

INSPECTION REPORT

ABRAHAM MOSS HIGH SCHOOL

Crumpsall Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105560

Headteacher: Mr D Watchorn

Reporting inspector: Mr Joseph Fitzpatrick
19874

Dates of inspection: 11th - 15th December 2000

Inspection number: 223956

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Crescent Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ms Alison Thaw

Date of previous inspection: 11/03/1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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			How high are standards?
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Saleem Hussain 9981	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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		Urdu	
Marie Durkin 12499	Team inspector	English Drama	
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		Design and Technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Abraham Moss is a bigger than average, mixed comprehensive school serving pupils aged 11 – 16, with 1036 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is well above average at 68 per cent. The biggest ethnic groups are Pakistani (43 per cent of the school population) and white pupils (31.2 per cent) but there are groups of pupils from many other ethnic backgrounds. Sixty-three per cent speak English as an additional language and there are 296 pupils (29 per cent) who are at an early stage of language acquisition. In total, 742 pupils (72 per cent) are supported through EMAS (the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service). Sixty per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, well above the national average. The percentage identified as having special educational needs (37 per cent) is very high, as is the 4 per cent with statements of special educational needs. There is a high rate of mobility in the school: in the course of the past academic year, 120 pupils left the school and 170 were admitted. The school is popular and oversubscribed. Among its pupils there are 62 refugees, 25 asylum seekers and eight from travelling families. The school has specialist provision capable of accommodating up to 24 physically disabled pupils and there are at present 20 such pupils on roll.

The areas from which most pupils come are seriously disadvantaged in social and economic terms. There is an extremely wide range of ability among the pupils but, in overall terms, the standard of attainment of pupils on entry is very low. The school is barrier free and physically disabled pupils are fully integrated into mainstream education.

The school is part of a larger building complex, the Abraham Moss Centre, which includes further and adult education, a senior citizens' club, and other organisations. The school makes use of the Centre's sports facilities, its library and theatre. Most of the school part of this complex was destroyed by fire in 1997. Most departments suffered the complete loss of accommodation, equipment and resources including all departmental records and documentation. The school administration area was also destroyed together with all documentation. While the new building was under construction, staff and pupils continued the work of the school in temporary accommodation. A new three-storey block has taken the place of the old building, and the one remaining part of the previous school building was refurbished in June 2000, when the whole school was finally re-occupied.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which provides a good quality education for pupils from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. Senior managers and staff are committed and teaching is mainly good. The school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in art, media studies, Urdu and, at Key Stage 4, in German and information and communications technology (ICT) are above national expectations
- In most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, pupils make good progress
- The quality of teaching is mainly good and there is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching
- The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and there is a widely shared commitment to raising standards of attainment
- Very good provision is made to develop the pupils' skills in English language
- Provision for special educational needs is very good
- There is very good provision for inclusion and equal opportunities – for example, pupils with physical disabilities are well integrated into the life and work of the school

What could be improved

- In a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science, standards are below or well below the national average or expectation
- As at the time of the last inspection, the school fails to make curricular provision for all pupils in modern languages and design and technology at Key Stage 4
- The rate of pupils' attendance is well below national averages
- The governors are not sufficiently involved in strategic planning and there is no school development plan or school improvement plan
- There is no school-wide programme for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching
- The school building is not big enough for the number of pupils on roll

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in April 1996. Standards in a range of subjects have risen – in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communications technology (ICT), history, geography and religious education. Standards in art remain high. The school has continued to make very good provision for pupils' English language development. There is more secure information on the attainment of pupils on entry and more use is made of statistical data to evaluate performance, set targets and drive up standards. The management of special educational needs is more efficient. The school has also addressed the legal requirements for collective worship and the annual meeting with and report to parents. Religious education is now provided for all pupils. The school sets challenging targets and is on course to meet them.

However, the school has failed to comply with the statutory requirement to provide courses in modern languages and in design and technology for all pupils in Key Stage 4. The rate of pupils' attendance, low at the time of the last inspection, is now even lower.

The school has the quality of leadership and management and the quality of commitment among staff to make further progress in the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	D	D	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

When they enter school, pupils have very low standards of attainment. Many have very low standards of attainment in English language, which affects the rest of their learning. For example, of the present Year 7 pupils, 92.7 per cent had reading ages on entry two or more years below their chronological age. The results of this group were very low in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in each of English, mathematics and science.

In 1999, the school's results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national average in English and science and very low in mathematics. However, compared with similar schools (as judged by the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals) the results of pupils in the school were above average in English, in line with the average in mathematics and well above average in science. In 2000, the results of pupils were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science but in comparison with results in similar schools they were just below average in English, in line with the average in mathematics and above average in science.

In 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* - C was below the national average but well above the average in similar schools. In 2000, the percentage was again below the national average, but well above the average in similar schools.

Inspection evidence indicates that in mathematics, standards of attainment are well below average in both key stages; and that in English and science, standards are well below average in Key Stage 3 and below average in Key Stage 4. In most other subjects the overall standards of attainment are below average in both key stages. But standards are in line with the national expectation in design and technology at both key stages and in ICT in Key Stage 3; standards in ICT at Key Stage 4 are above average. Standards in art are above average in both key stages. In modern languages, standards in French are below the national expectation in both key stages but standards in Urdu are above the national expectation in both key stages; in German, standards are in line with the national expectation at Key Stage 3 but above the national expectation at Key Stage 4. In media studies at Key Stage 4, standards are above average.

Set against their attainment on entry, most pupils make good progress, including pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs are also enabled to make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans by means of a well organised and managed programme of support.

Pupils for the most part listen well in lessons and respond well to instructions. Most can understand what is said and all but those who are completely new to English can express their meaning in speech with reasonable clarity. Pupils who are new to English make rapid progress in their ability to speak and to understand what is said. Pupils can generally cope with the reading materials they encounter in lessons: lower attaining pupils read simple texts with reasonable accuracy and sound understanding while higher attaining pupils read complex texts with good levels of fluency, accuracy and understanding. Writing is difficult for most pupils and some do not acquire an acceptable level until late in Year 10; but the majority can produce brief, clearly expressed texts with an acceptable level of competence and some express themselves with a better than usual level of precision because of the care with which teachers introduce and explain technical vocabulary. Some higher attaining pupils write extended texts showing an excellent command of vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

Pupils cope with number tasks with reasonable success whenever they encounter them in their work. For example, they interpret and use graphs successfully in science and there are some good applications of number in geography. There is a strong emphasis on number in the teaching of mathematics in Years 7 and 8.

Pupils' skills in the use of ICT are in line with the national expectation in Key Stage 3 and are above that level in Key Stage 4, and there are some good applications of these skills in several subjects. However, some departments have still to draw up curricular plans for the use of ICT in their subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Generally good. Pupils are generally well motivated to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. For the most part pupils listen well and pay attention in lessons and are orderly and polite in corridors. There is occasional noise in the corridors and inattention in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. There are notably good relationships between teachers and pupils. Relationships between pupils are usually very good.
Attendance	Well below average. The present rate of attendance is unacceptable.

Although the attendance rate is too low, there are some mitigating circumstances. For example, the area in which the school is situated is characterised by poor health and absence from the school for

health reasons accounts for more than two per cent of the total. Absence from the school by “transient” pupils is also disproportionately high. The attendance rate is higher than it was last year and there has been a slight rise since the beginning of the new academic year. The school is working hard to improve the pupils’ rate of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In all but two of the 187 lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better. In percentage terms, 99 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better, 18 per cent was very good or better and only one per cent was less than satisfactory. The majority of lessons were good. In well taught lessons pupils made good progress by means of a good work rate, good classroom control, well chosen tasks and, on occasion, planned extension work for those who are gifted and talented. Unsatisfactory lessons were characterised by poor classroom control or a failure to match work to the prior attainment level of groups of pupils. For the most part, lessons were pitched at an appropriate level for the pupils involved. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good overall. There is good provision for the early development of pupils’ English language skills, which enables pupils of all levels of attainment to make good progress. Good quality teaching also helps pupils to achieve a sound command of numeracy skills and good skills in ICT.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced. Notwithstanding some good features at Key Stage 4, the school fails to comply with the statutory requirement to provide all pupils with courses in modern languages and design and technology, a shortcoming noted in the last inspection report.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision in the Barrier Free area is excellent. Staff are trained to a high standard and this enables the pupils with impaired mobility to take part fully in school life. Individual education plans are of good quality and there are very good systems for tracking and reviewing pupils’ progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. These pupils are carefully identified on entry and specialist courses are provided for those who are relatively new to English. Good systems are being developed for monitoring the progress of different groups.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The introduction of religious education for all pupils has contributed to their spiritual development; pupils make particularly good progress in the understanding of their home faiths. The personal, social and health education programme contributes to pupils’ moral development and there is a good debate of moral issues in several subjects; pupils are encouraged to develop their own personal values.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. There are good systems for monitoring the academic progress and personal development of pupils. Good use is made of community facilities and health agencies. Pupils feel secure and valued.
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The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced but at Key Stage 4 the curriculum is insufficiently broad and lacks balance. Good use is made by pupils of the homework club provided in the community library after school. There is a reasonable range of extra-curricular sporting activities and other activities designed to help improve pupils' skills in areas such as language and woodwork. Several subjects run "booster classes" aimed at improving pupils' levels of attainment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and is ably supported by a team of well qualified assistant heads who are committed to the success of the school. There are good management systems in place designed to drive up standards. The school is beginning to make more sophisticated use of the large amount of data it collects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a strong commitment to the school and to improving standards of attainment and attendance. However, they have failed to ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in respect of the curriculum at Key Stage 4; and they have not ensured the provision of a school development plan in order to provide better coherence for the many school policies and set a clear strategic direction for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Data are gathered systematically and analysed and appropriate feedback is given to heads of department and other key staff. There is good monitoring of the performance of different groups of pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Educational initiatives are well supported through careful financial planning and management. The absence of a school development plan makes it difficult to link priorities clearly to the school budget.

There is a strong commitment by the senior management team, which is widely shared among the staff and governors, to keep on raising standards of pupils' attainment and to improve the quality of education being provided so that it matches more and more closely the needs of the school's many client groups. There are sufficient staff to cover the subjects taught but additional support staff are needed in some subjects and areas. The main building is well furnished and has many good features but the building is too small for the number of pupils and there are some very large classes; shortage of rooms is most seriously felt in science and design and technology. The school makes good use of the new City Learning Centre to help pupils apply ICT to their work in a range of subjects. Although most departments were able to replenish book and other resources after the fire, some still lack important resources. The school has invested in new computers for use by the various departments but some departments still have not drawn up curricular plans showing how this new equipment will be used. The school's managers apply the principles of "best value" when making purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How the school strives to realise each pupil's potential• The homework club in the library• The barrier free scheme for physically disabled pupils• The encouragement of good behaviour and the good working atmosphere• The new building is much better in many respects than the old and is well maintained• The school is approachable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The rate of attendance, especially in Key Stage 4• Some teachers are not very skilled in the use of computers• Homework diaries are not always signed by the teacher

The inspectors support the positive views of the parents. Some teachers are shortly to undertake a programme of training in the use of computers in teaching. Homework diaries are usually checked carefully by form tutors but there are some gaps in the allocation of homework and in acknowledging its completion.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils enter school in Year 7 with very low levels of attainment. A high proportion have very low levels of competence in English language and this impacts negatively on all their learning. For example, 92.7 per cent of the present Year 7 pupils had reading ages on entry which were two or more years below their chronological age; 30 per cent had reading ages four years below their chronological age. The results of this group in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were very low in comparison with national averages: some 35 per cent fewer achieved the nationally expected level 4 or better in English than did so nationally; in the case of mathematics and science, the shortfall was 29 per cent and 34 per cent respectively.
2. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the school's results were well below the national average in English and science and very low in mathematics. However, when compared with the results obtained in similar schools – those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals – the school's results were above average in English, in line with the average in mathematics and well above average in science. In 2000, the school's results were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science but in comparison with the results in similar schools they were just below average in English, in line with the average in mathematics and above average in science.
3. In 1999, 33 per cent of the school's pupils obtained five or more grades A* - C in GCSE examinations. This was below the national average but well above the average in similar schools. In 2000, 29.7 per cent of pupils obtained five or more grades A* - C in GCSE examinations, below the national average but well above the average in similar schools. In English, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* - C in 2000 was well above the average in similar schools; in mathematics it was in line with the average in similar schools; and in science it was above the average in similar schools. There is little difference in the achievements of boys and girls when set against the respective national achievements of boys and girls. The trend in the school's performance over recent years in GCSE examinations is above the national trend.
4. Inspection evidence indicates that in English pupils' standards of attainment are well below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and below average at the end of Key Stage 4; in mathematics, standards are well below the national average at the end of both key stages; in science, standards are well below average at the end of Key Stage 3 and below average at the end of Key Stage 4. In most other, non-core subjects, overall standards of attainment are below average at the end of both key stages. However, standards are in line with the national expectation in design and technology at both key stages and in ICT at Key Stage 3; standards in ICT are above average at Key Stage 4. Standards in art are above average in both key stages. In modern languages, standards in French are below average in both key stages but standards in Urdu are above the national expectation in both key stages; in German, standards are in line with the national expectation in Key Stage 3 and above that level at Key Stage 4. In physical education standards are in line with the national average in both key stages.
5. Set against their attainment levels on entry, most pupils make good progress, including those for whom English is an additional language. The school tracked the results in public tests of a cohort of 120 pupils who entered the school in 1995 and took their GCSE examinations in 2000. Of this group, which excludes pupils who entered the school after 1995 and those who left before 2000, only six per cent achieved above the national average in standardised tests in 1995 whereas 38 per cent achieved above the national average in GCSE points scores in 2000. The average points score in this group was 31.6 compared with the national average of 38. This indicates a good level of added value over the five years these pupils were at school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

6. For the most part, pupils listen well in lessons and can understand what is said. All but those who are completely new to English can express their meaning in speech with reasonable clarity. Pupils who are new to English are helped to make rapid progress in their ability to speak and to understand what is said by means of regular withdrawal for lessons in beginners' English and through the care many teachers take in explaining terms and showing how they are used. The grouping together of pupils who share the same first language also enables them to help each other to express their meaning in English. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can read at least simple texts with accuracy and understanding; higher attaining pupils read complex books with good levels of fluency, accuracy and understanding. Writing is the most difficult medium for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Many do not achieve an acceptable level of written expression until late in Year 10; but before that the majority can produce brief, clearly expressed texts with a reasonable level of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Some express themselves with a better than usual level of precision because of the care with which teachers introduce and explain technical vocabulary. Some higher attaining pupils write extended pieces showing an excellent command of vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.
7. Most pupils can cope successfully with tasks involving number work wherever they encounter them in their school work. For example, they interpret and use graphs successfully in science and make good use of ICT in geography to make graphs and diagrams. There is a strong emphasis on number in the teaching of mathematics in Years 7 and 8.
8. Pupils' skills in the use of ICT are in line with the national expectation in Key Stage 3 and are above that level in Key Stage 4, and there are some good applications of these skills in several subjects. Hitherto computers have not been readily available to pupils in many subjects and the school is now planning an infusion of new computers in most subjects to enable them to comply with Curriculum 2000. However, some departments have not yet drawn up curricular plans for the use of ICT in their subjects.
9. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress towards achieving the targets agreed on their individual education plans. The good provision made for pupils for whom English is an additional language enables them to make good progress.
10. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to school and the mobility-impaired pupils have excellent attitudes. They are very keen to be involved in all aspects of school life and participate fully. In the withdrawal groups and the learning support unit pupils work hard. Relationships are good, pupils behave well and respond well to the opportunities. Pupils who receive support in lessons also respond well.
11. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall with a number of very good features. The teaching is strongest in the withdrawal groups and where there is in-class support. Teachers have detailed and specific knowledge of the needs of individual pupils. Relationships are very good and the work is pitched at a suitable level. In English, mathematics and science very well targeted support based on the individual education plans results in good progress. Subject and support teachers ensure that mobility impaired pupils participate fully in lessons. Subject teachers are beginning to make effective use of the range of information available to them to improve the match of work to the needs of individuals.
12. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The 'Barrier Free' area provision is excellent. Staff are trained to a high standard and this enables the pupils with impaired mobility to take part fully in school life. The school has developed an efficient and effective system for producing individual education plans. The systems for tracking and reviewing progress are very good and annual reviews of statements are up to date and take place as required.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. The school has successfully maintained the high quality of pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development since the last inspection.
14. Pupils' attitudes to the school are good overall. They co-operate well with teachers and apply themselves diligently to tasks. Most pupils show high levels of concentration, interest and enthusiasm in lessons. A good example of this was seen in a Year 7 geography lesson where pupils concentrated well, using previous knowledge in their work on the development of London as a settlement. Pupils are keen to answer whole class questions, and participate fully in their lessons. Many good examples of this were seen during the inspection. For instance, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, pupils were extremely enthusiastic in their 'animatica' project to make mechanical wooden toys. Pupils show high levels of interest and involvement in the many extra-curricular activities offered by the school. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to the school and the mobility impaired pupils have excellent attitudes.
15. Behaviour is mostly good. The school is an orderly community and racially harmonious. Pupils are courteous and show respect for staff and visiting adults. The good behaviour in lessons makes a considerable contribution to pupils' progress. Pupils behave well during registration times and break-times. They behave very well in assemblies. However, a small number of pupils are noisy as they move between lessons and sometimes there is a little foolish behaviour from them. Bullying is not a significant problem. When it occurs, the school has very good procedures in place that would address the issue immediately. Pupils are confident that if they are bullied they can turn to staff for help and advice.
16. Behaviour management by staff is good. Through this, and the high quality of the personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme, pupils have a very good and clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They are fully aware of the system of rewards and sanctions, and believe them to be fair.
17. The incidence of exclusion at this school is broadly in line with national averages for schools of this type and size. There were 84 pupils excluded for fixed terms and 3 permanently in the last academic year. The level of both temporary and permanent exclusions is similar to that of the last inspection. Records show that all exclusions are for extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour.
18. The pupils are trustworthy and care for property. They show respect for school buildings and share equipment and learning resources sensibly. This represents an improvement over the last inspection where concern was expressed about pupils' care of school property. Older pupils who were on the roll when the fire occurred say that everyone now values the new buildings that bit more.
19. Personal development is very good. Most pupils develop a degree of independence in learning as they progress through the school. For example, they use reference books and information technology with increasing effectiveness to research coursework and homework tasks.
20. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, and they accept it well. Year 8 and 9 pupils respond well in helping with office and reception duties as part of their "on desk" tasks. Similarly, the 'anti-bullying council' has been successful in providing Year 10 and 11 pupils with good developmental opportunities as they undertake their peer counselling duties. These pupils have shown a high level of initiative in developing the scheme and introducing it to PHSE lessons. They recently made a presentation to the school's governing body, explaining how the scheme operates and answering relevant questions.
21. Relationships are very good at all levels and this makes a considerable contribution to learning. Many good examples of co-operation were seen during the inspection. For instance, in an information technology lesson, Year 10 pupils worked together very well in investigating and setting up a database. They developed each other's ideas to research further in groups. Pupils respect

each other's feelings, values, beliefs and contributions to lessons very much. The school has a number of mobility impaired pupils and many ethnic minorities are represented among both pupils and staff. Everyone works in a positive atmosphere of respect and harmony. A good example of this was seen in a Year 9 PHSE lesson about stereotyping in society. Pupils and staff had a very open and honest discussion on very serious issues.

22. Despite some improvements in monitoring and promoting attendance since the last inspection, the level of attendance is poor. It is well below the national average. This significantly affects the continuity of learning for many pupils. In the last academic year none of the year groups achieved over 90 per cent in attendance. Year 7 showed the best rate with an average of 88.2 per cent. The lowest occurred in Years 10 and 11, with both a little below 80 per cent. Much of the absence is attributable to health reasons and also extended holidays. Attendance was a key issue at the last inspection and inspectors wanted the school to continue their efforts to raise the level. The school has worked hard at this and continues to do all it can. However, there are a high number of pupils who are unresponsive to the school's efforts. Inspectors are encouraged to note that the attendance for 1999/2000 was a considerable improvement over the previous academic year. The school has made a positive start to the current year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The general quality of teaching is good and there is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Only two lessons out of 187 were unsatisfactory. Teaching in 99 per cent of lessons was satisfactory or better and in 18 per cent it was very good or excellent; in only one per cent was teaching unsatisfactory. Teachers know pupils well and the good relationships they establish with them contribute greatly to the good quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Lessons are well planned and structured, usually supported by good long term and medium term planning, and most form part of a coherent sequence of work. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and some show enthusiastic enjoyment of their subject and convey this to the pupils. In subjects like art and ICT, these qualities largely account for the good standards that are achieved. Teachers are skilled at pitching work at an appropriate level for the pupils concerned and at setting activities that appeal to their interests. There is an insistent emphasis on inclusion: in one excellent drama lesson, for example, the gifted and talented pupils were challenged to exhibit a level of skill which was poignantly evocative and moving; at the same time, there was excellent involvement of a physically impaired pupil in tableaux, spontaneous improvisation and planned improvisation. Teachers for the most part are aware of and sensitive to the language needs of many of the pupils; they introduce key terms with care and check on pupils' understanding of what is being said or read at regular intervals throughout the lesson. In subjects like science and design and technology, teachers work hard at improving pupils' literacy skills in the knowledge that this will be the key to their progress in the subject. The deliberate grouping in sets and classes of pupils who share the same first language enables these pupils to help each other understand what is being said in lessons and to make sense of reading materials and worksheets. In one good lesson for beginners in English, the teacher enabled pupils relatively new to English to follow the plot of *Macbeth* and to grasp something of its characterisation by skilled use of a video film and clear and supportive commentary.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall with a number of very good features. Teaching is most effective in withdrawal groups and where there is in-class support. Teachers have detailed and specific knowledge of the needs of individual pupils. In English, mathematics and science very well targeted support based on the pupils' individual education plans results in good progress. Subject teachers are beginning to make effective use of the range of information available to them to improve the match of work to the needs of individuals. The generally good quality of the teaching and of the support they receive is enabling pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. There is good use in some subjects, such as design and technology, of extension worksheets to stretch and challenge higher attaining pupils.
25. Where teaching is good or very good, the lessons are planned to provide challenging activities tailored to suit the range of attainment in the groups that make up the class. As a result, pupils

show a high level of motivation and the quality of their learning is good. This is especially the case when pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. For example, in a geography lesson for Year 7 pupils on the growth of London from Roman times, the teacher set a number of challenging tasks requiring the pupils to interpret evidence and engage in logical thinking. The pupils became engrossed in their work and the lesson was completed with a plenary session that reinforced learning points. In a top set mathematics lesson in Year 7 many pupils were enabled to use relatively advanced thinking skills and good powers of logical deduction in working out the number of home and away fixtures required in a tournament between various numbers of schools.

26. Teachers employ a good range of teaching methods and approaches: individual brainstorming, group and paired work, whole class discussion involving extended question and answer routines, demonstrations by pupils as well as by the teacher, and evaluation by pupils of what they have achieved in the lesson. In some cases, there was very good use made of ICT equipment such as the interactive board to involve pupils actively in the lesson. The quality of pupils' learning is greatly assisted in science and in design and technology by the careful assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress, enabling teachers to evaluate the impact of their teaching and to bring about improvements where this is deemed necessary. Unfortunately, there is no school-wide system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching; a system is said to have been in the course of development before the fire of 1997; it now needs to be revived.
27. In the very small proportion of lessons that were judged to be unsatisfactory there was poor classroom control or a failure to match work appropriately to groups and individuals in the class. In a few classes where teaching was only satisfactory, teachers' expectations were too low or classroom control was occasionally lax. Homework is regularly set in most subjects and effectively extends the curriculum time. However, although it is marked conscientiously, some pupils make inadequate responses to the homework that is set and work is not done or not done fully or to a satisfactory standard. Poor attendance in many classes also adversely affects the learning of a significant minority of pupils. A worryingly large proportion of pupils miss work in ordinary lessons not because of absence from school but because of other commitments. For example, the average attendance in mathematics lessons during the inspection was 76 per cent; in modern languages, the average attendance was 70 per cent in Key Stage 3 and 80 per cent in Key Stage 4. Given that the learning of too many pupils already seriously suffers through absence from school, the school needs to safeguard as far as possible the continuity of learning of those who do attend school.

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

28. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 was described in the last inspection report as broad and balanced and this is still the case. The provision for Religious Education has improved and now meets statutory requirements. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, with particularly good provision, for example, for English, geography and history and the opportunity for pupils to study French, German or Urdu. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 3 is good in the ICT lessons, but it is not yet being included in the planning for all other subjects.
29. The Key Stage 4 curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. Pupils are not expected to continue to learn a modern foreign language nor do they have to take a design and technology course. This was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and the situation has not improved. However, there are good features at Key Stage 4. All pupils take an ICT course and the range of options is good. These extend beyond National Curriculum subjects with the inclusion of drama, performing arts, child development, business studies, media studies and Urdu. In modern languages pupils also have the opportunity to take an A level in their first language if this is appropriate. The ASDAN (Youth Award) option is a good alternative provision for pupils for whom a full programme of GCSEs would not be appropriate. The school has links with a further education college to provide a building course, but does not offer any other specifically vocational courses.
30. Mathematics receives a relatively low proportion of curriculum time; additional support teaching for the higher tier papers takes place after school. Religious education (RE) and music also have a limited amount of time though this is not having a significant effect on standards. The time allocated

to physical education is satisfactory but the scope to teach gymnastics is limited because of lack of equipment in the gym.

31. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. In Key Stage 3 the main emphasis is on improving literacy skills and the work in withdrawal groups focuses strongly on this. Learning support teachers and assistants work with individual pupils and small groups, both in withdrawal groups and by supporting them in lessons. Transitional and annual reviews are effective and support pupils with statements. The special needs team is working closely and effectively with the core subjects to develop further subject teachers' skills in matching work to the individual needs of the pupils on the register. The provision for the integration of mobility-impaired pupils is excellent. It enables these pupils to take part fully in lessons and in all other school activities, including a residential visit to an activity centre in the Lake District.
32. The Excellence in Cities initiative has enabled the school to set up a number of projects to extend the curriculum. The learning support unit and learning mentors scheme have only been in place this term but the initial indications are that they are proving helpful in supporting pupils who are having difficulty in coping with the curriculum. The planning for gifted and talented pupils is underway. The newly opened City Learning Centre has the potential to add considerably to pupils' and teachers' understanding of the use of ICT as well as improving their ICT skills.
33. The school has appropriate systems in place for the identification of pupils with English as an additional language at entry through a range of verbal and non-verbal tests. In this regard, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There is good understanding of how the first language can be used to support the learning of others - for example, the EMAS team encourage pupils to use bi-lingual dictionaries. The refugee support team of the EMAS service provides very good bi-lingual support for Somali, Arabic and Vietnamese speaking pupils.
34. The provision made by the school to ensure equality of opportunity for its diverse intake is very good. The school prospectus includes the school's equal opportunity statement which reflects the school's ability to help pupils with physical difficulties, those who have difficulty in learning, pupils for whom English is an additional language and gifted children. There are very good procedures being developed to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. Pupil progress data is shared with departments to enable whole school development of the policy.
35. The school largely meets its aim to be socially inclusive through its very good range of specialist provision. This includes support from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service team for the large numbers of pupils in the school for whom English is an additional language. Provision to meet the language and social needs of beginners in English is excellent. Other pupils at the early stages of learning English are supported through a wide range of specialist teaching strategies. Very good bi-lingual teaching and pastoral support are provided for refugee children by the Refugee Team. The Learning Support department provides a very good range of support for pupils with special educational needs and also for Traveller pupils in liaison with the LEA's Travellers' Education Service. Provision for gifted children is in its developmental stages: provision includes a range of activities, including trips linked to curricular areas and additional provision in mathematics and science to stretch the most able pupils. The school monitors the take-up of curricular subjects by gender with the aim of encouraging girls to study subjects of their choice.
36. The school has very good procedures in place for monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils. This includes analysing pupils' achievements at GCSE by ethnicity, gender and language group. Although the use of information from the analysis of data is in its developmental stage, it is increasingly used to inform curriculum development and teaching strategies - for example, to raise the achievement of English boys who have been identified as one of the under-achieving groups. Although classroom teachers are provided with a range of data about pupils in their classes, analysis of the data in order to apply the findings to raise the achievement of identified groups is not yet fully developed.
37. The strong presence of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service in the school has a clear impact on the valuing of bi-lingual pupils across the school community and in raising their achievement.

This is supported by the very good procedures developed for monitoring the achievement of the diverse range of linguistic, cultural and religious groups in the school.

38. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and includes appropriate work on health and sex education and advice about drugs. Careers education and guidance are good and enable the pupils to make well-informed choices about their future education and employment. These include thorough preparation for the work experience programme which pupils undertake in Year 10 and good advice about college applications. The Education Business Partnership is strong and an annual industry day helps pupils to understand how business and industry work. The links with local primary schools are also good, which helps to ensure that there is continuity for pupils when moving from Year 6 to Year 7.
39. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities. It offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take part in cultural, sporting, social, musical and other activities, as well as different subjects providing clubs to support academic work. Concerts, plays, visitors to the school and visits to places of interest, including residential visits, are all valuable activities which extend and enhance the curriculum.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

40. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the school is very good. Although there is no formal documentation to give a focus for development and the school has not made an audit of provision, it is implicit in the ethos of the school and finds practical expression through the curriculum and through many of the extra-curricular activities. The ethos of the school is based on valuing all pupils equally regardless of religion, culture or background. The quality of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in all subjects but particularly outstanding in religious education, art, music, media studies and the performing arts. Provision for extra-curricular activity is good. The school has a wide selection of activities which include sports, music and the performing arts, homework and other study clubs. A primary objective is to make the provision for pupils inclusive and open to all. Its success is evident in the integration of pupils who are physically impaired but who move around the school and take an active part in school life alongside their peers so that all pupils benefit culturally, socially and morally. For instance, residential visits included taking a group of pupils with physical impairments and other disabilities to the outward bound centre of the Calvert Trust in the Lake District.
41. The quality of the act of worship is good. The ethos of the school is reflected in the act of worship through which the school celebrates the rich diversity of the school community. The act of worship is the responsibility of the senior pastoral team and is well planned with guidance in the school assembly policy. Each year group has a broad set of goals to explore which is often linked to the PSHE programme and to important moral and social issues. Whilst due recognition is given to the religious heritage of Christianity the school ensures that all the faith communities are celebrated in an appropriate way. Care is taken to preserve the integrity of each faith and the values and attitudes of the different religious communities. The constraints of accommodation mean that acts of worship lasting for about 45 minutes occur on a weekly basis for all pupils. Therefore provision is made for a "Thought for the Week" during registration time on other occasions. However there are few instances of it being used effectively. The pupils often take part and listen well in the act of worship. A year 10 act of worship, which was exploring the Christian festival of Advent and Christmas and the Muslim festival of Eid, began with recorded Indian music chosen by a pupil appropriate to the theme.
42. The quality of provision for the spiritual development of pupils is good. The sense of discovering one's self worth and self-identity is fundamental to the ethos of the school and is reflected in the example set by adults in the school community. The staff set standards of politeness and good manners. They often have a caring, sensitive approach. They are prepared to listen and then respond to pupils. During Ramadan a room for prayer was organised by pupils. Opportunities for the exploration of and reflection on values and beliefs occur in most subjects. In science poems which pupils have written on the sun, the ozone layer and gravity are displayed. In art in Key Stage 3

pupils discuss “self”, then write about themselves before expressing their ideas in a self portrait reflecting their likes and dislikes and their cultural heritage.

43. The quality of provision for moral education is very good. A draft behaviour policy paper reflecting many of the good practices in the school is being actively considered by the senior pastoral team. This is based on the clear principles, ethos and values of the school. There is a focus on issues of responsibility, respect, courtesy and appearance. Clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour are provided. The staff often have high expectations and are committed to encouraging honesty, fairness and justice. The PSHE programme is a particular strength in developing personal values and integrity on moral issues. With wide-ranging and well structured planning, this programme ensures that pupils explore their personal responsibilities and learn to take responsibility for their actions. In physical education pupils learn the significance of playing by the rules and respecting the referee or umpire.
44. The quality of provision for social education is very good. The ethos of the school is based on a strong sense of community, of loyalty and of shared values. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility, show initiative and develop an understanding of the concept of “community”. The pupils are encouraged to relate positively to each other and to participate with others in the context of the school community and of the wider world. They are expected to learn the value of tolerance and recognise the right of people to hold views which are different from their own. Typically an act of worship during the week explored the “I have a dream” speech of Martin Luther King and the issues it raises of race and human rights. Several subjects provide opportunities for collaborative work in groups. Similarly pupils have opportunities to use their initiative and take responsibility for their learning. Pupils in design and technology are expected to work independently developing a design brief which takes account of the needs of others, particularly those with some physical or other impairment. There are opportunities in school for pupils to exercise responsibility and to participate fully in the school community. There is an active School Council for each year group and pupils staff the school reception desk. Opportunities for social responsibility extend beyond the school which has a reputation for giving time, effort, money and support to local, national and international bodies. Each year the school raises over £500 for UNICEF as part of a non-uniform day. Last year £2,600 was raised for Francis House, a hospice for young people. The largest project is the on-going support for senior citizens, which gives the school the opportunity to build bridges between old and young in the immediate neighbourhood. Initiatives to support individual charities are encouraged. Pupils from the school take part in city-wide events and celebrations on a regular basis. Each year pupils are elected to the Manchester Young People’s Council which gives young people an introduction to citizenship and the running of the City Council. Pupils have the opportunity to meet governors and discuss issues affecting them.
45. The quality of provision for pupils to appreciate their own cultural tradition and to begin to appreciate the diversity and richness of others is excellent. The ethos of the school is based on the desire to minimise the impact of racial and religious differences. The school recognises and values the communities from which the pupils come and uses the experience of the pupils to enrich the school curriculum. There are many opportunities to appreciate their own cultures and religion and opportunities to research other cultures. An act of worship in Year 8, which brought together music and story from different cultures based on the theme of Britain’s historic cultural roots, is an instance of the breadth of provision encouraged. In all subjects support for the cultural development of pupils follows the National Curriculum guidelines, but in most provision goes beyond these requirements. In addition to the main European languages opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their language skills in their own mother tongue. Lessons in Urdu make good use of authentic drama and video resources. Visits to the theatre, to art galleries and museums in Manchester are a part of the broader curriculum available. The creative arts and media studies are particularly significant with enrichment evident in music, in dance, in drama and in art. Music draws inspiration from African, Caribbean, blues, Chinese and West European sources. There are visits to places further afield, for instance, to Liverpool for an exploration of slavery and its impact on history in the local and international context and residential visits such as the regular visits to Europe for language study.

46. The last inspection report concluded that the pupils' moral, social and cultural development was well provided for but that improvements in religious education were necessary to further enhance provision. These matters have all been attended to, creating better provision than in 1996.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school takes positive steps to ensure pupils' health and safety and the level and quality of support are very good. The educational and personal support and advice given to pupils is good. Careers advice and guidance remain a strong area since the last inspection and the school has improved the PHSE course. These provisions contribute significantly to the caring ethos of the school which continues to provide a secure learning environment for pupils.
48. The school has good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic development in the great majority of subjects taught. It has improved procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and potential on entry since the last inspection, where it was identified as a key issue. It now effectively builds upon the information it gets from its feeder primary schools, so that better provision based on individual needs can be made. Attainment, effort and "areas of concern" are effectively measured each year. Good use is made of the results of national tests and assessments to monitor the progress of individuals and pupils are given valuable support, advice and guidance in their learning. The school also makes good use of assessment information to inform curricular planning and to modify teaching. A number of teachers volunteer to act as mentors for pupils who have difficulties or who are not achieving their full potential. Pupils' achievements and any problem areas are discussed on a one-to-one basis during reviews with their tutors. These reviews are effective, with a strong element of target setting involving pupils.
49. There are good procedures overall for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Staff know pupils well and this gives pupils confidence to approach staff regarding any problems. Form tutors monitor pupils' attitudes, behaviour and basic personal and social skills through PHSE lessons and one-to-one interviews. Based on this, much advice and information is provided to guide pupils in their personal development. However, the school is not yet consistently recording information in pupils' personal records and so this restricts the ability of some tutors to monitor personal development fully. The school recognises this and the head of PHSE is currently consulting staff to develop a specific proforma for this purpose.
50. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. These pupils receive high quality classroom and withdrawal support. Consequently, they make good progress in their learning. Pastoral care for these pupils remains a particular strength of the school from the last inspection.
51. The school has successfully maintained its strong level of pastoral care for all pupils since the last inspection with good improvements in Child Protection and health and safety procedures. Arrangements for Child Protection are very good, the school following the Local Education Authority's procedures fully. There are two designated officers who are appropriately trained and effective in dealing with any issues. All staff receive training in the school's procedures and there is very good quality written guidance. Monitoring arrangements are effective and staff are vigilant regarding any issues.
52. There is a good quality health and safety policy in place. The school is in the process of updating its documentation and written guidance to staff, following review and a few minor changes. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and frequently in each faculty. However, there is insufficient heat and dust extraction equipment in the resistant materials area in design and technology. Accident and emergency procedures are effective in dealing with any problems. There is a high number of trained staff to administer first aid. The school should review the location of these staff, as accidents in one or two areas of the school may mean delay in contacting the first aider. Fire drills are carried out regularly and are appropriately recorded.
53. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The "Barrier Free" area provision is excellent. Staff are trained to a high standard and this enables the pupils with impaired

mobility to take part fully in school life. The school has developed an efficient and effective system for producing individual education plans. The systems for tracking and reviewing progress are very good and annual reviews of statements are up to date and take place as required.

54. The school works very closely with external agencies in raising awareness of health and safety matters, particularly in PHSE lessons. Guest speakers include the police and school nurse who support drugs education and sex education respectively. Other contributors include Manchester Health Promotions. Inspectors observed a number of PHSE lessons and nearly all lessons were good or better in respect of teaching and pupils' learning.
55. There are sound arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance. The school has recently introduced a computer-based monitoring system for identifying any unauthorised absence. Detailed reports are provided regularly for form tutors and senior managers. There are rigorous procedures to follow up absences including a policy of telephone calls on the first day of unauthorised absence. Consequently, problems are identified at an early stage and this enables the school to give pupils as much support as it can. There is an effective partnership with the Educational Welfare Service but recent changes within the Service have resulted in a reduction of referrals taken from this school. This is untimely, given the levels of absence. Much work is done to promote better attendance. For instance, good attendance is celebrated in assemblies. Year group 'attendance leagues' are displayed to develop a healthy spirit of competition. The school is considering developing parents' workshops to include a focus on attendance matters as well as creating another dedicated post to promote attendance.
56. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The school works very hard to maintain high standards of behaviour; this includes senior staff being 'on call' to deal with any problems. Records of incidents of bad behaviour are effective in identifying negative patterns in individuals' behaviour. Where necessary, pupils are placed 'on report' for a week or so and this is effective in monitoring and tracking progress. Much work is done in PHSE lessons and, along with other strategies this is effective in promoting tolerance and respect for others. For example, pupils recently reviewed the school rules and made sensible suggestions about the school's behaviour policy. Very good use is made of a range of rewards and sanctions. Pupils from all year groups say sanctions are effective in controlling bad behaviour and this minimises disruption in lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The great majority of parents have positive views of the school. Parents' views and the quality of relationships with parents are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Almost 20 per cent of the inspection questionnaires were returned and a few parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. The questionnaire indicates that nearly all parents are pleased with the high expectations the school has for their children. They feel that staff expect their children to work hard and achieve their best. Similarly, they are pleased with the progress their children make in school and the quality of teaching. Most parents say behaviour is good and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Inspectors also received positive views about the leadership and management of the school; extra-curricular activities; and the arrangements for homework. Evidence from the inspection shows that most of these views are firmly based.
58. A very small number of parents are dissatisfied with how closely the school works with them. A few parents were concerned about the information they receive about how their children are getting on. Inspection findings did not support either of these concerns.
59. The quality of information to parents, especially about pupils' progress is very good. Key letters and documents are translated into several ethnic minority languages. The prospectus is bright, attractive and informative about the school's policies, provisions and procedures. Pupils' achievements are positively celebrated in termly newsletters, which again are well presented. They are effective in keeping parents abreast of school' issues, dates, events and developments in particular faculties. Parents also receive a useful booklet about entry to the school and provisions in

Year 7. Year 9 pupils and their parents are given very good information to help them make subject choices for the future. The school provides helpful interim reports for parents at appropriate times in the school year regarding their children's progress. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and give clear information to parents about their children's academic and personal development. Very strong features include a pen portrait of the pupil and the involvement of pupils in target setting.

60. The school has corrected the omissions in the school prospectus and annual report to governors reported at the last inspection. Parental involvement in the work of the school is similar to that of the last inspection.
61. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Support team (EMAS) gives much time to providing translations for the benefit of a number of parents where English is a second language. They make a very good contribution to involving these parents more effectively in their children's learning. The school's links with its parents are effective and their involvement has a good impact on the work of the school. Parents make a sound contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.
62. The school is keen to consult parents on various aspects of the school's work. Working parties are occasionally constituted, a recent example being the one to consider a home-school agreement. Parents are sufficiently represented at full governing body meetings through the presence of several parent governors. A few parent helpers support school activities and lessons - for example, in the Learning Support Unit and the 'targeted access scheme' where they accompany pupils on visits to colleges and universities. Parents support fundraising well - for example, through donations for Christmas parcels for the needy. Parents generally make good use of Student Planners to monitor their children's attendance, homework and general progress. Information sessions and occasional parent workshops organised by the school - for example, about sex education - provide good additional opportunities for parents to meet staff and share views.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63. The headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction. He has been at the school since its opening in 1973 and became headteacher in 1984. He has been a force for stability and continuity throughout the school's history, not least when the school "kept going" in the immediate aftermath of the devastating fire of 1997; but he has also grasped the need for change and development and in recent years has helped to fix the staff's attention on the need to raise standards of attainment. At present there is no occupant of the post of deputy head, but the headteacher is ably assisted by a team of six assistant headteachers who are well qualified and strongly committed to the school's success. They oversee and take responsibility for many aspects of the school's life and work and carry much of the administrative burden of the school. In recent years they have been largely responsible for gathering and analysing a broad range of statistical data on pupils and their progress and for developing ways of using the data to set targets for pupils and for the school in order to raise standards. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Each year, the headteacher and one of the assistant headteachers interviews each head of department in turn, armed with information yielded by the data, in order to review the work of the department and to set new objectives for the coming year. Despite there being a number of devices designed to drive up standards and notwithstanding the fact that some departments have devised their own systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching, there is no system of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching throughout the school.
64. The governing body is of good calibre and truly representative of the wider community served by the school. It has provided the school with a good deal of support, notably in overcoming the trauma of the fire, and shares the commitment to raising standards of attainment and improving rates of attendance. It has assisted with the innovations of recent years and is familiar with the process of Performance Management, setting realistic but challenging targets for GCSE performance each year, for example. Governors have a good grasp of the school's financial situation and of its various strengths and weaknesses. However, although they have reviewed curricular provision regularly, they have failed to ensure that the school complies with the statutory requirement to provide all pupils with courses in modern languages and design and technology at Key Stage 4. They have

also failed to be involved enough in setting a clear strategic direction for the school by ensuring that the school devised a school improvement plan. Although the school has produced a wealth of papers reviewing its performance and papers outlining plans for development and improvement, it needs to bring its plans together in a single, overarching document that will ensure cohesion in development planning, indicate links to personnel and to the school budget and build in accountability, success criteria and time scales. The in-depth knowledge the governors have of the local area, its recent history and its needs makes them very well placed to help the school chart its development and progress over the next five or ten years.

65. Good communications between school and home are assisted by the attractive school prospectus, regular glossy newsletters each half-term as well as interim and end of year reports to parents on their children's attainment and progress. Reports are of good quality, indicating clearly how well pupils are doing by means of grades for effort and for standards of attainment, and setting new targets for the future. In a useful section, the school indicates what the parents of the pupil concerned can do to help the pupil improve further. The annual governors' report to parents is also a valuable document, listing developments over the course of the year, giving a range of useful information including exam results, and outlining plans for the future. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection report.
66. The school's financial position is sound, with a healthy surplus forecast to be carried forward to the next financial year. Although the average expenditure per pupil is relatively high, this is to be expected in view of the specialist work done in the school and the many different client groups – including non-ambulant pupils – it serves. The school has been successful in ensuring that it receives adequate funding for its various services and improvements from a wide range of sources, notably in relation to social inclusion, learning mentoring, school self-improvement, gifted and talented pupils, literacy and numeracy and other aspects of its provision. Most departments were able to purchase a good range of books, including sets of textbooks, and other resources in the wake of the fire but in some departments, such as geography, there are some shortages of resources. In physical education, the lack of fixed and portable gymnastic equipment prevents the department being able to implement the National Curriculum programme of study for gymnastics. Pupils have access to a range of suitable fiction – important for their progress in literacy – both in the school and in the community library. The sharing of some resources and facilities by the school and the Abraham Moss Centre has been the cause of financial tensions in the past and has also consumed much of the time and energy of the school management in relatively unproductive administration, but the situation has been eased by the recent creation of a clear policy of service level agreement. It is to be hoped that this will release managers to concentrate more on the improvement of the school.
67. There is a good match of teachers to subjects and classes and teachers are generally well qualified in the subjects they teach. There is a good programme of in-service training linked to school improvement and the school operates a good induction programme for the six newly qualified teachers on the teaching staff. Support teachers and support assistants play an important role in the teaching of pupils and contribute strongly to the progress pupils make. The range of different needs among pupils in many classes and the extremely large size of some classes make the availability of support staff all the more valuable.
68. The new school building is in many ways an improvement on the building it replaced. It has many well furnished and attractive classrooms which are well suited to the teaching and learning that go on there. Many rooms and some corridor areas are embellished with good quality art work or displays of pupils' writing and other work. Several departments contribute to pupils' language development through the display of key words and technical terms. However, the new building is not big enough for the number of pupils on roll. It is basically a building designed to cope with six forms of entry and the reality is that the school has seven forms of entry. Moreover, a substantial number of pupils join the school in the course of the school year. As a result, the school needs new laboratories and some rooms are too small for the large classes the school has to create. This can cause a safety hazard in subjects like science. In design and technology, there is a shortage of workshops and storage facilities, and the lack of dust and heat extraction in resistant materials

restricts the development of important aspects of the National Curriculum because of the risk to health and safety.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve its provision further the school should:

- Raise standards in all subjects to a level closer to national expectations (paragraphs 2, 4, 6)
- Ensure that it complies with statutory requirements by providing all pupils in Key Stage 4 with courses in modern languages and design and technology (29)
- Take even more rigorous steps to improve pupils' levels of attendance (22, 55)
- Ensure that governors comply with the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and provide a single, cohesive school improvement plan (64)
- Introduce a programme of monitoring and evaluating teaching right through the school (26)
- Work with the local authority to enlarge the building to a size whereby the school can cope comfortably with the number of pupils on roll (68)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	187
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	14	52	28	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1036
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	617
Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	384
English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	655
Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	178
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	140

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School	14
National	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	112	83	195

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30 (27)	41 (31)	35 (23)
	Girls	27 (49)	20 (24)	17 (23)
	Total	57 (76)	61 (55)	52 (46)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	29.2 (41)	31 (30)	26 (25)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	5 (7)	14 (12)	9 (8)
	National	24 (28)	38 (38)	26 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	55	30
	Girls	35	29	17
	Total	79	84	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	40	43	24
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	60 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14	31	10
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	80	68	148

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	20 (22)	75 (69)	80 (75)
	Girls	24 (28)	61 (57)	68 (62)
	Total	44 (50)	136 (126)	148 (137)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	29.7 (33)	88 (83)	100 (91)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32.8
	National	38.7 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	11
Black – African heritage	51
Black – other	40
Indian	23
Pakistani	445
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	13
White	323
Any other minority ethnic group	128

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	881

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	20.4
Key Stage 4	18.6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	20	2
Black – other	17	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	27	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	50	0
Other minority ethnic groups	14	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3280288
Total expenditure	3402852
Expenditure per pupil	3636
Balance brought forward from previous year	182159
Balance carried forward to next year	59595

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	903
Number of questionnaires returned	177

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	33	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	35	5	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	44	5	1	1
The teaching is good.	62	32	1	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	35	9	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	26	7	1	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	20	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	47	40	7	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	55	33	5	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	31	4	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	30	4	0	7

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

ENGLISH

69. Pupils' standards of attainment at entry are very low in comparison with the national average. At the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils' results are well below the national average and broadly in line with those in similar schools. Taking the four years 1996-1999 together, the performance of pupils in English is well below the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. The standards of boys and girls are broadly matched at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and over the past four years. Evidence from the inspection shows that there is an improvement in standards for the current Year 9. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils obtaining passes at grades A* - C in English and English Literature is well below the national average but is well above the national average in comparison with results in similar schools. The proportion obtaining GCSE passes in English at grades A* - G is broadly in line with the national average and with results in similar schools. Over the past four years the performance of pupils in English is well below the national average and above the average in similar schools. Evidence from the inspection shows that there is an improvement in standards for the current Year 11, reflecting the overall improvement over the past four years.
70. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are well below the expected levels for 14-year-olds. Higher attaining pupils produce accurate and consistent written work that is well presented. Extended creative writing is a strong feature as is the improvement in basic skills evidenced by all pupils. Most middle and low attaining pupils produce written work that lacks consistent accuracy and pupils with special educational needs exhibit weaknesses in technical accuracy and expression. The use of a word processor improves the presentation of work of some of these pupils. The majority of pupils read widely and there are many books available to them but the reading skills of many middle and lower attaining pupils lack fluency and expression. Most high attaining pupils read widely and conduct research using a variety of media. In a Year 10 lesson pupils studying *Macbeth* used a wide variety of research and archive material to develop their understanding of the text. All read and understand Shakespeare and are exposed to the full range of the National Curriculum for English. Speaking and listening skills are below the national expectation. High attaining pupils answer questions fully and discuss issues with awareness and authority. In a Year 11 lesson the high level, sophisticated, communication skills used by the pupils showed cogency and flair. Pupils spoke about their coursework authoritatively and knowledgeably. Listening skills were not as secure. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in work seen are below the national expectation and well below this level at the end of Key Stage 3. In general terms, pupils' progress is sound in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Writing is closely focused on GCSE criteria and is detailed and accurate in the case of a large proportion of the pupils. High attaining pupils produce sophisticated and mature written work. Extended personal responses and sensitive well argued discursive essays are good features. Most pupils successfully place literature in an historical context thereby developing their written responses. Drafting and re-drafting hones pupils' written work. Many pupils, particularly lower attainers, do not re-draft as successfully as high attaining and most middle attaining pupils. Their work, consequently, lacks development, detail and refinement. All pupils read and understand the set texts plus a wide range of non-literary material. Evidence from work seen, pupil interviews and presence at the library homework club indicates that a majority of the pupils further extend their reading. Speaking and listening skills are more assured, particularly for higher attaining pupils, who speak confidently and respond appropriately. The speech of a minority of pupils is inappropriate, lacking an awareness of situation and audience and listening skills are consequently undeveloped. A keener emphasis on drama develops the speaking and listening skills of many pupils. Empathy with character, role-playing and improvisation help to produce more assured speech and more careful listening.
71. Across the curriculum, pupils listen well in lessons and can understand what is being said. All but those who are completely new to English can express their meaning in speech with reasonable

clarity. Pupils who are new to English are helped to make rapid progress in their understanding and ability to speak the language by means of regular withdrawal for lessons in beginners' English and through the care many teachers take in explaining terms and phrases. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can read simple texts with understanding; higher attaining pupils read complex texts with good levels of fluency, accuracy and understanding. Writing is the most difficult medium for most pupils and especially for those for whom English is an additional language. Many do not achieve an acceptable level of written expression until late in Year 10; but before that the majority can produce brief, clearly expressed texts with a reasonable standard of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Some higher attaining pupils write extended pieces of writing in subjects like geography, history and religious education, showing a very good command of vocabulary, spelling and punctuation and a good ability to organise content.

72. Overall, teaching is good in both key stages and a high proportion of lessons are good and very good, particularly at Key Stage 4. The strengths of these lessons are the clear targeting which is shared with the pupils; the detailed specialist knowledge of the staff and their unbridled enthusiasm; the positive relationships with the pupils and the well planned briskly paced lessons. All of the departmental staff are extremely hard working and dedicated. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were clearly directed in their approach to examination questions and the teacher had high expectations of pupils' work and commitment. As a consequence, the pupils responded with motivation and skill. Good and very good lessons are briskly paced, well planned and innovatively relevant. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils analysed linguistically sophisticated poems in the role of detectives and extracted deep and subtle references. A Year 11 class used high-level research skills to place *Macbeth* in an historical context and their teacher probed pupils' knowledge and skills to elicit meaningful characterisations of the witches. Successful behavioural management strategies produce a businesslike atmosphere in these lessons. They are divided into manageable units and tightly timed, resulting in focused work; pupils are challenged and expected to give of their best and they do. A small proportion of lessons is less successful, particularly in Key Stage 3. In these lessons behaviour management strategies are not as strong; work is insufficiently structured to meet the needs of the pupils and the pace is less brisk. Pupils are less focused, produce less work and the quality of learning is affected. Overall, learning is good in both key stages. Pupils develop their skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Extensive work on promoting basic skills promotes the standards of all the pupils. Extended writing using sophisticated vocabulary and research is a strong feature as is the quality of personal response, particularly at Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress overall. The efficient use of specialist learning support aids learning by careful planning with the support staff.
73. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is generally broad and balanced. The development of drama at Key Stage 3 to meet curriculum 2000 requirements is underway and will aid the development of literacy skills. Extra-curricular activities are numerous and welcomed by the pupils. The best assessment is constructive, diagnostic and informs the progress of pupils. ICT is used successfully at both key stages and is significant in aiding the presentation of work by lower attaining pupils. Much of this work is over reliant on the use of computers at the pupils' homes and the department looks forward to being able to garner the use of the new technology available in the City Learning Centre. Some separate gender groups at Key Stage 4 enable a greater concentration on non-literary texts for some boys and creative writing for some girls as appropriate in order to maximise attainment. Drama skills in the department are strong and could be further utilised to add range to the teaching and learning of the pupils. The course in Media Studies enhances English and English Literature and is an enrichment in its own right. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural provision by the department is strong and pupils' attitudes to the subject and personal relationships are good. Leadership of the faculty is good. The subject has a clear direction and the head of department has zest and vigour. The Head of Department commands loyalty and enthusiasm from a dedicated team. The departmental handbook and policies need to be revised and up-dated. A structured programme of mutual teacher observation would be beneficial.
74. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The cultural richness, which is a feature of the department, has been further developed. Development planning is good and the teaching and learning of the pupils who speak English as an additional language are still a strong feature. The

department has addressed the need for clear assessment to target individual needs and has built up a large database to help target all pupils' attainment and to inform lesson planning. Attendance is still too low in some lessons.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

75. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The increasing numbers of pupils who enter school as beginners in Years 7 to 10, make very good progress. Overall, pupils make better progress in their speaking and listening skills than in their reading and writing skills across both key stages. The progress of EAL pupils is enhanced by the very good support provided by the EMAS team in a variety of ways including withdrawal courses for beginners, and in-class, group and individual support.
76. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils with English as an additional language are able to express themselves clearly and confidently in classroom discussions and for a range of purposes and audiences. The majority are able to convey their meanings in simple, grammatically correct sentences. Pupils' ability to express complex ideas is limited by the lack of a wide vocabulary and grasp of complex sentence structures.
77. By the end of Key Stage 4, although the majority of pupils for whom English is an additional language, are able to access the curriculum, some continue to find recording their written work difficult. Many pupils continue to need and receive help with, for example, GCSE course work assignments and with completing their class work. They demonstrate a sound grasp of subject specific vocabulary and contribute appropriately to classroom discussions.
78. The strong presence in the school of the well led and managed Ethnic Minority Achievement Service has a clear impact on the valuing of bi-lingual pupils across the school community and in raising their achievement. This is assisted by the very good procedures for monitoring the achievement of the diverse range of linguistic, cultural and religious groups in the school.

MATHEMATICS

79. On entry to the school, the general standards of pupils are very low. The attainment of the majority of pupils towards the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is well below the national average. However, the percentages of pupils achieving the higher levels 5 and 6 in recent years in the end of key stage tests have been rising. In 2000 about one third of the pupils achieved level 5 or above and this is about average when compared to similar schools. Additionally, approaching one sixth of the pupils achieved level 6 or above in these tests during the same year and this is above the average for similar schools. GCSE results in mathematics have also been rising. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C in 2000 was 20 per cent. Whilst this is well below the national average for all schools it is broadly in line with similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A* - G was 93 per cent and this compares favourably with the results for all schools. Attainment has improved since the last inspection when only about three-quarters of the GCSE entry in mathematics secured a GCSE grade. When set against standards attained by pupils on entry, the achievement of the majority of pupils at the end of both key stages is now satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at either of the key stages.
80. In lessons and work seen at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 the standards of work of the majority of pupils were well below that normally expected. Many of the top sets in mathematics are working at the expected level and in a few cases at higher levels. Pupils in the top set in Year 7, for example, were undertaking an investigation involving the number of matches that were required in a tournament between various numbers of schools. Many of the pupils used relatively advanced thinking and skills in order to deduce the total number of home and away fixtures that were required. Many were also able to deduce the algebraic expression for the general case. On the

other hand pupils in a Year 11 class were undertaking examination questions in preparation for the mock examination at the foundation level of the GCSE. Although some of the pupils made satisfactory progress in solving the problems, others showed limited understanding of some of the basic concepts. Several had very restricted numerical skills.

81. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, frequently good and occasionally very good; the overall quality is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and most classes contain a good range of activities. In a few classes, however, pupils are allowed to work for too long on one type of activity with the result that some lose interest and fail to make further progress. During work with the whole class teachers give clear explanations and pupils are frequently questioned to check their level of understanding and to reinforce their learning. In a good Year 9 class, for example, pupils were introduced to a problem solving exercise involving the determination of the dimensions of an open box which would lead to the box having a maximum volume. Good, clear explanations were given to the class by the teacher in a supportive and encouraging way. The pupils were then expected to work in small groups to discuss how they might initially tackle the problem. Pupils worked well together and supported each other. Most were responding well to the greater level of responsibility that the extended piece of work required of them. In several lessons teachers make good use of the pupils to support teaching and learning. For example, individual pupils are frequently required to explain solutions to the rest of the class using the white board. Many examples are presented to pupils in context using everyday examples. Extensive use is made in many lessons of good quality handouts to support aspects of the work. Good relationships are developed between the pupils and with the teacher. Pupils are effectively managed and with a few minor exceptions behaviour and standards of discipline are good. Teachers set homework on a regular basis. This is marked accurately, together with appropriate comments and returned to the pupils. Good records of pupils' progress are kept by the teachers. However some pupils in most classes make inadequate responses to the homework that is set. Poor attendance at classes also adversely affects learning for a significant minority of pupils. The overall attendance rate for the mathematics classes visited during the inspection was only 76 per cent. In a few classes teachers have low expectations of the pupils and the pace set is insufficiently challenging. Teaching has improved since the last inspection when there was some unsatisfactory teaching, particularly to mixed ability classes in Year 7.
82. Much of the mathematics curriculum is appropriate and provides continuity and progression for the pupils. In the lower school there is a particular focus on the development of the numeracy skills of the pupils. This work together with that undertaken in primary schools has led to an improvement in most pupils' confidence in handling number. There was no evidence during the inspection of pupils' progress in any subject being impeded by poor numeracy skills. Specific provision is beginning to be made for gifted and talented pupils. In particular the top set in Year 7 are now undertaking tasks which are designed to develop higher level skills. Additional resources have been made available to support the work. Currently schemes of work for mathematics do not indicate how information and communications technology will be used to support teaching and learning. Planned purchases of computers will allow the department to rectify this and to make appropriate use of computers as part of mathematics lessons. During Key Stage 4 there is a reduction in the time available for mathematics lessons. Pupils during this key stage are time-tabled for three periods of mathematics each week and this equates to 10 per cent of the overall curriculum time available. This is below the time allocated for the subject in most schools. Pupils preparing for the higher level GCSE paper undertake additional work after school.
83. The department is effectively led and managed. Differentiated and detailed schemes of work have been developed and agreed. The staff are now working well as a team and have a shared aim of improving standards of mathematics and numeracy in the school. Examination and test results are reviewed on an annual basis with the senior management team. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been undertaken in conjunction with an officer of the local education authority. Some staff development has been undertaken including that relating to numeracy. Liaison with local primary schools is also undertaken. Teachers in the department are well qualified and during the current session there is a more stable team of teachers. Illnesses and frequent staff changes during the previous session had adversely affected pupils' progress and attainment. Accommodation provided for the teaching of mathematics is of good quality. Rooms are well decorated and furnished. Good

use is made of pupils' work as display materials in these rooms. Learning resources including text books are adequate to support the work of the department. Planned purchases will provide the required access to computer resources.

SCIENCE

84. On entry, pupils' results in science are well below national standards of attainment. By the age of fourteen, intensive work in language skills as well as in science results in improved attainment. In May 2000, 28 per cent of pupils gained level 5 or above. While this is below the national average, it is well above the average achieved by similar schools and represents a considerable 'value-added' score. The Key Stage 3 results have been at this level for the last three years, and there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls, or of groups from different cultural backgrounds. While the achievement of pupils is sound in both key stages, it is more evident in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3; progress in Key Stage 4, however, is dependent on the sound groundwork done in Key Stage 3, particularly in helping pupils to understand key terms and concepts in science.
85. During Key Stage 4, everyone is prepared for the Double Award examination in science. In many cases, literacy skills have leaped forward during these two years, and by the time of the GCSE examinations, pupils are demonstrating sound scientific knowledge and understanding, correct technical vocabulary, and can write accurate and coherent descriptions of what they have done. Although the department's score of 25 per cent grades A* - C is well below the national level in science, it is again above the performance of similar schools. In June 2000, 96 per cent of the pupils gained a grade in the A* - G range – close to the national average for all schools and a major achievement for pupils who began with modest levels of attainment. It is also an improvement upon the results reported at the last inspection. GCSE examinations still present language difficulties to some pupils; this and poor attendance in Year 11 and the admission of some pupils during Years 10 and 11, who then attend irregularly if at all, are all factors which depress the school's results. At GCSE, boys and girls achieve roughly the same levels, and pupils for whom English is an additional language often out-perform white pupils who have English as their mother tongue.
86. In Key Stage 3 lessons, pupils' attainment invariably matches the teachers' expectations, and sometimes exceeds it, as, for instance, in a Year 9 class when pupils became fascinated by the logic of chemical equations. Suddenly, in two lessons, they found that they had mastered the technique and were performing at a much higher level than anticipated. During Key Stage 3, much of the progress made is in literacy skills and the use of scientific language, but the time spent on establishing a firm foundation here pays dividends in Key Stage 4. During Years 10 and 11, pupils generally progress faster as their confidence in the use of English grows. A Year 11 class, investigating what makes chemical reactions work faster, was discussing 'collision theory' confidently and correctly at a level well above normal expectations. In all years, pupils' notebooks are usually neatly written, with clear diagrams and a logical record of experimental results. Pride in good presentation is a common characteristic.
87. Pupils with special educational needs match the standards of their classmates orally, and in practical work. When they have additional support, this is usually true of their written work as well. However, additional support is not available in all lessons and without it, their written record is often incomplete and of a poor standard. With such a high proportion of special needs pupils in classes (especially in KS3) there is a clear need for an increased level of support to enable them to reach their full potential.
88. Various strands of assessed practical work were seen, and it is clear that from simple beginnings in Year 7, pupils are carefully guided in the procedures and records that are needed, and by Year 10 they can undertake complete investigations with confidence. The standard of the sample of scripts seen that are intended for GCSE submission was high and reflected the hard work put into the earlier stages. Most pupils are interested, well motivated and arrive expecting to enjoy their

science lessons. They particularly enjoy practical work and their experiments are done confidently and competently.

89. The standard of teaching is very high. Sixty five per cent of lessons were judged to be good or very good and the remaining thirty five per cent were all satisfactory. Teachers' enthusiasm, commitment and interest in the subject motivate pupils and raise attainment. Staff know the pupils well and this enables appropriate tasks to be set and different strategies used. A clear strength is the quality of relationships that exist between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves. The result is that class control can be achieved with a 'light touch' and information passes easily in both directions, improving learning and raising standards. Lessons contain plenty of challenges, of language as well as of science, and move at an appropriate pace. There is a wealth of experience and expertise which is shared freely between staff. Good humour and considerable patience are two other attributes which teachers all share, and which make learning more enjoyable for pupils, especially in the early stages when there are so many language problems to be overcome. On the whole, pupils listen well to teachers, follow instructions and take part fully in activities. Although no ICT work was seen during the week, staff are anticipating the arrival of more computer equipment so that pupils will be able to use the technology themselves instead of watching demonstrations. Two other factors underpin the good teaching. First is the high quality of the support staff and the contribution that they make to pupils' understanding and to allowing those in their care to match the performance of the rest. Second is the excellent support from the two technicians who supply and remove apparatus unobtrusively and are ready to supply whatever is needed during lessons. Good teaching is backed up by a comprehensive system of assessment and monitoring of results. It is independent of the main school system and enables pupils' progress and the impact of teaching to be monitored quickly and easily, and has been developed considerably since the last inspection. In general terms, the department has made good progress since the last inspection.
90. Science is taught in six new laboratories which are admirably cheerful and decorated with pupils' work and reference material. However, the labs are insufficient in both number and size at present, and the situation worsens term by term. There is a clear and urgent need for additional laboratories so that group sizes can be reduced, pupils given more room to experiment safely, and teachers have a clear view of everyone in the class. Regardless of conditions, pupils are taught by a team that is dedicated to their welfare and to enabling each individual to achieve the best possible results. The team has established a secure, encouraging and cheerful environment in which to work.

ART AND DESIGN

91. Standards in art and design are above average. At Key Stage 3 pupils achieve well and many achieve above expectation. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 is at least satisfactory and standards attained at GCSE are above the national average.
92. In 2000 the percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* - C was above that in similar schools and also above the national average for grades A* - G. At GCSE pupils generally achieve better in art than in the other subjects they take. The pattern of results over recent years has been consistently high.
93. Standards in lessons observed during the inspection in Key Stage 3 are above expectations for 14 year-olds. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the expectation for pupils aged 16. Teaching in the subject is good at Key Stage Three and enables pupils to develop good skills in a range of media and techniques. Pupils' skills in painting and other colour media are enhanced by carefully focused tasks in every project and teachers ensure that these basic skills are taught in a structured way. For example, the Year 7 project on 'Self Image' provides excellent opportunities for demanding work in a range of media, effectively taught through different methods to ensure all pupils make good progress. As a result of the recently revised curriculum, pupils experience and develop knowledge and skills in 3D media, textiles and printmaking and teachers' command of their subject encourages the interest and enthusiasm most pupils demonstrate in lessons. All projects successfully integrate the need to develop practical skills with opportunities to develop ideas and

study art from different times and cultures. Subsequently pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultural backgrounds are often reflected in their work. To support learning, challenge and inform pupils teachers provide many good quality and effective resources. Opportunities to experiment and explore the properties of materials and techniques, however, are less frequent than expected in Year 9. As a result the development of independent learning, exploration of personal ideas and research skills are less well developed. This will hinder the potential for a smooth transition for pupils opting into Key Stage 4.

94. In Key Stage 4 lessons seen during the inspection standards were in-line with expectation. At this level most teaching is satisfactory, some is good and none is unsatisfactory; teachers demonstrate the skills and enthusiasm seen in the previous key stage. They are committed, hard working and keen to promote high standards. However, their efforts are less effective in promoting the consistently high levels of achievement seen in Key Stage 3. Teaching provides structured opportunities for pupils to further develop the skills gained earlier, and many pupils achieve well. For example, pupils are encouraged to use a good range of materials, techniques and approaches including mixed media, graphic techniques, textiles, ceramics and 3D work. Working from observation, however, is less evident than in Key Stage 3 and teaching seldom promotes the exploration and analysis of directly observed objects and situations. Analysis and recording therefore are seldom pursued beyond an initial drawing and as a result, the development of ideas lacks evidence of independent exploration and experimentation. In Year 11 pupils enjoy a good deal of independence in the choice of the 'theme' they study. Teaching provides a supportive 'framework' within which pupils develop their thematic study. For example every project will have broad guidance contained in a course booklet that helps pupils structure their work. This is very effective in supporting the majority of pupils and along with the teachers' frequent intervention, feedback and encouragement, many pupils of lower ability and those with special educational needs will achieve beyond expected standards. Pupils of higher ability, however, are not sufficiently challenged or extended by developments from photographs, books or other secondary sources. At both key stages teaching does not sufficiently integrate assessment of pupils' work with the practical process of learning. Pupils are therefore unclear about how their work is judged and the connections between different projects and areas of study they undertake.
95. Teaching in art and design is at least satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. Teachers plan their lessons and longer term projects well, ensuring that tasks are appropriate for the range of abilities in the mixed-ability classes. The most effective teaching ensures that tasks challenge all pupils and teaching style and method promote effective learning for the most able as well as those who find the subject difficult. The majority of good or very good teaching is in Key Stage 3 where teachers have successfully introduced more challenging work through structured tasks.
96. The subject is very well managed and the head of department provides a clear direction for the subject and care and support for both staff and pupils. There is much evidence in all studios and around the school of the hard work and commitment of teachers under the leadership of the head of department. For example, the carefully mounted displays of pupils' work and impressive learning resources developed by teachers are testament to their efforts. Planning for coverage and teaching of the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and documentation to support teachers is clear. However the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is not currently planned in Key Stage 3 and the provision of computers for use in the studios is poor. In this respect, the curriculum fails to meet statutory requirements for the inclusion of ICT.
97. In all other respects there has been good progress since the last inspection and the continued success of the subject provides an excellent basis for further development and improvement. Time should be taken to monitor the effectiveness of recent changes and the refinement of current practice resulting from issues raised in this report.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. Over the past three years the proportion of pupils achieving an A* - C grade at GCSE has been close to the national average for similar schools. This year the proportion achieving an A* - C grade dropped to just below the national average. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by boys or girls. Pupils attain better in design and technology than they do in their other subjects at GCSE. The overall results show a steadily rising trend in the standards achieved in the subject and overall standards are in line with the national expectation at the end of both key stages.
99. By the end of Year 9 a very small majority of the pupils attain broadly in line with the national average in all design and technology subjects. From very early in Year 7 most pupils develop a good understanding of how to design a product. Middle to higher attainers use technical language fluently to explain their design ideas although lower attainers remain hesitant and unsure of the correct terminology. In the Year 7 'Animatica' project, pupils show good and developing skills in using tools and equipment to make their products in both resistant materials and textiles. In the Year 8 desk-tidy project, pupils produce good sketches to communicate their design ideas. The work of the higher attainers is very well structured with a good standard of annotation to describe their ideas. In Year 9 food technology, pupils have made good progress in their competences in designing and making. The work relates well to industrial practice and pupils show good skills in evaluating commercial products in a range of disassembly work. Computer aided designing techniques and the use of computer aided manufacturing equipment to produce design outcomes are underdeveloped. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show good interest in their work and make good progress for their capabilities, especially when supported by specialist staff.
100. At Key Stage 4, not all pupils follow a course in design and technology, which makes national comparisons less meaningful. What is clear, however, is that from a well below average attainment on entry into the school a very small majority of those taking the subject at GCSE attain in line with the national average by the end of Year 11. A very small minority attain above the national average expectation. The literacy and graphical communication skills seen in pupils' coursework are variable but satisfactory overall and good for a significant proportion of middle to higher attainers. The design process is well embedded in their work and pupils are able to explain their ideas confidently and competently, with most of the higher attainers using the correct terminology fluently. In Year 11 graphics products, most pupils show good levels of creativity and imagination in their design outcomes. Skills in using the computer to support learning are good in food technology and child development where pupils access the Internet in the new City Learning Centre (CLC) to research topics. In food technology, pupils are successfully developing a good understanding of the nutritive, sensory and physical properties of food. Pupils' work shows appropriate attention to product analysis which also relates well to industrial practices. Pupils' knowledge and experience in using computer-aided design and manufacture equipment are underdeveloped.
101. Teaching was good overall and there was a proportion of very good teaching. The teaching is successful in ensuring a rising trend in standards. Teachers are using a growing range of exemplar material to guide and support pupils in their design work and pupils' work on display is of a good standard. The design worksheets used provide clear guidelines for design work, with extension sheets to effectively challenge and extend the higher attainers. The development of literacy skills, particularly the technical language of the subject, is well supported by good strategies such as keywords on display, frameworks for evaluating work and periodical spelling tests. The quality of teaching ensures that most pupils are well motivated and clearly aware of what they need to do in their projects. In most lessons good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. The great majority of pupils respond well to the teaching styles adopted and show good interest levels in their work. Lapses in pupils' concentration are dealt with effectively and pupils are kept on task for the great majority of the time. Good assessment and monitoring procedures enable teachers to monitor and effectively support pupils' progress towards their predicted attainment targets and beyond. The latest strategy adopted in all areas is an additional colour coded assessment system, which informs pupils of how well they are progressing and is an early warning of what needs to be improved. It keeps pupils well-motivated and focused on improving standards and is becoming increasingly effective in all design areas. Homework is

regularly set and effectively extends the curriculum time. In some classes unusually large group sizes for a practical subject reduces the amount of individual support and attention teachers are able to provide for pupils. This affects standards and raises some concern about safety when large numbers are present. The design and technology technicians provide an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning in all areas.

102. Very good leadership provides a clear educational direction for the design and technology department. It has efficiently and effectively managed the many changes involved in amalgamating two separate areas and now enjoys a strong sense of corporate identity. Design staff plan and work as a team ensuring that a consistent approach to designing and making is adopted in all design areas. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress in the subject is strong, with all teachers very much committed towards raising standards. The very effective management and predominantly good teaching have facilitated an improvement in the standards since the last inspection; the requirements of the new orders for design and technology have been fully adopted.
103. The school remains in breach of the statutory National Curriculum requirements for design and technology at Key Stage 4. These require all pupils to follow a course in design and technology at Key Stage 4. There is a shortage of workshops and some shortcomings in the provision of storage facilities and the lack of dust and heat extraction in resistant materials severely restricts the development of some important aspects of the National Curriculum because of health and safety issues. Resources have been significantly improved, especially in the provision of specialist control equipment, but computer aided design and manufacturing remains underdeveloped.

GEOGRAPHY

104. In the year 2000, teachers assessed the attainment of pupils at age 14 as being well below average. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the level of A* - C passes was well below the national average and the level of A* - G passes was just below the national average. Average points scores were also well below the average nationally. Pupils' grades in geography were below those for most other subjects in the school. There were no significant differences in grades between boys and girls. Results in 2000 showed an improvement over 1998 and 1999 results. Entries for GCSE are small compared with national figures. A small number of pupils take a Certificate of Achievement course.
105. In general, pupils' attainment is low when they come to the school. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average, rather than low, at age 14 and at age 16. This difference is due mainly to changes in the scheme of work that, in turn, have had an effect on teaching methods. The good literacy strategies developed by the school have also had a positive impact on standards, resulting in sound levels of achievement by pupils in both key stages. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress and attain satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment. Progress is good when they receive additional support in lessons. Pupils who are mobility impaired are fully integrated into lessons and attain standards in line with their peers. Attainment, overall, is rising over time, but a significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly and do not achieve appropriate standards.
106. By age 14, those pupils who attend school regularly have acquired a working geographical vocabulary and higher attaining pupils can explain geographical patterns that occur throughout the world. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, are able to explain the links between climate, formation of tropical rainforests, the types of human activity in the forests and the environmental effects of that activity. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 can explain the reasons for migrations of population in parts of the world, and particularly the population movements from southern to northern Italy. In general, pupils do not sufficiently develop the skills of analysis, interpretation and exploration. This is recognised by the school and changes have been made to the schemes of work and teaching methods to accommodate these features. This is a strong contributory factor to the improvement in attainment.

107. By age 16, the skills learnt in previous years have been developed rather more in preparation for GCSE. In particular, many pupils improve their independent learning skills. This is seen, for instance, in work done by higher attaining pupils as follow up writing to their field studies, and in good extended written work on the advantages and disadvantages of the Aswan Dam scheme. Pupils routinely use graphs and tables to present information and interpret data, and the subject makes a satisfactory contribution to numeracy in the school. Pupils also make good use of ICT to edit and refine their work and to create graphs and diagrams of various types. The use of ICT is restricted by the fact that three computers have been available to the subject for some months, but have not yet been installed. Geography also makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development. Pupils' work is regularly marked and corrected and displays of key vocabulary are provided in most lessons.
108. The quality of teaching, and the learning it promotes, is satisfactory overall for those pupils who attend regularly. Teaching is satisfactory in half of the lessons and good or very good in just under half. There is a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching. Where teaching is unsatisfactory it is because the teacher does not have strong enough strategies for class control when pupils are restless and inattentive. As a result the pace of the lesson is slow because pupils are being corrected constantly so time is wasted leading to limited learning and progress. In the majority of lessons, teachers have good class control that is achieved with quiet authority and without fuss. Where pupils are supported in class there is a high level of joint planning and teamwork between the teacher and the support staff which leads to good learning and progress. Where teaching is good and very good, the lessons are carefully planned to provide challenging activities tailored to suit the range of abilities found in most classes and to provide extension work for pupils who finish quickly. Teachers provide interest for pupils by setting work that makes them think for themselves and examine evidence. As a result they show a high level of motivation and interest and learning is very good. This was clearly illustrated in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were studying the growth of London from Roman times. The teacher gave clear instructions for the work to be done and planned a range of challenging tasks that engaged pupils' interest and involved interpretation of evidence and logical thinking. As a result the pupils became quite engrossed in the lesson which was completed with a good plenary session to further reinforce learning. Regular homework is set. Those pupils who attend school regularly show good attitudes to work, take care over presentation of work and try hard with spelling and punctuation. Behaviour in class is good in most lessons.
109. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In many lessons pupils have opportunities to reflect on their environment and to appreciate the wonders of nature and of the world. This is clear, for example, in work done on earthquakes and volcanoes. A moral dimension is found in lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong. The teachers provide good role models. Pupils are also taught respect for the views of others and care and consideration for one another. There are good opportunities for social development through working together in pairs and groups and when pupils are out of school on field courses. The in-built cultural element about people from other countries provides good cultural development. The department handbook provides good information about the subject and about departmental and school policies. The scheme of work has been extensively revised and provides a progressive and appropriate course that is designed to raise attainment. This is already having a positive effect on standards. There are good procedures in place for assessment and good use is made of the data provided to track pupils' attainment and progress, to look for differences between the different groups of pupils and to set targets for development. Pupils' work is assessed at National Curriculum levels so they know what level they are at and what to do to improve. At present, there is no regular, systematic monitoring of teaching by the school in order to share best practice and improve teaching and learning. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although modern, clean and well maintained, classrooms are too small for the many large classes that are common in the school. Since the recent fire, resources have been replaced but are still unsatisfactory. Stocks of appropriate textbooks are now being steadily increased, but other resources, such as maps, photographs and worksheets, are still in short supply. The head of department has shown good leadership in identifying those areas for development which are needed to further improve standards and in setting in place procedures to do so. The staff has shown a high level of commitment in developing resources since the fire and in modifying teaching methods to improve pupils' learning.

110. Taking into account the progress made since the disruption caused by the fire, the steady rise in standards for those pupils who regularly attend, and the good leadership provided, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

HISTORY

111. Standards in history are well below average when the pupils join the school in Year 7. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 though still well below average overall, the standards have improved and pupils are making steady progress. The standard of oral work is close to what is expected of pupils of this age, but the written work, particularly the extended writing, is well below average. The GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are also well below average but have improved in recent years. As with the younger pupils, the main reason for the level of attainment is the difficulty pupils have in writing in enough depth and detail. At GCSE this is particularly evident in essay writing. Pupils make sound progress in both key stages, assisted by the progress they make in understanding, speaking and writing English.

112. The observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that standards are rising in both key stages. A Year 7 lesson showed that pupils were able to select relevant information about the people who have invaded or settled in Britain and to explain the legacy of groups such as the Vikings or the Anglo-Saxons. In Year 8, in a lesson on the Crusades, pupils recognised at a fairly simple level that Muslims and Christians could have had different points of view about the same events. In Year 9, pupils in their oral work showed a reasonable understanding of both the different interpretations of the evidence about 19th century working conditions in factories and coal mines and why there could be more than one interpretation. In their GCSE work on the weakness of the Weimar Republic and the Rise of Hitler, pupils could identify important factors and were making good connections between them. For example, they understood why attitudes towards the Treaty of Versailles helped to stimulate German nationalism.

113. The teaching is good overall. Teachers share a common format for planning based on a good scheme of work. The explanations at the start of lessons are clear and make good links with the previous work. This gives the pupils a clear understanding of what they will be doing in the lesson though not always of what they will be expected to achieve. In some lessons the aims are made more explicit by being written up on the board. Support teachers and assistants are well-briefed about the lessons and this helps to ensure that pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language are fully involved and make at least as good progress as other pupils. The joint planning with the language support teacher has been of particular benefit to pupils.

114. The classes are well organised and managed. Pupils respond to the approach and are generally willing to work well. The good teaching is promoting good learning as pupils develop more understanding of ideas and concepts. However some of the GCSE students are reluctant to think for themselves, though with encouragement they will do so. This was very evident in a Year 11 lesson when after a slow start 17 out of the 19 pupils made a contribution to the discussion. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the pace of work was not as brisk and the work was not as well matched to the range of ability in the class.

115. The staff are working hard to support the development of literacy skills in history. Reading aloud is a regular feature of lessons and pupils are confident and keen to do this, even when not the most accurate of readers. The use of writing frames is helping to improve the quality of written work, giving the pupils more guidance on the exact requirements for a piece of written work. Teachers are encouraging pupils to use the specialist subject vocabulary from Year 7 onwards so that they become familiar with historical terminology. Homework supports the work done in class and pupils' work is regularly and helpfully marked.

116. Teachers are flexible in their approach. For example, in a Year 11 lesson when it became clear that a number of pupils were finding the work more difficult than anticipated the teacher was able to adapt the plan to take account of this. Lesson planning has also been modified to take account of feedback from the GCSE examiners. Sensitive and controversial issues such as the Arab-Israeli

conflict and the Holocaust are dealt with very well and the multi-ethnic nature of the school is used to great advantage in helping pupils to understand different beliefs and opinions.

117. The department is very well led. The action plan is realistic and is focused on raising achievement. The curriculum is being sensibly revised to take account of the changes to the National Curriculum and the new schemes of work include interesting plans for the use of ICT. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The range of resources is good and the work and other information on display shows what pupils are capable of achieving and provide a valuable source of information and stimulus.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

118. Over the past three years the proportion of pupils achieving an A* - C grade in GCSE information systems has been significantly above the national average; the proportion achieving A* - G grades has been broadly similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining an A* - C grade in ICT has been significantly below the national average during this period with the A* - G grades being well below the average. Boys and girls achieve broadly similar results in the subject. In information systems, pupils achieve at a higher level than they do in their other subjects at GCSE but in ICT they achieve below that level. In overall terms, pupils make good progress in both key stages and their standards of attainment are in line with the national expectation; by the end of Key Stage 3 and above that level by the end of Key Stage 4.
119. In timetabled ICT lessons a very small majority of the pupils attain inline with the national average in all strands of the subject by the end of Year 9. There are very clear strengths in pupils' attainment in the strand of communicating information through word-processed texts, which more often than not incorporate images that are imported from a variety of electronic sources apart from the Internet. When using word processing or desktop publishing software pupils show good skills in manipulating text and images and show a good level of spatial awareness in setting up the presentation of a published page. In the timetabled lessons all pupils are taught to use a spreadsheet to set up, for example, a shopping bill or to model costs associated with the relocation of a factory, but there is little evidence of these skills being used and built upon in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are satisfactory but relatively underdeveloped in terms of using the computer and peripheral equipment to perform meaningful tasks in the strands of measurement and control work. Apart from the lower attainers, most pupils show good keyboarding skills and use the mouse well to select and manipulate menus and functions. Higher attainers speak confidently about their work, using the technical vocabulary of the subject well. Lower attainers find the concepts difficult to grasp and do not readily use appropriate technical terms. Pupils with special educational needs show considerable interest in their work and make good progress.
120. By the end of Year 11, the great majority of the pupils attain at least in line with the national average in the full GCSE information systems, with a significant proportion attaining above the average. A small minority attain below the average. Attainment in the information systems course is well below the national average for the great majority. The standards seen in timetabled ICT lessons and in pupils' coursework are above the national average. There is good evidence of word processing, desktop publishing and information handling in pupils course-work in several subjects across the curriculum. There is, however, little evidence of the use of spreadsheets or work in specialised areas such as computer aided design or manufacturing work. Whilst pupils are provided with opportunities in some subjects to use ICT to research and present their work, it is not fully integrated into the schemes of work of all subjects. There are several subjects which have yet to identify how they intend for the new orders for ICT to be used in their subjects, and the provision is variable within subjects, depending on staff interest, expertise and confidence.
121. In the information and communications technology lessons observed during the inspection teaching was predominantly good in both key stages. Teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and effectively stimulate pupils' interest. They provide challenging and interesting tasks that are generally well matched to pupils' interests and the problems posed build effectively on pupils' prior

knowledge and skills. Teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance, working with pupils at their computers. The system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress is effective in the discrete lessons. Assessment of ICT work across the curriculum is less secure. The teaching styles and strategies adopted impact very positively on pupils' learning. As a result, most pupils show good interest levels, sustain their concentration spans for appropriate lengths of time and make good progress in developing their ICT skills. The worksheets, produced within the ICT department, successfully identify learning objectives but not all written instructions are sufficiently modified to suit the needs of pupils of all levels of ability. Good technical support ensures that equipment works effectively in lessons and any network problems are quickly sorted to ensure the continuity of learning for pupils.

122. The acting head of ICT leads and manages the subject effectively, ensuring that the discrete ICT provision fully reflects the requirement of the National Curriculum at both key stages. Standards have improved since the last inspection, although the use of ICT across the curriculum remains underdeveloped in some subjects. A considerable investment has been made in improving resources, and this is currently having a very positive effect on standards and access for pupils. Access to Internet facilities to support learning is not currently provided and affects standards in handling information. During the inspection very good use was made of the new, high quality multimedia provision in the City Learning Centre enabling pupils in design and technology, media studies, religious education and science to benefit greatly from this shared facility. The computer suites are very busy at times outside lessons, reflecting a growing interest, confidence and competence amongst pupils in the use of ICT to support their learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

123. The overwhelming majority of the work undertaken is in Key Stage 3, because the school has not yet implemented the National Curriculum order to offer a foreign language course to most pupils in Key Stage 4. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 do not distinguish between French, German or Urdu, of which pupils choose one after a short taster course in Year 7. The assessments show that overall both boys and girls are below the national averages. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment is, however, much less than that found nationally.
124. GCSE results are from self-selecting groups and cannot therefore be reliably compared with national averages; also because they are from relatively small groups they fluctuate considerably in percentage terms. Results at grades A* - C in French were at 33 per cent in 1998, 25 per cent in 1999 and 50 per cent in 2000. In 1998 boys did better than girls, against the national trend. All pupils obtain at least a grade G and most do better than that provided that they meet the requirements of their modular GCSE course, in which attainment is recorded over two years. In overall terms, pupils' attainment is below average in both key stages in French and above the national expectation in both key stages in Urdu; in German, standards are in line with the average in Key Stage 3 and above that level in Key Stage 4.
125. Attainment in French is not as good overall as in the other languages because in each year at Key Stage 3 the school provides a support group for pupils with particular special needs, which means that the results of the cohort taking French cannot be compared on a like for like basis with the other language groups. Also, for a variety of reasons a number of pupils interrupt their course or start it late, which impairs their learning. This cannot be entirely made good by reference to hand written or printed texts. The strength of the learning is listening and speaking. Pupils listen and respond well. A few have authentic French capability from an African background, which contributes to the learning of others. Reading is also at least satisfactory, because teachers have taken the trouble of providing a wide range of reading material, including texts suitable for identified gifted and talented pupils who read above the level appropriate to their chronological age. Writing is a weakness. Many pupils have difficulties with basic literacy which affect their learning adversely - for example, by causing problems in the recording of vocabulary. It is only a partial remedy to offer them word processed lists which may or may not engage their attention. However, pupils make

good progress, including those with special educational needs, especially in listening and speaking.

126. GCSE results in German, though well below the national average in 1998, were above average in 1999 and 2000. Three pupils out of four gained a higher grade in 1999 and four out of five in 2000.
127. Pupils' attainment in German is average for their age in Key Stage 3. Although there are the same initial problems with writing referred to above, by Year 8 pupils taking German are working at average standards. Some pupils can initiate conversation, for example by requesting a ruler. By Year 9 writing is no longer a weakness, and pupils can demonstrate their skills by guided translation into German. They have studied the perfect tense and are aware of its importance as an indication of progression in terms of National Curriculum Levels. Differentiated work ensures that pupils with special educational needs can complete sentences prepared for them. Reading is satisfactory, and pupils are used to reading aloud.
128. Those pupils who attend school consistently achieve well in Key Stage 3 in all languages. Progress is particularly good from a low base in Year 7 to the end of Key Stage 3. Special needs pupils make good progress in their writing despite initial difficulties, as well as keeping up with the others in listening and speaking. In Key Stage 4 achievement is very good where pupils come within range of the highest grades at GCSE, as can be seen from their accrued marks. There are however too many pupils who put themselves at a disadvantage by failing to observe the requirements of the examination board - for example, by missing the end of Year 10 examination.
129. In lessons pupils respond with enthusiasm to imaginative teaching strategies including classroom games, which continue to motivate older pupils as well as younger. They enjoy their learning, and relate well to teachers and to each other. However, the school's failure to implement National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4 invites indifference to modern languages amongst many Year 9 pupils. Also, there are too many who fail to attend regularly. In the sample of lessons inspected the average rate of attendance was below 70 per cent at Key Stage 3, and below 80 per cent at Key Stage 4.
130. Teaching is mainly good in both key stages; none is unsatisfactory. Teachers are competent with their languages and use them effectively in the classroom. There is a good overall strategy, and teachers plan and prepare their lessons well, taking account of the school's extensive data base of information about pupils. Teachers know their pupils well, manage them well and usually contrive to offer differentiated work to meet the needs of all. An effort is made to accommodate the discontinuity of learning which some pupils experience - for example, by the systematic use of flip charts which enable returners to look up last week's work. The Scheme of Work shows evidence of concern about the need to develop pupils' self-confidence and sense of initiative, and teachers are conscious of the need to be good role models. A planned school trip to Lille and Ypres in 2001 will offer a major opportunity for social and cultural development.
131. Day to day leadership and management of the department are good. However, there is a strategic weakness in the school's continuing failure to implement National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4. The lack of an expectation that pupils do a language beyond Year 9 affects attitudes at Key Stage 3 as well as resulting in a situation in which 78 per cent of Key Stage 4 pupils do not take a foreign language. This is a failure to address a key issue of the previous inspection report.
132. For this reason progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. There has also been too little progress with the introduction of Information and Communications Technology into a subject which is essentially about communication. On the other hand teaching has improved, because there is now more use of the foreign language in lessons. Standards match closely those seen by the previous inspectors, though this is to be set against a national background of improvement.

Urdu

133. The standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE are well above the national expectation, with 82 per cent of pupils entered in 1999/00 achieving grades A - C, and 100 per cent achieving grades A - G. The trend of above average results has been maintained over the past three years. Pupils also sit for the GCSE in Year 10: in 1999/2000 all pupils achieved at least grade A. The results are above the national expectation in comparison with those for all schools and well above the national expectation in comparison with similar schools.
134. Standards of work seen are very good overall. The majority of pupils make good progress at Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils' achievements at Key Stage 3 are a reflection of the good progress made in building on their prior knowledge and understanding of the language and in developing their reading and writing skills. By the end of the key stage, most pupils demonstrate very good listening and speaking skills in classroom activities. Their written work is neat and well-presented. They can write sentences and short paragraphs using familiar language. More able pupils and recent arrivals from Pakistan are afforded the opportunity to gain accreditation for their first language skills through entry for the GCSE in Year 9.
135. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils contribute confidently in classroom discussions, using language appropriately for a variety of purposes.
136. The subject scheme of work, which follows the guidance of the National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages, supports the progressive development of pupils' language skills. Teachers use their very good knowledge of pupils' abilities to provide challenging work. Pupils' progress is supported by their attentiveness in lessons and their good listening skills. By the end of the key stage, pupils' writing skills are very good. They are able to express themselves clearly, using formal and informal language, for a range of purposes.
137. Teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. Although both teachers of the subject are unqualified, they have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use an appropriate range of teaching strategies to engage and involve pupils in their learning. Sometimes the level of challenge for more able pupils in mixed ability classes is limited. The range of resources for the subject is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, but more resources are needed for the A/S and A level classes at Key Stage 4. Teachers have developed a wide range of differentiated materials supplemented by tapes and videos. ICT remains an area for development. Training and development needs, especially with regard to gaining qualified teacher status is another area for development.

PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

138. Specialists who are committed to the subject teach drama and contribute to the wider education it affords the pupils. Teaching is well paced and controlled. It concentrates on the achievements of the pupils and is celebratory. All teaching seen was very good or excellent, combining verve and enthusiasm with detailed knowledge and understanding aimed at developing pupils' personal and academic achievement. In one Year 7 lesson the empathy and technical skill by which the pupils conveyed the plight of evacuees was awe inspiring. Lessons are well prepared and paced and all pupils gain the maximum insight into the subject as well as gaining knowledge of a wide range of sophisticated drama skills. Work seen during the inspection was of a high standard and helped to develop the self-confidence, independent learning and literacy skills of the pupils.
139. The teaching of drama at Key Stage 4 provides a depth and breadth to the curriculum. It incorporates teaching styles which clearly develop the learning of the pupils. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the pupils. At the same time, requirements for pupils to develop their own portfolios of work, visit theatres and empathise with others develop their independence.

Music

140. At the time of the inspection and in the absence of the head of department on maternity leave, the majority of lessons observed were taught by a newly qualified teacher on supply to the school.
141. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were considerably above national results. However, the evidence of the inspection shows that these assessments tended to overestimate what pupils have achieved. Standards of work of pupils currently in Year 9 are below the national expectation. The allocation of time to music in Years 7 - 9 is well below what is recommended and this significantly limits pupils' attainment. Pupils gain a satisfactory working knowledge of the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum in creative group work. Little evidence of pupils' composing was available, but pupils contributed to a class ensemble performing in 12-bar blues style in an appropriate style. They had composed their contributions, using a good range of percussion instruments and keyboards. The ensemble achieved satisfactory overall standards of composing and performing, but higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged by the activity. Pupils' speaking is developed through regular question and answer activities. There is a small amount of written work in which pupils consolidate their knowledge and evaluate their practical work. This makes a small but positive contribution to the development of their skills in literacy.
142. GCSE results have improved over the past three years. Numbers of candidates are comparatively small and therefore comparison with national averages is of little value. Candidates in music achieve well in relation to their success in other subjects. The department allows open access to the group, with the result that it is of mixed ability. In 2000, seven of 17 candidates achieved A* - C grades, which was below the national average. In 1999, the number was six out of eight, which was above the national average. In each of these years, two candidates achieved A* grades. In 1998, two of ten pupils achieved the higher grades.
143. In the current Year 11, standards are overall below average, but pupils are attaining well in relation to their varied abilities. Several are experienced and confident performers. Most have good skills in improvisation and this leads to some proficient composing. They use four-track recorders and programmable keyboards confidently. Pupils' knowledge of composers and the characteristics of different eras in music is below expectation.
144. When compared with their earlier attainment, pupils' achievement in music is satisfactory. Although their high level of absence impairs some pupils' progress over time, pupils make steady progress in individual lessons. For example, in Year 7, groups of pupils practised graphic scores and performed them competently to the rest of the class. In Year 8, pupils composed and performed group pieces based on the rhythm of their names. Because of the practical nature of all of the activities undertaken, pupils for whom English is not the first language and pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. This was clearly the case in Year 9, when all pupils were purposefully involved in singing and accompanying a reggae song, 'Get up, stand up!' in an authentic style. There was secure syncopation in the accompaniment, but the singing lacked confidence. Pupils preparing for GCSE make good progress. The small numbers involved allow pupils to receive a generous level of individual assistance, and they are encouraged to compose and perform in their own preferred styles. Instrumental tuition, which is of a very high standard, is available at this stage for pupils without previously developed skills in performing.
145. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Lessons are carefully prepared and have clear objectives, which the teachers explain well. The teachers have a thorough knowledge of the pupils and their capabilities. This enables the pupils to achieve a good pace of learning, for example in the whole-class ensembles in Year 9. Pupils are well behaved generally and teachers easily maintain order when pupils occasionally become excitable during practical work. Teachers make very good use of the wide range of resources available and the varied accommodation, which is of very high quality, enhances pupils' progress when they disperse for group work. In Key Stage 4, teaching is clearly focused on GCSE requirements and takes full account of individual pupils' needs. Teachers' assessment of work in progress is constructive. Time is generally well used, but a few lessons began unnecessarily late, and occasionally too much time is allowed for an individual practical activity. Pupils make best progress when exacting deadlines are set.

146. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is imaginative and provides a very wide range of musical experiences for pupils. The GCSE course is tailored to the needs of individual pupils and is not therefore available as a detailed schedule. In addition, a programme of regular opportunities to develop pupils' skills in musical analysis is needed, so that these skills can be systematically developed. Computers are not used in music at present, but there are firm plans to remedy this in the near future. Music makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The cultural diversity within the school is suitably reflected in the music curriculum and celebrated regularly in performances. In a Year 8 assembly during the inspection, pupils in different language groups impressively celebrated in music the important and varied contribution made to Britain's culture by what they described as 'invaders'. There are good opportunities for extra-curricular music. The school mounts a regular programme of musical events throughout the year in the school and the community, often in collaboration with drama and the performing arts. A production of 'West Side Story' was a recent highlight. One hundred pupils learn instruments from visiting tutors. The music department is very well organised and is an integral part of the performing arts provision. Teaching is monitored from time to time and there are good opportunities for in-service training for teachers. Music has continued to develop well since the previous inspection and retains many of the strengths noted at that time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

147. The proportion of pupils gaining A* - C grades in the 2000 GCSE examination was below that found nationally, but all pupils who were entered gained at least a grade G. Evidence gained during the inspection indicates that attainment by pupils near the end of both key stages is average and is similar to the attainment levels observed in the last inspection.

148. The department state that on entry the majority of the pupils have not experienced the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study in Key Stage 2 and their starting point is below average.

149. The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average. Most pupils achieve average standards on the trampoline, in health related fitness and games. Many pupils show a satisfactory understanding of the principles of play in games. Good standards were observed in a soccer lesson when Year 9 boys showed a variety of dribbling skills with good control. Girls make a very good beginning in dance; they show a sense of rhythm, can recall previous learning and introduce new movements. The department recognises the diverse cultural background of their pupils and in their programme include dance forms from other cultures. Boys in Year 7 have a sound understanding of the effect of exercise on the body.

150. At Key Stage 4, overall standards are average although there are some good individual performances on the trampoline and in basketball. The standard in GCSE cycling is good. Good use of video was made in a trampoline lesson: pupils were able to analyse their performance and make reasonable coaching points. The standard of girls' cricket is good and pupils have good fielding and bowling skills. In badminton, pupils understand the principles of attack and defence but have a limited range of strokes. In their fitness lesson there is evidence that boys know how to organise a fitness circuit. Pupils studying cycling as part of their GCSE course achieve well and are familiar with racing strategies. The previous report was complimentary about the provision for pupils where the National Curriculum is modified and about the standards achieved in Boccia (barrier free physical education.) This provision is being maintained.

151. The quality of teaching is never less than sound; most is good and some is very good. All the teachers know their pupils well and the good relationships they establish make a significant contribution to the good discipline, co-operative atmosphere and safety in lessons. All lessons are well planned and structured; pupils enjoy them and most display a positive attitude to learning. Participation rates are good. Pupils listen attentively to the teachers' explanations except for some boys in Years 7 and 9. Where teachers create opportunities for pupils to observe and evaluate they make appropriate comments. However, this was not a feature of all lessons. Teachers know their

pupils well and plan accordingly. Where teaching is good expectations are higher and pace is brisker and the pupils are better motivated. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take a lead in lessons. In those lessons where support is present, it is effective and pupils appreciate the additional attention. Good use is made of outside coaches in activities like soccer, netball and cricket: pupils respond well and with enthusiasm to the expertise shown by these coaches.

152. The department is well managed by an experienced head of department supported by enthusiastic colleagues. There are good schemes of work which are a good basis for lesson planning. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. Access to the Leisure Centre is more tightly controlled but vigilance is still required. The lack of fixed and portable gymnastic equipment prevents the department from being able to fully deliver the National Curriculum programme of study for gymnastics. The only hard area currently in use is in need of maintenance and the playing fields are reported as being badly drained. There is a range of extra-curricular activities and school teams. Pupils have been selected to represent the City in soccer, cricket and netball. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 form a local sports council and are discussing what sporting opportunities can be developed for young people in the locality. This is an excellent initiative shared by the school and the Sports Development Unit of the Leisure Services.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

153. Standards of achievement are just below the national expectation but steadily improving. The subject is making a developing and effective contribution to standards of achievement and to the ethos of the school.

154. A new head of subject joined the staff after the last inspection in 1996 and introduced GCSE courses in 1997, candidates taking the exam in 1999. Small groups in Key Stage 4 take the Religious Studies (Long Course) for the GCSE. The most recent results show an improvement on the first year with 25 per cent gaining grades A* - C and 75 per cent grades A* - G. The small number of candidates makes a comparison with national data or other statistics unreliable. Each year a larger group of pupils is taking Religious Education (Short Course) GCSE. The number of candidates is increasing each year. This year 34 per cent of the candidates gained A* - C grades and 85 per cent gained A* - G grades. These results are below the national averages for A* - C grades and just below for grades A* - G. However, the results are in line with the overall performance of pupils in GCSE across the school. Girls are more successful than boys at levels A* - C but both groups are equally successful at A* - G. The school analysis shows that pupils are often most successful when studying the religion of their own culture, one Muslim girl in year 10 achieving an A* last year. Statistics of teacher assessment are not available for the end Key Stage 3, as this is not a requirement of the Manchester Agreed Syllabus or a national requirement in religious education.

155. Standards of attainment are just below national expectations in both key stages. When regard is taken of the pupils who are on the special needs register, those who have English as a second language and the mobile character of the school population, the performance of pupils is in line with their ability. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils with English as a second language make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. By Key Stage 4 their command of English has improved and they are making effective use of the knowledge and understanding of their own cultural community; for instance, some were able to use the correct terms to explain and discuss concepts of predestination and freewill in the context of the Islamic faith.

156. The standard of pupils' work is satisfactory in both key stages. The standard of literacy is improving. Pupils in Year 7 can listen to a narrative, make notes and then prepare a written account of the story in their own words. Other strengths are the improvement in spelling and the use of glossaries. However, too frequently the written work is lacking in structure and is limited to one or two sentences at the most. In Key Stage 4, where motivation and commitment is greater, the pupils' notes are better organised but answers are often confined to statements in single sentences. There is no evidence of the use of writing frames and a very limited amount of extended

writing. Pupils are beginning to demonstrate their ability to use computers effectively in Key Stage 3. Year 9 are using the new City Learning Centre, the Internet and the CD ROM facility to prepare their personal accounts of the life and times of Anne Frank.

157. Teaching is good in both key stages. The subject knowledge of the staff is good, resulting in effective planning and appropriate content. The need for accuracy in the use of terminology is recognised. The staff have very secure levels of understanding and they make good use of illustrations which are relevant to the cultural and social background of pupils. Individual support for pupils is good. There is a positive approach in lessons so that the management of classes takes into account the character of the class and adapts the teaching methods accordingly. The acceptable standards of behaviour are clear to pupils and staff are firm but a sense of humour is often evident in their relationships with pupils. A variety of resources are available and are used effectively in both key stages. The quality of homework is good; homework is integrated into classwork and consolidates and extends it.
158. Tasks are well matched to the background of pupils but do not give sufficient scope for all pupils to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. The tasks set are often limited in scope and do not therefore give sufficient opportunity to the more able or allow pupils with special educational needs to show how they are progressing. The literacy policy is developing but more needs to be done to improve extended writing skills. Similarly the new technology is being introduced successfully in Year 9 but needs to be developed more systematically in both key stages. The scheme of work requires a clear rationale and structured development of the use of the new technology. The system of day-to-day assessment in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory; clear criteria are required which relate to levels of achievement and to the end of key stage statements in the Manchester Agreed Syllabus. Assessment shows improvement in Key Stage 4 where it is satisfactory but is still of limited value. Pupils need guidance so that they know what is necessary in order to improve the standard of their work. Oral assessment in lessons is often good in both key stages.
159. The standard of learning is good in both key stages. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are attentive, courteous and well focused on the task in hand. In Key Stage 4 they are diligent, asking sensible questions and are prepared to persevere in lessons. The staff are prepared to listen carefully to pupils and respond positively and effectively to them in both key stages. There is sound acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills in Key Stage 3 and this improves in Key Stage 4 where it is good. Learning is used creatively to stimulate pupils. In Year 8 pupils bring in their own "special things" to share with each other; by means of the subject they learn much about themselves and about each other. Pupils sharing their ideas work together effectively. The standard of learning in Key Stage 4 benefits particularly from this approach and from increased pupil motivation on GCSE courses. Independent learning leads to greater concentration and to the development of self-knowledge. There is a sound pace to lessons in Key Stage 3 and a good pace in Key Stage 4. The level of challenge is well matched to the age and background of pupils. The progress of pupils who need learning support is satisfactory in both key stages, although additional in-class support is limited in religious education. Pupils who do not have English as their main language make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 but good progress in Key Stage 4. By this time their command of English is improving and because they have a choice of religions they work with greater confidence and sense of achievement.
160. There is very good evidence of improvement since the last inspection. In 1996 the subject had poor resources, no accommodation, no clear rationale or place in the school curriculum and no one to take responsibility. There have been improvements in each of these aspects. The subject has an able head of subject who has developed an effective scheme of work. There is good accommodation and religious education is taught to all pupils as a discrete element in the curriculum. The subject makes a very good contribution to the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, treating with respect and integrity the values and attitudes of the various cultures from which pupils come. Most recently increasing numbers of candidates are successfully taking examination courses. Resource provision is good especially in Key Stage 3 but there is scope to improve the quality and range of materials in Key Stage 4 and to make better links with some of the religious communities in the neighbourhood from which many of the pupils come. To maintain these

improvements and to continue to make progress the staff need to develop systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching effectively.

161. Overall the subject is developing well its role in a school committed to the concept of cultural diversity and of valuing all pupils equally irrespective of religion, race or background.