attaining Year 11 pupils, the teacher asked pupils to illustrate directional change through points of the compass by moving themselves according to instructions given. This practical approach engrossed the pupils and had the advantage of making it very easy to ascertain whether or not they understood the concept by seeing whether they could follow the instructions accurately. Teachers incorporate a variety of tasks into their lessons which help to motivate the pupils and maintain a good pace to learning. These are broken down in short manageable sections with clear instructions at appropriate points. In these good lessons teachers give very supportive and informative feedback to pupils on how well they are doing. Many also give good information to pupils about precise examination requirements and how their work relates to these. Actions being undertaken within some departments, such as the work being compiled within the art department to help standardise judgements about attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, are strengthening this area. Homework is taken very seriously

by all concerned, with good tasks set which build on work done in class and which extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped throughout the school and statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4.

22. ICT was identified as a key issue for improvement at the last inspection. Since then the situation has improved, although major developments have been recent. All pupils have a taught lesson of ICT throughout Key Stage 3 where basic National Curriculum requirements are covered. However, currently there is very limited use of ICT across the curriculum as a whole and standards, whilst satisfactory, could be considerably higher. At Key Stage 4, ICT is offered as an option at GCSE which around a third of pupils opt for each year. For these pupils statutory requirements are met. For the remaining pupils provision is not systematic. Pupils studying business studies make the most use of ICT, as part of their course. For other pupils provision depends entirely on the use made within individual subjects, and this has been limited and uncoordinated. For such pupils statutory requirements have not been met. Provision for sixth-form students are also under-developed. As a result of this, standards in ICT overall are too low.
23. The school is aware of the deficiencies, and has already dealt with some of the problems. A major difficulty in the past has been a lack of resources and there has recently been a significant investment in hardware. For some years there have been rooms that have been equipped with computers and used by pupils taking the GCSE courses in ICT and business education. From September, there has been in addition, a room that can be booked by any teacher in the school for cross-curricular use has been established. All staff have been enrolled on a course to ensure that they are skilled in the use of ICT. The school is currently auditing the provision of ICT across the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and then plans to then tackle any gaps identified. The school, therefore, has appropriate plans in hand to rectify the weaknesses in ICT, but as yet the recent developments and the plans for improvement are too new to have had the necessary impact on pupils' standards of attainment.

Teachers do not encourage pupils to exercise enough initiative and independence in their learning, and there are weaknesses in teaching in a minority of lessons.

24. In the very large majority of lessons teachers have a tightly organised structure which directs pupils' learning and dictates the content of their work. Pupils are obviously used to this way of working and it clearly meets with considerable success. However, it leaves relatively little opportunity for girls to exercise initiative or independence in their work. Although pupils are asked lots of questions that test factual knowledge, there are fewer opportunities created for them to make oral contributions of length or ones based on the ordering and expression of their own thoughts and opinions.

These weaknesses result in certain areas of pupils' learning being less well developed than they could be and they impose a limit on aspects of attainment, particularly at the higher levels. In English, for example, creative and imaginative approaches are under-emphasised. In mathematics there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to solve problems and carry out investigations. In other lessons this approach sometimes results in pupils, especially higher attainers, not being fully challenged. It has a particular impact on learning in the sixth form, where students are less equipped than they might be to deal with some of the higher level demands being made of them. In the lessons where more flexible approaches are used pupils are well able to cope and indeed they flourish. Examples of this were seen in an advanced GNVQ business studies lesson where pupils were working with impressive levels of independence and maturity, and in a drama lesson, where there were high levels of collaboration and discussion during group work.

25. In the lessons that were just satisfactory and the small number that were poor, the quality of teaching was more mundane and did not engage pupils as well as in the better lessons. Less effort was made to make the subject matter interesting and relevant. For example, in a French lesson on the timing of a typical school day in France, there was no attempt to draw out any similarities and differences with the pupils' own experiences. Occasionally classroom control or management was not so strong and, although pupils still worked relatively well, the fewer demands being placed on them resulted in less application to their work. In a small number of lessons the teaching started well but the pace of learning was not maintained and pupils' productivity decreased. Such lessons were seen in a range of subjects, but were in the majority in technology and more so in French. In the two poor lessons observed, the teachers were not thoroughly prepared, did not give clear instructions to pupils and did not ensure that all were actively engaged in the lessons. Work did not reinforce prior learning, such as in an English lesson where excellent homework was barely discussed and unfocussed whole class discussion did not build on the group discussion that preceded it, causing pupils to become disillusioned and bored. Class control in a personal and social education lesson was inadequate and the teacher was not able to keep pupils' attention on the task. It was the pupils who dictated the pace of these lessons rather than the teacher.

The statutory requirements to provide religious education (RE) for all pupils in the sixth form, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils are not met in full.

26. Two statutory requirements, which were identified as not being met in full at the previous inspection, are still not carried out as they should be. RE is offered as an option at A level, but for the very large majority of sixth form students who do not choose this option, no other provision is made.
27. A mechanism for providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is in place, but it is not implemented in full. Pupils have three assemblies per week, where the potential to provide an act of collective worship exists. On the two other mornings of the week pupils have form periods where form teachers are supposed to lead a 'thought for the day', which would provide

an act of collective worship. Some very good and worthwhile assemblies were observed which fully met the requirements of the act. A minority, whilst being valuable experiences for pupils, did not include an act of collective worship. In some form periods teachers lead a useful 'thought for the day', but in others, no attempt is made to do so. Whilst all pupils participate in an act of collective worship on some days of the week, therefore, not all take part on a daily basis, and thus statutory requirements are not met in full.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. In order to improve the quality of education provided for pupils and to raise standards even higher, the governors, headteacher and staff of the school should:-

(1) Improve the provision of ICT within the school by: - (paragraphs 22 and 23)

- ensuring that statutory requirements are met for all pupils at Key Stage 4;
- improving the use of ICT across the whole curriculum throughout the school.

(2) Provide more opportunities for pupils to exercise initiative and independence in their learning by: - (paragraphs 24 and 25)

- developing their oral skills and confidence in English lessons and across the curriculum;
- developing their creative and imaginative work;
- developing their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems and carry out investigations, especially in mathematics;
- tackling the weaknesses in teaching evident in a minority of lessons.

(3) Fulfil statutory requirements by: - (paragraphs 26 and 27)

- ensuring that religious education is provided for all pupils in the sixth form;
- ensuring that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	23	38	31	0	4	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	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	705	116
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	110	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	98	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	0	143	143

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	137	99	105
	Total	137	99	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	96 (83)	69 (56)	73 (80)
	National	72 (73)	62 (60)	55 (54)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (53)	36 (32)	27 (36)
	National	35 (42)	37 (35)	30 (25)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	133	84	101
	Total	133	84	101
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	93 (84)	59 (57)	71 (69)
	National	73 (61)	66 (64)	62 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	57 (38)	35 (29)	29(28)
	National	38 (30)	38 ([])	30 (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	0	143	143

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	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	96	138	138
	Total	96	138	138
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69 (63)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	National	53 (52)	91 (90)	95 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43 (42)
	National	41 (40)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

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	0	33	33

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	N/A	12.4	N/A (N/A)	N/A	4	N/A (N/A)
National	N/A	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	N/A	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	50	82
	National		73

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	817
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	10	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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	221

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.7
Key Stage 4	18.8

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,012,836
Total expenditure	2,000,349
Expenditure per pupil	2419
Balance brought forward from previous year	87,657
Balance carried forward to next year	100,144

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

810

Number of questionnaires returned

36

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	6	1	3
My child is making good progress in school.	49	44	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	47	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	54	9	1	5
The teaching is good.	49	46	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	40	6	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	30	1	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	19	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	44	45	5	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	44	45	5	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	36	0	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	50	9	1	8