

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MORTIMER COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

South Shields, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: South Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108727

Headteacher: Mr R.A. Snowdon

Reporting inspector: Dr D.M.J. Benstock  
20243

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 249140

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Reading Road  
South Shields  
Tyne and Wear

Postcode: NE33 4UG

Telephone number: 0191 456 6511

Fax number: 0191 427 1176

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr I.E. Palmer

Date of previous inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20243	David Benstock	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13786	Susan Walsh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19214	Geoff Price	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
8341	Bill Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	Staffing
23891	Peter Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology	Learning resources
22906	Barry Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Accommodation
17868	Eileen Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design History	
12118	Alan Paver	Team inspector	Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Educational inclusion
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Health and social care	

2494	Michael Newton	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	
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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>11</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>31</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Mortimer is a co-educational community school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. It has a fully comprehensive intake. The school is situated on the West Park Ward of South Shields in Tyne and Wear. Many pupils are from areas of social deprivation and high unemployment, and the overall socio-economic background of pupils is below average. Currently, 25 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The number of pupils on roll is 1095 and is bigger than average. The school is popular and oversubscribed. The majority of pupils are white with UK heritage. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, whose first language is not English, is approximately 10 per cent. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs was 23.7 per cent in 2002, which is above average. The percentage with statements is below average. The school benefits from participation in the 'Excellence in Cities' government initiative.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Mortimer Comprehensive is a good school. Attainment in the most recent tests at Year 9 and examinations in Year 11, was below the national average, but well above average compared with similar schools. Standards of work seen during inspection are better than indicated in the 2002 examinations, reflecting good improvement and in many subjects they are close to expectations for the ages of pupils. There is good achievement as a result of good teaching. Staff recruitment difficulties for the past year have been virtually resolved. Excellent provision is made for dance, and very good provision for drama and history. Attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are good, but a minority show little respect for property or staff, and their behaviour is unsatisfactory, despite efforts made by the school. Leadership and management by the senior staff are very good and focused on pastoral care and personal development as well as raising attainment. The school is well supported by the governing body. Unit costs are high and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- It provides a very good level of pastoral care and overall support for all pupils.
- There are very good strategies to ensure all pupils are fully included in the schools' provision but especially for those with special educational need or those whose first language is not English.
- The quality of teaching overall is good and there is a very good approach to monitoring and developing teaching through departmental review and performance management.
- There are very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and excellent links with the community to enhance the curriculum overall.
- There is very clear direction for improvement provided by the headteacher and senior leaders, and the school is well supported by the governing body.
- Standards and provision within the performing arts, especially drama and dance, are very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in English in Years 10 and 11, in music in Year 9 and the development of listening and speaking skills across all subjects of the curriculum.
- Behaviour of a minority of pupils, who exhibit a lack of respect for some teachers and property, and show disregard for the impact of their behaviour on other pupils.
- Quality and use of ongoing assessment in the teaching, including marking of pupils' work.
- Quality of reports to parents, and arrangements for subject consultation.
- Attendance, which is below the national average.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in April 1997. Improvement in school provision has been good. Overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 have improved, although in English attainment fell sharply in 2002. GCSE results have improved broadly in line with the national trend. Teaching has varied especially

in the past year due to staff recruitment difficulties, but the quality of teaching is again consistently good. The behaviour of a minority of pupils has declined. Three key issues were identified in the last report. The first issue identified the teaching of design and technology as weak. New staff have been appointed, schemes of work revised, more focused targets for development set and a more carefully considered range of options provided. The quality of teaching and standards has risen significantly. Secondly, work on assessment was identified as needing further improvement. Improvement has been achieved in the use and availability of performance data although practice is still variable in departments. Good use is now made of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. Thirdly, the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus in religious education, which were not fulfilled, are now fully completed. The very good leadership has ensured that teachers develop very good understanding of pupils' learning styles, teaching method and a very strong commitment to supporting all pupils.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was below national average. The performance in English was well below average as a result of staffing difficulties earlier in the year. However, standards of pupils when they enter the school are overall below average and progress from Year 7 is satisfactory. The attainment in Year 9 is well above average compared to similar schools. In relative terms, boys' performance in 2002 was slightly better than girls'. Overall standards have improved in line with the national trend. GCSE results are close to average compared to all schools and well above average compared to similar schools. Progress is good from Year 9. Overall performance has improved since 2000. Targets set by governors have been exceeded. Standards of work seen suggest a higher and improving attainment in Year 9, in that they are much closer now to the expected levels for the age. The exceptions are in English and music. No variation is noted between boys and girls. Standards seen in Year 11 are close to expectations. Particularly good standards are seen in drama and dance, and design and technology. Achievement of pupils from Year 7 through to Year 11 is good.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	<b>Good.</b> The majority of pupils are positive about school and participate in a full range of activities. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 have lost their determination to do well after recent staffing problems.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The majority behave well, but a significant minority are disrespectful to people and property, and behave in an unruly manner.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Relationships between pupils and staff are mainly good. Pupils have a good understanding of moral values but lack team skills that might have come from collaborative group activities.
Attendance	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Attendance is below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11

Quality of teaching	Good	Good
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*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.*

Teaching is good in almost every subject. It is very good in English, history and drama, and is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare a wide range of activities to respond to pupils' preferred ways of learning. Planning is good and broadly takes account of the range of attainment. Good management of behaviour results in good attitudes of the majority of pupils. A minority of pupils are disrespectful especially to new teachers, and are not managed well. Ongoing assessment is satisfactory but marking of pupils' work does not provide enough guidance to pupils on their levels of attainment or how they can improve. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and provision to support those whose first language is believed not to be English is very good. Literacy provision is satisfactory but there is insufficient focus placed on developing speaking and listening skills. Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily, with practice opportunities in science and geography as well as mathematics. Information and communication technology (ICT) is integrated well into most subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Good.</b> Statutory curriculum is in place. The curriculum is broad and balanced. There are good opportunities for the performing arts. Vocational courses in school are limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	<b>Very good.</b> Careful thought is given to specialist support and teachers make good provision for appropriate work in class. Individual education plans are used well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	<b>Very good.</b> Pupils receive high quality support from specialist teachers using the native language. Support is especially good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Good.</b> There is good provision for development of cultural awareness and very good multicultural development. Moral and social development is good, achieved through the range of curricular opportunities, rather than the programme for personal and social development. Spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	<b>Very good.</b> There is a very effective well-managed pastoral system. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance are very good.

The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Parents have generally positive views of the school and in particular the level of care. There is an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA). However, the quality of information provided for parents about pupils' progress is not sufficiently detailed and arrangements for consultation with subject teachers are inadequate.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	<b>Very good.</b> The leadership team have established a clear educational direction and the work of the school reflects the aims very well. Development plans are well conceived and have appropriate priorities for raising attainment.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	<b>Good.</b> The governors are very supportive and are involved well overall in shaping the direction of the school. They have a satisfactory

	understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	<b>Very good.</b> Very good arrangements are in place to monitor and develop teaching. Performance management is clearly established.
The strategic use of resources	<b>Excellent.</b> Financial resources are managed excellently. Governors play an important part in deciding the strategic use of resources.

Overall, the levels of staffing, accommodation and resources are good. There is now a good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum. Administrative staff contribute very well to the efficient running of the school. Accommodation provides a good learning environment, and very good use is made of display. Some areas are in need of refurbishment or are too small for the classes. Learning resources are satisfactory. The school takes every opportunity to ensure the principles of best value for money are followed.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects the pupils to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Pupils are making good progress at school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• The extent to which they are kept well informed about how pupils are progressing.</li> <li>• The standards of behaviour.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' views that the school expects pupils to work hard, and that overall pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching. The team also supports the view that reports should be improved to provide better information about pupils' progress and that the behaviour of a minority of pupils is unsatisfactory. The quality of homework is variable between subjects but overall is satisfactory in standard.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. When pupils entered the school in Year 7 in 2002, their attainment in the national tests was below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Cognitive ability and other tests indicate that the overall level of attainment on entry has been consistently below average over the past five years.
2. In the national tests taken in Year 9, in 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining level 5, or higher, was well below the national average in English, below average in mathematics, and close to average in science. The pattern was similar for the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels 6 or 7. Overall, attainment as measured by the pupils' average point score was below average. Progress on this basis from Year 7 to Year 9 has been satisfactory.
3. In 2002, boys attained relatively higher levels than girls, as they did in 2000. In 2001 attainment for boys and girls was very comparable, but overall there has been a better performance by boys than girls over the past few years. Overall attainment in Year 9 has fluctuated year to year since the last inspection, but always remained below the national average. Nevertheless, there has been an improvement in line with the national trend.
4. In mathematics, and to a lesser extent in science, there has been a significant improvement in Year 9 attainment from 2000 to 2002. In English, attainment, which was above average in 2001, fell sharply in 2002, to be well below. This was due to staff illness and recruitment difficulty that led to a period of unsatisfactory staffing arrangements. This problem is now resolved.
5. The overall attainment in Year 9 in 2002 was above the average in similar schools, defined as those admitting a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. In mathematics and science the attainment was well above average in similar schools and in English this year it was in line. Comparison with schools admitting pupils with a similar range of prior attainment in their Year 6 national tests, suggests that progress or 'value added' from Year 7 to Year 9 was well below average, although this was largely due to the weak performance in English in 2002.
6. In the subjects other than English, mathematics or science, teacher assessments in 2002 indicate well above average performance in design and technology, and above average performance in ICT, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Attainment was assessed as being close to average in history, geography and religious education. Attainment was assessed as being below average in art.
7. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C was below the national average. The percentage gaining five or more grades A\*-G was close to the average. The overall attainment measured in terms of the average point score per pupil was also close to the national average. Since the last inspection, having fallen in 2000, results have improved in line with the national trend. Targets set by the governors have been exceeded.
8. The proportion of pupils gaining five, or more, A\*-C GCSE grades in 2002 was well above the average in schools in a similar context and was close to average in schools with pupils having a similar range of prior attainment in Year 9. The progress made from Year 9 to Year 11 was close to average. The total average points per pupil in 2002 were well above the average in similar schools.

9. In the core subjects, the percentage of A\*-C grades in mathematics was close to national average, and in English and science it was well below average. Results were broadly similar for boys and girls in mathematics and science but boys achieved relatively higher than girls in English against their respective averages.
10. In the other subjects, performance was largely below average measured in terms of proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades, although in design and technology results were higher and in line with national averages. In art and drama, pupils performed relatively better than in other subjects. Performance in business studies, geography and French was relatively weaker.
11. Standards of work seen during inspection in lessons and from analysis of pupils' writing indicate an improvement over those indicated by the most recent test and examination results. Overall standards are in line with national expectations for the respective age groups. This improvement has been mainly due to the appointment of a considerable number of new staff and, in particular, heads of department in the last 18 months. Standards seen are in line with national expectations for the age in mathematics and science but are below average at this time in English. Standards seen in music, which are now below average, are lower than the previous assessments.
12. Overall achievement of pupils as seen from the work in Year 7 to Year 9 is good, and it is also good from the work seen in Year 10 to Year 11, as a result of enthusiastic and determined teaching being re-established. There is no observed significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils are achieving well in all three core subjects.
13. Work seen in Year 9 is broadly in line with expectation for the majority of subjects and reflects in most classes good achievement from entry to the school. The standard is above average in history, but below average in music and modern foreign languages. In history, for example, pupils show good detailed knowledge of historical events such as the Black Death. In music, performance skills are satisfactory but pupils do not listen or reflect on their performance, and composing skills are weak. In modern foreign languages pupils lack confidence with pronunciation.
14. Work seen in Year 11 is close to the standard expected for average GCSE grades, in most subjects. The rate of progress of individual pupils is seen to be good. Standards are significantly above average in dance and drama, where the levels of skill in performance are well developed for the majority of pupils. Standards are above average in design and technology. Skills of modelling and working with resistant materials are strengths but design is in need of improvement. Standards are below average in English, geography and French. Weakness in speaking and listening affects other subjects as well as English.
15. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This is as a result of the care given to address their needs, the awareness of all staff and the quality of support they receive. Provision is very good in Years 7 to 9, where for example Year 7 pupils are in smaller classes. In addition to withdrawal for catch-up classes as part of the National Strategy for literacy and numeracy, a significant amount of learning support assistance is allocated to these groups. This investment enables pupils to improve their literacy and number skills. At all times teachers take account of the needs of these pupils in the work they set and good use is made of pupils' individual education plans. In Years 10 and 11 there are fewer available staffing resources but the level of support remains good. Pupils are guided well into appropriate courses including vocational and performing arts courses.
16. Pupils for whom English is not the first language make very good progress. Teachers support very well the small numbers of pupils who are at early stages of English

language development. They receive additional high quality support from specialist teachers who can help them in and out of lessons, using their native language.

17. Pupil's standards of literacy across all subjects are average. In most lessons pupils have few opportunities to read aloud, give presentations to the class or feed back after group activities. As a result their skills in speaking and listening are below average. Pupils read well for meaning and can meet the demands in all subjects. Writing is generally well presented and organised by pupils of all attainment levels. Spelling is below average levels for all but the most able pupils. Good use of ICT skills helps pupils to prepare and present their written work.
18. The overall standards of numeracy are average. As a result, most pupils cope well with numeracy tasks met in other subjects. For example, in design and technology, pupils usually measure accurately when dealing with proportions of ingredients. In science pupils draw accurate graphs to represent results of experiments. In geography, pupils generally interpret graphs well and draw a range of graphs to convey the meaning of data.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

19. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to school. Younger pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 are enthusiastically involved in activities outside lessons such as dance and cookery. During lessons Year 7 pupils are keen and well behaved. However, even within Year 7 there are pupils who have low levels of concentration.
20. Overall attitudes and behaviour were good in four fifths of lessons seen during inspection. However, some pupils had unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. These pupils have suffered from many changes in staffing and routine. A number have lost interest in their schoolwork, which results in absenteeism. They can behave well in lessons but are often passive. Pupils tend to prefer practical subjects such as physical education, dance, drama, art and design and technology.
21. Even when pupils in Years 10 and 11 have chosen the subjects they study, such as art, performing arts and history, the work rate of a substantial minority can still be relatively slow. Teachers work hard to manage behaviour and try to inspire pupils. A significant minority of pupils, usually boys, have to be frequently reminded to concentrate and stay involved in their work. Their behaviour can be challenging and can prevent other pupils from learning effectively. Attitudes can be very good, for example, as seen in a Year 11 French lesson: pupils attempted to help each other and the great majority tried hard to participate sustaining high levels of concentration throughout.
22. Many teachers have good relationships with pupils that have been established over a number of years and often involve touches of humour. However, pupils are less tolerant of teachers who are new to the school and can be challenging and occasionally disrespectful. Relationships between pupils are satisfactory and occasionally good; for example, in a Year 11 religious education programme pupils worked well together in groups.
23. Standards of behaviour overall are satisfactory. Pupils can behave in formal situations; for example, Year 8 pupils behaved well in assembly when a pop group performed. Most pupils behave in a sensible manner in the dining rooms and girls act sensibly in social areas. In the classroom, behaviour in Year 7 is often good but in other year groups a significant number of boys lack self-discipline. For example when Year 11 pupils had to wait for their teacher they became fractious and rowdy, exhibiting immature behaviour such as repeatedly switching on and off lights and fighting with each other. Behaviour as pupils move around the school is usually

sensible although there is a boisterous element. These boys indulge in rough and tumble, including play fighting.

24. A small minority of pupils show insufficient respect for property. Toilets have been vandalised and one set of toilets has needed to be refurbished. These toilets are locked during lesson time and supervised at other times. The actions of a minority have affected access for the majority. Although pupils can lack maturity, they are polite to visiting adults but some find it hard to sustain a conversation. The number of fixed term exclusions is high, but the school works hard to retain pupils and ensure that difficult pupils remain engaged in education. The behaviour of a small number of challenging pupils can have a disruptive effect on the learning of other pupils.
25. Personal development is satisfactory. There are some opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. In Year 7 pupils were put in charge of counting merits and they took their duties very seriously. Overall, lessons provide relatively few opportunities for working in groups and pairs, which would help pupils develop their social skills. For example, in a Year 10 personal and social education lesson pupils were asked to work in pairs and discuss moral issues and crime. They found it very difficult to work this way and very little progress was made. However, good examples of collaborative work are found in drama and science. There are good opportunities for personal development through involvement with the school council and mentoring of Year 7 pupils by Year 11 pupils, but this involves a small number of pupils.
26. Attendance rates are below national averages. Pupils in Year 7 attend regularly but attendance rates decline and by Year 11 a significant number of pupils miss substantial amounts of schooling. The unauthorised absence rate was low in the school year 2001–2002. The school has worked hard to improve punctuality and most pupils arrive at school on time.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

27. The quality of teaching is good overall and leads to good learning in almost every subject. Teaching is very good in English, history and drama. Within the good teaching there are often very good features, for example in the quality of use of ongoing assessment in science and art. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. There is inconsistent marking in this area, and opportunities to challenge individual pupils on their pronunciation are not always taken.
28. Teaching of citizenship, recently introduced as a National Curriculum subject, is good and being firmly established by the school alongside its provision for personal and social education. Teaching in the performing arts area of the curriculum is strong with high expectations being promoted, especially in drama and dance. The rigour in evaluation is a notable feature in these subjects. Religious education is taught regularly and to a good standard. In most subjects a good range of strategies are adopted to meet preferred learning styles. There is good teaching of ICT in discrete lessons and through other subjects. Planning is a notably good feature and tasks are selected according to need. New technology is used well, with computers and interactive whiteboards enhancing the learning. Ongoing assessment in most subjects is satisfactory but marking of homework is often insufficiently detailed to identify areas for improvement.
29. In the previous inspection, unsatisfactory teaching was noted in physical education and design and technology. New staff appointments have been made and there have been considerable improvements in resources. Both subject areas are now providing good teaching from knowledgeable teachers. At the time of the last inspection, the teaching staff was well established and effective. A number of staff changes due to retirements and promotions left the school using an excessive number of temporary or unqualified staff for a period of time. The quality of teaching suffered overall, for

example in English where changes to the deployment of staff ensured satisfactory teaching for older pupils but inadequate provision for the younger ones. The staffing position is now more stable; teaching has improved again and is developing well.

30. Teachers have good subject knowledge and it is very good in English, history and design and technology. They use this knowledge wisely with a good variety of teaching techniques. A clear focus is placed on meeting the lesson objectives that results in a brisk pace of learning. Overall, there is very good class management that ensures pupils' interest, motivation and secure gains in knowledge and understanding.
31. The quality of teaching is enhanced by the teachers' good understanding of the needs of their pupils and the relationships developed in class interaction. Teachers recognise that pupils have preferred methods of learning and adapt their lessons well to suit. The school's focused work on teaching and learning styles has a major impact on the consistency of teaching in the school. This is consolidated through specific lessons referred to as 'learning to learn' that ensure pupils' learning is effective and efficient. Essential study skills are quickly acquired when pupils first come to the school and are reinforced year after year.
32. Lesson planning is consistently good in most subjects and it is notably very good in history and English. Good account is taken of pupils' prior knowledge and the teacher sets clear objectives for each lesson. Overall, good provision is made to ensure work is challenging and appropriate for the broad range of attainments in a class. It is expected that most pupils will achieve well and this results in pupils being interested and determined to succeed. Progression through lessons is managed well. In some subjects, including English, mathematics and science, the level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils is not sufficient to extend their intellectual thinking and reach the attainment of which they are capable.
33. Homework is used well in some subjects but not others. In the best examples it provides good extension to class work and ranges in demand depending on the attainment of the pupils. It is focused and effectively used in English and design and technology. Opportunities are not always taken, however, in other subjects to develop pupils' ideas or encourage independent learning.
34. Ongoing assessment is satisfactory although marking of homework is inconsistent between subjects and teachers within a subject. In the best examples, teachers make it very clear to pupils their level of attainment and what is required to raise the level further. In other cases marking is cursory and gives little meaningful feedback. Insufficient use is made by some teachers of available assessment data to identify learning misconceptions and appreciate the achievement potential.
35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and, in some subjects, very good. There is close liaison between subject specialists and learning support staff. Very good use is made of appropriate resources to ensure pupils make progress comparable to others of similar ability. Teachers of pupils with special educational needs make very good use of the learning support assistants. The assistants are well prepared, know the children and take an active part in many lessons. Lessons for these pupils are well planned and teachers make use of a very good range of quality resources. Good use is made of the National Literacy Strategy material.
36. Pupils with special educational needs generally learn well, not only when taught by the specialist teacher but in lessons in general. They benefit from work that takes full account of their needs and is presented in challenging and innovative ways. There is regular reinforcement of previous learning, particularly basic literacy and number skills.

37. A good level of support is given to those pupils where English is not the first language.
38. Teachers support well the small numbers of pupils who are at early stages of English language development. Very good strategies are in place to assess the language levels of these pupils. They receive additional high quality support from specialist teachers who can help them in and out of lessons, using their native language.
39. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. In most subjects, key words are displayed and supportive writing frames are used to help lower attaining pupils. Across the curriculum the impact of the school literacy policy is satisfactory. Literacy has been addressed in departmental policies and schemes of work. However, evidence of literacy strategies in lessons is thin. Teachers give little additional support for reading. Although key words are displayed in most teaching areas direct support for pupils' writing is found only in a limited way. Some teachers employ outline frames and useful phrases to help lower attaining pupils construct their written responses.
40. Numeracy is taught satisfactorily in areas of the curriculum where opportunities arise. It is taught well in mathematics and science. Teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy to support their lesson structures with mental arithmetic starter activities and well-considered plenary sessions. Graphical work is used in many subjects such as geography and history to practise these skills.

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

### **Quality and range of the curriculum**

41. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall, being good between Year 7 and 9 and satisfactory between Year 10 and 11. The key issues of the last inspection related to provision for design and technology have been met. The school provides good opportunities for all to participate in the performing arts and provides vocational courses in ICT and health and social care. The statutory curriculum is in place except that the obligation to provide a daily act of corporate worship is not met.
42. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum are satisfactory overall. This judgement balances a number of strengths and some comparative weaknesses. All of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are provided between the ages of 11 and 14 with extra time in physical education for dance and discrete provision for drama. Time for English and a modern foreign language is enhanced but a second language is introduced only in Year 9. Time allocations in Years 7 to 9 are below those recommended for music and religious education.
43. Careful thought is given to enable pupils with special education needs to access the full curriculum and provision for them is very good. In Year 7 these pupils are in smaller classes and in addition to withdraw for catch-up classes as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, a significant amount of learning support assistance is allocated to these groups. This investment enables pupils to improve their literacy and number skills. At all times teachers take account of the needs of these pupils in the work they set and good use is made of pupils' individual education plans. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are guided into appropriate courses including vocational and performing arts courses.
44. A new co-ordinator, steering group and whole school policy for literacy were established in 2001. All staff have undergone some training. Across the curriculum the impact of the school literacy policy is satisfactory. Literacy has been addressed in departmental policies and schemes of work. However, evidence of literacy strategies in lessons is thin. Teachers give little additional support for reading. Although key

words are displayed in most teaching areas direct support for pupils' writing is found only in a limited way.

45. There is satisfactory provision for numeracy development, and subjects recognise where applications of numeracy can be incorporated, following the guidelines of the National Numeracy Strategy.
46. The governors make very good arrangements to ensure that all pupils are included in the school's curriculum provision. Equality of access and opportunity falls short of excellence only in the very narrow range of vocational courses offered on the examination courses. Arrangements to meet the needs of ethnic minority pupils are excellent and a higher proportion of ethnic minority pupils move on to extended education than in the whole school population. This is because the school's workers in the area of language development have the secure confidence of the local ethnic minority community and its religious organisations who return their full support to the school. Similarly arrangements to provide for the disaffected, those who need extra educational guidance and those with special educational needs are very good and the rigorous application of attendance procedures secures the attendance of pupils who might otherwise not come to school.
47. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good overall: there are areas of considerable strength in the performing arts, physical education and games. In particular, provision is well matched to community provision in hockey and netball so that pupils are able to use very good facilities shared with the community. Pupils receive good coaching and then can move on after school into adult sports' clubs housed on the premises. Similarly, chess players are able to join the South Shields Chess Club which uses the premises in the evening. The strength is the development of sports' skills; the comparative weakness is the under-emphasis of movement-based activities such as gymnastics and use of the trampoline.
48. Curriculum provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory but its effectiveness requires revision in view of some weaknesses of pupils' learning techniques and personal attitudes outlined elsewhere in this report. The school prospectus does not make sufficiently clear to parents what is taught in the area of sex and drugs education or the right of parents to withdraw from it if they wish. A co-ordinator of this field including citizenship is comparatively recently in place and is well aware of the need to re-address provision. The curriculum strands of health education have been carefully mapped and the support of a local education authority team has been sought to review parts of the programme, to deliver it and to train staff. This is planned for after the GCSE examinations in 2003.
49. Provision for careers and vocational education appears satisfactory but could not be thoroughly inspected because of staff absence. The school makes good use of time and available staff at the end of the summer term to suspend the timetable during activities week. Year 7 pupils spend time on European awareness and Year 8 on multicultural awareness. Year 9 spend a day working with industrialists, some of them governors, and establish links which lead to work experience the following year. The numbers going into extended education and training has increased rapidly but remains below the national average.
50. Good vocational guidance helps pupils to choose from a variety of routes through extended education. Very few go directly into employment in an area of high unemployment. Rather more than usual numbers of pupils lose contact with the reporting agency so that their destination after school is not reported. The school is well aware of the need to extend the range of vocational courses at the age of 14 and is actively engaged in so doing.
51. This is a community school and the headteacher is also warden of community provision, working to a separate set of managers. Community provision was not inspected but the passionate commitment of the headteacher to this concept creates

a uniquely successful organisation: the school is securely embedded at the centre of a network where the community makes an excellent contribution to pupils' learning and the school makes an equally effective contribution to the life of its community.

52. The school's relationships with partner institutions are good overall. There are very good strengths in its relationships with primary schools. Public relations here are very good and the school is over-subscribed at the beginning of Year 7. The care of pupils during the transfer and the transfer of records, particularly for those with special needs, is very good. There are very good curriculum links across the science curriculum where science teachers work on projects in Year 6 then develop them in Year 7. This style is being introduced in English. This strong model of cross-phase curriculum linking is not yet followed by all subjects and the high quality of linking with the primary school sharing the Mortimer site is not yet established with all five of the main feeder primaries. Good links with providers of extended education in the area allow pupils a choice of destination but the crucial link to develop the 14 to 19 vocational curriculum is missing.

### **Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

53. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Restrictions on available space prevent a daily act of corporate worship being held, but assemblies are held weekly for all year groups. These usually but not invariably include a prayer or time for reflection. Lessons in religious education play a particularly strong part in pupils' spiritual development, and, along with members of staff funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), have established among pupils mutual respect for the different faiths represented in the school. For instance, all pupils attend the annual carol service, and all are included in visits to the local mosque. Frequently assemblies include demonstrations of religious ceremonies events, such as a Sikh wedding. Spiritual development is good in art and English, through the explorations of feelings and emotions underlying the creation of works of art and literature, and in history, drama and dance, pupils explore their own feelings and reactions to situations such as the life of a child in a Victorian workhouse, or the effects on the community of catastrophes such as the Holocaust and the Black Death. However, there has as yet been no audit of spiritual provision within subjects to ensure its consistency across the curriculum, and opportunities in a number of subjects are missed.
54. Provision for pupils' moral development, embedded in the ethos of the school, is good. Staff are good role models, and pupils are clearly taught right from wrong. As a result of a broad-based citizenship programme, recently established, and through the programme for personal and social education, pupils learn about taking responsibility for the care of other people in the local community, and about environmental issues. Older pupils form a 'Buddy' system which supports younger pupils, and take part in the paired reading scheme; fundraising for charity, usually as a result of non-uniform days, raises considerable sums for charities nominated by pupils themselves; during activities week pupils make contact with people in homes for the elderly, and with pupils in schools for handicapped children. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance between people of different creeds, and many took part in an anti-racist event held in St James's park in Newcastle. Moral issues are explored in subjects such as geography, where pupils learn about world issues such as refugees, economic migration and the effects of pollution, and in physical education and design and technology they learn the importance of teamwork and ensuring one another's safety. In science and ICT, pupils consider the moral implications of issues such as cloning, and the use of the Internet. Sex education and information about the dangers of misuse of drugs is provided through the personal and social education course. A small number of pupils, however, do not think sufficiently carefully about their personal responsibility for maintaining an ordered community and adopt casual, provocative and, occasionally, aggressive attitudes.

55. There is good provision for pupils' social development, both in class and out of lessons. There is an extensive programme of field trips and visits, both within the local area and further afield; pupils have opportunities to visit France and Italy. Extra-curricular activities organised by the performing arts and physical education are well attended. In several subjects pupils regularly work with each other in pairs or small groups, sharing ideas and opinions, but this practice is not as widely used as it could be. Contacts with the world of work, the local community, and other educational institutions are good.
56. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good overall. There are good opportunities for cultural awareness, and for their understanding of multi-cultural issues, opportunities are very good. Bengali is taught in Year 9, and is about to become available as an option at GCSE. In a number of subjects, such as geography, art and music, pupils have opportunities to learn about the cultural differences between societies; pupils from ethnic minorities frequently make contributions to lessons, demonstrating artefacts or explaining customs. The annual 'One World Day' explores the music, dance and food of different people, and in classrooms and around the school key words and directions are translated and written in Arabic script. Pupils study British and European culture and traditions by reading the work of authors such as Dickens, by exploring the plays of Shakespeare, and by listening to a wide range of music from popular styles to the works of the great composers. Pupils visit professional performances in local theatres, and large-scale performances of musical shows take place annually.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

### **Care**

57. The school has a very effective well-managed pastoral system, which is a strength of the school. Form tutors and year heads stay with forms and years as they move through the school. This results in these teachers knowing pupils very well, including those with special educational needs and pupils who have English as an additional language, and being well aware of pupils' physical emotional and intellectual needs. Staff are very supportive of pupils, who find them easy to approach if they have problems with schoolwork or of a personal nature. Staff work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in education. The various strands of provision are very well managed and the work of the pastoral team is carefully examined and its worth carefully measured.
58. Subject teachers provide pupils with very good quality educational support. Form tutors and year heads provide good personal support and effectively monitor pupils' personal development. The programmes of personal social and health education and careers education, although satisfactory, are less effective at providing pupils with guidance. For example, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 get limited information about growing up, puberty and changing relationships.
59. The school follows locally agreed procedures regarding child protection. Although the named person and his deputy carry out their duties conscientiously, they have had insufficient training in child protection and in meeting the needs of children in the care of the local authority. The school has good procedures that help to ensure that pupils and staff work in a safe environment. Minor safety issues identified during the inspection were quickly attended to.
60. The school has very effective procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Rigorous procedures include careful record keeping and ensuring parents are contacted the first morning their children are absent, and good work by form tutors and year heads results in low rates of unauthorised absence. Pupils with significant attendance problems are encouraged to attend by learning mentors and the

educational welfare officer visits pupils with the most severe attendance problems. Consistent effort results in maintaining the level of attendance but rates remain unsatisfactory,

61. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school's behaviour policy is of good quality and contains very valuable guidance for teachers. Rewards and sanctions are made very clear. Most pupils respond well to the policy and are keen to avoid detentions. Exclusion rates have been high in previous years and alternative strategies have been devised to reduce them. The recently established learning support unit makes alternative provision for the small number of pupils who find it difficult to cope in some lessons. It is too early to measure its success. There is also an inclusion team who help pupils, who are at risk of exclusion and who exhibit very challenging behaviour, to improve their behaviour and social skills.
62. The school is aware that bullying occurs occasionally and is usually restricted to name calling or exclusion from the group. Pupils are confident that bullying issues are usually quickly and effectively resolved. However, a small number of parents were less satisfied with the school's approach to bullying. The school keeps very good records of racial incidents. Pupils and parents recognise the school's good work to promote racial harmony.
63. The school learning mentors provide a high quality service and are very effectively managed. Their work is well focused and complements the work of teaching and pastoral staff. A well thought out philosophy together with an effective referral procedure prevents overlapping roles and confusion, resulting in support for the maximum number of pupils. The role of the learning mentor has been extended to provide help for older gifted and talented pupils who may be under great pressure to achieve well, in addition to those pupils who find it difficult to meet their responsibilities at school.
64. Mortimer Comprehensive is a truly inclusive school, which seeks to meet the needs of all its pupils, both academically and in its pastoral commitments. An alternative curriculum exists for pupils in Year 10 who have been disapplied from modern foreign languages. Learning mentors work with groups across the school. They provide the Homework Club and the Breakfast Club, which caters daily for between 30 to 40 pupils. There are Easter and summer schools and visits abroad for pupils identified by the school as gifted or talented across all years. An inclusion unit, catering for a maximum of eight pupils, works intensively with them for short periods of time and has links with the learning mentors. A social inclusion group has been established. This involves pupils at risk of exclusion. The management of the different groups of pupils has been improved by the establishment of an inclusion group, which has regular meetings each half term, and is co-ordinated by a deputy headteacher.
65. The development and progress of pupils with special educational needs are monitored carefully and good support is available to such pupils. For those students with more specific needs, including those with statements of educational need, individual action plans are drawn up and are used to very good effect by teachers across the school. Generic targets are supplemented by specific targets for each subject. They are shared with learning support assistants and others who may work with a pupil. These statements and plans are carefully monitored and reviewed by the special educational needs co-ordinator and at appropriate times formal reviews take place as required by statute. Any pupil, including those for whom English is not their first language, can receive help and support in this very inclusive school.

## **Assessment**

66. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good. The school has carried out cognitive ability tests for several years but has now moved to the Middle Years

Information Service (MidYIS) assessment system. There is extensive analysis of value added data to compare progress of pupils with that nationally and in similar schools. The school was part of the National Value Added pilot. Regular assessment is embedded in each department's scheme of work.

67. Whilst the use of assessment data centrally to guide curriculum planning is good, and the procedures for supporting pupils' academic progress are also good, the potential use of the information within departments remains more variable. The senior management is committed to supporting and training heads of department in this area of work.
68. Using results from Year 6 National Curriculum tests, the school has now instituted a system of target setting for all pupils. These targets are currently issued to subject teachers and, after minor changes in some cases, are used to monitor progress. For all subjects there is a mid-year trawl to check ongoing progress, but in many departments assessment takes place more frequently. However, the setting of simple, short-term targets as part of the normal marking process could be further developed.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

69. Pastoral staff work hard to establish close links with parents and ensure that there is effective communication about attendance and behaviour. However, parents receive insufficient information about their children's progress in lessons. The school ensures that there is very good communication with parents who find it difficult to understand English. Many documents are translated into home languages. Translators are available at parent's nights and the school has been successful at ensuring that parents from a range of ethnic cultures understand the importance of education.
70. There is good communication between the school and parents of children who need extra support. There are a small but significant number of parents who find it very difficult to manage their children's behaviour and to support their education. The inclusion unit and learning mentors try to help these parents improve their parenting skills.
71. Most parents are supportive of their children's education. They want their children to do well. The school holds regular evenings where parents can learn how to help their children; these are very well attended. Many parents provide their children with computers and access to the Internet. Parents encourage their children to complete their homework. There is an active PTA that raises significant amounts of money for the school. The role of the PTA extends beyond fundraising and provides parents with an opportunity to raise their awareness of educational issues. The school carefully collects and analyses parents' views.
72. Parents are pleased with the standard of education provided by the school. Parents are aware that the school is well led and managed. They recognise that teaching is good and that teachers have high expectations of their children. They feel that their children make good progress. The inspection confirmed parents' positive views.
73. A small number of parents were concerned about standards of behaviour. The inspection noted that most pupils behave appropriately but pupils do not always behave well for new and temporary teachers. Parents were concerned about the setting of homework. Although homework is generally used appropriately pupils may struggle to complete lots of homework one week and have very little homework the following week.
74. Information for parents is unsatisfactory. A significant number of parents are concerned about the quality of information they receive about their children's progress. The inspection confirmed that the information that they receive about

progress is unsatisfactory. Written reports are of a very inconsistent quality. They often contain insufficient information about what pupils know understand and can do, and the academic progress made. Written comments often focus on pupils' attitudes to a subject. Targets are far too general and do not tell parents or pupils how to improve achievement in a subject area. Year 7 and 8 parent evenings involve form tutors reporting to parents about pupils' progress based on insufficient information and parents do not have sufficient access to subject teachers.

75. The prospectus contains a clear statement by the headteacher, which gives parents a good indication of the atmosphere of the school. The school is aware that although the prospectus meets statutory requirements it does not make it clear to parents that they can withdraw their children from religious education or sex education if they wish. The governors' report to parents does not meet statutory requirements as there is insufficient information about provision for pupils with special educational needs and the admission of pupils with a disability. The school is sensitive to these omissions and has sent out a separate letter about this matter. There are regular newsletters that reflect the lively life of the school.
76. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their child's progress. They are invited to attend the annual review meeting and receive a copy their child's individual education plan.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

77. The quality of leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff is very good. There is a strong commitment to improvement and to strengthening the climate for learning within the school. There is also a strong shared determination to re-establish the strengths of teaching within the school after the considerable staffing difficulties and changes within the last 12 months. Heads of departments and pastoral leaders have the energy and shared vision for development that is promoted strongly by the senior team.
78. Leadership ensures very clear educational direction for development. Departments have clearly focused plans that reflect and contribute to the overall school improvement plan. There is a strong focus on developing pastoral support, personal qualities of pupils and the learning environment, as well as raising attainment. Staff are wholly committed now to the aims of the school and this is reflected very well in the work of departments. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. Delegation of management responsibilities is good with clear roles for the senior leaders.
79. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well, ensuring that the appropriate National Curriculum is in place. There are minor omissions from the governors' annual report. Governors are very committed to supporting the school and contribute well through the committee structure. There is a broad range of expertise, which is drawn upon to aid decision-making processes. Governors have an increasingly good understanding of their strategic role and are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
80. The school has carried out very good reviews of departments, which has enabled careful evaluation, and development of the teaching. Middle managers including heads of department and year heads fulfil their responsibilities in the monitoring process although the extent to which this is done varies somewhat between departments. Evidence from the reviews is used well to guide staff training, curriculum needs and overall departmental performance.
81. There is very good analysis by senior staff of performance data to evaluate the work of departments and compare the progress being made by pupils against national

expectations. The analysis is not always taken through to lesson planning and departments have variable expertise in using performance data to its best effect.

82. Over the last two years there has been a high turnover of staff, with the school needing to replace a significant number of staff at senior and middle management level. The timing of staff leaving has resulted in a high proportion of temporary teachers and as a result the school has had to work very hard to maintain good standards. Despite this most subjects now have sufficient and suitably qualified teachers to teach the curriculum and this is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. The new appointments made are now beginning to make a good impact on standards across the school. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as a second language, benefit from the very good support of well-trained learning support assistants. A well-planned training programme is established and a comprehensive and successful induction programme supports newly qualified teachers. New teachers, and those recently qualified, speak highly of the support received within the school. Teachers' qualifications satisfactorily meet the needs of the curriculum.
83. The development planning process takes very careful account of financial implications. A very clear process that identifies development need is taken through a series of stages to eventual consideration by the finance committee of the governing body to ensure integration with the budget plan. Administrative support for financial control and budgeting is very good and there is excellent adherence to the principles of ensuring best possible value for money. Resources are used exceptionally well. Full use is made of new technology in the process. The most recent report of the auditor on the school fund revealed very minor aspects for attention. A large carry forward in the budget for 2001-2 is identified, but is needed for general repairs and maintenance. Additional grants are used entirely for their intended purpose. Development planning is fully costed and carefully reviewed by governors to ensure maximum efficiency. The expenditure per pupil is well above average and, overall the school gives satisfactory value for money.
84. The accommodation is good. The main teaching block is attractive and well maintained. There is good provision in this block for the community with a range of rooms and social areas. Dance and drama departments have very good teaching areas adjoining the main hall. Rooms for modern foreign languages are very good, being spacious and well equipped. However, three of the four ICT rooms are small for normal classes, although the adjacent spacious library is equipped with some computers. Some departments are housed in the older teaching blocks of the school, and whilst these are satisfactory, there is need for refurbishment, particularly in science to bring the accommodation up to date. Provision for physical education is very good, with two gymnasiums, a sports hall, and a floodlit artificial pitch. Hard play areas are of high quality and used by the county netball teams. There are ongoing improvements around the site to reduce muddy patches and create a cleaner environment. The number of rooms available for teaching is satisfactory for the present curriculum and numbers of pupils, although in design and technology specialist rooms are not always available for certain lessons. Great effort has been made to create a pleasant learning environment. Classrooms and specialist rooms have been designed to be light and well situated. The school adjoins the shared community leisure centre that is available and used throughout the day and evening.
85. Learning resources are adequate overall. There are good resources in history, art, religious education, music and science but inadequate resources and equipment for use in physical education and design and technology. ICT resources for the school are satisfactory, and largely centralised for security, but some difficulties exist when subject departments need to book ahead for computer suite use. There are limited numbers of computers in individual departments, but the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) is developing in design and technology. The school makes good use of the two interactive whiteboards available.

The library is considered by all as an accessible learning environment, and is being further developed into a mixed media area where pupils make very good use of access to the Internet and school database materials. The school community centre is being used extensively to support the wider public and bring community and school into closer contact.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. In order to improve the school further, governors, headteacher and senior staff should:

- (1) Raise the attainment in English throughout the school by ensuring:
  - that staff deployment is settled;
  - there is a specific focus on the development of speaking and listening skills across all subjects.(Paragraphs: 87, 92)
- (2) Raise attainment in music in Year 9, by:
  - increasing the amount of time on teaching the subject.(Paragraphs: 166, 167)
- (3) Identify strategies to improve the attitude and behaviour by a minority of pupils, who show little regard for school, staff or fellow pupils, by:
  - reviewing the behaviour policy;
  - reviewing the effectiveness of rewards and sanctions.(Paragraphs: 20, 24, 61)
- (4) Develop the quality of ongoing assessment by:
  - sharing good practice from within the school;
  - using assessment data more rigorously within departments;
  - improving the marking of pupils' work to give guidance to them on how to raise their levels of attainment.(Paragraphs: 27, 28, 34, 67, 68)
- (5) Review the quality of reporting pupils' progress to parents, by ensuring:
  - targets are more explicit;
  - attainment levels are clear;
  - timing is appropriately arranged for issue in conjunction with consultation opportunities.(Paragraphs: 74, 95, 105)
- (6) Raise the level of attendance, which is currently unsatisfactory for a minority of pupils, by ensuring that these pupils:
  - are clear about their progress, and feel motivated by potential success;
  - are settled after the turmoil of staff changes and temporary teachers.(Paragraphs: 29, 46, 60, 69, 159)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	73

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	43	72	29	2	1	0
Percentage	5	28	47	19	1	1	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1095
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	288

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	124

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	109

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.4
National comparative data	7.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	121	95	216

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	80	79
	Girls	61	57	58
	Total	115	137	137
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (79)	63 (65)	63 (62)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66(66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15(36)	36(37)	25(22)
	National	32 (31)	45(43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	83	72
	Girls	65	61	57
	Total	138	144	129
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (66)	67 (62)	60 (60)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (32)	34 (37)	25 (23)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	107	128	235

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	40	99	103
	Girls	56	118	122
	Total	96	217	225
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (42)	92 (94)	96 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.9
	National	39.8

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	20	90
	National		

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	939	162	3
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	73	5	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	36	7	1
No ethnic group recorded	19	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	
Total aggregate hours worked per week	297

**Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.1
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	21.5
Key Stage 4	20.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	25

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	3455758
Total expenditure	3385572
Expenditure per pupil	3122
Balance brought forward from previous year	212866
Balance carried forward to next year	283052

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1095
Number of questionnaires returned	532

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	55	11	4	2
My child is making good progress in school.	33	57	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	48	15	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	50	22	5	2
The teaching is good.	28	59	7	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	49	19	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	47	10	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	23	49	18	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	30	50	8	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	55	9	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	48	8	3	11

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching enables very good acquisition of knowledge and pace of working, together with securing a good level of interest by the majority of pupils to achieve well overall.
- Pupils have very good attitudes in lessons so they learn well.
- There is very good leadership and management by the department, leading to consolidation of very good learning and rising standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' speaking and listening skills, which are under-developed.
- Attainment overall in tests and examinations, which was not high enough in the last academic year.
- Achievement of a significant minority, especially in Years 10 and 11, who lack determination and motivation to succeed.

87. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment in English. By the end of Year 9 pupils are currently working at average levels. Results in National Curriculum tests for 2001 were above the national average. Results for 2002 fell to be well below national average levels and below those gained in mathematics and science. This was against a marked upward trend over the previous three years. This fall was due to staff illness, recruitment difficulty, and a need to rearrange the staff deployment. Results were close to average compared to schools with similar backgrounds. Boys achieve better against national figures than girls.
88. GCSE results for English examinations in 2002 were below national averages. In English and English literature the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was below the national average. Pupils overall did better in the literature examination. Levels of entry in both were high. Almost all pupils gained grades A\*-G in both GCSE English examinations. Although girls did better than boys in English, boys were less far behind than nationally. GCSE results overall were less good than those achieved in mathematics but a little ahead of those in science. In recent years results in English have been consistently below national averages.
89. Work seen is at national average levels by the end of Year 9. The achievement of pupils is good. When they enter the school they have below average attainment. By the time they complete Year 9 their work is generally at average levels. This represents better achievement over the three years than might be expected. Speaking and listening skills are less well developed than might be expected for the ages of pupils. Pupils' only oral contributions to lessons are often brief answers to direct questions. All pupils read texts effectively and can analyse both meaning and the language, as seen in some very good work on themes in Joan Lingard's *Across the Barricades*.
90. Higher attaining pupils write fluently and at length across a wide range of tasks. Boys often write very confidently, which helps explain their better test results. Spelling is inconsistent and only the highest attaining pupils achieve average levels. In Year 7 the early written work of lower attaining pupils is often fragmented and handwriting can be poor. However, they make rapid progress in developing their writing skills. Those for

whom English is a new language make particularly good progress. All pupils make good use of ICT to prepare and present their work. Pupils with special educational needs have additional support in Years 7 to 9 and they make good progress across the three years.

91. Work seen in Years 11 is currently below that typical for the age. In 2001 this cohort of pupils' level of attainment overall in English was above average in the National Curriculum tests. On this basis, their achievement so far remains unsatisfactory. However, the quality of the current work compared to that at the beginning of the year indicates that pupils are now making good progress with their knowledge and understanding of both language and literature. This results from the re-establishment of a full complement of permanent, very good teachers.
92. Development of speaking and listening skills is less impressive because pupils have only limited opportunities to develop them. Reading is very well developed in all pupils. Higher attaining pupils respond sensitively to novels such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and to dramatic works like Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Their writing about different kinds of love in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* shows very good analysis of character and themes. Work on poetry does not have quite the same assurance. Most pupils write with good fluency and develop their ideas clearly. Levels of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally average. In longer pieces of writing, pupils' command of paragraphing is uncertain so that their work is not always well organised. All pupils, but especially lower attainers, make very effective use of drafting techniques to raise the standard of their work. They use ICT appropriately, mainly to present their work, but also for research. Specialist teachers and learning assistants support pupils with particular learning difficulties very well in lessons. Their work is well planned in conjunction with class teachers so that these pupils make very good progress.
93. Pupils are very positive about their work in English lessons. Most pupils listen attentively and behave well. Relationships with teachers are good and pupils support one another well in class. They remain interested in their work until the end of lessons.
94. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and convey this very well to pupils so that they are keen to learn. Lessons are very carefully planned according to clear and supportive schemes of work. Materials and tasks are well chosen so that pupils enjoy their learning. The majority of pupils behave very well because teachers' classroom management is very good. Short language-based activities at the start of lessons help pupils to develop basic literacy.
95. Teachers generally choose appropriate activities that encourage pupils to learn well. For example, in a lesson on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Year 10 pupils had to organise themselves quickly and efficiently in groups to cope with demanding oral tasks. They did this very well and made rapid progress in developing their speaking and listening. In some lessons there is a lack of exciting and challenging oral work. In other lessons pupils' progress is less impressive because teachers make few demands. They do most of the reading aloud themselves and pose pupils direct questions which only require short answers. A minority of pupils make unsatisfactory progress due to their lack of interest and confidence in their potential for learning that is a residue from the previous staffing problems.
96. The newly appointed head of English provides very good leadership. Other members of the department who share responsibility for planning and organisation support her very well. A determined drive to raise the standards of all pupils' work is very evident in current policies and procedures. Schemes of work have been completely revised in the light of changes to the National Curriculum and to GCSE examination specifications. The progress of pupils is carefully tracked, and when they appear to underachieve, teachers give good additional help. Further revision is ongoing. Overall

improvement since the previous inspection is good. Results at GCSE were rising until 2001 but fell in 2002. From work seen, the standards are rising again. The quality of teaching is now very good, has improved greatly after the disruption in staffing stability, and is better than described in the previous report. Very recent changes are having a substantial impact on raising standards in English.

## Literacy

97. Pupils' standards of literacy across all subjects are average. Pupils read well for meaning and can meet the demands in all subjects. Writing is generally well presented and organised by pupils of all attainment levels. Spelling is below average levels for all but the most able pupils. Good use of ICT skills helps pupils to prepare and present their written work. In most lessons pupils have relatively few opportunities to read aloud, give presentations to the class or feed back after group activities. As a result their skills in speaking and listening are below average.
98. Across the curriculum the impact of the school literacy policy is satisfactory. A new co-ordinator, steering group and whole school policy were established in 2001. All staff have undergone some training. Literacy has been addressed in departmental policies and schemes of work. However, evidence of literacy strategies in lessons is thin. Teachers give little additional support for reading except in history, geography where pupils frequently read aloud and where guidance is given to help pupils read for research. Teachers choose appropriate texts in art and design to match pupils' reading levels. Although key words are displayed in most teaching areas direct support for pupils' writing is found only in science, ICT and art and design. Here teachers use more structure for writing and useful phrases to help lower attaining pupils construct their written responses.

## English as an additional language

99. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress. Teachers support very well the small numbers of pupils who are at early stages of English language development. Very good strategies are in place to assess the language levels of these pupils. They receive additional high quality support from specialist teachers who can help them during and out of lessons, using their native language. As a result they make very rapid progress that is closely tracked and recorded. Instances of teachers providing pupils with very good support were noted in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education. Elsewhere even though pupils were identified as having English as an additional language they coped very well without needing special support.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching results in good learning and achievement.
- Good leadership and management give a clear direction towards improving standards.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. They result in pupils' good attitudes.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good; it ensures they make similar progress to other pupils.

## Areas for improvement

- The marking of pupils' work does not help pupils to know their standards and what they need to do to improve their work
- Homework is not used well enough to inform the attainment and progress of pupils.
- Lesson objectives and the review time at the end of lessons are not sufficiently focused on pupils' learning.

100. In 2002, pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 was average and well above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in mathematics was similar to that in science but better than that in English. Boys did better than girls. Overall, results have risen steadily in line with national trends over the last 5 years.
101. In the 2002 GCSE mathematics examination the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was average. Results were well above average in relation to similar schools and to their standards at the end of Year 9. Results rose significantly in 2001 and this standard has been maintained in 2002. The performance of boys and girls was similar. Pupils did better in mathematics than they did in most other subjects studied.
102. Standards in work seen at the end of Year 9 are average. Achievement is good. Standards are improving as pupils move from Year 7 to Year 9. The implementation of the national strategy for teaching mathematics in both Years 7 and 8 is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Overall, standards of numeracy are average. Pupils generally handle numbers confidently in mental and oral activities although lower attaining pupils in Year 9 do not recall their tables easily or order decimal numbers confidently. Graphical skills and data handling skills are satisfactory but algebraic skills are weak for many pupils. Good attention is given to pupils' problem solving skills through lessons on 'thinking skills'.
103. In work seen, by the end of Year 11 standards are average. Compared with their standards at the end of Year 9, pupils' standards indicate that they are achieving well. Number skills are satisfactory. Graphical and data handling skills are generally good for many pupils. Average attaining pupils in Year 11 calculate and draw appropriate graphs of 'moving averages' confidently and accurately. However, algebraic skills are still weak for all but the highest attaining pupils. Average attaining pupils are not confident when solving equations. Problem solving skills are good in GCSE coursework.
104. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is often very good. As a result, learning and achievement are good. The good subject knowledge of teachers ensures new skills and concepts are explained clearly, which helps pupils to understand them better. Good relationships exist between pupils and their teachers; this results in pupils generally behaving well, listening well during discussions and working well on their tasks. Well-planned lessons that cater well for pupils' needs contribute much to the progress of the pupils. For example, in a very good lesson with lower attaining pupils, the teacher used a practical activity well to develop pupils' understanding of the relationship between the circumference and diameter of a circle. Support staff are used effectively to support pupils with special educational needs. This ensures they make similar progress to other pupils.
105. Starter activities are being used well to develop pupils' oral and mental skills. However, objectives are not clearly focused on learning in different parts of the lesson and the review time at the end of lessons is not always used well enough to give pupils sufficient time to think about what they have learnt. Teachers generally question pupils well. They use this opportunity effectively to find out what pupils already know about the work covered and develop their understanding further. Although homework

is set regularly the quality of homework set does not adequately reinforce pupils' learning, challenge more able pupils or provide information about pupils' progress or attainment. Marking is inconsistent; it does not inform pupils well enough about their standards and what they need to do to improve. The presentation of pupils' work is often untidy.

106. The subject is well led and managed. A clear direction is provided towards improving standards. New teachers are well supported and all teachers work effectively as a team on behalf of their pupils. A good process for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department is beginning to have an impact on improving standards. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, as attainment in Year 9 has steadily risen compared to the national average, numeracy policies are fully embedded and good teaching quality sustained.

## Numeracy

107. The overall standard of numeracy is average. As a result most pupils cope well with numeracy tasks met in other subjects. For example, in design and technology, pupils usually measure accurately when dealing with proportions of ingredients. In science pupils draw accurate graphs to represent results of experiments. In geography, pupils generally interpret graphs well and draw a range of graphs to convey the meaning of data.
108. At present, subjects are making a satisfactory contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy skills in lessons. There is a policy statement and all staff have been made aware of the national strategy for teaching numeracy and what they should do to assist pupils within lessons. They have identified where numeracy impacts on their subject.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Work schemes are clear and effective.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as a second language progress well.
- In keeping with school policy, the department has developed a very stimulating environment for learning in science.

### Areas for improvement

- The level of textbook resources, particularly for GCSE.
- Setting of short-term targets.
- Provision of greater challenge for higher attaining pupils.

109. Results in national tests for 14 year olds in 2002 were in line with the national averages, just below average when compared to schools with pupils having a similar prior attainment but well above average when compared to similar schools. Given the pupils' standard when they entered the school this represents good achievement. For the last three years results at the school have improved more rapidly than the national trend. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
110. At GCSE in 2002 the results were below the national average. However this appears to be against the trend of results over the previous two years and the overall movement is upwards. This again represents good achievement. The difference in performance between boys and girls was also negligible.

111. Standards in Years 9 and Year 11 are at the national average. All pupils enjoy their science and are confident and competent in their use of scientific equipment. Higher attaining pupils have a good scientific vocabulary and are knowledgeable, with good ICT skills. Middle attainers are confident in their understanding of scientific concepts and are able to express themselves effectively in scientific terms. The lower attaining pupils understand the basic principles and the significance of science to their everyday existence. In particular the written work by the lower attaining pupils achieves a very good standard.
112. The department has a literacy policy and backs this up by the use of writing frames, key words etc. Numeracy skills are included and there is some good graphical work in particular. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the use of additional worksheets and the teachers in the department contribute to the writing of the individual education plans. Pupils with English as a second language are helped by the provision of translations of the basic equipment and key words on the wall in the laboratories and small handwritten science dictionaries as well as appropriate individual help in lessons.
113. Learning and teaching are good. An enthusiastic approach from the teachers encourages a good response from the pupils and good learning situations are quickly established in the lessons. Class management is good and lessons are well planned. There is also an effective effort made to make the science lessons as relevant as possible. For example, in a lesson on optics great stimulus was given by the use of visual aids showing fibre optics, special mirrors and cats' eyes to add meaning and significance to the lesson for the pupils.
114. Visual aids are used with skill and planning to the maximum effect. Generally pace is brisk and pupils learn well and with enjoyment. Very occasionally pace is slowed, for example by the use of too much 'cutting and sticking'. The highest attaining pupils could be stimulated more by the posing of more open-ended questions. Progress for the older pupils is also hindered by the lack of textbooks to take home.
115. The leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers are observed and there is monitoring of exercise books. The assessment process is well developed with targets now being given for pupils at all levels. These targets are given to the teachers who in turn inform the pupils. The issuing of National Curriculum levels following end of topic tests, thus enabling pupils' progress to be monitored closely, backs up the progress through the year. Books are marked regularly, often with helpful comments, but the provision of simple, achievable short-term targets would help to guide pupils towards immediate improvement. The in-service training of teachers is good and, for example, most have already completed training for the teaching of ICT and by the end of the year all will be suitably qualified. The department has carried out an audit using the guidelines of the Key Stage 3 pilot and the teachers are in the process of modifying the Key Stage 3 work schemes and lesson plans.
116. The accommodation in the department is good and the laboratories have good displays of posters, key words and pupils' work kept in immaculate condition. The department is served by two very efficient and competent laboratory technicians but two technicians are insufficient for a department of this size and the consequences are that learning and teaching are hampered by the teacher often having to service pupils' practical problems rather than being able to teach.
117. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained and attitudes to science have remained good. Good progress has been made with monitoring and developing teaching. Further work on setting targets to focus on raising attainment is still needed.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to good progress.
- Assessment is very good and helps raise standards.
- There is a good range of two and three-dimensional work

#### Areas for improvement

- The need to develop more independent learning.
- The attainment of boys in the GCSE examinations.
- The use of whole-class teacher demonstration of skills.

118. Teacher assessments at the age of 14 show standards to be average. Standards in GCSE have remained at average levels over the past three years. A much higher than average proportion of pupils takes art at GCSE. A higher than average proportion of pupils get a grade A. Boys are less successful than girls in gaining the higher grades A\*-C. Pupils with English as an additional language and pupils from ethnic minority groups reach average standards.
119. Standards seen at age 14 and in GCSE are average. These are similar to teacher assessments and GCSE results in recent years. The use of mark-making techniques in drawing and painting is very good in Year 7. Pupils are given examples of up to 40 different techniques of achieving tone and texture in their drawings. They use these impressively. However, there is not enough application of these skills in later work, particularly by lower attaining boys in Year 11. Where drawing and painting are done from direct observation the standards are well above average in all years. Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 show good skills in three-dimensional work, particularly in clay modelling and light sculpture.
120. Overall, pupils in all years make good progress. Higher attaining pupils and the gifted and talented make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. Many of these pupils reach good standards in art. A significant minority of white boys makes unsatisfactory progress in GCSE. This is largely due to much unfinished work and inadequate application of the skills learned earlier. There is no tradition of using sketchbooks for research and development. This limits the provision for independent learning.
121. Teaching and learning are good. All teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and there is a good range of specialist disciplines. They teach the skills of drawing and painting well. These include a formal study of colour theory and the use of colour. Ten-minute sketching exercises are particularly successful. There is not enough use made of teacher demonstrations for the whole class and some pupils waste time in gaining an awareness of how they might improve their work. However, all pupils get individual attention and support in turn. There was one incident of unsatisfactory teaching. In this lesson the vast majority of pupils did not bring the required work to the lesson and they were not given adequate work to do instead. The boys, in particular, took advantage of the supply teacher situation. There is good use of ICT for research, especially in GCSE.
122. Leadership and management are good. There is a newly appointed acting head of department who has written new schemes of work. These are in good detail. They are well illustrated and give good support to the newly qualified teachers and temporary supply staff. Assessment is very good. It is designed specifically for each unit of work. It includes detailed self-assessment. This helps pupils to understand what they have to do to improve their work. The success of each unit of work is evaluated and this is used in future planning.

123. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and to study the spiritual and cultural elements of the art of other cultures.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths

- The course in citizenship is diverse, relevant and well planned.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to aspects and issues raised are positive.

### Area for improvement

- A system of monitoring and evaluating the teaching of the subject both within and across subjects to ensure consistency has not yet been put in place.

124. The course in citizenship was introduced as a major part of pupils' personal, social and health education at the beginning of the school year. It is taught in all year groups by form tutors, and includes such topics as citizenship and the role of the media in Year 8, local democracy in Year 7, the European Parliament in Year 9 and global citizenship in Year 10. In addition, each subject department has incorporated into its scheme of work opportunities for increasing pupils' awareness of implications for citizenship relevant to the particular subject or topic being studied.
125. Pupils' levels of attainment are satisfactory, and their achievement is good. By their responses to a number of issues pupils display an increasing awareness of the importance of citizenship in a variety of situations. Pupils in Year 8 discussed the importance of creating rules in order to protect the rights of the individual, and in Year 9 pupils discussed different ways of making a positive contribution to society. In lessons in ICT pupils in Year 10 learned about voting patterns, and discussed the contribution of electronic systems of voting. In science, pupils consider the social and environmental implications of quarrying in a National Park. By discussing the rights and wrongs of the execution of a Nazi war criminal, pupils learn to think for themselves, and as a result of a visit to battlefields of the First World War pupils were able to empathise with the plight of young volunteer soldiers at that time, making comparisons with the present-day professional army. Lessons in religious education provide opportunities for pupils to discuss human rights.
126. The quality of teaching is good. Form tutors and subject teachers teach elements of the course with commitment and enthusiasm. Lessons which are part of the personal, social and health education programme are well planned, with strategies which develop pupils' understanding and provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and express their opinions. Lesson plans identify opportunities to teach aspects of citizenship, although occasionally opportunities are missed.
127. The co-ordinator for the subject, with the co-operation of other members of staff, has created a diverse and relevant course in which the school's aims and values are firmly embedded. Pupils are clearly taught to develop insight and understanding which will better equip them for their adult lives. Democracy is operated in a practical manner in elections for year group and school councils, each of which is playing an increasing role in the life of the school. Pupils in Year 8 are developing their folders of work into personal records of achievement, and it is the intention of the co-ordinators to expand this practice into other year groups. In assembly, pupils in Year 11 were invited to think about the rights and wrongs of angry retaliation as they heard of the reactions of a New York taxi citizen to the destruction of the World Trade Centre, and in a Year 8 assembly

pupils reflected on the importance of tolerance towards handicapped and disadvantaged people.

128. The school is aware that the need to monitor pupils' attainment and progress as the course continues is an area for development, and is currently considering ways of implementing this.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are very good, and lead to a clear co-operative sense of direction.
- Attainment has risen consistently, and pupils now do better than they do overall in their other subjects.
- Improvements in the department since the last inspection have been very good.
- Teaching overall is good with many very good features; this leads to the development and application of a variety of strategies, and ultimately, good learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Procedures for using National Curriculum levels in assessment of attainment and pupil self-assessment need strengthening in Years 7 to 9.
- Industrial links are under-developed, and the department currently offers no vocational option choice.

129. Examination results at Key Stage 4 have risen steadily over the last three years and are now a little above the national average. Pupils' average point scores are broadly in line with the national average, and overall pupils do better than they do in all their other subjects in the school. Girls do better than boys but this is not significant in comparison with national figures. Teacher assessments in Year 9 have been higher than tests in core subjects, and partly reflect the progress pupils make but also the difficulty the department is having, reconciling grades given with National Curriculum levels.
130. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 9 are about average overall. On entry, pupils' attainment is below average, particularly in designing, and their achievement is therefore good overall. Achievement varies in different units of work across different specialisms; this is because expectations and opportunities for open-ended design vary. Staff in the department are continually developing its scheme of work and work co-operatively in its development of a coherent approach to planning. The recent development of structured pupil workbooks is improving the acquisition of knowledge and pace of lessons. Pupils design and make a variety of products including clocks and healthy nutritious meals. They start to use flow charts in their planning, and use hazard analysis and control systems in their development of food products. They work competently with simple electronic circuits, CAD/CAM systems and practice computer control. This means they are starting to understand industrial processes and acquire skills and knowledge of a wide range of tools, materials and processes.
131. By the end of Year 11, pupils' making is good. They are achieving well. They research and analyse their results well and this leads to improved design development. In some areas, modelling helps pupils to develop their own products, but practice is inconsistent across the specialisms. Expectations of the presentation and communication of design ideas, and evaluation of ideas against the original specification, are again variable, and this has an effect upon overall achievement. Pupils do not currently have access to CAD software, and the application of ICT to folio work is variable. There is a lack of opportunity for progression in design using

ICT, although they do enhance attainment in graphic products by their use of CAD/CAM to make promotional gifts for point of sale displays. Gifted and talented pupils are identified but a full support programme has yet to be developed. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make at least as good progress as other pupils, as do those with English as a second language. The department's inclusive policy is successful in encouraging a mix of boys and girls in available options.

132. Since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements with regard to all three key issues in the last report. For example, Key Stage 3 curriculum coverage, including textiles, is now good; there is now a satisfactory range of Key Stage 4 subject options, and attainment has improved to match national expectations in both key stages. Pupils' ability to investigate and develop ideas has much improved, but they still do not evaluate their work as well as they might. There is a need to further develop a progression of expectation in the helpful writing frames sometimes provided. Lesson pace is now good; pupils make good progress, and are now motivated. Technician provision is now much better and is well utilised to support teachers and pupils. Subject areas in design and technology now co-operate and there are very good working relationships. Large group sizes have been addressed, and funding for consumables is now acceptable. Some work has still to be done to secure the accuracy of Year 9 assessment, and develop pupil self-assessment.
133. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are good overall, and in over one third of lessons teaching is very good. Individual lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of resources available. Pupils learn skills well when the correct technical equipment is provided. In both key stages, product analysis is utilised to impart knowledge and understanding of existing products, and set the context for pupils' own design work. Stimulating exemplar material in teaching rooms is used to raise expectations. Independent learning is encouraged through well-focused research, and well-organised pupil manuals and workbooks are being developed for Years 7 to 9. In Year 9, progress in learning is hampered by some variation in expectation, for instance in the quality of design presentation and modelling. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' learning and progress are enhanced when teachers provide clear guidance and a structured approach to design folio work, and this is particularly supportive for the low achievers. An effective programme of 'top-up' and after-school support is provided. The department incorporates many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social, cultural and environmental development and understanding, for instance when pupils develop foods with cultural or special dietary needs in mind.
134. Management and leadership in the department are very good, and priorities for further developments are clear and shared by an enthusiastic department. The department is currently short of one specialist teaching room and has limited textiles resources. It has made good use recently of a CAD/CAM embroidery machine to enhance the quality of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9. The department does not currently offer a vocational option. Staff involvement with examination boards is clarifying ideas, but department industrial links are under-developed. Assessment and monitoring in Years 10 and 11 are enabling pupils to improve their work. Since the last inspection, improvement has been dramatic. Standards have risen significantly in 2002 compared to previous years. Teaching is much improved and the leadership is very clearly focused on strategies to raise attainment. Overall improvement is very good.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, consequently standards are rising.

- The decline in standards of the last five years has been halted and the number of A\*-C grades doubled in 2002.
- The leadership and management of the new head of department are good and teachers blend into an effective team.
- There is a habit of rigorous appraisal and effective self-criticism which is shaping good practice and raising standards.
- The department is well accommodated and well stocked so that pupils can learn.

#### Areas for improvement

- Closeness of work to the requirements of the examination board.
- Standards of fieldwork and geographical investigations between Year 7 and Year 9 in order to raise standards of GCSE coursework.
- Attracting more of the highest attainers in Year 9 to the GCSE course.
- Further develop good learning skills, especially in listening and maintaining concentration.

135. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average. There is no established curriculum continuity between the department and its main feeder primaries so that knowledge and understanding of geography are very uneven on entry. For example, pupils from one primary school could use Venn diagrams to sort concepts, and knew the difference between Great Britain, the British Isles and the United Kingdom; others did not. By Year 9, standards assessed by teachers are at the national average. The scrutiny of exercise books and the inspection of lessons confirm that pupils are achieving at an average standard overall and are making good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. Whilst those of high prior attainment are now being stretched towards the highest levels of the National Curriculum through, for example, the work on the school environment in Year 7, they do not experience any more fieldwork until GCSE coursework. The quality of extended writing and geographical enquiries is good but the requirement to solve geographical problems is not yet sufficient to attract enough higher attaining pupils to the GCSE courses from a restricted and competitive option choice.
136. Attainment in GCSE in 2002 was well below the national average but the decline over the last five years in the score of GCSE grades A\*-C has been halted. In 2002 the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C was twice that of the previous year, but still well below the national average. Standards seen reflect this level of attainment. Some pupils, particularly boys, choose geography at GCSE for negative reasons. Overall, when the average score of pupils in Year 9 is compared with the average GCSE score in geography, their progress is satisfactory. Overall progress is now accelerating and pupils are achieving well as a result of the good teaching. However, teachers do not address closely enough the requirements of the examination board, nor do they yet use well enough a rich data resource to set challenging targets for pupils.
137. Teaching is good. Its strength lies in the good quality of subject knowledge that pervades the organisation and management of teaching and learning of the all-specialist team. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and computer skills is good because they are carefully planned into the new schemes of work and well taught in lessons. Some younger pupils and older ones with low prior attainment lack the listening and concentration skills to help them learn. Pupils learning English as an additional language have very good support but there is no additional support in class for those with special educational needs when the subject makes a major contribution to the support of literacy and numeracy skills. All lessons contain a good variety of appropriate tasks so that pupils can learn at their own level and pace to make good progress in class. The pace of work is brisk and the good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils contribute positively to good learning. Where some older and lower attaining pupils show signs of not wanting to participate the quality of support and encouragement is good enough to keep them productively on task.

138. The leadership and management of the new head of department are good. Effective new schemes of work and a new handbook are being developed. There is an effective review and appraisal system within the school that is growing within the department. The rigour involved in self-criticism is improving teaching and learning and is raising standards in a good team that works well together. Teachers offer strong role models to girls as well as boys. The department has good accommodation and is well stocked. The department is improving quickly and there are good reasons to expect that standards will rise further.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and pupils are highly motivated.
- Standards are above average.
- Thinking skills are promoted well.
- The subject makes a good contribution to citizenship, and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Lack of provision for independent learning.
- Range of textbooks to support coursework at GCSE.

139. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 teacher assessments judged standards to be above average. GCSE results have been broadly average over the past three years.
140. Standards seen currently at the end of Year 9 are similar to teacher assessments. In Years 7 to 9, pupils show good, detailed knowledge and understanding of topics such as the Black Death, the Great Fire of London and trench warfare in the First World War. They are active and enthusiastic learners and can record a story quickly in drawings, signs and symbols. This method of recording intensifies their concentration and thinking. Their spoken answers show excellent knowledge and understanding. Some written answers are hindered by poor skills in literacy.
141. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are higher than the GCSE results in recent years and are now above average. This is largely due to the very good promotion of thinking skills introduced recently. A much greater than average proportion of pupils take history at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs and those with below average skills in literacy do particularly well in recording on graphs and charts. There has been no use of coursework in GCSE studies in the recent past, and so there is no strong tradition of independent learning in GCSE studies. Coursework is now introduced in Year 10 and is leading to an improvement in standards and depth of knowledge. Pupils are achieving well from Year 10 to Year 11 and standards, relative to national expectation for the ages, are rising.
142. Teaching and learning are very good. There is some excellent teaching and some excellent features in all lessons. The teachers are lively and charismatic. They use their good specialist knowledge to enliven lessons and interest their pupils. There is often a subtle and unexpected use of humour by the teacher. This often touches on pupils' emotions. The most successful aspect of the teaching is the promotion of thinking skills. Teachers use a range of techniques to help pupils to focus on the details. These include the use of graphs to chart details of events and emotional responses. This aspect of teaching is exemplary in engaging pupils' interest. It is also instrumental in ensuring that all pupils make very good progress. Pupils show impressive levels of concentration. This is particularly good in groups of lower attaining pupils.

143. Pupils are set in broad ability groups and work is planned carefully to challenge and interest each group. Leadership and management are very good. There is new leadership within the past two years. Planning is very good and there is good evaluation of the work of the department. Assessment is good. It evaluates the success of teaching, and changes are made to raise standards. It was recognised that girls showed less interest in the units on war and more social history has been introduced to broaden the appeal for girls.
144. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studying the emotional, moral and social effects of war, famine and natural disasters. It also makes a good contribution to education for citizenship as pupils consider responses to laws and the individual conscience.
145. There is good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved. Teaching has improved significantly. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Fieldwork and the use of artefacts are now good.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good, and pupils make good progress.
- Teachers have very good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils are interested in the subject and they behave well in lessons.
- There is good leadership and management of the department.

#### Areas for improvement

- Use more fully National Curriculum levels in teaching to help pupils set targets.
- Make more use of new technology in teaching.
- Increase the teaching time for pupils taking short courses ICT.
- Further support cross-curricular ICT.

146. The results of pupils at the end of Year 11 in 2002, taking the short course GCSE ICT, are just below national averages. Teachers' assessments of pupils aged 14 in 2001 indicate that they are above national levels. The standards of work seen during the inspection by pupils in Year 9 are at the levels expected for their age. The standard of pupils taking GCSE are in line with national expectations.
147. In Year 7 pupils have created some *PowerPoint* presentations, making use of their skills in word processing and importing clip art and other images into their slides. Higher attaining pupils have slides showing uniformity of text and background. Pupils in Year 8 make use of desktop publishing to create newspaper front pages. They use word processing for extended writing, and are learning how to create databases. In Year 9 pupils show good evaluation of *PowerPoint* presentations, and have produced interesting presentations about moral issues of banning boxing and foxhunting. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make a wider use of more advanced skills to complete project work in GCSE short and full courses. They produce good quality flyers for set assignments and individual project work, websites with hyperlinks to their home page, and more complex formulae in spreadsheets.
148. Pupils make good progress in lessons as they increase their skills, knowledge and understanding in the use of a variety of software applications. In Year 7 pupils start with a diverse range of skills and understanding of ICT, and achieve well to reach national standards by the age of 14. There is good achievement by pupils in Years 10 and 11 where they exceed predictions made using data from tests and attainment

levels in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils make similar progress as other pupils and achieve well.

149. Overall, teaching is good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge as well as knowledge of examinations to give clear explanations, which helps pupils learn, and understand what they need to do to get best results in there exams. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers and pupils' positive response in lessons contributes to their learning. Lessons are usually well planned and tasks selected are appropriate to pupils' attainment levels. Teachers have high expectations of pupils being able to work independently and complete tasks set. Where interactive whiteboards and data projectors are used, pupils are quickly able to learn processes in using software; however, this technology is not used in all ICT lessons. Although the department have developed a good criteria-based assessment scheme for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, little use is made of this in teaching to help pupils set targets for their work.
150. There is good management of the department, with clear leadership and a commitment to improve standards, which have improved in all years. The appointment of a technician, the creation of new ICT rooms and the purchase of new equipment have been significant contributions to the good improvement made since the last inspection. Assessment of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good and the introduction of GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 has increased opportunities for pupils in these years.
151. Good use is made of ICT in the teaching of other subjects. Many departments make use of the one bookable ICT room, as well as using the limited number of computers in their own departments. The demand for using this technology in teaching continues to grow and the purchase of a number of laptop computers goes some way to meet this demand. However, the limited number of computers and associated technology in departments reduces the effectiveness of use of ICT in teaching. The New Opportunities Funded training for ICT is still in progress, and is well supported by the ICT department.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The department is well managed and led effectively.
- The accommodation is very pleasant, with excellent displays.
- Teachers make good use of ICT to motivate pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The oral skills of many pupils are unsatisfactory developed.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' exercise books is inconsistent.
- There is no portfolio of moderated work, so that opportunities for pupils to have exemplar work are missed.

152. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in French in 2002 was significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-G was also below the national average. The difference in the overall level of performance between boys and girls is similar to that seen nationally. The proportion of a small group of pupils who attained grades A\*-C in German was close to the national average, but above it at grades A\*-G. When all the examination results in school are compared, pupils performed better in most other subjects than in French. The results in French at A\*-C show a slight improvement over the results for 2001, with almost twice as many pupils having been entered for the GCSE examination. The trend over the last three years is rising. Fewer pupils took German, and the results at grades A\*-C show a significant improvement over the previous year. No pupil was successful in gaining a grade A\* in French or German in 2002. Analysis of the results by each skill area shows that the weakest skill overall for one third of all the pupils entered was in speaking. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 show pupils' overall level of attainment above the national average: evidence during the inspection suggests that this is overestimated.
153. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 in French is below average. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language used in the classroom by the teachers is generally average. The majority of pupils recognise the words and phrases from their topics. They are able to note information, which they extract from conversations on cassette. Pupils in two Year 8 classes, for example, drew successfully on their whiteboards a quick sketch of the different pieces of furniture they heard mentioned on cassette. Pupils' oral skills are below average. They lack confidence, rely on prompts or support from the teacher and find the pronunciation of some words difficult. The best speaking observed was in the small groups in Year 7, when lower attaining pupils engaged in oral activities for about 20 minutes. They name the pets, say if they have a pet and put a question to partners. Some pupils found it difficult, but they persevered. Pupils generally write or copy with reasonable accuracy and at an appropriate level. Not all pupils in classes have the same quantity of work. Many pupils omit accents. This applies particularly to higher attaining pupils in Year 9, where the omission of the accent on the past participles results in an insecure knowledge of the perfect tense. Very few pupils redraft their work or complete corrections to improve its accuracy.
154. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 11 is below average. Pupils understand the vocabulary and constructions relevant to their topic, ranging from leisure activities in the lower attaining groups to healthy eating and keeping fit in the higher attaining classes. Oral skills vary. Many pupils lack confidence and pronunciation is sometimes anglicised. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 answered

questions confidently, but only in the present tense. The best pieces of coursework writing in Year 11 are accurate. Pupils use a range of expressions and different tenses. Average and lower attaining pupils are either less consistently accurate or sentences do not always convey meaning.

155. One small group of pupils in Year 11 is the last class to take German. The overall level of attainment is average, and they are making good progress. They are taught well by a teacher who only took them over at the beginning of Year 11 and who has developed her own course material. In the one lesson observed, pupils spoke confidently in the past tense, which they also use well in their written work. Word order remains a problem in both speaking and writing.
156. The achievement and rate of progress of most pupils in Years 7 to 11 are satisfactory. Over time, pupils acquire the necessary vocabulary to help them with their topics. For example, in a Year 8 class, pupils consolidated their knowledge of furniture prior to a listening exercise, in which they performed well. Pupils in a Year 9 Spanish lesson learnt how to express their like or dislike of different leisure activities. In a Year 10 French lesson, pupils developed their writing skills, consolidated their use of the perfect tense and used the imperfect tense for the first time. Lower attaining pupils in a Year 11 lesson matched the French phrases successfully to pictures on computers. Progress for a significant number of pupils, however, is unsatisfactory in speaking. Pupils with special needs, or English as an additional language, and the gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to others in the class.
157. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour vary from very good to satisfactory: overall, they are satisfactory. Pupils in three Year 7 lessons responded enthusiastically to flash cards, and pupils in a Year 11 class to the teacher's miming. Not all pupils take a pride in the presentation of their exercise books.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers' planning is sound. Teachers share the objectives of the lesson with pupils and display them clearly, so that pupils are aware of what they have to learn. Lessons contain different activities and different skills, but occasionally there are no opportunities for pupils to speak or to read aloud. Teachers use resources well, particularly the overhead projector to introduce or to consolidate vocabulary, flash cards and small whiteboards. Whole-class work is used effectively to aid pronunciation or to commit new words to memory, but individual pupils are not challenged afterwards. Teachers' marking is satisfactory overall, but inconsistent in quality and regularity, and there are few comments in Years 7 to 9 to help pupils to improve.
159. The department meets the statutory requirements for teaching the National Curriculum. However, the amount of time devoted to a second language, Spanish, in Year 9 is insufficient, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The newly appointed head of department is already providing good leadership and management for a mainly new and relatively inexperienced team. All teachers are committed and work well together. The use of ICT has been integrated well into the work of the department in order to motivate pupils. The accommodation is spacious and very pleasant, with excellent displays. Resources are satisfactory, but no portfolio of moderated work exists to provide exemplars to pupils and there are insufficient textbooks in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last report has been satisfactory, and the department has the capacity to improve further. Standards in writing and acquisition of vocabulary have developed, but speaking remains weak for many pupils. After considerable staff changes, the quality of teaching is being re-established and leadership is significantly improved with new staff in post.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

The Performing Arts faculty aims to develop skills of communication, self expression and confidence. It has very good facilities. There are two music rooms, a drama studio and a theatre/hall with full lighting and a dance studio. All pupils take dance and drama in Years 7 to 9. The faculty is organised and manages music, drama and dance as an integrated area of the curriculum. Each subject is taught separately, and pupils must choose one of the three to study at GCSE level.

## Music

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching overall is good.
- Standards of attainment in composing in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes towards music are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9 are too low.
- The time allocated to music is insufficient to deliver the National Curriculum in sufficient depth.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not satisfactory.

160. In 2002, results in music in GCSE were well below average in comparison with all schools. The trend over recent years has declined. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. Numbers entered are small in comparison with most other subjects.
161. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are below the national average, and this was reflected in standards of work in Year 9 seen during the inspection. Standards of attainment have declined since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress within lessons is generally satisfactory but they have not achieved as well as they might between Year 7 and Year 9 because music has had a relatively low allocation of time.
162. Pupils' performing skills are satisfactory. Most have developed a secure sense of rhythm; they read uncomplicated notation fluently and use good fingering techniques when playing simple melodies on keyboards but they play insensitively because they do not listen to the quality of their performances. Poor listening skills also prevent them from making better progress in ensemble work. Pupils do not readily use a wide technical vocabulary to discuss music they hear. At present pupils at this stage have limited access to ICT in music. No singing was heard during the inspection.
163. Standards of attainment of pupils in Year 11 are average. The achievement of pupils from Year 7 to 9 is satisfactory and in Years 10 and 11 is good. Particular strengths are in the development of skills in composing; they become confident in using conventional form, melody and harmony. Higher attaining pupils create attractive pieces that contain some original ideas. For example, one composition about clowns effectively portrayed the underlying pathos by using an insistent rhythm and repetitive harmony to support a melody in a minor key. Most pupils know how to develop their pieces beyond the scope of suggested guidelines and all are willing to explore original ideas. More able pupils perform competently, but lower attaining pupils lack secure technique and do not communicate confidently with an audience. Pupils do not have a wide enough descriptive or technical vocabulary to describe music they hear.
164. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Most are able to cope with the same standard of work as pupils in larger classes. Pupils who are gifted and talented are identified within the department and make satisfactory

progress; pupils who speak English as a second language make satisfactory progress in music.

165. Pupils display positive attitudes towards music. They co-operate well with one another and with the teacher, handle equipment responsibly and try hard to control levels of noise. When they are working independently, most use the available time well, avoiding the temptation to distract other pupils unnecessarily.
166. The quality of teaching overall is good. Planning is good, so that objectives are generally clear, activities are varied and practical activities are appropriate. Most pupils learn well, at a good pace, and make good progress as a consequence. Very good relationships developed with pupils ensure strong co-operation and concentration by the majority. The assessment system for pupils in the GCSE course is well used to inform pupils of their attainment and progress. There is not always a sufficient range of challenge for pupils of different attainments. The assessment system used in Years 7, 8 and 9 records pupils' attainment, but is not related to suggested criteria for National Curriculum levels of attainment in music. Pupils are not therefore always clear about their levels of performance and knowledge of music.
167. The new leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department, recently appointed, is rigorous in evaluating the effectiveness of the quality of teaching. Time allocated to music is insufficient to deliver the National Curriculum in sufficient depth, with the result that pupils do not develop skills beyond a basic level. Resources have improved since the previous inspection, and are now good.
168. Accommodation for music has a number of unsatisfactory features; the second teaching room is separated from the main room and practice rooms, and access to equipment is difficult. Practice rooms in which pupils can work in small groups, exploring and sharing ideas without interrupting the work of others, are small and congested with larger instruments because of lack of proper arrangements for storage; ventilation and lighting are unsatisfactory. Pupils do not, therefore, have access to separate spaces in which to experiment and refine the quality of their work. This has a direct effect on standards of attainment in composing, in performing in ensembles and on listening skills.
169. The school's choir and instrumental groups rehearse regularly and contribute to various events within the school and to the annual carol service held in a local church. Music is taught as part of a course in performing arts in which, by exploring ideas which are thematically linked, such as the 'Circus World' project in Year 7, pupils become aware of the creative links between music, drama and dance.
170. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have declined compared to six years ago. Difficulties with staff recruitment in the past two years have impacted on opportunities and on pupils' progress. The quality of teaching, which has been varied and sometimes unsatisfactory, is now good. Pupils are now able to enjoy music. Assessment procedures remain in need of being brought in line with current practice.

## Drama

The overall provision in drama is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Challenging and engaging lessons.
- Strong leadership and management.

### Area for improvement

- Time allocation for drama in Year 7.

171. All pupils take drama in Years 7 to 9 as part of a performing arts programme. The time allocated for drama in Year 7 is less than in Years 8 and 9. GCSE drama is offered as one of three expressive arts subjects in Years 10 and 11. All pupils must choose one of these subjects and so the numbers of pupils taking GCSE drama are high. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow a well-balanced and stimulating programme of study in drama. Teaching is rigorous and pupils enjoy their work. By the end of Year 9 they are working at levels that show good achievement over three years.
172. GCSE examination results in 2002 were close to the national average and amongst the best in all subjects. They have been consistently at this level over recent years. These high standards are the result of very good teaching that encourages pupils to be independent and resourceful learners. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Lessons are very focused and pupils work hard to achieve high standards. Activities are challenging and engaging as seen when Year 10 pupils worked in small groups on staging a scene from Catherine Cookson's *Fifteen Streets*.
173. The pace of learning was brisk and pupils were encouraged by the teacher to evaluate their performances as a means of moving forward. Pupils showed good use of posture, facial expression and movement to give convincing characterisations. Work in folders is of above average standard and is very well organised. Pupils achieve well given their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Leadership and management are strong and effective. Performing arts have a high profile in school and the drama club, productions and other events make a very valuable contribution to the effectiveness of the faculty.

## Dance

Overall the quality of provision in dance is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning is consistently very good.
- Attainment of pupils is above average.
- The analysis of results and subsequent action plan is very thorough.
- The attitudes of pupils are very positive.
- The dance studio is a very good facility.

### Area for improvement

- Attainment in the GCSE examinations.

174. In the 2002 GCSE examinations 33 per cent of pupils attained A\*-C grades. These results were below the national average but over time results have gradually improved. Increasing numbers of pupils take the course and in 2002 there were 40 entries. Fewer boys than girls take the subject and girls' results over time are better than those of boys. Pupils attain better in the practical elements of the course than in the theoretical aspect.

175. At the end of Year 9 pupils attain above average standards. They use their imagination to dance with belief and feeling and respond sensitively to the work of others. Pupils in Year 9 are able to respond to a partner with appropriate movement actions. Year 7 pupils understand levels and basic body shapes. They co-operate well in small groups and use expressive body language in their dances.
176. The present GCSE pupils are attaining above average standards. The presentation of written work of higher attaining pupils, especially girls, is very good. They draw detailed diagrams to illustrate their work and organise their files very effectively. A few pupils are hindered in the theoretical aspects of the course because they find it difficult to record information accurately. Year 11 girls perform the set study with confidence, showing a good understanding of timing, space and the dynamic qualities of the dance. A few pupils find difficulty in keeping the momentum and fluidity of the movements but the majority have good timing and co-ordination.
177. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was always at least very good and excellent in one lesson. Two specialist teachers teach dance and their strong expertise allows pupils to develop and enjoy every aspect of the subject. The teacher choreographed the dance performed by Year 7 pupils simply by using voice and gesture and this improved pupils' performance instantly. Teachers' planning is very thorough and pupils are given calendars of weekly activities. This is especially helpful for Year 11 pupils planning their final performances. Boys and girls enjoy their lessons. They work hard and their attitudes and behaviour are mostly good. The department plans a broad and vibrant curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils and captures their interest. The standards of attainment are high in Years 7, 8 and 9 because all pupils experience one lesson of dance every week.
178. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a shared commitment to improvement. The thorough monitoring of examination statistics that has been undertaken indicates a capacity to raise standards in the GCSE examinations in future. Pupils are often involved in spiritual and cultural dances and the contribution of the emotional aspect of dance to pupils' personal development is very high.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Pupils' attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average.
- Teaching is good so pupils make good progress.
- The links made with the community are excellent and very beneficial to pupils' learning.
- The facilities are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work to provide planned opportunities for teaching the evaluative component of the National Curriculum, literacy, numeracy, ICT and citizenship.
- Assessment to be specific to activities and shared with pupils.
- Provide pupils with the opportunity to work towards a GCSE examination in physical education.

179. The percentage of pupils reaching the nationally expected level of attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was above average. This confirms inspection evidence that present pupils in Year 10 are attaining above the expected level for their age. However, the attainment of present Year 9 pupils is average because pupils'

attainment on entry, in Year 7, was below average. This is the result of pupils' lack of experience in some areas of the National Curriculum before joining the school. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language follows a similar pattern. The attainment of pupils in dance is above average. They work co-operatively in small groups and interpret feelings well using expressive body movements. Boys and girls have a good knowledge of health and fitness and are able to warm up and stretch independently and effectively by the end of Year 9. They understand the effects of exercise on the body. Pupils gain this knowledge in their fitness lessons and through teachers' insistence on thorough warm-up activities at the start of every lesson. Boys in Year 8 co-operate well when planning paired balances but the majority lack agility and control in their gymnastics movements. The majority of girls in Year 9 have inconsistent hockey skills. However, the girls who play for the team have developed advanced skills and are confident enough to help others.

180. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards. During the inspection week lessons for girls in Years 10 and 11 were taught by two external instructors as part of a six-week self-protection programme. This is a very good initiative that raises girls' awareness of the risks faced by teenagers. The girls are confident and physically fit and their understanding of how to deal with potentially dangerous situations is good. Boys in Year 10 play football with good skill and a good understanding of how to create space. Boys in Year 11 have good skills in basketball, although they can be inconsistent. Boys and girls know and use technical language accurately, such as the names of muscles. Listening skills are mainly good. A few girls in Year 10 are confident and able to organise and umpire netball matches for younger pupils. Pupils' analytical skills are not as well developed as their performance skills and there is a lack of emphasis in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in lessons.
181. A few individual pupils and teams achieve very high standards in regional and county competitions in athletics, cricket, dance, football, netball, hockey, rugby and sports acrobatics. The attainment of these talented pupils is well above the national average and they benefit from the opportunities offered by their teachers. It is through these good extra-curricular activities that the subject makes its very good contribution to helping pupils understand fair play and sportsmanship. They travel to matches and meet other pupils from different areas and backgrounds.
182. The quality of teaching is good overall, and this promotes good learning in the majority of lessons. The teaching of dance is consistently very good. Pupils benefit in their learning because most year groups are divided by gender and ability and teaching is closely matched to the needs of the pupils in each group. In the best lessons, pupils learn very well because many activities are set incorporating the four strands of the National Curriculum. The length of the lesson gives teachers adequate time to fully develop these strands. In some comparatively less successful lessons, teachers focus on managing the activities and the behaviour of pupils rather than developing pupils' performance, planning and evaluative skills. The department is developing a focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT in the schemes of work but teaching does not yet fully promote the initiatives or include any reference to risk assessment and citizenship.
183. All teachers have good subject expertise and their demonstrations give pupils a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. The attitudes of the majority of pupils are good and they have good relationships with their teachers. This helps their learning. Pupils participate regularly and standards of dress are very good. The listening skills of a few boys are unsatisfactory. For example, in volleyball they underachieved when their lack of co-operation wasted time and hindered their learning. A very small number of girls are casual but non-confrontational. They make minimal effort in their lessons.

184. The head of department provides clear educational direction and good leadership for the subject. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The number of lessons in which teaching is good has increased, staffing is now more stable and the attainment of pupils is now higher in Years 10 and 11. Very good links have been developed with local secondary schools and the department's extensive links with community sports groups are of a real benefit to pupils' learning. Assessment procedures have been developed to match National Curriculum levels but further development is necessary to make them specific to activities. Very good facilities allow pupils to attain high standards in a wide range of activities. The lack of a GCSE course in the subject limits the curriculum and the aspirations of higher attaining pupils.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

### Strengths

- There is a significant improvement in provision since the last inspection.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils achieve well in relation to the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Well thought through lessons stimulate interest and develop understanding.
- The subject benefits from very good leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop assessment strategies so that pupil and departmental performance can be more effectively monitored.
- Enrich the curriculum by the further use of ICT, and by the better use of outside resources.
- Increase the time allocation in Years 10 and 11 to that recommended for short course GCSEs.

185. Since the last inspection provision for religious education has improved significantly. Two specialist teachers now teach it across the school in two well-equipped rooms. The standards achieved in the work seen meet the expectations of the local agreed syllabus in all years.
186. Across Years 7 to 9 pupils produce work of a standard close to national expectations. By Year 9, they have gained a good grasp of key elements of Christianity and the other major world religions they study. They are, for example, able to use the correct terminology for differing beliefs and practices. Many show a good appreciation of the use of symbolism in religion as demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson on the Maria Gomez cross. As a result of the good teaching and the well thought through links with modern culture, many demonstrate the ability to appreciate the impact of religion on attitudes and behaviour as seen in a Year 8 lesson on the parable of the Good Samaritan.
187. In Years 10 and 11, pupils now follow a short GCSE course and in 2001 and 2002 a significant majority have sat the examination. Results are close to the national average. However, taking account of the limited time allocated to the subject, which is well below that recommended, and the overall ability of the pupils, this represents good achievement. During the course pupils successfully build on the work of earlier years and study a range of moral and social issues from a religious, and particularly Christian and Muslim, perspective. Many are able to demonstrate a good knowledge of the fundamentals of these faiths that influence moral judgements.
188. Pupils are very well supported in their learning, particularly those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. As a result these pupils make good progress across all years. Pupils have opportunities to participate

in lessons and do so positively. Their contributions are always valued. The majority show interest in the subject and work well in all aspects of the work.

189. The quality of teaching is overall good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and seek ways to make the subject relevant. The resources in the department are very good and these are used to maximum effect. For example, the use of appropriate video and audio clips is particularly good. Lessons are well planned and involve a variety of activities that challenge pupils' thinking. The very good rapport teachers have with students enhances their learning. The lessons seen during inspection made a good contribution to personal development. A few lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, were unduly hurried and inadequate time was given for reflection and reinforcement of learning. In some lessons in all years a few pupils lose concentration and they are not sufficiently challenged and brought back into the lesson. In a few other cases pupils are not provided with sufficient support with their writing.
190. The leadership of the subject is very good with a clear vision and plan for further improvement. The management of the department is good but there is a need for further development of assessment to help monitor both individual pupil progress and that of the department. The proposed use of ICT together with the enrichment of the curriculum by visits and speakers would enhance the subject further.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Consistently very good teaching and learning.
- Very good use of health care centres and professionals to provide inter-active learning experiences.
- Introduction of the new applied vocational GCSE.

### Areas for improvement

- Literacy standards applied in the subject.

191. GNVQ intermediate and foundation courses provide a valuable vocational accreditation for pupils in Year 11 and the department now offers the new applied GCSE course in Year 10. These courses give pupils the opportunity to experience the independent work ethos of vocational study. The first pupils will complete the GNVQ examination in 2003. The attainment of pupils on these courses is in line with the national average and a minority of students is attaining above this level. Pupils on the intermediate GNVQ course understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care and manage their assignments independently. The files of pupils in the GCSE group are well presented with very good use of learning aids such as spider diagrams and subject-specific vocabulary.
192. These pupils understand the importance of communication skills in health and social care settings. Most pupils have good communication skills, but low standards of literacy skills hinder the learning of a few pupils. All pupils enjoy the co-operative nature of group discussion and pair work that is frequently used to assist their learning.
193. Teaching is consistently very good and teachers make very effective use of question and answer involving all pupils in a positive learning situation. The department uses outside visits and visitors to give primary evidence. These very good community links provide appropriate learning situations for the vocational elements of the courses. In one lesson observed, two school nurses demonstrated a variety of methods of measuring physical health and pupils' learning was accelerated by the practical

nature of the lesson. In another lesson, the teacher led a series of experiments with the pupils to inform them through first-hand experience about communication skills. Teachers use review sheets effectively to give pupils targets each term and to check their files. Handouts are clear with much visual information and are well matched to the needs of the pupils. Pupils' learning is helped by their enthusiasm for the subject and the very good relationships they have with their teachers.