

INSPECTION REPORT

BROADOAK HIGH SCHOOL

Partington, Manchester

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106363

Headteacher: Mr C C Howlett

Reporting inspector: Mr A Pugh
3625

Dates of inspection: 9 – 13 October 2000

Inspection number: 223895

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Warburton Lane
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Ian Clayton

Date of previous inspection: 16 March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Aelwyn Pugh (3625)	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievement How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further? How well is the school led and managed?
Liz Pike (14007)	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Bob Hartman (22723)	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Chris Hassell (31290)	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Cath O'Leary (12016)	Team inspector	Science	
Vivian Harrison (31779)	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Roslyn Fox (4617)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Sylvia Greenland (23324)	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
Peter Harle (11672)	Team inspector	Art Music Drama/Expressive Arts	

Reg Grogan (20716)	Team inspector	History Religious education	
Anthony Bailey (4512)	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Broadoak High School is a mixed 11-16 secondary modern school, serving the community of Partington, Trafford. The number of children in the area is declining. Numbers at Broadoak have fallen over recent years so that the school is now much smaller than most, with 419 pupils on roll. The range of pupils' attainment on entry is restricted by the policy of selection operated by the local education authority. Most pupils enter the school with low levels of prior attainment, especially in reading, writing and numeracy. The proportion of pupils requiring learning support, including the highest level of support, is higher than usual in secondary schools. The pupils at the school are mainly of white ethnic background and the number of pupils who are using English as an additional language is extremely low. There are high levels of disadvantage in the area, and 57 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the national average. To help pupils with a range of learning difficulties and to tackle the issue of poor attendance, the school recently established a Flexible Learning Centre which has quickly become one of the strengths of the school. The school works closely with South Trafford College and the local community. Between them, they have established the 'Learning Gateway' to provide lifelong learning opportunities for adults as well as pupils in the Partington area.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Broadoak has made considerable progress since its last inspection. In 1998, the school was found to have serious weaknesses in standards, attendance, management and efficiency. It is now an effective school and no longer has serious weaknesses. It is a very caring community and provides very good support for its pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, and standards of attainment are rising. Attainment is below national averages but is above average in comparison with other schools serving pupils of a similar background. Pupils have good attitudes to their work, good relationships with each other and with their teachers, and most behave well. Attendance has improved but this is still below average because of persistent absence by a small group of pupils. The school provides acceptable value for money. Teaching is good: in only a very few cases is it unsatisfactory and in about a third of lessons it is very good. The headteacher provides very strong effective leadership for the school. He is supported in this by the governing body and key staff who have a shared commitment to bring about further improvements and the clear capacity to succeed.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very strong, dynamic leadership and a very clear sense of direction for the school.
- Staff have a clear commitment and determination to ensure that the recent improvements made by the school are maintained and developed further.
- The ethos of the school is based on very positive attitudes, good relationships and a high level of care for pupils.
- The school makes good provision for the personal, social and health education of its pupils.
- The very wide range of extra-curricular activities makes a major contribution to pupils' academic, social and cultural development.
- The recently established Flexible Learning Centre has quickly become a strength of the school.
- The initiatives introduced to monitor and improve attendance are wide-ranging and imaginative.

What could be improved

- standards of pupil attainment, particularly in Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11);
- the timetable, so that all pupils are given equal access to the full range of the curriculum;
- Information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects;
- numeracy skills across all subjects;
- school library facilities, so that pupils have far more opportunity to learn independently and to develop a love of reading for its own sake;
- attendance rates of pupils, so that standards are raised further.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was inspected in 1998 when it was found to have serious weaknesses in standards, attendance and management. Since then there have been excellent improvements in the leadership and management of the school. There have also been improvements in standards, attendance and efficiency. The management and monitoring systems and structures now in place have the capacity to maintain these improvements. As a result, the school is no longer judged to have serious weaknesses.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14- and 16-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
National Curriculum tests	E	E	E	A	well above average A above average B average C
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C	below average D well below average E

The school has made gains since the last inspection, both in levels of attainment and in pupils' progress. Pupils achieve more than would be anticipated from their standards on entry which are well below national average in English, mathematics and science.

Year 9: Results in national tests over the last three years have been well below national averages in English, mathematics and science. The school's results, however, are improving at a faster rate than the national trend. The results for 1999 and 2000 are well above average for schools, serving pupils with a similar background. Pupils make, at least as much, and sometimes significantly greater progress than pupils from all schools who had similar levels of performance at the age of 11.

GCSE: Results at GCSE are well below national averages, especially in the case of girls. However, the rate of improvement in the school's results over the last six years has been above the national trend. Progress made at GCSE by Broadoak pupils is close to the average for schools serving pupils with a similar background. The school has met the targets set for improvement in GCSE, and from 1999 to 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades rose from 14 to 23 per cent. Overall, and considering pupils of all abilities, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Poor attendance and absence from examinations have detracted, however, from GCSE results. It is unclear why girls achieved less well than boys, despite having similar standards when they enter the school.

Work seen: In the work seen, the particular strengths are in physical education (PE), music, art and drama. In the majority of subjects, standards are below national expectations but compare satisfactorily with standards being produced by other schools catering for pupils with a similar background. Standards are better in science than in English and mathematics. Pupils tend to be better at speaking and listening than in reading and writing; this has a clear effect on standards in several subjects. Absence from school and non-completion of work are also depressing standards in some areas. The weaknesses in ICT result from the fact that the school does not yet deliver all aspects of the National Curriculum in this area.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils are interested and contribute with enthusiasm to lessons and to extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is mostly satisfactory, although in lessons some pupils disrupt the learning of others. The level of disruption is frequently reduced by teachers' very good skills in behaviour management.
Personal development and relationships	Good: most pupils respect others' feelings, values and beliefs and understand the impact of their actions on others; they show initiative and take on responsibilities readily.
Attendance	Poor but improving: despite the hard work of the school, a group of persistent absentees depresses the average attendance rate; absence from lessons and from examinations is also adversely affecting standards achieved; too much of the absence by pupils is being condoned by their parents, making it very difficult for the school to reach its targets for improvement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

- Teaching was good or better in 71 per cent of lessons, of which 30 per cent was very good or excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) and only a small amount in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). The proportion of lessons where teaching was good or better has almost doubled since the last inspection.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good at both key stages.
- There has been an improvement in the teaching of literacy skills since the last inspection, and teachers in all subjects are now putting an appropriate emphasis on this.
- Teaching in English and science is good, particularly at Key Stage 4. In mathematics teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4.
- In most other subjects teaching is good. It is strongest in music and art at both key stages and history at Key Stage 4. In addition, examples of very good teaching were seen in mathematics, French, and PE.
- Pupils' learning is good. There are some particular strengths in the music, art, drama, PE, history and religious education (RE).
- Teaching and learning in ICT and numeracy are underdeveloped across both key stages.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. However, the content and balance are unsatisfactory because not all Year 11 pupils are following a recognised technology course and, at both key stages, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop ICT skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good overall, though there is a lack of specialist help in mainstream classes. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4, where a high rate of absence and lack of extra help impede learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good with a specialist teacher who visits the school regularly and works with the three pupils who have only recently started to learn English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good: the support for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Good provision is made for moral, social and cultural development, and pupils respond well to this.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school is a caring community in which pupils feel secure. This supports learning very well. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, know pupils very well; good liaison between those with academic and pastoral responsibilities enhances the guidance given to pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school has very strong, effective leadership and a rapidly developing management system which is creating an environment where pupils and staff strive together to succeed. The school provides acceptable value for money.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors carry out their responsibilities effectively but have not yet ensured that requirements are fully met for ICT and design technology (DT).
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: the progress, made by the school recently, is the result of careful analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the establishment of clear targets and strategies for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Levels of staffing are appropriate, and accommodation is good. The library is a weakness, as is the provision for ICT across subjects.

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 • Their children make good progress • The good behaviour of pupils • The good standard of teaching • They are kept well informed about progress • The school's high expectations • The school works closely with parents • The school is well led and managed • The children are helped to become mature and responsible • The school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that is set

The inspection team did not find overall weaknesses in the amount of homework set, although there were inconsistencies in the use made of homework notebooks by pupils. In all other respects, inspectors' findings agreed with parents' and carers' views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

On Entry

1. The range of pupils' attainment on entry to the school is restricted by the policy of selection operated by the local education authority. National tests show that levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science on entry to the school are well below the national average. Other tests confirm low levels of literacy and numeracy on entry. There is no consistent difference between the standards of attainment of boys and girls on entry.

Key Stage 3

2. The average points score, in the national tests, at the end of Key Stage 3, over the last three years are well below national averages. The boys achieved higher results than the girls in English, mathematics and science. Girls were about eighteen months behind the boys, who in turn were over a year behind national standards. The school's results are however improving at a rate greater than the national trend. The results for 1999 and 2000 are well above the average for similar schools. Statistical analysis from national data shows that pupils make at least as much, and sometimes significantly greater, progress than pupils from all schools who had similar levels of performance at the end of Key Stage 2. Achievement over Key Stage 3 is therefore good, including that of those pupils who have special educational needs.

Key Stage 4

3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE average points score for 1999 is well below the national figure, with boys' results better than girls'. Girls' results were very low in comparison with the national average. Nevertheless, the rate of improvement in the school's average GCSE points score per pupil over the last six years is above the national trend. Pupils' progress at GCSE, based on average points score per pupil, was close to the average for similar schools. The GCSE results for the year 2000 show a very significant increase in the proportion of higher GCSE grades achieved, (a rise from 14 per cent to 23 per cent in the proportion gaining five or more A*-C grades). There is also an increase in the average number of GCSE points scored per pupil, from 24 to 28. At the time of writing this report, verified national figures for GCSE are not available, but the year 2000 results give a very strong indication of gains in both pupils' attainment and achievement. (The results for 2000 met the targets set by the school for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grade GCSEs and one or more A*-G grade GCSEs.) Overall, pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well over Key Stage 4.
4. Poor attendance has a negative effect on standards. For example, it can be shown statistically that, in history, attendance has almost as much as effect on pupils' GCSE grades as do the national curriculum levels which they achieved at Key Stage 3. Absence from actual examinations also depresses the published standards for Key Stage 4. This accounts for the slightly higher levels of attainment observed during the inspection, in some subjects, compared with examination results. This may also be explained by the overall improvement in the school as a result of recent changes in management. The school has searched in vain to account for the lower attainment

levels achieved by girls relative to boys – which is a feature of many subjects over both key stages – despite there being no consistent difference between boys' and girls' standards on entry.

The Work Seen

5. Standards of literacy are very poor on entry, so the school has given literacy a very high profile. There is now evidence that the school's policy is beginning to have a positive effect on standards, particularly in reading. In several subjects, however, standards in writing are lower than standards in reading, speaking and listening.
6. Standards of numeracy have improved since the last inspection but overall the standards of numeracy are below average. Pupils can use calculators effectively but sometimes show weakness in the recall of basic numerical knowledge, such as multiplication tables or mental subtraction and addition. This is particularly evident higher up the school. Several instances were observed of pupils using their fingers, rather than recall or mental strategies, to add and multiply whole numbers. The adoption in mathematics of the approach to numeracy advocated in the national numeracy strategy is, however, beginning to improve standards of numeracy. Nevertheless, these weaknesses in numeracy do not inhibit pupils' progress in other subjects of the curriculum. In science, for example, simple calculations, measurement and the reading of scales were performed successfully. Year 8 pupils, in design technology, used weighing scales confidently and made judgements about relative proportions. In a Year 11 English lesson pupils were confident in extracting relevant information from a table in order to provide data for an essay on old age. Although there is a draft policy, the school currently lacks a strategy for numeracy across the curriculum. This, however, is a priority for the near future.
7. In most subjects, very little use is made of ICT. This limits the development of pupils' ICT skills and also restricts the range of pupils' experiences within particular subjects.
8. National examination and test results show that the school has made gains, since the last inspection, both in levels of attainment and in pupils' progress. This is supported by classroom observation and the scrutiny of pupils' work.
9. In most lessons seen, pupil attainment was below average but slightly better at Key Stage 4. This reflects the ability range of the pupils in the school. In English, pupils displayed better skills in speaking than in reading and writing. Oral answers showed that pupils, including those with special educational needs, had good levels of understanding of the topics being discussed and the literature that they were reading. Pupils wrote in a variety of styles, and work was accurate and well presented. However, the content was often too limited. Year 11 pupils displayed good standards of higher literacy skills.
10. In the lessons observed in mathematics, standards were below average but compared well with standards of pupils in similar schools. Standards in class were better than the 1999 examination and test results would suggest, showing that work in this area is improving.

11. In science, attainment overall was satisfactory. It was better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Pupils used technical language appropriately and confidently and were able to apply knowledge effectively to the interpretation of the results of practical experiments.
12. In art, attainment was at the national average but some real excellence was also seen, particularly in Year 9, good standards were being achieved in a variety of media and styles.
13. In design technology (DT), attainment overall was below the expected level but good standards were achieved in all branches of the subject by small numbers of pupils. Weaker standards seen were mainly the result of lack of initial ideas, limited research and careless or incomplete work
14. In drama and expressive arts, attainment is at the national level at both key stages. Pupils acquired the necessary drama skills; good quality animation and live musical input were seen in projects being prepared by pupils in Years 10 and 11.
15. Satisfactory work was seen at both key stages in geography. However, pupils of all levels of ability had difficulty relating conclusions to hypotheses being tested. Work of less able pupils was often incomplete and showed a lack of understanding and commitment.
16. Standards in history were just below national expectation at Key Stage 3 and below national expectations at Key Stage 4. Pupils showed a sound knowledge of historical events and were able to explain causes and consequences of events being studied. They were less adept at evaluating the reliability and usefulness of different types of evidence or points of view. At both key stages, less able pupils had difficulty in expressing themselves accurately in writing.
17. In ICT standards at Key Stage 3 were mostly below national expectations. At Key Stage 4 it was never up to expectations. This is partly the result of the fact that the school is not yet able to offer all aspects of the National Curriculum to pupils.
18. In French, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations although higher attaining pupils do reach standards in line with expectations. Standards in Year 7 are below national expectations but they are better than in Year 9, reflecting the improvements recently made in this department. In Key Stage 4, standards are below national expectations though better in speaking and listening than in reading and writing.
19. In music, pupils attain the national average at Key Stage 3 despite their generally weak background in musical skills or awareness. Many pupils build further on this through the music work pursued as part of the expressive arts programme.
20. In PE, standards have improved since the last inspection; standards are now above expectations at both key stages.
21. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. This progress is good in Key Stage 3 where they are largely taught in discrete classes within the streaming system, though there are some pupils on the special needs register in the lower mainstream teaching groups. In many subjects, such as art, geography and design technology, special resources have been provided and it is in these subjects that progress compared to that of other pupils is most notable. Pupils who have attended the summer school and who regularly attend the school's breakfast reading club have made rapid progress in improving their reading ages.

22. There are three pupils with English as a second language who are just beginning to learn the language; overall they are making satisfactory progress. A peripatetic language teacher attends regularly to give them individual language lessons and support in some classes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

23. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning. They usually participate appropriately in lessons and show particular enthusiasm for the extra-curricular activities the school offers. Behaviour is mostly satisfactory, although in lessons some pupils disrupt the learning of others. This disruption is most often limited by teachers' very good skills in behaviour management. The incidents of fixed-term exclusion are much higher than the national average, but this relates to a small number of pupils, both boys and girls, who are repeatedly excluded most often for violent behaviour to other pupils. One of the functions of the Flexible Learning Centre is to offer a supportive route for these pupils and those with poor attendance to return to school. It is well used for this purpose. Most pupils are usually polite to each other and adults and show respect for and appreciate the very well-maintained school buildings and site; there is no graffiti and very little litter.
24. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are good, though they are better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3 behaviour in class is generally good, and pupils are positive and eager to succeed. Many of them work together well and share resources, and behave responsibly in the specialist rooms before school and at dinner times. There are inevitably outbursts of anti-social behaviour from pupils with emotional difficulties but these are quickly and effectively dealt with by the teacher. In Key Stage 4 many of the pupils with special needs are amongst the disaffected core of poor attenders.
25. The relationships between pupils and adults are good and, in most cases, relationships between pupils are also good. Bullying is infrequent and dealt with quickly. Pupils work well in mixed gender and ethnic groups, although most pupils are from one ethnic group. Adults provide a positive role model for pupils who appreciate and contribute to the school's ethos because they feel valued and respected by staff. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility; for example, Year 11 pupils act as prefects and organise the school council and the school forum. From Year 7 onwards, house sports captains have the responsibility of organising their own teams. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously and perform them diligently.
26. Overall, pupils' attendance is poor in comparison with national averages. However, the persistent absence of a small number of pupils has lowered the school's attendance figures significantly. Some of these pupils could achieve well, were they to attend school regularly; this is not only a loss for them but also has a detrimental effect on the overall standards achieved.
27. The school has analysed pupils' absence thoroughly and examined patterns and trends very carefully. It has employed varied and imaginative strategies to promote attendance and has had some success in raising attendance since the last inspection. These strategies include: modification of the timetable to reduce truancy at the end of the day and week; certificates of good attendance (some of which are posted home); competitions to motivate pupils (McDonalds and Manchester United Football Club have sponsored the school and prizes for 100 per cent attendance are awarded weekly); close and pro-active liaison with educational welfare officers; and, regular

communication with parents. This communication includes telephoning the parents of all pupils who have not arrived at school by 10 am, sending letters to those who are not available by phone and insisting on and pursuing pupils for letters of authorisation of absence from parents. The school's very dedicated office staff play a crucial role in this.

28. The impact of these strategies, however, has been limited, and the pupils' poor attendance detracts significantly from the standards they could achieve.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. Teaching is good. It is satisfactory or better in over nine out of every ten lessons and good or better in seven out of ten lessons. In a third of lessons it is very good or excellent. Only a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Key Stage 3 and none in Key Stage 4. The proportion of lessons where teaching was good or better has almost doubled since the last inspection. This reflects the considerable emphasis which the school has placed on improving the quality of teaching.
30. The strongest teaching was in music and art at both key stages, and English, history and science at Key Stage 4. In addition, examples of very good teaching were seen in mathematics, ICT, French and PE.
31. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their pupils. They are particularly good at managing pupils, especially older pupils. They reason with and show respect for even the most uncooperative of pupils. They help children to learn by giving them advice on how to develop and improve their work. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 English lesson where pupils were being helped to discuss and develop their ideas so that they could produce a piece of writing on the treatment of women. In a creative arts lesson, three boys were writing a story for infant children. Through a series of carefully chosen questions, the teacher helped them to identify the less effective parts of the story and to find ways of making it more interesting for young readers. Teachers use a variety of methods to help develop pupils' understanding. In history, for example, drama is used to help pupils reconstruct and examine events from the past and, in one science lesson seen, dice games were being used to help pupils understand the factors affecting heredity. In several subjects, teachers produce useful displays and other materials to illustrate the topics being studied. Staff are very good at making sure that pupils behave well and work hard, and very little time is wasted in lessons. Classroom assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs.
32. Most pupils respond well to their teachers and make the effort to develop their own skills, knowledge and understanding. Many are making good progress in those areas.

33. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good in both key stages. They are taught English and maths in the special needs department, with a learning support assistant present. In other curriculum areas they are taught in the same groups by subject specialists with no support assistance. Teachers plan well for these groups and generally provide appropriate resources. Good pupil-teacher relationships are a feature of all the lessons, and teachers manage the pupils and their learning well. However, in some subject areas, teachers are unsure about the level of work needed and do not expect a high enough standard. This restricts the progress made. More use of classroom support would help overcome some of these difficulties.
34. There has been an improvement in the teaching of literacy skills since the last inspection and teachers in all subjects are now putting an appropriate emphasis on this. Key words and technical terms which pupils need to know are displayed on classroom walls and pupils are encouraged to use these to help them with their reading and writing. They are also encouraged to use technical terms when discussing topics and in question and answer sessions. Teachers also make sure that pupils know the meaning of new terminology introduced during a lesson. The teaching of numeracy skills is less well developed in subjects other than mathematics but some good examples of number work were seen in ICT. The school has invested in new ICT equipment but, currently, subject teachers make very little use of ICT.
35. The school's provision for pupils' out-of-school study is very good. An after-school study club, supervised by a classroom assistant, is available four days a week and often supported by teaching staff. Pupils are encouraged to attend and are awarded points when they do. Homework is generally being set according to the published homework timetable. However, insufficient attention is paid to pupils recording it in their homework journals; this results in parents being uninformed. Year 10 and 11 pupils attend compulsory homework groups if they fall behind with the completion of their coursework. The school has organised a week's Easter University in 2001 for the current Year 11 pupils. Accommodation at Didsbury campus has been booked for 25 Year 11 pupils who, supported by school staff, will study and prepare for their GCSEs. Two summer schools for literacy and for gifted and talented pupils were provided in 2000. Pupils valued these. Year 7 pupils, for example, felt that the summer school which they attended had provided an excellent introduction to Broadoak and enabled them to get to know their fellow pupils before the start of term in September.
36. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments about teaching and the expectations which teachers have of pupils. Just under a quarter of parents who returned questionnaires did not think that their children were given the right amount of work to do at home. However, apart from some inconsistency in the way that pupils used homework planners, inspectors found that the use of homework was at least satisfactory. The school did give very good support for pupils who needed help with completing homework.

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

37. Since the last inspection the amount of teaching time at both key stages has increased and the range of opportunities offered to pupils has been considerably extended. Alternative accreditation has been introduced in a good range of subjects. The SEN Unit has been fully integrated into the school and the Flexible Learning Centre has developed into a strength of the institution. RE now meets statutory requirements and suitable arrangements are in place to drive up literacy standards.
38. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered by the school are good. The curriculum is unusually broad for a school of this size. The content and balance of the curriculum is largely meeting statutory requirements though there are some exceptions to this. In Year 11 not all students are following a recognised technology course. The school is also failing to provide pupils with sufficient ICT opportunities to develop their ICT skills at both key stages. This aspect of the curriculum is therefore unsatisfactory.
39. Since September 2000, the school has introduced streaming into Years 7 to 9. When they enter the school, pupils are assigned to teaching groups on the basis of their performance in Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. They are then tested further and, after half-term of the autumn term, they are assigned to different groups if necessary. After that, the school reviews pupils' progress each half-term and makes further adjustments as required. This reflects the school's determination to monitor pupils' performance and to help them succeed. Unfortunately, the system lacks flexibility. When pupils move from one stream to another they do so for all subjects. This does not allow for the fact that a pupil might perform well in one subject and less well in another and limits the extent to which teachers can provide pupils with work appropriate to their individual needs.
40. A further problem presented by the present timetable is that not all streams have the same amount of time allocated to specific subjects. This is particularly the case in modern languages. In practice, this makes it extremely difficult for pupils, especially those in the lowest ability streams, to move to different streams. This works against the notion of giving all pupils equal access to the curriculum.
41. Although statutory requirements are met in modern languages the schools has applied for an unusually high percentage of Key Stage 4 pupils to be disapplied from studying the subject. This could again limit pupils' opportunities.
42. RE is delivered as part of a personal and social education programme. Statutory requirements are fully met as they are for the daily act of worship.
43. Expressive arts are a compulsory subject area at Key Stage 4. This is unusual and reflects the school's determination to build on strengths.
44. The school has four pupils on roll for whom English is an additional language. The curricular opportunities for these pupils are restricted by their ability to understand what is being taught. However, every effort is being made to offer them as wide and relevant an experience as possible; support and specialist teaching for them are being provided by the local education authority.

45. The current drive to improve literacy standards is beginning to have an impact in the school, and lower ability pupils are being equipped with the reading and writing skills necessary for learning. The school library has been out of operation this academic year. This is significantly affecting pupils' ability to undertake additional, or complementary studies, or simply to read for pleasure. The school has plans to re-open an improved facility later this year.
46. Considerable emphasis is being placed currently on developing vocational education. The school is in the process of reviewing its Key Stage 4 curriculum to provide vocational and work related pathways that will offer alternatives to the traditional academic route. The curriculum does not yet have a structure which allows pupils of all abilities to have access to these pathways. Currently only the less able are encouraged to opt for them. A senior member of staff has been given responsibility for and a time allowance to oversee vocational education. The school is working in close partnership with South Trafford College on the provision of NVQ for Year 11 in sports studies and catering and for Year 10 in administration and construction. In Year 10, links with 'M Power' and Trafford Business Partnership support NVQ courses in administration, construction and retailing. Funding to allow this has been obtained through an enterprising bid to the Single Regeneration Budget. Currently the school does not have a qualified assessor or verifier but draws on external expertise. It is early days and the overall picture is a mixed one: Year 10 implementation has been uneven with two courses being successfully launched and a third being unable to find a training provider. The school has put in place an interim arrangement but this will not result in pupils achieving accreditation unless the situation is resolved quickly. At Key Stage 3 additional funding has been secured from the DFEE Standards Fund to promote the study of key skills.
47. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to all the subjects of the curriculum in both Key Stages, with the exception of ICT for which there is no provision in the department. The opportunity to progress in modern languages skills is also limited by the small amount of time which they spend on the subject in comparison with other Key Stage 3 pupils. The lack of specialist classroom support at Key Stage 4, means that sometimes pupils do not understand the subjects they are studying. This further limits their opportunities. Their curricular opportunities are supplemented by the summer school and by the breakfast reading club.
48. A major strength of the school is the provision which it makes for extra-curricular activities before the start of lessons, at lunchtime and after school. The wide range of activities offered extends and enriches the curriculum. The programme is ongoing and all year round and is well publicised. It makes a substantial contribution to the life and ethos of the whole school and is highly regarded by pupils and by parents.
49. Activities include sport with its open access clubs, team practices, and matches which bring substantial success to the school. Running in conjunction with this is an effective series of inter-house competitions. Music too plays a major role in the programme with its singing club, guitar club and rock band. The latter tours Denmark annually, playing to large audiences and more recently at the Trafford Centre. There are many other contributors to this programme such as the weekly Christian 'Lunch Gap' group, half-termly discos and a computer club. Extra lessons take place after school in geography, French, maths, art and ICT, food technology and science. There is also a homework study group and Breakfast and Lunch Clubs to promote literacy. A variety of educational visits and visits abroad are provided for pupils each year. The Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme is another highly successful contributor to this programme.
50. The literacy breakfast club is an imaginative and excellent feature of the school's extra-curricular provision. The club is open pre-school to all pupils. About twenty pupils have

been attending regularly, mainly boys; this is commendable considering the national trend for boys' literacy levels to be lower than that of girls. Those attending clearly do have a significant need to sharpen literacy skills. Tea, orange juice, toast and jam are served, and the pupils read either to themselves, a teacher or a supporting member of staff. The atmosphere is friendly; pupils work hard and clearly love it. They have access to a good range of reading material, both fiction and non-fiction. Start-up money has been very well spent.

51. The school's provision for personal and social education is a strength of the school. The programme is delivered across all year groups and tailored to meet pupils' needs. Sex and health education, which includes examining the dangers of drugs misuse, are delivered in Year 9 through this programme and also through biology. There is close collaboration between the teachers involved to ensure that pupils gain both technical and personal perspectives on the issues examined.
52. Work experience placements are arranged mainly through the Trafford Business Education Partnership. The school has a system in place to ensure pupils benefit from the process. Pupils apply for placements and are interviewed. They arrange pre-placement visits by telephone and later maintain a diary. Pupils are visited by staff, and evaluation forms are completed. A formal debriefing is undertaken through careers education. The NVQ 'improving own learning and performance' is being piloted with a quarter of Year 11 pupils and the whole Year 11 cohort pursues NVQ 'learning with others'.
53. Pupils receive good careers education from Year 9. For example, from the spring term, teachers help pupils to consider their ambitions, dreams and wishes through a specifically designed programme. At a later stage in the same year, this is combined with a consideration of what particular skills they have, and how these may be channelled into careers choices. This year culminates in an options evening to which all pupils and their parents are invited.
54. The head of upper school and a careers assistant run the careers provision at Key Stage 4. There is a very well-stocked careers room with Internet access and careers programmes as well as other up-to-date material from the local careers service. The room has been completely refurbished and will be fully available to all Year 10 and 11 pupils from November 2000.
55. The school has developed very good links with the community which support pupils' learning well. For example, 24 pupils in Year 11 have been assigned to mentors who are adult volunteers from the local business community and who have been trained by staff at the school. The pupils meet the mentors at their places of work and have the opportunity to discuss issues that are work related and pertinent to them.
56. A local literacy scheme is planned to provide a shared school and community library by February. Additional funding has been secured to further this project which is intended to enhance the community's confidence in the school.
57. There are good links with the primary schools whose pupils transfer to Broadoak School. Staff use the information about these pupils to group them according to ability. There are significant links with South Trafford College which shares the school's site and to which a significant number of pupils move for Post-16 education. A number of GNVQ and NVQ courses, such as catering and business & administration, are run jointly by the school and college. This liaison benefits pupils well and prepares them for work.

58. Overall, the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The personal social and religious education (PSRE) programme is a very effective vehicle within which the school provides well for pupils' personal development. This provision pervades the ethos of the school and is valued by pupils and parents.
59. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies are well planned and give pupils opportunities to reflect on a range of themes, such as worship as a celebration of what we value, and the power of music to influence and reflect our feelings. One assembly was led by the head of music, who is also an assistant head. His presentation was inspirational, and he succeeded in captivating the pupils with a story drawn from his personal experience. He was supported by members of the guitar, singing and keyboard clubs who performed an arrangement of 'By the waters of Babylon'. This was very well received by fellow pupils, who listened with attention and applauded the performance at the end. The religious education department has schemes of work which develop pupils' knowledge and insight into the values and beliefs of many world religions. Annual visits are made to churches and other places of worship.
60. Pupils who attend Lunch Gap, an optional weekly RE activity, also have further opportunities to consider religious issues. During the week of the inspection, the local Baptist minister led a very interesting session on the experiences which have made people appreciate God from the earliest times to the present day. Pupils also reflected on the value of fun in life. The creative arts make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development by providing pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their creativity. However, at present, opportunities are missed in other curricular departments to encourage pupils to reflect on the world around them and gain inspiration from it. In addition, little use is made of the tutor periods to encourage pupils to reflect on every day spiritual issues.
61. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is good. Staff promote the values of honesty and have consistent and high expectations of behaviour. Pupils know what is expected of them. Particularly effective opportunities for discussion of moral principles were seen in one history lesson in which pupils discussed the economic and moral implications of the slave trade.
62. The school's provision for pupils' social development is good. There are very good relationships between pupils and adults; staff promote the values of consideration and respect for others and commitment to the school. There is a school council in which pupils from each house propose and consider issues fed through from each year group. Decisions made are reported back to pupils through assemblies. There is a termly Youth Forum in which pupils act as chair and secretary and, over the last two years, representatives from this forum have participated in the 'Trafford Your Turn' young persons' council, the Regional Transport Parliament and the North West Regional Young Persons' Conference. In September 2000, ten pupils from the school represented Trafford at the National Young Persons' Parliament in London.

63. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have opportunities to experience the music, art and dance of other cultures through the creative arts programme. Few visits are made to art galleries, theatres or museums. However, theatre and music groups visit the school regularly. A fortnight before the inspection, for example, the school was visited by the pop groups 'Precious' and 'Blast'.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

64. The school is a caring community in which pupils feel secure and which supports pupils' learning very well. There is a very high standard of cleanliness, and staff make every effort to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Procedures for child protection are well established and known to all staff.
65. The guidance offered to pupils to support their academic progress is sound. Teachers in Key Stage 3 collate the Key Stage 2 SATs and 11+ results as well as results from standardised tests set early in Year 7. This information is used to group Year 7 pupils into ability bands which cross all subjects. Whilst the grouping arrangements are reviewed as pupils progress through the school, pupils remain in the same band for all subjects. This practice limits the flexibility with which the timetable can be arranged. As a result, the provision for pupils is not always sufficiently tailored to their needs as some may not be able to achieve equally well in all subjects.
66. All pupils in both key stages are assessed half-termly for classwork, attendance and homework. Whilst targets for attendance are clear to pupils, targets for achievement are less clear at Key Stage 3. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are helped to set targets for their GCSEs and GNVQ/NVQs. Strategies to achieve these, including behaviour and attendance, are discussed with pupils and reviewed regularly. Assessment in the Flexible Learning Centre is good. Each piece of work is assessed, targets reviewed and teaching planned accordingly.
67. From Year 7, pupils are expected to accumulate and record their achievements in their school record of achievement folders. This process supports pupils' awareness of their progress as they move through the school and is useful when Year 11 pupils complete their national record of achievement.
68. The procedures to support pupils' personal development are a strength of the school. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, know pupils very well and the good liaison between those with pastoral and academic responsibilities enhances the guidance offered to pupils. The PSRE is well planned, wide-ranging and delivered with sensitivity and an awareness of individual pupils' backgrounds and aspirations. There is an expectation that pupils will achieve well.
69. The school cares well for the pupils who have special educational needs. A notable feature of the department is the caring and positive ethos. Pupils' progress is monitored through regular testing; there are regular reviews of individual education plans as well as the statutory reviews of statements. Detailed records are kept of the progress of individual pupils within the special needs department, but there is no regular monitoring of their progress across other curriculum areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

70. Parents' and carers' responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting indicate that most are very happy with the school and the way their children are supported. They consider that there has been a significant improvement in the last eighteen months in the school's efforts to involve them. Inspection findings show that, whilst the parents' association has not been reformed since it was disbanded a few years ago, the school has been effective in improving communication and involvement with parents.
71. The school aims to break the cycle of low value that some parents place on education; staff want parents to feel welcomed in the school. All parents are invited to the school for awards evenings, in which their children's successes are celebrated. The first meeting for parents of pupils in Year 7 was held during the second week of the term and was well attended. Parents were able to meet teachers, discuss and sign the home-school agreement and begin to get to know the school before any discussions about their children's progress - which some might anticipate as being difficult - could deter their involvement. The close links with South Trafford College, which shares the school site, promote the use of the building by the community and encourages parents to regard the school positively.
72. The quality of information sent to parents and carers about their children's progress is good and valued by them. There is an effective reporting system which includes annual and half-termly interim reports. Annual reports include an evaluation of each pupil's achievement in terms of their class work, presentation, behaviour, attendance and homework and, at Key Stage 4, the expected GCSE grades. Interim, computer-generated reports record each pupil's attendance. In addition, an overall grade of A, B or C is given for homework and classwork. This either leads to a letter of congratulations being sent to the home or to a request for parents to come into the school to discuss their child's progress.
73. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved and value the flexibility with which the Flexible Learning Centre is used to support their children.
74. Contacts between the special needs co-ordinator and the parents of the pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Review meetings are held at flexible times to fit in with the parents' needs and parents are given every encouragement to attend, both by letter and by telephone.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

75. The school has very strong, effective leadership and a rapidly developing management system which is establishing an ethos of success. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, based on raising attainment and challenging pupils to strive to give of their best in every aspect of their lives. This vision is shared and supported by the senior management group and the rest of the staff. It has also been clearly conveyed to the pupils who know precisely what individual and group targets they have to meet in terms of academic progress, attendance, behaviour and appearance. The headteacher has been very imaginative in responding to the challenges presented by falling roles and attendant financial pressures. An example of this is his approach to senior management. Rather than appointing a substantive deputy, he has established a senior management group, (involving four assistant headteachers, the head of lower school and the head of upper school) an academic board and a pastoral board. In this way, he has been able to limit costs, involve a wider range of people in making decisions and ensure that the pastoral system is used to support the raising of attainment rather than

being an end in itself. The headteacher has been dynamic in putting in place the systems needed to tackle the serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection. As a result, there have been improvements in attainment, attendance and the management.

76. In this, the headteacher has been supported by a dedicated group of experienced senior teachers who have a great commitment to the school and its pupils and the open-mindedness and willingness to respond positively to change and to the direction given.
77. The management of subject departments is good. In mathematics and PE it is very good and in music it is outstanding. Heads of department provide a clear direction for their subjects and this has led to clear improvements being made. There is still a need for more monitoring of teaching and learning in some departments. Leadership and management in the special educational needs department are good. The special needs co-ordinator is hard-working and achieves a great deal with the amount of time at her disposal. There is a detailed special needs policy available to all staff. A panel of link teachers from each curriculum area has been set up. So far it has only met once, and its work has still to be developed, particularly in giving adequate support to all subject departments in strategies for managing and teaching pupils with special needs.
78. There have been major improvements in the work of the governing body since the last inspection. There is now a clearly defined committee structure to manage governor business. Minutes are meticulously kept, and there are clear lines of communication between individual committees and between those committees and the main governing body. The chair of governors and committee chairpersons have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the way that they affect standards. Now that their role is clearly defined, governors are developing increasing confidence and expertise in supporting and challenging the school to do better. They are also more ready to suggest improvements to the systems being used within the school. One example of this is the decision to change departmental monitoring procedures. Until recently, a link governor was attached to each department. Some governors felt that this was in danger of leading to confusion between management and governing roles and also to a lack of consistency in operation. Therefore a new system was introduced where heads of department are required to present regular reports to governors, using a common format, showing how successfully they are contributing to the implementation of the five strands of the school's three year strategic plan. In most respects, the governing body fulfils its statutory obligations but has not yet ensured that requirements are fully met in ICT and DT.
79. Over the last eighteen months, the school has been able to make improvements to its work because strengths and weaknesses have been clearly identified and a range of monitoring procedures introduced. Clear data have been produced on pupils' attainment on entry and at the end of Key Stage 3. These are being used to set targets, to monitor pupils' actual progress against their expected progress and to identify remedial action where necessary. Similarly the school has introduced a clear system for analysing and monitoring attendance and for setting individual, group and whole school targets for improvement. Imaginative use has been made of technology to support this work and improve reporting to parents. Each subject department is now required to plan and monitor its work against each strand of the overall strategic plan which focuses clearly on the raising of standards. The quality of teaching is now monitored regularly, and firm action has been taken where teacher performance is below par. Not all departments are yet fully confident in using monitoring data to raise standards; improvements have been slower in numeracy and ICT than in other areas. However, this has to be set against the fact that the school has had to focus on eliminating a number of serious weaknesses in a short period of time.

80. The school provides acceptable value for money. The amount of money spent on each pupil is higher than average. This reflects the decision by the local authority to give additional resources to support the school because of the crucial role which it plays in ensuring education and lifelong learning within an area of high social deprivation. The spending decisions made by the governing body are clearly related to the priorities set out in the school's strategic development plan and focus on the raising of standards and ensuring that pupils are given access to good quality accommodation and resources. The school's three-year strategic plan and annual development plan give a clear indication of costs, and expenditure is carefully monitored.
81. Individual departments are also required to relate their own planning to whole school priorities and to monitor expenditure. Good use has been made of the Pupil Retention Grant to fund a range of imaginative initiatives to tackle poor attendance. More recently a plan funded through a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) has been introduced to improve the careers library facilities within the school. For each project supported by additional funding such as SRB, the school produces a separate action plan with clear targets costs and timescales. During the last two years, there has been considerable investment in improving provision in ICT, literacy and numeracy and in establishing the Flexible Learning Centre. To date the investment in ICT and numeracy has had limited impact on the curriculum as a whole. The Flexible Learning Centre, on the other hand, has quickly become one of the strengths of the school; the investment in this resource is beginning to have a clear impact on raising of standards. Financial control is effective and based on the governing body's financial policy. The school underwent a full audit in March 2000. No issues for action were identified.
82. The school is staffed appropriately. It has a very experienced teaching force, many of whom have spent most, if not all, of their working lives at Broadoak. The fall in pupil numbers and the reduction in teachers mean that some staff are teaching subjects outside their own specialism. However, this does not detract from the quality of teaching and some of the best teaching in the school was delivered by a member of staff who was teaching a subject in which he did not qualify originally. Despite the reduction in staff, the pupil/teacher ratio is still good and reflects the determination of the headteacher and governors to ensure that class sizes are kept at a level where pupils' needs can be met appropriately. The school has allocated a considerable amount of money to staff training; there is a well-organised programme for supporting newly qualified teachers and staff who are new to the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support assistant are both well qualified and work very well together. However, the amount of classroom support available is not adequate for the needs of the whole curriculum, with some pupils remaining unsupported in mainstream classes. Good use is made of support staff in the Flexible Learning Centre.

83. The accommodation is good. The refurbishment, presently in progress, has resulted in considerable improvements in science, music, geography, the Flexible Learning Centre, ICT, food technology and art. The school office has also been refurbished and there are further plans for upgrading library facilities. The redecoration of the outside of the building and public areas inside have also contributed to creating a very attractive working environment. This is further maintained by the excellent work of the site manager, caretaker and the cleaning and catering staff.
84. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. However, there is insufficient ICT hardware and software in most departments. The library is also woefully inadequate and limits opportunities for independent learning. The governing body has recognised this and has recently accepted a plan for upgrading these facilities.
85. The specialist accommodation for the teaching of pupils with special needs is good and is obviously well respected by the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. The following key issues are in the order of their importance for raising standards in the school. They should be included in the governors' post-inspection action plan.

*matters to which the school is already giving attention

- (1) Raise standards further in Key Stage 4 *
through

- continuing to monitor pupils' standards and progress;
- presenting higher challenges for the more able pupils in the school;
- continuing to identify pupils whose progress falls below expectations;
- giving pupils further help in expressing their ideas effectively in writing;
- providing pupils with further help in completing their work;
- continuing to focus on developing pupils' confidence and determination to succeed.

(Paragraphs: 3, 9, 16, 18, 22, 46, 47, 98, 119, 122, 134, 152, 154, 167, 172, 174, 177, 184, 188, 206, 210, 211)

- (2) Ensure that pupils are given equal access to the full range of the curriculum
through

- revising the timetable so that movement of pupils between teaching groups is more flexible and is more suited to individual needs and abilities;
- ensuring that the amount of time allocated to each subject allows all National Curriculum requirements to be covered and for appropriate progress to be made.
(Paragraphs: 22, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 65, 113, 170, 206)

(3) Improve the delivery of ICT
through

- ensuring that the National Curriculum requirements for ICT are fully met;
- ensuring that all departments plan for and deliver ICT as part of day-to-day teaching in their subjects;
- investing in appropriate hardware and software to support the above developments. *

(Paragraphs: 7, 17, 34, 38, 47, 78, 79, 81, 84, 95, 110, 142, 145, 162, 170, 171, 175, 179, 180, 182, 188, 193)

(4) Improve pupils' numeracy skills*
through

- continuing to implement the numeracy policy recently introduced into the school;
- ensuring that all departments draw up specific strategies to ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to apply and extend numeracy skills within each subject.

(Paragraphs: 6, 34, 79, 81, 123)

(5) Improve the library facilities *
through

- implementing the action plan recently drawn up by governors for the re-establishment of new library facilities;
- ensuring that there is a good range of reference materials to support independent study in all subject areas;
- ensuring that pupils have access to a wide range of styles and genres of literature;
- ensuring that all departments build into their schemes of work opportunities for independent reading and research by pupils.

(Paragraphs: 45, 84, 115)

(6) Improve attendance rates so that standards are raised further*
through

- continuing to apply the range of initiatives already being implemented by the school to improve attendance;
- conducting further analysis of data to identify patterns of non-attendance and possible reasons for this;
- to adapt and refine existing strategies in the light of this;
- to involve parents, governors and other members of the community even more closely in implementing, reviewing and developing existing strategies.

(Paragraphs: 4, 26, 27, 28, 174)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

FLEXIBLE LEARNING CENTRE

87. The Flexible Learning Centre (FLC), established in 1999, is a strength of the school and supports those pupils who, for a variety of reasons, may be experiencing difficulties which affect their learning. This is in its early stages but is seen to be very successful, and standards are being raised. The overall quality of education and care is very good.
88. At present there are eighteen pupils registered in the FLC. Attendance programmes range from a single period to thirteen periods per week. Pupils across both key stages, in the main, work on individual intensive programmes for literacy and numeracy development.
89. Expectations for pupils' attainment are usually appropriate and sometimes high. Where expectations are high, but achievable, they generate confidence in pupils, and promote the ability of pupils to think for themselves.
90. The centre is managed by a well-qualified and experienced member of staff.
91. The quality of teaching is always good and, on occasions, very good or excellent in lessons observed. Teaching contributes to the satisfactory and occasional very good progress pupils make, as well as establishing a positive environment for learning. The teacher is confident in her work and the best lessons are well planned, with good use being made of perceptive questioning. Pupils' work is marked regularly, often alongside the pupil, providing up-to-date feedback, enabling pupils to know their strengths and weaknesses. The teacher and the pupils are actively involved in setting individual targets and take evident pleasure in success.
92. Strengths of the department are the very good relationships in classes and the teacher's ability to manage behaviour consistently and effectively. Pupils are polite and courteous to their teacher and to visitors and they show respect for property. Pupils and their parents accept recognition of learning difficulties without embarrassment and welcome the help and support provided.
93. The ability of pupils to develop self-esteem and a sense of personal worth shows clearly in the mature approach of many of the older pupils to academic work which they continue to find difficult and in which they know that success may be limited.
94. The overall provision for ICT in the Flexible Learning Centre is unsatisfactory.
95. The FLC is housed in an attractive classroom base which displays current examples of pupils' work. The FLC and special educational needs class base are, unfortunately, sited on separate floors. This hinders communications, sharing of resources and potential flexibility in the deployment of the very effective classroom assistant. The overall provision for ICT in the FLC is unsatisfactory.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	146
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7.5%	22%	40%	26%	2.7%	0.7%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	409	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	234	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	90	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	10.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.6
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	43	37	80

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	17	21	16
	Girls	22	13	14
	Total	39	34	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	49 (56)	43 (44)	38 (40)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (23)	14 (18)	6 (15)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	14	19	23
	Girls	13	12	17
	Total	27	31	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	34 (57)	39 (49)	51 (50)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (20)	8 (21)	16 (25)
	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	32	33	65

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	4	27	30
	Girls	5	27	32
	Total	9	54	62
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	13.8 (22.1)	83.1 (76.8)	95 (93)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	23.2 (26.4)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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
	National	

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	399
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	49	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	28
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	125

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	69.8%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	20.9
Key Stage 4	19.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1,577,666
Total expenditure	1,558,666
Expenditure per pupil	3,659
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	19,000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	418
Number of questionnaires returned	49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	48	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	45	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	59	2	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	37	22	2	2
The teaching is good.	55	43	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	39	4	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	22	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	31	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	41	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	49	45	4	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	43	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	80	20	0	0	0

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

ENGLISH

96. Test results show that, on entry to the school, pupils' standards of attainment are well below the national averages.
97. The 1999 Key Stage 3 results were well below the national average but were above the average for schools whose pupils have similar backgrounds. The difference in performance between boys and girls was significant, with girls faring less well against the national trend. Results in 2000 were again well below the national average but very high in relation to similar schools. On this occasion, girls' results were better than those of the boys. Since 1996, the average National Curriculum score for the school has risen at a rate above the national trend.
98. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C GCSE grades in English language was 9 per cent in 1999, rising to 25 per cent in 2000. It is not possible to make a meaningful comparison between boys' and girls' performance because of the small numbers involved. In English literature in 1999, ten per cent of the pupils who were entered for the examination achieved A*-C grades, rising to 41 per cent in 2000. These results were well below the national average. In both English language and English literature, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-G grades was below the national average. Four pupils were entered for the Certificate of Achievement as an alternative to English GCSE. Five pupils were not entered for any exam because they very rarely attended school.
99. The quality of teaching is a strength and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Teaching at both key stages is good, though stronger at Key Stage 4. There were several examples of excellent teaching and only in one lesson was teaching less than satisfactory. On this occasion, pupils were effectively repeating a task and were not being given enough challenge academically. The teacher also expected too little of the pupils in terms of their behaviour.
100. The excellent teaching was seen in both key stages. It involved lessons with the school's most able and least able pupils and included both language and literature work.
101. In one Year 11 class, more able pupils developed a good standard of higher level literacy skills by gathering and drawing on information from a variety of sources, including prose extracts, tables and pictures. The teacher helped pupils individually to draft this material into an essay on the treatment of women. In a Year 10 class, the teacher used skilful questioning to draw a group of low ability pupils into the world of 'Macbeth'. From their oral answers, it was clear that pupils had a high level of understanding and were also widening their vocabulary. The teacher supported the pupils' learning through the use of a high quality display which was built up lesson by lesson.
102. A Year 7 group whose members have low levels of literacy arranged a cartoon into a sequence and then, supported by a series of writing frames, wrote stories which they were proud to read aloud. In order to achieve this, they received excellent support from the teacher and the classroom assistant. The fact that there is excellent practice in different areas provides a good base for further development within the department.
103. Schemes of work are currently in a period of transition. Staff have recognised the need for more detailed schemes and have started to work together on writing them.

104. A broad range of teaching strategies is employed effectively by the whole department. Particularly strong features include the teachers' use of overhead projectors and prepared transparencies to ensure that pupils remain focused on the topic being considered and that the pace of delivery remains brisk. Particularly good use is made of questioning to ensure that pupils' knowledge is drawn out and that their understanding is developed.
105. There has been an improvement in writing since the last inspection. A good range of writing is now being demanded of pupils: personal, imaginative, poetic, transactional. Pupils' writing normally begins with a first draft in their draft books. Final versions in their neat books show how corrections have been made to grammar and spelling, as well as commendable improvements in standards of presentation and handwriting. However, there is little evidence of pupils developing the content of their writing or of teachers giving guidance on how to develop drafts into higher quality pieces of work, by looking at elements such as structure, vocabulary and character building.
106. Marking is done conscientiously. There is an emphasis on the correction of spellings and grammar. Although there are examples of guidance on the processes behind successful writing, these are the exception rather than the rule. As a result, there is little to suggest that pupils know how to develop their work further.
107. In assessing pupils' work, teachers award a letter grade for effort and a number for attainment. Despite best efforts, including wall displays in all English rooms, many pupils do not understand how the scheme works or how the marking system is related to National Curriculum or other examination measures. Therefore they have a limited understanding of how well they are progressing and how they might improve their performance. GCSE coursework assignments are marked with a GCSE grade and this is understood.
108. Currently no records are kept of the books read by individual pupils. This limits the extent to which teachers can ensure that pupils are exposed to a wide range of styles and genres and develop their experience of literature.
109. Teachers use drama to draw on pupils' skills in speaking and listening, in order to help them develop their reading and writing. More formal links with the drama department would enable this aspect of the work to be developed further.
110. At present the schemes of work do not identify opportunities for pupils to use ICT within English. Therefore there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply and develop such skills. This is in breach of National Curriculum requirements.
111. Pupils' attitude and behaviour were good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Although the majority remained well focused, there were lessons when learning for all was adversely affected by the misbehaviour of a few who persistently talked, called out, or were in other ways a nuisance. They behaved in this way despite being presented with satisfactory lessons and despite teachers persistently bringing them to task. Poor behaviour was particularly apparent at Key Stage 3 and in the late afternoon. The school has recognised the afternoon timings as an area of difficulty and is considering ways of improving the situation.
112. The social and moral development of pupils is well supported by the department. A powerful Year 11 lesson focused on life in a nineteenth century workhouse. Pupils' imagination was captured when the teacher brought out and started to eat the daily food ration: six ounces of stale bread and a very meagre vegetable gruel. The oral work

which followed was of a high standard and is being used as a basis for further writing activities. This is very good practice.

113. At Key Stage 3 pupils are making good progress. However, the introduction of streaming for Years 7-9 has resulted in some pupils being in classes that do not match their ability level in this subject.
114. At Key Stage 4 there is evidence of an improvement. The GCSE examination results last year, particularly in literature, suggest an upturn, and the standard of writing being produced by Year 10 pupils indicates that this can be sustained.
115. The school library has been out of action since the start of the academic year. At the moment there is no member of staff, either teaching or non-teaching, responsible for it. The book stock is out of date and the fiction section needs major investment if it is to be attractive to pupils. The lack of access to a school library means that pupils have little opportunity to extend their understanding and interest in any subject. This has a negative impact on standards in general and the promotion of literacy in particular. It hinders the development of a broadly based love of reading which the department is aware is currently lacking in the school. The headteacher and the governing body have identified the library as a priority for development; significant funds have been secured to develop the library and its fiction section. Formal plans are in place to re-open an improved facility that will be shared with the community.
116. Departmental accommodation is of a good standard and appropriately arranged. Rooms are well maintained and contain attractive displays of pupils' work, of materials promoting literacy, and explanations of departmental policy. The best displays of pupils' work are of an excellent standard.
117. Departmental resources are barely adequate. The stock cupboard contains a great deal of very dated material that would be unattractive to pupils and inappropriate. There are not sufficient poetry anthologies. No sets of poetry books have been purchased for many years. There are no anthologies of short stories, a genre of writing that would be particularly well suited to the literacy needs of the pupils. Sets of textbooks are also inadequate.
118. The management of the department is satisfactory. Progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in quality of teaching, assessment and the development of pupils' writing.

MATHEMATICS

119. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the percentage who reached level 5 and above was 43, which is well below the national average of 63 per cent. The percentages for 2000 are 45 for the school and 65 nationally. The difference in performance between girls and boys is in line with the national trend, but with boys' performance significantly better proportionally than that of girls'. Standards are well above average in comparison with similar schools, and this is borne out by the results for 2000. The trend over the last three years, in terms of average National Curriculum points score, is above the national picture.
120. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE examination was 5 per cent, very low compared with the national average of 46 per cent. The percentage of pupils reaching A*-G grades was 73 per cent, which is well below the national figure of 96 per cent. The school's figures for 2000 are 22 per cent for A*-C and 81 per cent for A*-G: significantly better results. In terms of grades A*-C, boys consistently reach a higher standard than girls, and the same situation is broadly true for the proportion of A*-G grades. These are both opposite to the national situation. Standards at GCSE in 1999 are very low in comparison with the average for similar schools. The 2000 figures are broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Standards in mathematics over the last few years have usually been below those in English and science, but the difference is decreasing.
121. Standards on entry, based on Key Stage 2 results and other nationally standardised tests, are very low compared with national averages. The levels of achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are good by the end of Key Stage 3. Based on the 1999 GCSE results, achievement must be judged as unsatisfactory over Key Stage 4; but scrutiny of pupils' work and classroom observation, together with the GCSE results for 2000, point to good levels of achievement, although slightly inferior to those of Key Stage 3.
122. Overall standards in mathematics are below average, but not as low as suggested by the 1999 national examination and test results. Notwithstanding this, standards are now at the very least comparable to those of similar schools. Severe staffing difficulties over the last few years are now decreasing and staffing changes over the last year or so are now having a positive impact on standards. The department is close to meeting its targets for 2000 and is now more aware in its teaching of the need to raise standards of attainment.
123. The department is in the process of adopting the National Numeracy Strategy and levels of numeracy are broadly in line with standards expected of pupils of this attainment level. Although several instances of finger counting were observed in lower attaining sets, the majority of the younger pupils were secure in their basic mental arithmetic, no doubt as a result of recent developments in primary school numeracy teaching. Lower-attaining Year 9 pupils are able confidently to complete a multiplication square using various techniques such as adding, doubling or halving. Although a draft policy has been circulated, there is currently no whole school strategy to support the pupils' development of numeracy skills across the different school subjects.

124. Pupils' learning in mathematics is good. Most pupils work productively at a pace appropriate to the teaching and their level of attainment. For example pupils in the lowest attaining Year 9 group were able to organise themselves to collect equipment in order to cut out and name various triangles and quadrilaterals, after having been set a target time for completion by the teacher.
125. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in algebra. Lower-attaining Year 7 pupils can extend simple sequences and experience some success with simplifying algebraic expressions, including simple equations by Year 11. Middle-attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 solve simple equations, squaring and cubing numbers with confidence. In Key Stage 4, such pupils are able to substitute into complex algebraic expressions, but sometimes experience difficulty when dealing with negative numbers in these situations. Higher-attaining pupils are able to construct and solve equations by the end of Key Stage 3 and to use brackets with confidence in algebra. By the end of Key Stage 4 these pupils derive formulae for the generation of sequences and plot graphs of complex algebraic functions.
126. The amount of work completed by many of the pupils is impressive. Although this work is monitored carefully, annotated with positive comments and spellings usually corrected, pupils are not always clear about what they could do to improve and make progress in their learning.
127. Since the last inspection the standard of teaching has improved. Learning objectives are now given at the beginning of lessons and the lesson content is now better matched to pupils' levels of attainment. The level of challenge is now greater. For example, a group of middle-attaining Year 9 pupils, looking for congruent shapes, had to justify their choice to the whole class, using correct mathematical language where possible. A low-attaining Year 10 set was challenged as to how many completed small squares were needed in order to complete a multiplication square. Pupils in a low-attaining Year 11 group were invited to read some questions out, thereby giving them useful reading practice in a mathematical setting.
128. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and it is good or better in half the lessons. Teachers know the pupils with special educational needs and give them work which is appropriately challenging. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject which makes them aware of common errors which various pupils might make. Literacy is not neglected. All classrooms have word lists on display and teachers draw attention to any new vocabulary being introduced. Some attention is also given to the correct spelling of mathematical terms. A variety of teaching techniques is used. In one lesson, for example, a humorous mathematical story was used to round off a session on fractions. Many satisfactory lessons could become good lessons by an increase in pace.
129. Most lessons now follow the National Numeracy Project lesson format: a quick mathematical activity, usually involving mental arithmetic or a re-cap of previous work, then the lesson proper, including the lesson aims, finishing with a review of the lesson and sometimes another quick mathematical activity. This lesson format has a crispness that ensures that even tardy pupils begin the lesson at a definite point. Several quite boisterous groups were made to concentrate using this technique.

130. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are usually at least satisfactory, and are good or better in almost half the lessons. One of the prime causes of this is the very good relationships with teachers; the odd display of silly or boorish behaviour is treated with firmness, professionalism and good humour. Pupils help one another when 'stuck' and lessons are free of petty bickering. Classrooms, text and exercise books are virtually free of graffiti or doodles. This respect for the working environment provides a positive atmosphere and encourages effective learning.
131. Only the quality of subject leadership and dedication has enabled the department successfully to come through a very difficult period brought about by staffing problems. The analysis of past results indicates clearly the negative effect on standards of these problems. Standards are now beginning to move forward. Departmental staff are hard working, mutually supportive and very keen to raise standards. Accommodation is very pleasant, and the department has a comprehensive collection of texts from which to choose. It has recently bought some good quality software, but has been unable to make use of it because of technical problems. Serious consideration will need to be given to the use of ICT which is now an inherent part of the National Curriculum.

SCIENCE

132. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the percentage who reached level 5 and above was 38, which is well below the national average of 54 per cent. Girls performed less well than boys in these tests. The results for 2000 show a slight drop (2 per cent) in the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or above. On the other hand, the percentage gaining Level 6 has increased from the previous year. When compared with schools in similar circumstances, standards in science are well above average.
133. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4+ by the end of Key Stage 3 has increased from 58 per cent in 1996 to 78 per cent in 2000. When these results are compared to the attainment levels of the same group on entry, these pupils have achieved well.
134. In GCSE examinations all pupils are entered for double award science. In 1999, the percentages gaining A*-C (24.6 per cent) and A*-G (86.1 per cent) were well below standards nationally. However, when compared to schools of a similar type nationally, attainment was well above average. A similar picture is seen in the results for 2000 (27.3 per cent gaining A*-C and 84.6 per cent gaining A*-G).
135. Over the last four years there has been an upward trend in results. There has been greater improvement in A*-C results than in those for A*-G. Overall, over the last four years the rate of improvement at both A-C and A-G has been greater than that nationally.
136. At both key stages the majority of pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress when earlier attainment is taken into consideration. At Key Stage 3, a small number of pupils with special educational needs made very good progress. The significant improvement in terms of pupils' progress since the last inspection is largely due to the successful literacy strategies and planning which have been developed within the department.

137. The department is serving the needs of the less able more consistently than those of the most able. In lessons, many pupils achieve well and make clear gains in knowledge. For example, Year 8 pupils know the difference between acids and alkalis and how to test for this. A group of low ability Year 9 pupils knew the names of many of the bones of the skeleton and of the main joints. They also knew that calcium was needed for healthy bones. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of the principles of refraction and total internal reflection.
138. The majority of pupils enjoy science and are keen to do well. They show interest in their work and take a full part in lessons. During practical activities seen, pupils were encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning and to work co-operatively with others. This they did well. The majority of pupils respect each other, their teachers and other adults and also show care for the environment in which they work. Most pupils listen carefully and politely to the teacher and to the contributions of others. The behaviour of pupils observed within lessons was mostly good with only a very few examples of disruptive behaviour and bad manners. These were dealt with promptly. The relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the department with teachers creating a positive and supportive working environment.
139. The quality of teaching in science is good. At Key Stage 3 only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. In almost three-quarters of lessons, teaching was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in the lessons seen at Key Stage 4. All lessons were well planned with clear learning objectives. Time was managed well and good pace was maintained. Lesson objectives differed for each of the streams in a year group and, where necessary, teachers planned work to suit the specific needs of pupils with Individual Education Plans. Good use is made of a range of teaching and organisational styles to suit the material being covered. Pupils were well managed, and good behaviour was demanded by teachers.
140. The teaching of basic skills for literacy was good in all lessons. Key words were displayed in classrooms, and pupils were encouraged to use these to help develop their understanding of the work being covered. Teachers mark exercise books and other work regularly but they do not make enough use of written comments to help pupils understand how to improve their work.
141. Homework is set for every lesson and often used to help develop pupils' understanding. For example GCSE practical investigation work is carefully supervised over a number of weeks to ensure it meets exam board requirements. Where teaching was good, the methods and activities used were well suited to the work being covered and ensured that even the most difficult of pupils rose to the challenge and made good progress. For example, in one Year 8 lesson, pupils of low ability responded well to being given the responsibility to carry out an experiment on photosynthesis for themselves. In a Year 11 low ability group, a dice game was used well to demonstrate some of the factors affecting inheritance. Satisfactory lessons could have been made better if teachers had presented their pupils with higher challenges or used a wider range of methods. For example, in a lesson on the periodic table, pupils had to carry out a large number of similar calculations when a fewer number would have done equally well. There was very little practical activity and too much concentration on reading texts and producing written answers. This made the lesson less interesting to the pupils, and it was more difficult to keep them on task.

142. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The department provides a safe and secure environment for pupils to work. There is a good health and safety policy which is understood and used by both staff and pupils. The majority of pupils are developing the skills required for experimental and investigative science. However, the lack of sufficient information technology resources prevents pupils from developing these skills to a sufficiently high level. The schemes of work cover the content of the national curriculum programmes of study. However, they include little reference to how ICT might be used, and there is no reference to how science can contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are tested at the end of each unit to assess their progress. However, these results are not used to help adapt planning to meet the identified needs of the pupils.
143. The head of department provides clear and effective leadership. She has a clear vision of where the department needs to be and is developing good strategies and mechanisms to deliver them. There is a clear development plan which identifies aims for the department and highlights appropriate priority areas linked to appropriate actions. For example the priority related to raising attainment is linked to challenging targets. The support mechanisms for newly qualified and associate teachers are good and are implemented effectively. Regular weekly meetings ensure that some monitoring is taking place. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is limited and needs to be further developed. Procedures for monitoring consistency of teacher assessment across the department are not in place.
144. The accommodation is satisfactory, and departmental resources are adequate. Great efforts have been made to make the environment pleasant and stimulating for the pupils. The new physics accommodation is good but the location of the biology lab on a different floor to the rest of the department is a disadvantage especially for the lab technician. Despite this, staff receive a good level of support.
145. The department has made considerable progress in a number of significant areas since the last inspection. The attainment of pupils shows an upward trend. The quality of teaching has improved from being satisfactory or good in two-thirds of lessons to being satisfactory in all but one lesson and good or very good in nearly two-thirds. The good literacy strategy has led to more pupils being able to gain full access to the curriculum and to make more progress. The management of behaviour in the majority of lessons is now good. Success criteria in the form of targets are now in place and drive the development plan. The provision of textbooks is now adequate, and the refurbishment of the physics lab and its relocation have made the department more centralised. Marking is now consistent within the department but still lacks sufficient instances of informative comment. Attendance remains a stubborn problem with an unsatisfactory number of pupils not being entered for GCSE because of this. There has been no improvement in provision for ICT although the department now has one stand alone computer but of limited capability. The monitoring of work across the department remains inconsistent. More rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems for teaching and learning now need to be put in place.

ART

146. GCSE results in art are above the national average for schools of this type and at the same level when compared with all comprehensive schools. This is the case for both the proportion of A* to C grades and average points scores gained. Results have been improving steadily since 1998, and this improvement was maintained in 2000. In lessons seen, attainment overall was at the national average, but some real excellence was seen. For example, in a Year 9 class a girl showed real flair in directly observed still life drawing, going directly to tonal work using a soft pencil. Sketch books are well used as a research and development tool and are linked to worthwhile homework. Some very good work was seen, covering a wide range of skills and techniques such as colour, texture, pattern, line drawing and imagery in specific styles including art nouveau and Celtic pattern work. Several examples of very good relief and three-dimensional work were seen, including large-scale work, such as models of insects made from cane and tissue.
147. The nature of teaching gives full equality of access for all, including those with special needs. Those with specific abilities in art are fully stretched. Display is used effectively within the department to celebrate success and to inspire but far more use could still be made of displays in corridors and other areas around the school. Visits to art galleries could also be arranged to extend the pupils' experiences of art.
148. The issue at the last inspection concerning the lack of ICT in the curriculum has been resolved.
149. Teaching and learning are very good at both key stages, and the staff concerned are totally secure, both as artists and as teachers. Preparation and shared target setting are very good. Pupils know what is expected of them and how to get there, but targets are open-ended enough not to limit pupils' creativity. Lessons are delivered at an intensive pace, and a considerable amount of work is covered. Pupils are set challenging targets which some find hard, but all rise to the challenge. In many lessons, teachers and pupils work together in the pursuit of excellence. Relationships are good, and staff and pupils share a common purpose. Pupils are given very good individual feedback to help them develop their ideas further. They learn a range of styles and techniques. Good work, for instance, was seen in two dimensions, three dimensions, relief, clay, textiles and batik. Above all, learning is built on intensive skill development.
150. Pupil response is very good at Key Stage 3 and excellent at Key Stage 4. Pupils have a bubbly enthusiasm, especially in Year 7, and they are open and positive in their approach. There is a sense of people working hard together to reach a common goal. One Year 8 class concentrated well, producing good work in spite of a considerable amount of noise around them. One Year 9 class showed rapt attention, and their subsequent work showed very good self-management, with total involvement and commitment. The Key Stage 4 pupils showed deep concentration, with a shared desire for quality and a sense of pride in their work.
151. National Curriculum coverage is broad and thorough. Art is having a positive impact on literacy, and technical language is used well as an analytical tool. Assessment is good, with teachers giving good feedback to help individuals develop further. Self-assessment is good, but there is potential for further links with language work in Key Stage 3. Art has a very positive impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in the school. The management of the department is good and classes are well organised.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

152. The 1999 GCSE results in each area of DT were well below national averages for all maintained secondary schools. The results, however, compare favourably with the school's own results and those of similar schools. Resistant materials and food technology were above the school average in 1999 but there was a decline in performance in 2000.
153. Teacher assessments show that current attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below what can be expected nationally. Girls performed better than boys did in 2000 reversing the 1999 results where boys were near national expectations for pupils achieving level 5+. From low attainment on entry progress is generally satisfactory and achievement is often good, especially in practical work. Improvement is seen through the key stage, with design skills showing a range of presentational techniques. Good work is seen in all areas from a minority of pupils. The weaker work often lacks depth of research and limited graphical skills.
154. Recent examination results and work seen during the inspection show that current attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the expected level. Levels of achievement are often good with design folders showing a range of presentational and graphical skills including commercial material, photographs, use of colour, freehand drawing and ICT to illustrate and develop ideas. Good work is seen in all areas of the department from a minority of pupils. Weaker work is mainly due to lack of initial ideas, limited depth of research and sometimes careless or incomplete work. Practical solutions, including modelling and final products, are usually good. Attainment in child development and NVQ catering is satisfactory at this stage of the course.
155. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Satisfactory and good teaching is seen at both key stages. The better lessons have good pace, use appropriate teaching strategies and use subject knowledge to expand or develop ideas, resulting in an increase in pupil learning and understanding. This was seen in lessons where pupils were developing ideas for an observational child study, researching and making a desk tidy, increasing their understanding of perspective drawing and rendering techniques and studying the effects of heat on certain food products. Satisfactory lessons have some good features but could be made better if they were more challenging and delivered at a greater pace. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, and achievement is often good especially in practical work. Literacy support is good with key words on display to help pupils develop technical vocabulary.
156. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are mainly good. They work in pairs or groups and share workplaces and equipment willingly. Speaking skills are usually good but listening skills are often weak. Written work can also be of a low standard. There are instances of inattention and distraction, especially towards the end of lessons or when demonstrations and explanations are being given. Relationships in all areas are usually good.

157. Assessment procedures are in place at both key stages linked to national curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 and examination board criteria at Key Stage 4. Pupils are encouraged to assess and evaluate their own work. Pupils, however, need to be given a better idea of the level at which they are working. Marking is consistently done but can be over generous at times.
158. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 covers the programmes of study, and pupils experience a range of materials and processes. The electronics/control module is not addressed adequately at present, and the use of metal is underdeveloped. At Key Stage 4 statutory requirements are not met in Year 11. In addition to GCSE courses a NVQ level 1 in catering is offered in conjunction with the local college of further education. ICT, although used, needs to be further developed in some areas of the curriculum.
159. The department is managed efficiently and documentation is well prepared. Analysis of pupil performance is a feature and target setting has been introduced at both key stages. Monitoring of standards across all areas including teaching and learning is being developed. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils needs to be addressed in documentation and practice.
160. Accommodation is good overall and very good in food technology. A stimulating environment is created with good displays of pupils' work to support the learning. Resources are good overall but there is a shortage of ICT equipment in food technology. A resource based research area could be developed to encourage independent learning.
161. Improvements since the last inspection include improved design skills, much improved accommodation in food technology, good links developed with the local college of further education, more use of ICT in pupils' work and evidence of the department contributing to the drive to raise pupils' literacy skills.
162. The department now needs to focus on the following areas: developing design skills further; making greater use of ICT in all areas; ensuring that the electronic/control module is taught at Key Stage 3; monitoring standards of pupils' work more rigorously; ensuring pupils understand how National Curriculum levels and examination grades work; improving standards of written work and general presentation.

DRAMA/EXPRESSIVE ARTS

163. GCSE in drama was taken for the first time in 2000. Results were very good with 84.6 per cent A to C and an average points score of 6.15. Expressive arts results at GCSE showed 32.6 per cent gaining A* to C grades and an average points score of 3.34. The whole Year 11 group took an arts subject at GCSE. In drama lessons at Key Stage 3 attainment is at the national average. In expressive arts lessons at Key Stage 4, attainment is similarly at the national average. Those with special needs progress well and have full access to the curriculum. They have equality of access at GCSE level, attaining well overall. Year 7 pupils have yet to acquire basic drama skills, but are learning them rapidly. By the end of Year 9, even the lower-ability pupils show co-operation and collaboration, and they 'tell a story' well. Low level reading skills occasionally inhibit performance in script-based work. The Key Stage 4 expressive arts work is heavily media-based, involving effective animation and video work and a good mixture of art forms, music playing a significant role. There are regular productions, and those with specific ability are stretched. Drama enjoys a high status in the school and is of great value to the pupils.
164. Teaching is good at both key stages. A similar picture applies to learning. Teaching is

secure, both in terms of content and the methods used. Planning and target setting are clear, and shared with pupils, who know just where they are going and how they are to get there. Teacher feedback is focused on individual pupil needs. Considerable emphasis is placed on the development of skills necessary to support drama work. However, the teaching concentrates on the essentials. Some good open-ended questioning was seen and pupils responded very well. In drama and in expressive arts pupils develop understanding of the tasks set, practise and develop relevant skills and use these to create appropriate end products. Pupils at Key Stage 4 manage their own learning with support and guidance, and skills seen included good quality animation and equally good quality live musical input to their own videos.

165. Pupil response is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic, and their attitudes are open and positive. Although pupils begin Year 7 as rather fussy and easily distracted, they soon learn the skills of concentration and self-regulation. They are fully involved in script-based work in spite of some difficulties in literacy skills. Pupils support each other well and, by Key Stage 4, readily take control of their own learning while taking full advantage of teacher expertise.
166. The curriculum is balanced between drama as a learning process in its own right and drama as theatre. There are some links with the drama element in National Curriculum English but they are informal. They need to be developed more systematically and related more closely to the attainment levels at the end of Key Stage 3. Drama and expressive arts provide an excellent foundation for the school's literacy policy. Assessment is good, and clearly linked to the high quality verbal feedback in lessons. Pupil self-assessment is generally good but needs further refinement at the early stages of Key Stage 3. Leadership is good, reflecting the passion and commitment of the head of department. Monitoring of teaching and learning across the faculty is in place, and is clearly linked to performance management principles.

GEOGRAPHY

167. At the end of Key Stage 3, results in teacher assessments have been below national standards for the past three years, showing no improvement. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are also below national standards. For the past three years, pupils have taken a travel and tourism GCSE instead of geography and results for grades A* to C have been well below national expectations. Results for grades A* to G have been in line with the national expectations, and the trend has been one of improvement. There is no consistent trend in the results of boys compared with those of girls.
168. Achievement is satisfactory at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are proficient in map work. They can explain the processes that cause relief rainfall. By the end of Key Stage 4 they can compare and contrast different climates, understand the formation of cyclones and anti-cyclones and they have a good knowledge of the causes and effects of global warming. Year 11 pupils have carried out fieldwork investigations of a river valley and have presented their data using ICT. However, the work seen indicates that they are not good at thinking through questions for themselves. At all levels of ability pupils have difficulty relating their conclusions to the original hypotheses and the work of the less able is frequently incomplete, showing lack of understanding and commitment. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress at both key stages due to the well-directed help of their teachers, but a lack of learning support assistance in class does slow their rate of achievement.
169. Teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Some of the teaching was good. One lesson was unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, good planning and careful management

of the pupils, with resources linked to the pupils' own experience, led to a purposeful atmosphere where the pupils were able to learn well. For example, a lesson on relief rainfall linked the diagram on the board to the view outside the window, using the Cheshire plain and the Pennines as a practical illustration of the theory, explaining why it rains so much in Manchester. Many lessons suffered from poor timing, which meant it was difficult for the teacher to summarise and consolidate the learning gains at the end. In some lessons there was a lack of work that would challenge pupils to think for themselves. Assessment through questioning was good and marking was regular, but grades given for work were usually too high for the quality of the work, giving pupils an unrealistic view of how to improve. Thoughtful provision of graduated worksheets and targeted extra help means that pupils with special needs and the more able can all learn at the pace that suits them.

170. Curriculum provision is satisfactory, with equal access for all pupils except the three pupils with English as an additional language. However, the subject suffers from a lack of ICT in most of the teaching or learning. There is not enough fieldwork throughout Key Stage 3 to give pupils the necessary enquiry and recording skills. There is no focus on the spiritual, moral and social cross-curricular aspects. While literacy is well emphasised through emphasis on key vocabulary and reading texts in class, there is little attention to numeracy.
171. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory and has laid the foundations for further improvement. Standards of attainment have been raised in Key Stage 4 but need to be improved further, with particular emphasis on Key Stage 3. A system of assessment has been built into the Key Stage 3 scheme of work and is now being used to determine national curriculum levels. However, pupils are not yet being given reliable knowledge of their level of achievement and of ways to take responsibility for their own improvement. Every opportunity is taken to raise levels of literacy, and there is more variety of teaching styles, particularly group and pair work. The department has a development plan linked to school priorities. There is appropriately differentiated work for pupils with special educational needs, and there are now sufficient books for whole classes. There is still a need for more fieldwork enquiries, development of ICT throughout the curriculum, and for the planned monitoring of teaching in the department to be put into effect.

HISTORY

172. In recent years, history results at GCSE have fluctuated greatly, reaching their lowest point in 1999, when only one of the thirteen candidates scored higher than a grade D. This year has seen a dramatic improvement with eleven out of the twenty-three candidates achieving grades A*-C. It is likely that official statistics will show that these results compare favourably with those of similar schools.
173. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is just below national expectation. Pupils have sound factual knowledge of the historical events, as Year 8 pupils showed in a mock game show quiz on the wives of Henry VIII. When answering questions in class, pupils show understanding of historical terms and are able to explain some causes and consequences of events they have been studying. Good teaching through imaginative reconstruction of the past in short plays and simulations is giving pupils a better understanding of events. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils learnt a lot about the profits to be made through the slave trade by re-enacting the progress of a ship on its triangular voyage, pupils playing the part of merchants at its various ports of call. Pupils enjoy the lessons and are keen to take part in the activities. The methods enable all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to make good progress. Many pupils have

difficulty expressing themselves accurately in writing. Teachers are paying careful attention to teaching the meaning of key words in the subject and correcting poor spelling and grammar. Year 9 essays on the slave trade showed weakness in developing ideas clearly in paragraphs. Pupils can use appropriate primary source material to find information, as did Year 7 pupils examining panels of the Bayeux Tapestry to learn about the Battle of Hastings. They are, however, not doing enough work on historical evidence to develop the skills for evaluating its usefulness and reliability for their enquiry. Similarly, they are not used to looking at different interpretations of people and events and explaining how and why they differ.

174. At Key Stage 4 attainment in Year 11 is below national expectations. Pupils have produced some interesting coursework on the life of an orphan apprentice in a cotton factory, based on their fieldwork at Quarry Bank mill. Some pupils are able to relate their biographical accounts to historical facts but many are not so well founded. In their current assignment on women's suffrage, pupils were having difficulty understanding the political points in contemporary cartoons and letters. A third of the class was absent from the lesson observed. Those present adopted a serious approach to their work. A few pupils with learning difficulties are finding the literacy level of the sources particularly demanding. They are receiving every assistance from their teacher over drafting and correcting their preliminary work. The course is highly structured around the teacher's prepared information sheets which build up, with completed pupil tasks, into a comprehensive record of the course. Very good teaching and organisation of work enable those pupils who keep up their attendance to make good progress. The number of pupils choosing history in Year 10 has increased this year. They show good understanding of the eighteenth century agricultural revolution, helped by a wide variety of learning materials, ranging from books and information sheets to video and visual aids. At this early stage on the course, they are being well trained in how to frame answers to examination questions.
175. The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. The one unsatisfactory lesson seen did not provide sufficient challenge to higher-attaining pupils to keep them on task. In general, the head of department's excellent organisation of courses and promotion of a variety of teaching styles give pupils opportunity to learn from different stimuli and to enjoy the subject. Courses are well supported by an impressive bank of teacher-produced resources but pupils also need to be able to use textbooks and reference books to greater effect. The department has amended its programmes of study efficiently in the light of changes to the National Curriculum for history. There is still scope for developing pupils' ability to find out information for themselves, by giving them greater access to suitable primary sources and implementing plans to use ICT.
176. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress in achieving its best results at GCSE this year. The senior management monitors teaching but internal monitoring is still at the planning stage. There has been some improvement in the textbook situation to cover the GCSE course and the Year 9 syllabus. The department has moved into refurbished rooms adjacent to a new computer suite.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

177. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 have varied greatly in the last four years, between a little below national standards and well below these. There is no clear trend over that period but, contrary to the usual pattern, girls have tended to reach higher levels than the boys. At the end of Key Stage 4 there have been no GCSE entries in the subject for the last three years. However, the results in the Certificate of Achievement have been good. For instance, in 1999 all fifty-four pupils entered passed, five obtaining a merit award. While the standards needed to pass this assessment are below those needed to do well in GCSE, such results show that many are able to show competence in the subject at levels not very far below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 4.
178. The standard of work seen during the inspection of pupils in Key Stage 3 was mostly below national expectations. In Key Stage 4 it was always below expectations. This is a result of pupils not being taught all the aspects of the subject required by the National Curriculum.
179. By the end of Key Stage 3, almost all pupils can use a mouse to access the different functions of Windows such as saving and printing work. Most have the basic skills of word processing, such as lining up sections of text in different ways and making them appear in different styles. However, few yet recognise that the purpose of word processing is to communicate ideas well, and fewer still have reached that kind of understanding in the case of other types of computer program, like the spreadsheet or the database manager. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have a rather better grasp of word processing (though very few are fluent) and can lay out a spreadsheet table using one or two different kinds of formula. However, there are still few opportunities for them to develop skills with computer control and communications.
180. The school does not offer pupils all the aspects of the National Curriculum to which they are entitled within this subject. Pupils steadily develop skills with computer programs, knowledge of how people use computers and communications in the world of work, and an understanding of why this technology can be such a useful tool. The rate at which they learn is not always satisfactory, however, often because they find it hard to concentrate for long on their tasks, especially in Key Stage 3. On the other hand, in Key Stage 3, pupils with special needs often make particularly good progress.
181. Teaching is always satisfactory, sometimes good, and in one lesson very good. The strengths of teaching include concentration on literacy, especially reading, spelling and writing, and on developing ideas of number, as well as good class control at Key Stage 4 and a widespread expectation that the class members will do well. The main weaknesses at the moment are rather skimmed lesson planning, with little attempt to define exactly what the lessons should achieve, too infrequent assessment of how well the pupils are learning, and infrequent tailoring of tasks to individuals.
182. Since the last inspection, a GCSE course has been introduced which is proving popular. It is too early to judge how successful it is likely to be. There has been a considerable investment in hardware and the school now has a very good number of computers for its size. However, there is no room with enough computers to enable pupils in a normal sized class to work individually. Unresolved technical problems with the existing machines and network also limit the use made of these resources. The assessment of pupil progress is underdeveloped. The school still does not meet the National Curriculum requirements for the subject. Pupils are not taught the full range of the programmes of study and the programmes which are taught are not closely enough

related to the attainment targets. At present, there is very little use of ICT within other subjects but the school has a policy to rectify this situation. The policy is awaiting implementation from January 2001 when new hardware will be in place.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

183. Results in the 1999 Teacher Assessments for pupils aged 14 were well above national averages. From analysis of work and observation of lessons of pupils currently in Year 9, these results were found to be too high. Year 9 pupils attain standards that are below national expectations; however, higher-attaining pupils write short descriptions of famous people using a variety of adjectives and structures, attaining standards that are in line with national expectations. Standards are better in Year 7 than in Year 9 although they are also below national expectations overall.
184. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 1999 was considerably lower than the national average and well below the proportion for similar schools. Girls' results were lower than their results in other subjects; boys' results were slightly higher. Contrary to national trends, there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. During the past three years, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades has fallen; however, numbers entered for the examination rose during the same period. The evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 pupils' standards are well below national expectations. Although some pupils in Year 10 are beginning to use French for themselves, following supportive structures provided by the teacher, some Year 11 pupils have difficulty using the French alphabet. Many find it difficult to understand the teachers' fluent use of French. Pupils have, in general, a poor basic knowledge. Speaking and listening skills are better developed than reading and writing. Writing is particularly weak, partly as a result of poor basic writing skills. Poor attendance in Year 11 is affecting standards, an issue identified in the last report.
185. When compared to their earlier attainment, pupils achieve well at both key stages. Year 7 pupils make a very good start and, at both key stages, progress is generally good. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress. However, progress is to a certain extent restricted because they have less time allocated than their peers and because there are no support teachers in lessons. Pupils behave well in French lessons. They enjoy the work. In one Year 7 lesson, a group of lower-attaining pupils were reluctant to leave the room because they were so engrossed in what they had been learning. Similarly, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils stayed on beyond the bell because they wanted to discuss their forthcoming French trip with the teacher.
186. Teaching is good overall and ranges from very good to satisfactory. Over half of the lessons seen were good and half were very good. Teachers are competent and confident and have a good knowledge of the National Curriculum. They have high expectations and provide material that is well matched to pupils' interests and abilities. They are constantly reminding them of what they must do to improve and extend the curriculum effectively with breakfast and after school classes.

187. The subject is taught by a recently appointed head of department and by a newly qualified teacher. The head of department provides very clear leadership and is introducing a range of effective policies that will support teaching and learning well. The development plan is good. Monitoring and evaluation are at an early stage, given the short time this team has been in operation, but already there are helpful informal structures. The newly qualified teacher is very well supported.
188. Since the last inspection, staffing difficulties have led to a decline in standards in French throughout the school and particularly at GCSE. In consequence, the school took the decision to re-launch the subject. This new start is in its early stages. Entirely new staff have been appointed, and the curriculum has been adjusted to give the department the best chance of success. However, this has resulted in weaknesses at both key stages. Currently, in Key Stage 3, only the highest attaining pupils are taught for enough time to cover all aspects of the national curriculum. Average attaining pupils are taught for two thirds of that time and lower-attaining pupils for a third. In Key Stage 4, French is offered as an option and the school is in the process of disapplying a large number of Year 10 pupils from the subject. Provision for developing ICT skills in the subject is unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

189. Music is not taken as a separate subject at GCSE. It does, however, play a significant role in the good GCSE results in expressive arts. In lessons seen at Key Stage 3, pupils attain the national average, in spite of their generally weak background in musical skills and awareness. They build on their interests in music, which are rock/pop in nature but, using this as a base, they cover a broad curriculum. By the end of Year 9, pupils are secure in melodic and rhythmic work, including effective work in reggae and Indian music. At Key Stage 4, pupils are confident and, when discussing options in their composition and performance work, give clear reasons for their decisions. Pupils with special needs attain well and have full access to the music curriculum. Those with particular musical ability attain appropriately. The very successful school rock band makes an annual concert tour to Denmark, giving concerts to audiences of over 1,000 people. Although only 2.5 per cent of pupils receive instrumental tuition, all on keyboard, it is very successful. The school subsidises the cost of this by well over 50 per cent. There is successful extra-curricular work in singing, guitars and percussion.
190. The issue at the last inspection concerning significant weaknesses in pupil attainment in Year 9 has been fully resolved. There are now five high-quality practice rooms with very good acoustics, resolving another issue from the last inspection.
191. Teaching and learning are very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teaching is characterised by total commitment and enthusiasm, building on excellent relationships. The enthusiasm and sense of delight in music are responded to by pupils equally enthusiastically. Although the teaching is founded on high expertise in rock music, National Curriculum coverage is good. There is an excellent working ethos, with the apparently relaxed and easy-going atmosphere being matched by a determination to succeed. Target setting is clear, as are the routes towards success. There is a balance between class, group and individual learning. Organisation and management are efficient and the teacher is used as a mentor, a tutor, a consultant, an expert and an inspiration. The 'elements rap' in a Year 7 lesson turned a potentially dull subject into something exciting, interesting and musical.
192. Pupil response at both key stages is excellent. Pupil attitudes are open and positive; there is a great sense of fun, linked to determination and commitment. There is a very good working atmosphere. Pupils give tremendous support to each other. When

working in groups, pupils organise themselves very well. Pupils arrive at lessons expecting thoroughly to enjoy themselves but also to work hard and to make effective music together.

193. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but some elements need review to ensure their relevance. Appropriate emphasis is placed on world music. Literacy development is good, and music-specific technical language is well understood and used. Music technology is very thoroughly covered, but IT composition work is undeveloped, with no sound sampling composition work. All pupils take an arts subject at Key Stage 4. Music plays a significant role in the expressive arts course. Assessment is generally good, and very strong when linked to verbal feedback from the teacher. Pupils are involved in their own assessment, but this needs further refinement. Music gives very strong support to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Leadership and management in music are inspirational, even charismatic. The dynamic communication of passion and enthusiasm sets pupils alight: the very successful staff rock group, *Rock of Ages*, regularly plays for pupils.
194. This is an excellent department. It plays a central role in the school's own view of its success, as well as being a very positive influence in the building of pupil self-esteem.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

195. Overall, standards in physical education are above national expectations. Good progress is made in both key stages, by pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. At the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments indicate overall standards in physical education to be above the national average, with many pupils achieving standards well above average. Observation of lessons during the inspection confirmed the accuracy of teacher assessment and revealed that pupils frequently achieve high standards as a result of the perseverance and practice of pupils, combined with skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching.
196. By the age of 14, pupils have acquired knowledge, understanding and developed skills in a range of activities. Pupils achieve well in games, dance and swimming. For example, in basketball and netball, pupils demonstrate that they can effectively transfer skills gained in isolated practices to the game situation. Their strength and perseverance are displayed well in swimming, where pupils are developing a variety of strokes and in dance, where dance sequences of quality are being created. There is no significant difference in the standards which boys and girls achieve. These standards show an improvement since the last inspection.
197. Following this foundation work many opportunities arise for pupils to progress through planned and progressive programmes of study. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate and offer informed opinions of their own and others' work, developing the skills of movement analysis and enhancing language development. At the age of 16, pupils have made good progress in a range of activities, in soccer, mixed basketball, and netball, where a growing tactical awareness has been developed.
198. In aerobics, pupils are developing fitness, flexibility, endurance and an ability to work at a sustained pace.
199. Boys and girls show their capabilities in preparation, organisation and leadership in the Sports Leaders Award Course currently being developed. Pupils plan, perform and evaluate a series of their own contributions to lessons.
200. The overall quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Very good lessons were

seen, and one lesson was excellent. Schemes of work are well structured and show progression, lesson to lesson and across the key stages. Individual lessons are effectively planned, and objectives are clearly defined and shared with pupils. Teachers leave time for pupils to review their work at the end of the lesson. Pupils reflect on their progress against lesson objectives, so enabling appropriate planning for improvement to be identified for the next lesson by both teacher and pupils. This is excellent practice. Detailed explanations and clear expectations are a feature of every lesson. This very good practice stimulates pupils' interest in the activity and assists them to learn.

201. Teachers are confident, highly motivated specialists who have secure knowledge and understanding of their subject and their pupils. In all lessons, teachers' knowledge and expertise have a significant, positive influence on learning. They are effective in planning and organising tasks that are well paced, match pupils' capabilities and contain appropriate challenges. Teachers use a variety of delivery styles in the same lesson, ranging from whole class direct delivery, to group work and individual tuition. At Key Stage 4, pupils are given many opportunities for independent learning and applying their knowledge to new situations. Teachers contribute well to the development of pupils' literacy skills through their use of technical language in their question and answer sessions. When opportunities arise, pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example through creating dances, evaluating a partner's performance or devising attacking and defensive strategies in basketball or netball. Relationships are of the highest order. Discipline is firm but relaxed, promoting generally high motivation and good order. It offers teachers opportunities to concentrate on certain groups while others remain purposefully engaged. Emphasis on safe practice is a feature of all lessons. Pupils' consistency of uniform dress throughout the school is to be commended and is an outcome of the perseverance of teachers' demands to retain high quality standards. The number of non-participants is extremely low, and they are gainfully employed as coaches, referees or observers with appropriate worksheets provided.
202. Pupils' attitude to learning is good across the key stages, and this has a positive impact on learning. They arrive on time, change quickly and readily engage in the tasks presented. Their interest and enthusiasm are clearly evident across all age groups. They show visible signs of gains in knowledge and understanding as witnessed by the review section of most lessons. In all lessons seen, there is a high degree of co-operation displayed by pupils who are well behaved, motivated and concentrate on the tasks given. Pupils are seen to be capable of working very hard physically in all activities. Expectations are high and pupils rise to the challenge presented by tasks. They respond quickly to questions and show confidence in demonstrating to others what they can achieve.
203. The department is led by an enthusiastic head of department, who is well supported by her male counterpart. Together they make a very strong team which is committed to delivering a balanced curriculum. Substantial documentation has been developed collectively. This provides a very good basis to support teaching and learning. Arrangements for assessment recording and reporting are in place. They include detailed pupil assessment and do assist in future planning. A systematic monitoring of assessment procedures, units of work and programmes of study has taken place. The time allocation for the coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study in Key Stage 3 only just allows for end of key stage descriptors to be achieved. At Key Stage 4 it is more appropriate. ICT is not used extensively to enhance learning. The school has good access to the adjacent leisure centre so that indoor facilities are good, though the clay-based playing fields create slippery and waterlogged conditions when wet. The playing fields have been made much more secure by a very substantial ditch.

204. Good liaison takes place with local primary schools, higher education establishments, clubs and sporting organisations. Since the last inspection, sustained and good progress has been made. Teaching and learning have improved and serve the needs of the pupils well. Planning is detailed, effective, co-ordinated well, and expectations of pupils are made very clear. The over-emphasis on boys' games has been rectified, and the school has entered a partnership with South Trafford College to develop courses. In the Sports Leadership Course, pupils are showing considerable development by planning their own work with evident maturity.
205. A comprehensive year-round programme of extra curricular activities is a very strong feature of the department. This serves to enhance pupils' social development as well as their practical skills. The programme provides open access clubs, team practices and matches. This provision, together with the substantial competitions organised within school, attracts an unusually high percentage of the boys and girls who achieve successes in local district and county competitions. It represents a substantial commitment of time by the physical education staff. The variety, regularity and quality of this additional provision have positive effects on pupils' attainment and attitude and make a very considerable contribution to the life and ethos of the whole school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

206. The school entered its first candidates for the GCSE short course in religious education this year, and the results were poor compared with the national average. These results reflect the difficulty that many pupils have in expressing their ideas clearly in writing. Also, continuity of learning suffered by blocking out time for other courses, such as careers, which are taught within personal, social and religious education. This remains an obstacle to progress at GCSE, which can only be solved by ensuring a regular weekly lesson for the subject throughout Key Stage 4.
207. At Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations, pupils making good progress from a low baseline on entry. This standard is more evident in the understanding that pupils show in reply to class questions and in general discussion than it is in their written work, which is more limited. Some exercises do capture pupils' imagination and they produce more thoughtful writing, as shown in their poems on human rights. Pupils have a good knowledge of some of the main beliefs of Christianity and Hinduism, and to a lesser extent Buddhism. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 showed a lot of initiative, as they worked in groups to research an aspect of Hinduism to present to the rest of the class. Working to the teacher's clear guidelines and using a range of reference material, religious artefacts and computer software, they were able to organise the information and communicate their findings clearly. The extra time allocated to the subject in Key Stage 3 means that pupils are able to make a start on the GCSE modules in the summer term of Year 9. This gives more depth to their studies, as they apply Christian principles for a 'just war' to an examination of global conflict. Good teaching, using a range of learning resources and a variety of activities, is helping all pupils to make good progress.
208. Pupils are also making good progress in learning from their study of religious beliefs and practice at Key Stage 3, seeing how they can apply them to their own situation. Teachers make the subject relevant to pupils' experience. For example a Year 9 lesson on pilgrimages started with pupils exploring their own feelings about a place that is special to them, as a way into appreciating the importance of holy places to pilgrims. In another lesson on Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in America, pupils were able to reflect on the importance of human rights. Their response is positive and

they show a keen sense of justice towards treating all people fairly. A local Baptist minister does valuable work in small discussion groups in Year 8, helping pupils apply the parables of Jesus to modern life. Visiting Christian music and drama groups around Easter also make their contribution to showing pupils the effects of faith on the lives of believers. A Christian lunch-time club gives opportunity for pupils to find out more about faith and its relevance today. In these varied ways, the subject is making a very good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

209. Despite their positive attitudes towards the subject, the behaviour of pupils at Key Stage 3 is no more than satisfactory. Whilst the majority concentrate well and exercise the necessary self-discipline in class, there are a significant number of pupils in most classes who are capable of disrupting the flow of lessons, by talking out of turn. The teachers exercise great skill in class management, effectively using a system of credits to reinforce right behaviour and channel pupils' energies in the direction planned for the lesson.
210. At Key Stage 4 attainment is in line with national expectations in general, but below the national average for those pupils working towards the GCSE short course examination in religious education. Pupils studying marriage and divorce show good understanding of the moral issues and religious views on the subject. The teachers establish trusting relationships with their pupils and create the right atmosphere in which they can discuss sensitive issues safely. Pupils are well behaved and serious in their attitudes towards their studies. Teachers are skilled in discussion techniques and make good use of stimulus material to engage pupils with the topics. A case study of the effects of divorce on children led to good discussion in a Year 11 class. An excerpt from the film 'Patch Adams' helped Year 10 pupils to understand the challenge to a person's faith that suffering presents. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to discuss these important matters and are making satisfactory progress in thinking through their own values and beliefs.
211. Pupils in two of the four sets in Year 11 will be entered for the GCSE short course examination. At this stage in the course, only the higher-attaining pupils are showing the level of argument in their written answers to questions that will earn them high grades. At the start of the unit of work on wealth and poverty, pupils in set one showed good understanding of the difference between absolute and relative concepts of poverty. The teaching is thorough over establishing the meaning of the concepts but the pace is slow; the pupils need to produce more of their own work in class, given the limited amount of time for the course. Year 10 pupils are making satisfactory progress in understanding some of the common arguments for and against the existence of God.

212. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages across the team of teachers, including the work of the supply teacher. Units of work are well planned and supported with a range of materials and activities at the right level for pupils. The department is well organised, which made it easier for the supply teacher to take over classes at short notice. There is a wealth of resources for teaching the subject, including a large collection of artefacts on display, which help create the right atmosphere for the subject. Ample space in the subject area and easy access to four computers in the careers room make it easier for teachers to organise group projects, that allow pupils some practice in learning for themselves. Good use is made of software in the subject, and there is some opportunity to use skills in word processing on projects. The monitoring of teaching is in place and teachers are welcome to observe the head of department's lessons.
213. Despite staffing problems since the last inspection, the department continues to make good progress. It has piloted the GCSE short course and developed appropriate life skills courses to cater for all abilities, so that all pupils can achieve a qualification at the end of Year 11. The teachers invest a lot of themselves in educating their pupils. The rewards in terms of academic qualifications are not great, but they have the satisfaction of seeing their pupils develop as mature young people, able to make informed decisions about their own values and beliefs.