

INSPECTION REPORT

**GREENFIELD SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND
ARTS COLLEGE**

Newton Aycliffe

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114305

Headteacher: Mike Thornton

Reporting inspector: D. Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th October 2002

Inspection number: 249182

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, Arts College status

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Greenfield Way
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham

Postcode: DL5 7LF

Telephone number: 01325 300378

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Peter Bergg

Date of previous inspection: 23rd September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16976	Denis Pittman	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils and pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
13786	Susan Walsh	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
17923	Michael Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English	
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Science	Assessment
30690	Gordon Allison	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art and design	
2491	Douglas Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages	
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music	
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Physical education	SMSC
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	<p>How good are curricular and other opportunities?</p> <p>Spiritual, moral, social, cultural</p>

28178	John Connor	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs	
10316	Norman Bertram	Team inspector	Geography History	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Greenfield is a community school situated on the outskirts of Newton Aycliffe. It acquired specialist Arts College status in September 1998. Although the school is smaller than average its roll is increasing and now stands at 721 pupils. A high proportion of pupils are drawn from socially disadvantaged areas rather than affluent homes. The incidence of free school meals (22.5 per cent) is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (21 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils with statements is above average. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups and there are no pupils who have English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been below average but is showing signs of becoming more in line with national expectations.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Greenfield is a good school with some outstanding features. It has established very effective links with the community that broaden and enrich pupils' experience. Most pupils achieve well particularly in relation to their prior attainment. The quality of teaching is good and ensures that pupils learn well. The vision and quality of leadership provided by the headteacher are very good. The positive relationships allied to the strong commitment to care and support effectively promote pupils' personal development. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in the visual arts are very high. Achievement in English and drama are very good.
- The leadership and management provided by senior staff and governors are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good and often very good.
- The relationships and attitudes to learning shown by pupils are very good.
- The high quality support and guidance provided for pupils. The programme operating in the ICAN base is outstanding.
- The involvement with and provision for the local community are very good. The range of extra-curricular activities promotes pupils' personal development.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment are below average in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are unsatisfactory.
- Higher attaining boys are underachieving in some subjects due to a lack of skills in evaluative and analytical writing.
- There are inconsistencies between departments in the use of assessment data to monitor progress.
- The accommodation provision in design and technology, physical education and art is unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in 1996. Standards of attainment in National Curriculum tests have improved and are now well above average relative to similar schools. The trend in GCSE examination results has begun to improve but is still below average. The underachievement of boys remains an issue. The quality of teaching is better and is an important factor in promoting the higher levels of achievement of pupils. The quality of assessment data is more comprehensive and provides useful information for target setting. The school has made an effective and well-planned response to national initiatives on literacy, citizenship and the curriculum provision for different groups of pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is not as well monitored or co-ordinated. Resource levels have improved, particularly as the result of achieving Arts College status. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) facilities is now significantly

better and more in line with national averages. Substantial improvements have been made in the quality of accommodation and decoration of the buildings. The accommodation provision in design and technology and physical education is still an area for concern; the latter is being addressed in the next stage of the school's development programme.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C

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

In the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds, results were in line with the national average. In English, attainment was above the national average and well above average in comparison with those achieved in similar schools. Attainment in mathematics and science was below the national average nationally but above the performance of similar schools. Overall, the trend in the school's performance was better than the national picture. The overall standards achieved were well above the results for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. This high level of performance relative to comparable schools has been sustained in 2002 – the standards achieved in science were particularly noteworthy.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were well below the national average but in line with the performance of similar schools. The results of some higher attaining boys were below expectation; attainment in the higher grades was below the national average but above that of similar schools. GCSE results have been well below average in recent years. The trend in GCSE standards has been lower than the national picture. The school failed to meet its overall target for GCSE examination performance by five per cent. In the most recent GCSE examinations (2002) the achievement of pupils is better. The school exceeded its target by two per cent last year; the actual results matched those of the previous year. Examination performance in most subjects is below national figures, but particularly high standards were achieved in business studies, visual arts and performing arts. The results in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages were low and were not as high as they should have been given the abilities of some pupils. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls is larger than that found nationally.

Standards in Year 9 are now average. They are above average in English, science, art and physical education. For all other subjects standards are in line with the national average apart from history, geography and modern foreign languages where they are below average. Overall achievement through Years 7 to 9 is good. Attainment in most subjects through Years 10 and 11 is in line with national standards. Attainment is well above the national expectation in art. However, standards continue to be below average in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages.

Overall, achievement is good but progress is flatter in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational need make satisfactory progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most pupils are very positive about their studies and many take an enthusiastic part in the wide range of opportunities provided for them.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and assemblies. A small minority of boys resort to attention-seeking behaviour in lessons. Behaviour around the school is generally good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are warm and positive; they are based on mutual respect and reinforced with a touch of humour. Pupils' personal development, as a result of the opportunities provided in the ICAN base, is excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most pupils come to school regularly. Rates of unauthorised absence are similar to the national average. Attendance has improved in recent years.

Exclusion rates have risen and are now high. This is because the school acts rigorously in addressing issues such as bullying and aggressive behaviour, which is sometimes evident in the actions of a minority of pupils. The school's response promotes appropriate standards of behaviour and adherence to school values. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The general quality of teaching is good; almost three-quarters of lessons are good or better. There are examples of excellent teaching in a range of subjects – for example in art, drama, design and technology, history and science. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only a few lessons. Overall, teaching meets the needs of pupils very well.

The overall quality of teaching in English is very good; it is good in science and satisfactory in mathematics. The skills of literacy are generally taught well but the teaching of numeracy requires more consistency. Across the school, the main teaching strengths are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, effective planning, high expectations and the good support and encouragement for pupils. On some occasions lessons lack sufficient pace and do not cater sufficiently well for the range of ability in the class. The rapport and positive relationship between staff and pupils are significant features of most lessons. Pupils gain new knowledge well and their understanding of issues shows increasing levels of maturity. Pupils generally work hard and concentrate well on their studies. Usually a considerable amount of effort goes into class work and coursework.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school is strongly committed to providing equality of opportunity and access to appropriate courses for all its pupils. An extensive range of extra-curricular and community activities enhances pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. In lessons, teachers encourage and support pupils well however overall planning is weak. The alternative curriculum for Years 10 and 11 pupils in the social inclusion group (ICAN) is outstanding.
Provision for pupils'	Very good. A very strong sense of shared purpose exists throughout the

personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	school and a clear code of conduct helps pupils to distinguish right from wrong. The provision for social and cultural development is very good. The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The friendly, community atmosphere helps pupils feel confident and valued. There are very high standards of care. Assessment procedures for checking on achievement are good.

The curriculum has good breadth and balance. The personal and social development programme is a particular strength. The careers education programme is very good. There is a full programme of year assemblies based on weekly themes, but there are limited opportunities for reflection or for pupil participation. The school does not comply fully with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. The school council provides a very effective channel of communication between staff and pupils. An impressive array of visits, trips and other activities helps to widen the horizons of pupils. The sensitive, personal approach of staff is enhanced by very good systems for monitoring pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's leadership and management are very good; his intimate knowledge of the school and awareness of educational issues provide clear direction and a sense of purpose. The deputy headteachers and the leadership team very ably support the head. An open and participatory style of management has created a good team ethos throughout the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very supportive, working closely with senior managers and contributing very effectively to strategic planning. Specialist expertise is well co-ordinated; governors have a substantive knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Performance management procedures are very effective. Results are evaluated carefully; the school makes effective use of monitoring information compiled by the local education authority (LEA). Review and setting of targets are accepted practice within departments.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Systematic planning enables resources to be efficiently deployed; there is a detailed identification of priorities and clear indication of action to be taken. Strong commitment to achieving best value is being established. The school consults well.

Most heads of department monitor standards, teaching and learning well. The quality of leadership and management in art and in the ICAN base is excellent. The co-ordination and management of special educational needs are unsatisfactory. The pastoral teams are very effective in supporting and guiding pupils' learning and development. The overall provision for staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. However, there are limitations, notably the accommodation for design and technology and insufficient technical and support staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their children like coming to school and they make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information they get about their children's progress.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think the teaching is good. • The expectation that pupils and pupils work hard and achieve of their best. • The school is approachable and well led. • The extra-curricular provision is very good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set and removing inconsistencies between departments.
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Parents' views of the school are very positive and the inspection team agrees with the supportive points summarised in the table above. There is no whole school homework timetable and departments make their own decision about setting homework. This results in an uneven spread of homework assignments. Reports have been carefully monitored and the school is aware that there are still inconsistencies in their quality. Often the emphasis is on a pupil's attitudes to the subject rather than the progress that they have made and strategies for improvement are not always included. The school makes significant efforts to involve and engage parents in its activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' general level of attainment on entry to the school is below average; attainment is particularly weak in English and mathematics. Even at this early stage there is a marked difference between the attainment of boys and girls; boys do not perform as well as girls.
2. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve well given their prior attainment. By the end of Year 9, in 2001, pupils achieved results in National Curriculum tests in English that were above the national average, and well above average compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Results in English were significantly better than in the preceding two years. In mathematics and science, in 2001, results were below the national average but above average relative to similar schools. The overall performance of pupils was well above average in comparison with similar schools. The trend of recent results is better than that nationally. The improvement in performance has been sustained in the tests for 2002 with standards continuing to be well above when compared with similar schools. Particularly noteworthy results were achieved in science.
3. Overall results in the last three years for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) have been well below the national average but in line with the performance of similar schools. Results are lower than at the time of the last inspection and the overall trend has been below that of the national picture. Results at GCSE in 2001 represented unsatisfactory progress from the standards pupils attained at the end of Year 9, particularly for higher attaining boys. In the most recent GCSE examinations (2002) the achievement of pupils is better. Although the actual results for the higher grades A* to C match those of the previous year, the progress achieved is good when account is taken of the levels of attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 (well below average, overall). The LEA data shows significant 'added value' for this group of pupils during their five years at Greenfield. The standards achieved in business studies, visual arts and performing arts were particularly good but were below expectation in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls is bigger than that found nationally.
4. In the work seen in lessons, standards are generally in line with the national average. At the end of Year 9, attainment is above average in English, science, art and physical education. For all other subjects standards are in line with the national average, apart from history, geography and modern foreign languages where they are below average. When considering pupils' prior attainment levels their overall achievement through Years 7 to 9 is good. Achievement in English is particularly good.
5. Overall standards of attainment, in Years 10 and 11, are broadly the same as the national picture. However, there is a greater degree of variability between subjects; this is to some degree a reflection of the broader range of ability in Years 10 and 11. Standards in art are exceptional; they are well above national averages. Attainment is above average in physical education, and average in English, design and technology, history, religious education, music and ICT. Attainment is below average in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages. Achievement in art is very good; pupils are entered early for GCSE and AS level examinations. In Years 10 and 11, overall achievement is satisfactory. The progress shown by most pupils is a

reflection of the emphasis that has been given to improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in art. They perform well relative to their ability in design and technology, religious education, music and physical education. In most other subjects pupils make satisfactory progress, apart from modern foreign languages where their progress is unsatisfactory.
7. Overall, literacy skills across the curriculum are below average. The school is working hard to improve this position. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary. In modern foreign languages, art, English and drama, pupils used technical language to good effect. Skills are less secure in mathematics, science, physical education and music. Extended writing requires development in most subjects and a wider range of reading texts is needed. The library supports all subjects by stocking specialised texts and multi-media materials. The English department has dictionaries and thesauruses available in each classroom; key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise pupils with these words. Carefully censored Internet access allows pupils to research topics in detail. Discursive and analytical writing is not consistent in subjects where literacy teaching is less emphasised. Writing at length is a feature in English, and most subjects take the teaching of basic literacy skills seriously. This is indicated by the use of writing frames, glossaries and study aids and by well-planned lessons. As a result, pupils gradually make improvements to their spelling, reading and writing skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
8. Standards of numeracy are average. Pupils use their numerical skills well in some subjects. Particularly effective use is made of them in art. In this subject, pupils use ratios when enlarging drawings. They think about volume when drawing still life studies and use geometric shapes when looking at styles of art such as Cubism. Pupils practise measuring and weighing in design and technology and use co-ordinates in geography. There is no overall planning of activities to develop numerical skills across all subjects. This means that opportunities to use numerical skills are missed.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are very enthusiastic and join in after-school activities well. For example, many pupils use the community resource centre after school for completing their homework and there is a lively working atmosphere. Older pupils are often to be found in ICT rooms working on coursework and homework.
10. Pupils often have very positive attitudes towards their schoolwork. For example, in a Year 7 dance lesson the girls had excellent motivation; they really wanted to do well. Pupils often demonstrate excellent attitudes in art lessons; in Year 9, pupils demonstrated impressive concentration and work rates while working on self-portraits in the style of Van Gogh.
11. Older pupils continue to have very good attitudes. In a Year 10 religious education lesson pupils had excellent attitudes. Very lively teaching encouraged pupils to reflect on "What is the word of God?", examining different interpretations of the Bible. The teacher ensured that all pupils were involved in the lesson and remained thoroughly motivated. There was an excellent rapport between the teacher and pupils, characterised by the teachers' insistence that pupils think for themselves.

12. Behaviour is good. Pupils behave well in formal situations such as lessons and assemblies. During a busy wet lunchtime pupils were very sensible about queuing for lunch. Pupils can be trusted with the minimum supervision. For example, pupils often go into the music rooms over the lunchtime and play a wide variety of instruments. They treat the instruments with respect and really enjoy themselves. In lessons, there are a small number of boys who are tempted to make a nuisance of themselves and demand the teacher's attention; most teachers manage these situations very well. Although these boys sometimes lose concentration and affect their own learning, other pupils are still able to make good progress.
13. Exclusion rates have risen and are now high. This is because the school does not tolerate the anti-social behaviour of a minority of pupils. This promotes high standards of behaviour and consequently standards of behaviour are good. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years. The school refers difficult or disaffected pupils to its own ICAN base and a wide variety of outside agencies. Many pupils successfully modify their patterns of behaviour.
14. Relationships are very good both between pupils and between pupils and teachers. The relationships between teachers and pupils are especially warm and are often based on humour together with mutual respect. These relationships give pupils the confidence both to ask and to answer questions. Pupils report very little bullying. Teachers quickly deal with issues and other pupils also offer support.
15. Personal development is very good. Pupils respond very well to the many opportunities for group and individual participation in lessons. Pupils respond with high work rates; they are ambitious to raise their own standards. In a Year 11 English lesson, where the class was discussing slavery, pupils were able to understand issues of dignity, injustice and prejudice. The teacher drew pupils out and encouraged them to express their own views. The personal development of pupils who attend the ICAN base is excellent. Very good provision for social development ensures that pupils learn important social skills such as making eye contact, sustaining a conversation and ultimately taking real responsibility for themselves and for others.
16. Rates of attendance are satisfactory. Most pupils come to school regularly. Rates of unauthorised absence are similar to the national average. Attendance rates have improved over the last few years.
17. Although attitudes and behaviour were positive during the last inspection there have been many significant improvements which result in pupils really enjoying school and being determined to take advantage of the good standard of education available at Greenfield School.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. Both teaching and pupils' learning are good. In 96 per cent of the lessons teaching was satisfactory or better, in 74 per cent of lessons it was good or better, in 22 per cent it was very good and in 7 per cent of lessons teaching was excellent. Learning follows a similar pattern and enables pupils to achieve well. Teaching was unsatisfactory in a relatively small number of lessons.
19. Teaching in English is very good; in science it is good and it is satisfactory in mathematics. There are examples of excellent teaching in a range of subjects – as in art, drama, design and technology, history and science. These lessons were characterised by teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve, very good

management techniques and highly effective teaching methods. In the few unsatisfactory lessons seen, lack of pace and clarity of explanation and not catering for the range of ability in the class were the main causes. Learning support is not as effective as it could be because of the limitation of staffing resources. Teaching, overall, is better than at the last inspection. General improvements in teaching have resulted from systematic monitoring of lessons and planning for improvements.

20. Pupils make good gains in knowledge because teachers use their subject knowledge and understanding effectively in organising and presenting work. In science, for example, pupils build on their previous learning and progress well. In a Year 9 science lesson, average attaining pupils were able to use their general ideas about energy to simulate the principles of conduction, radiation and convection. They began to see the importance of particles in the transfer process.
21. Teachers plan effectively and provide challenging work, to engage pupils' interest and to move them on in their learning. In English lessons, an emphasis by teachers on the skills of writing and note-taking, key points to include, and checking to spot errors, helps pupils to do well. Year 7 pupils, for example, made good progress in a lesson on 'word-families' and the techniques of note-taking. The teacher led the pupils to compile their own notes and work out improvements for themselves, by using a set of carefully structured activities. In art, teaching is very good, even inspiring at times. A wide range of excellent opportunities is provided, including work in two and three dimensions, a variety of which is displayed to startling effect in the art rooms and around the school. Pupils have a very strong commitment to art and are encouraged to high levels of individual creativity throughout the school. Year 8 pupils were learning the traditional elements of Aboriginal art to produce a large-scale mural on aspects of that culture. Year 11 classes worked at high levels on a photography project dealing with portraiture and still life compositions based in the style of Cubism.
22. Teachers take good account of the levels at which pupils are learning, in order to set suitably challenging work: expectations are usually high. In history, for example, pupils develop reasoned understanding of the inter-relationship of issues, as observed in a Year 9 lesson when they were learning about the views of different countries in the build-up to World War I. Teachers usually adapt work for pupils who work more quickly and for those who find tasks difficult, and schemes of work, as in English and science, show varied tasks for pupils of different abilities. Occasionally, in classes where needs are very varied, the teacher concentrates on ensuring that all pupils understand the main lesson points and opportunities to stretch the most able are overlooked. This tendency was evident in some lessons in modern foreign languages where pupils made satisfactory rather than good progress in learning new words and constructions.
23. Teachers assess work regularly using the school's own system and share with pupils the standards at which they are working. In several subjects, teachers inform pupils of their grades in terms of the National Curriculum – as in the humanities subjects, art, and design and technology – but this is not done sufficiently well in mathematics. However, teachers monitor progress carefully. Pupils who are not doing as well as they might are identified for extra help. Teachers regularly discuss with pupils the progress they are making and at the end of units of work set targets for improvement; the system is well used and appreciated by pupils. In several subjects – for example, drama, physical education and art – pupils are encouraged to monitor and evaluate their own progress, which supports their improvement effectively. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, pupils were helped to improve their own squash skills through observing one another's performance of the specified activities.

24. The range of activities and methods used by teachers is good. Practical work is regularly and effectively used in science, for example in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were investigating the properties of elements, mixtures and compounds. The design process is well emphasised through aspects of design and technology. In a Year 8 food technology lesson, for example, pupils' evaluations of the salads they had made helped them to understand the importance of combining different sorts of food. Pupils develop good skills in handling a varied range of materials – as in making a moisture sensor with vinyl and foam (in Year 9) and constructing a circuit for a timer (in Year 11). The application of ICT needs to be more effectively structured in some lessons such as in mathematics.
25. Teachers manage their classes very well. Relationships are very good and a strength of the school. The ethos for learning in lessons is purposeful, relaxed and friendly. Pupils bring to lessons very good attitudes and they behave very well on the whole. They persevere, try hard and work well individually and in groups – as observed in a very well-planned Year 8 drama lesson, in which small groups each prepared their interpretation of 'The Island'. Relationships in religious education lessons are very good and support a positive, calm atmosphere. Pupils feel comfortable in putting forward their own views and contributing a range of experience, for example in a Year 7 class discussion about the religious images of God. Lack of interest by pupils is only occasional, and most teachers manage incidents well and cultivate participation, though during the inspection lack of interest was observed in ICT, during a practical activity with Year 7 pupils, which was based mostly on evaluating *PowerPoint* presentations.

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

26. Overall, the school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum. The range of learning opportunities provides a rich educational experience for all pupils. A wide variety of good quality extra-curricular and community activities further enhances the curriculum.
27. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; it is good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is broad and balanced; all subjects of the National Curriculum are provided together with drama and religious education. In Year 8, most pupils have the opportunity to study a second foreign language. Statutory requirements are met in all curriculum areas; however, there is no collective act of worship. Citizenship is in the early stages of development with themes followed in assemblies, the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and tutor time. On entry to the school, pupils are taught in banded groups according to primary school test results; final adjustments are made during their first term in school in order to ensure they are in the appropriate class to meet their needs. The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has flexibility; it is possible for pupils to move within the different classes. By Year 9, pupils have been correctly assessed and movement from one class to another is less necessary.
28. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a common core curriculum including English language, mathematics, religious education, physical education and ICT; this is supplemented by a good choice of options. The current Year 10 curriculum has been modified to cater more effectively for the wide range of pupils. A number of new courses have been introduced, including a range of vocational and accredited courses. These include the ASDAN awards, GNVQ in business and performing arts, and junior sports leader. Pupils are carefully guided and helped by tutors to select appropriate courses. As an Arts College, pupils are expected to study one arts option at GCSE.

Almost all pupils were accepted to follow their first option choices. Twenty-three pupils from the social inclusion group (ICAN group) are disapplied from modern foreign languages. The advantages of the new curriculum operating in Year 10 gives greater access to GNVQ with pathways to a greater range of post-16 courses. There are opportunities for fast tracking in art examinations, for example. Last year only four pupils requested a change in their courses; this confirms pupils' needs are being well met. In Years 10 and 11 citizenship themes are developed in tutor time, PSHE and assemblies; it is yet to be developed within departments. The programme for gifted and talented pupils is in the early stages of development.

29. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school has a positive commitment to promoting an inclusive education and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. The alternative curriculum for Years 10 and 11 pupils in the social inclusion group (ICAN) is outstanding. Pupils follow ASDAN courses, Prince's Trust XL and junior sports leader awards. These courses focus on developing social skills and independence, and improving learning, punctuality and attendance. Years 10 and 11 pupils with special educational needs follow a more practical curriculum. For example, within the physical education curriculum, they rock climb at the local indoor rock climbing centre as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and learn to play squash at a nearby squash club. In Years 7, 8 and 9 special educational needs provision is satisfactory except for the allocation of time to modern foreign languages, which inhibits their progress.
30. The school's curricular and pastoral structures are designed to ensure good equality of opportunity. There are examples of outstanding practice, for instance the excellent ICAN social inclusion base and in the arts. However, there is some unsatisfactory equal opportunities practice in modern foreign languages.
31. The curriculum provision for literacy is satisfactory. Teachers have received training in how they might effectively teach literacy and they are starting to do this. Even so, there is inconsistency in practice. Departments have adopted literacy policies, which are now being reflected in schemes of work and lesson planning, especially in English, science, art, design and technology and drama. For example, there is a good emphasis on understanding of key scientific words. The emphasis on literacy is contributing to improving standards by the end of Year 9. The catch-up programme is less effective because it is not well planned or monitored. The arrangements for the teaching of numeracy skills are satisfactory. The school has adopted the Key Stage 3 strategy in mathematics; however, this is in the early stages of development. Several subjects have already developed these skills in their everyday lessons. In science, the quality of learning opportunities has recently improved, which is a consequence of the Key Stage 3 strategy in science. Science lessons are structured with a starter activity, which allows pupils to build new learning on existing knowledge. The provision for ICT is satisfactory; many subjects have access to their own suite of computers. However, their use is yet to be fully developed as resources have only recently been improved. The majority of subjects include some provision for ICT within their schemes of work. Opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills outside lessons are good. Literacy and numeracy recovery programmes are in place in Year 7 so pupils can be helped to gain full access to the curriculum.
32. A wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities is provided, which are well attended by both boys and girls. There is very good provision for sports through the school's and community programme. The school is heavily involved in the life of the community through activities like tennis, dance and concerts and a range of arts activities. Many subjects provide additional clubs to support pupils with their studies; for example, in

science they run booster classes for Year 9 pupils and summer schools during the school holidays; the school also has a big commitment to residential and outdoor education. All physical education staff give freely of their time to provide extra-curricular sporting activities and over a third of pupils regularly participate.

33. Provision for careers education is very good. In Years 7 to 9 careers education is taught as part of PSHE and is delivered by form tutors. In Years 10 and 11 there is a very good programme of careers education taught by a specialist teacher. Pupils have access to work experience late in the autumn term of Year 11; unfortunately, due to local circumstances, this is very close to GCSE mock examinations. The careers library provision is of excellent quality, providing accessible high quality resources. Very good provision for careers education results in pupils making sensible, informed decisions about their futures.
34. Provision for PSHE is very good. The programme is very well balanced and includes social, health, and drug and sex education. The curriculum is constantly reviewed and improved in order to meet pupils' needs. Form tutors who receive very good guidance from key stage co-ordinators deliver the programme. This helps them to deliver good quality lessons. The very good quality programme of PSHE makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
35. The school's links with the community are excellent and make a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement. The school's overarching commitment to community education is central to its work. There are many interesting activities developed in partnership with local providers, which extend pupils' interests and increase their aspirations. For example, Year 7 pupils have been involved in the University of the First Age and Year 9 pupils have attended entrepreneurship events. Pupils have access to a rich range of musical and art events. Talented singers have been able to work with the Black Voices African Choir, and art pupils with artists from China. The school is anxious to increase levels of attainment and aspirations in the local community. There are many events and classes available in the community base. However, the school will go out into the community in order to meet specific needs; for instance, an ICT class has been held at a local pub.
36. The school has very constructive relationships with its partner institutions including its feeder primary schools and the local sixth form college. There is a useful bridging project to encourage continuity between Years 6 and 7. For example, a significant number of pupils have visited the school's design and technology department. The school is particularly good at working with the local primaries to identify children who are vulnerable and will find transfer to secondary difficult. The school works closely with local providers of education post 16 to ensure that pupils are aware of their options when they leave school. This includes involvement in a local higher education project that encourages pupils to visit local universities. Access to an NVQ course at a local college improves the curriculum for a small group of older pupils.
37. The curriculum is now of a better standard than that noted in the previous inspection, especially in Years 10 and 11. Big strides have been made on social inclusion and on the development of a broad and relevant curriculum. The curriculum is now meeting individual pupils' needs and giving pathways into a range of post-16 education.
38. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. There is a full programme of year assemblies based on weekly themes, but there are limited opportunities during these occasions for reflection or for pupil participation. Form tutor times are mainly used for social and administrative purposes and rarely used for an

examination of wider issues. As a result, the school does not comply fully with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Within the curriculum, the spiritual development of pupils is fostered particularly well in religious education, where such issues are discussed fully throughout the curriculum. Opportunities for reflection on wider issues are also provided in geography, English, history, science and art.

39. The provision for moral development is good. The very strong sense of shared purpose throughout the school and a clear code of conduct help pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Teachers provide very good role models and many older pupils give support and guidance to their younger pupils, as well as visiting primary schools in the area. A very effective awards and merit system encourages the celebration of achievement in all areas of school life. Pupils are keenly involved in charity work with organisations such as 'Children with Leukaemia' and the Samaritans. Clear policies are in place on drugs, sex and bullying issues and these are dealt with effectively through the PSHE programme. Within subject areas, moral issues are fostered particularly well in religious education, English, drama, design and technology, art and modern foreign languages.
40. The provision for social development is very good. The school council provides a very effective channel of communication between staff and pupils. Members of the council are also involved in staff appointments and are represented on the arts college management committee. Relationships throughout the school are very good and this engenders a safe and harmonious atmosphere for all. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility through a wealth of extra-curricular activities, including sports, music, drama and dance clubs. Opportunities for social development are provided in most subjects, with an emphasis on group work and participation in lessons, most especially in science, ICT, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.
41. The cultural development of pupils is also very good. An impressive array of visits, trips and other activities helps to widen the horizons of pupils. These include many residential opportunities both in this country and in Europe. Other opportunities for cultural development are provided through the many clubs and events involving the local community as a result of the school's very successful Arts College provision. The high quality of this provision has been recognised with an Artsmark gold award for the school. Cultural awareness is fostered in many subjects, such as English, drama, history and geography. The previous inspection report noted that there were limited opportunities for multi-cultural development in the school. This is no longer the case. There are now numerous opportunities for pupils to celebrate the cultural diversity of Britain and that of the wider world. These are particularly well developed in religious education, where there is a very strong emphasis on multi-faith issues. Opportunities are also provided in other subject areas, most noticeably in English, drama, art, and design and technology.
42. Overall, the school makes very good provision for the personal development of all its pupils and has built well on the successes outlined in the previous inspection report. The school would now benefit from a full audit of this provision in order to celebrate the very good practice shown in some departments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. There are very high standards of care. The friendly family atmosphere in the school helps pupils feel safe and secure. Heads of key stage, assistant heads of key stage and form tutors know their pupils well and offer pupils very good quality support. They

- are dedicated and hard working and understand pupils' needs. There are very good relationships between teachers, learning support assistants and pupils. This gives pupils confidence to ask for help. The sensitive personal approach of staff is enhanced by very good formal systems and communication. This results in very good monitoring of pupils' personal development. Pupils who are at risk of becoming disillusioned with school are quickly identified and many pupils with personal problems receive skilled help and support. The school has sensible procedures for child protection and is sensitive to the needs of pupils who are in the care of the local authority.
44. The form tutor period is used mainly for registration and administrative tasks such as checking pupil planners. There are missed opportunities for addressing spiritual, moral and social education. However, in a Year 7 tutor period pupils had brought in poems about bullying. They listened respectfully while one was read to the class and there was a short discussion about the meaning of the poem.
 45. Pupils have access to very good education and personal support and guidance. Subject teachers offer very good support and teachers will often go out of their way to help pupils. There is very good guidance about careers and post-16 options. The programme of sex and drug education helps pupils make informed decisions and there is a counselling service for pupils. The school has very good links with a wide range of outside agencies that are involved in supporting young people. The school is planning to further improve standards of care by moving towards 'full service', where many of these services will be centralised within school, improving accessibility.
 46. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Form tutors and heads of key stages and their assistants rigorously monitor pupils' attendance. This has resulted in a steady increase in attendance rates. The school has been concerned about inconsistencies in the education welfare service and has responded by directly employing an educational welfare officer who will be part of the 'full service' arrangements. This will allow the school to respond quickly to pupils' absences and has the potential to further increase attendance rates.
 47. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school's behaviour policy is used consistently by teachers and is respected by pupils. Younger pupils respond very well to star rewards and are eager to collect rewards and get entered in prize draws. Older pupils appreciate staff nominations. Pupils are confident that teachers will not tolerate bullying. However, the school is not complacent and plans to review its anti-bullying policy in order to address issues such as homophobic bullying.
 48. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good in almost all subjects. Teachers help pupils to measure their progress against national standards by setting target levels and grades. An exception is in mathematics, where National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are not used. In many subjects, particularly art, the humanities subjects and science, target grades are negotiated with individual pupils through discussion, a particularly helpful strategy because it gives pupils ownership of their own targets and greater responsibility in ensuring that they reach them.
 49. Assessment information is well used to guide curriculum planning. A recent example was the identification of under-achievement in Years 10 and 11, followed by major re-design of the curriculum in these years. The school uses data effectively to compare its performance with other schools, both nationally and those in similar circumstances, as well as to identify departments within the school that are doing well and not so well.

50. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are satisfactory overall. The humanities subjects make very good use of assessment, for example to identify and support both low and high attaining pupils, but it is an area for improvement in many other subjects. In ICT and modern foreign languages, assessment information is not used well enough to monitor progress and identify those pupils needing extra help. In physical education the progress of pupils on the borderline of gaining C and D grades in GCSE is insufficiently tracked to ensure that early support is provided. Teachers in many other subjects set short-term targets for pupils, for example during marking of day-to-day work, but targets are not monitored closely enough to ensure that pupils act on the advice received. From time to time, information about pupils' performance in their various subjects is collected; however, when under-achievement is revealed, there is inconsistency between departments in how effectively this is addressed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents are very pleased with standards of education offered by the school. The school has a very good relationship with parents, and parents find the school easy to approach with problems or questions. Their concerns are usually resolved promptly. Parents report that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. The inspection agreed that in lessons pupils tried very hard and had very positive attitudes to school. Parents value the interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection confirmed that there are many exciting activities outside lessons and the school's status as a community Arts College extends these opportunities. Parents are aware that the school is well led and managed. The inspection found leadership and management to be very good. Parents are concerned about inconsistencies in the setting of homework. There is no whole school homework timetable and departments make their own decision about setting homework. This may result in a heavy load one night and very little homework on other nights.
52. The school provides a good range of information for parents. The regular newsletters are of excellent quality and reflect the vibrant life of the community. The prospectus is an attractive and useful document containing a wealth of information. Unfortunately, the governors' report to parents has insufficient information on some aspects, such as special educational needs, and its content does not reflect the dynamic nature of the school.
53. Parents were concerned about the information they get about progress. There are regular parents' nights and interim reports. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of annual reports. Teachers have been provided with guidance that states that reports should contain clear information about what pupils know, understand and can do, and the progress they have made. Strategies for improvement should also be included. Reports have been carefully monitored and the school is aware that there are still inconsistencies in the quality of reports. The history department consistently produces very good quality reports, which clearly indicate what pupils know, understand and can do, with clear targets for improvements. Although many departments have made a good effort to improve reports and get to grips with the new system, reports are still of a variable quality. Often the emphasis is on pupils' attitudes to the subject rather than the progress that they have made and strategies for improvement are not always included. Some subject reports are very brief. Reports contain very little information about what pupils have studied.
54. The majority of parents are supportive of their children's education and are willing to fund trips and visits and pay for study support materials. The school is keen to get parents involved in their children's education. There are information evenings at the

beginning of each key stage, which tell parents about modern teaching methods. The community education programme has run family learning days and courses. However, through previous lack of interest, these have concentrated on the arts rather than literacy and numeracy. The ICAN base has run a successful parents group, which has helped parents access information about a variety of issues, such as managing behaviour. A significant minority of parents thought that the school did not work closely enough with parents. The inspection found no evidence to support this and judged the effectiveness of the school's links with parents to be good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The leadership group effectively promote the aims and values of the school. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. His substantial experience of the school and awareness of educational issues provide a clear educational direction for the school. His energy and vision were pivotal in securing Arts College status for the school. The deputy headteachers and the leadership team very ably support the head. An open and participatory style of management has created a good team ethos throughout the school. Management is well structured and all members of the senior team have clear roles and responsibilities. Effective systems are in place to monitor and appraise their performance. The team is relatively small and may need expanding to ensure that no one individual is overloaded such as with monitoring the whole curriculum, for example. The sharing out of some of these responsibilities would enable management-training opportunities for other members of staff. Within the leadership team, members are accountable and well informed and share a common purpose. Together with the governing body, they strive for improvement. Leadership is collaborative, recognising the value of consultation and negotiation.
56. Heads of department have a good awareness of their roles in monitoring standards, teaching and learning. The quality of leadership and management in art and in the ICAN base is excellent; leadership and management are also particularly strong in English, design and technology, the humanities and religious education. The uncertainties over staffing issues and prolonged absence in special educational needs have led to an unsatisfactory position in the co-ordination and management of this area. This has led to inadequate monitoring of pupils' progress and insufficient review of the effectiveness of expenditure. The general monitoring of teaching focuses on sharing good practice and identifying the needs for professional development. This has had a major impact on staff's awareness of their strengths and on areas for improvement. Supportive systems are in place, which enable the school to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness and how to improve further.
57. Heads of key stages are very effective and, along with their teams, play a crucial role in promoting the aims and values of the school. They are fully involved in academic and pastoral issues and act as a direct link between home and school and between the school and outside agencies. The pastoral teams have a sound overview of the progress of groups of pupils and their subsequent levels of learning.
58. Developments are implemented, managed, monitored and evaluated efficiently. The high quality of these management practices is reflected in the successful award of Arts College status and the national recognition of the school's community involvement. The school improvement plan is detailed and appropriately referenced to strategic issues. These include: continuing to raise standards by effective use of baseline data; maintaining the quality of teaching and learning; and, implementing the national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The capacity of staff to succeed in

these areas of development is good. The school evaluates results carefully and makes use of monitoring information compiled by the LEA. The school monitors the progress of pupils from entry in Year 7 up to Year 9 and to GCSE. It is becoming more effective in using targets for raising results; last year overall GCSE targets were exceeded. In all departments, results are monitored and plans are made for improvement. Approaches are being strengthened, with more comparison of results, to help pupils to do their best in all subjects.

59. The experience and expertise of members of the governing body are well co-ordinated by the chair of governors. They work closely with senior managers and contribute very well to planning improvements. They monitor and review the work of the school through their committee structure and through the regular information they receive – on results and the budget, for example. They are committed to the continuous improvement of the school and review their own contribution towards achieving this. Among governors a wide range of specialist knowledge is held – experts on higher education and scientific research, finance, management, and computer technology augment the experience of parents and school staff. Governors are vigilant about the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Governors are very supportive of the school and proud of its status as a Community and Arts College. They actively endorse the ways in which staff, for example, in English and mathematics share and develop good practice with colleagues in primary schools, and identify pupils who will need support on transfer to the secondary school
60. The organisation and management of the performance management process are very effective. The recording system and associated documentation are comprehensive and well organised. The college has a long history of the effective use of performance management systems. The college achieved Investors in People recognition in 1995.
61. The headteacher's management objectives are set with the agreement of the governing body and the advice of an externally appointed advisor. All teachers have performance management objectives that are set and reviewed annually by their team leaders. The structure of annual reviews is designed as a cascade, starting with the headteacher reviewing team leaders who in turn review their team members. Lesson observations are conducted regularly.
62. Financial management and the planning of the use of resources are efficiently connected to the school's priorities. The school is effectively maintaining a balanced budget. Although operating within tight budgetary constraints, an appropriate proportion of the school's budget is allocated to learning resources for departments. In financial administration, there are correct divisions of responsibility and good procedures for ordering, receiving and paying for goods and services purchased by the school. The last financial audit indicated minor areas for improvement in financial efficiency. These have been corrected. Specific funding for the support of pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately but overall expenditure, including staffing, needs to be evaluated for its effectiveness. Competitive tendering is used for the ordering of goods or services, and the school works hard to achieve the best value in its financial decisions. The administrative staff are very efficient and greatly assist the smooth running of the school.
63. The school's systems are not overly bureaucratic; they support the drive for raising standards. The school provides a good quality of education. A positive feature of the school is the shared commitment to improvement. The dedication of senior managers, staff and governors is a significant contributory factor to the increasing effectiveness of

the school. The school gives good value for money despite some challenging socio-economic circumstances.

64. Good opportunities are available to staff for professional development. Training outcomes are systematically evaluated and senior management is aware of the costs and benefits of training and development. All training appropriately supports school or department objectives. There are numerous examples of staff, both teachers and support staff, who have been supported by the college to achieve external qualifications.
65. The match between teachers' expertise and subject needs is very good. Because of recruitment difficulties there is a small number of unqualified teachers but they are an asset to their departments and are on appropriate courses to become qualified teachers. Teachers are well supported by administrative and other support staff who make good contributions to the work of the school. The school has also created new appointments for 'full service', including an education welfare officer, school nurse and Connexions worker, which will enable staff from different agencies to work together in supporting teachers and pupils. However, there is insufficient technical support in ICT and design and technology, and an inadequate number of learning support assistants to support pupils with special educational needs. There are good induction procedures for new staff, including newly qualified teachers, to effectively integrate them into the life of the school.
66. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials are satisfactory. In most subjects there is a satisfactory range of appropriate class sets of reference texts, with the exception of science. In English and mathematics the stock of books is good. A particular strength in English is the provision of adapted Shakespeare texts for low attaining pupils. However, the number and range of drama texts are inadequate. Religious education has good stocks of books and computer software. ICT resources have improved considerably in recent months. The number of computers in the school is close to national expectations. Most subjects have their own suite of computers. The well-designed whole school network allows pupils to easily access their work on any computer. Internet access is quick and always available, as the school has invested in the latest technology. However, at the time of the inspection not all subjects could fully use the equipment as it had only recently been installed. Some subjects, notably design and technology, have unsatisfactory ICT resources. The library is a good resource, which is well managed, to give an encouraging environment for pupils to use. The book resources are modern and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. ICT resources in the library are good and are heavily used by the pupils and the community.
67. Accommodation is satisfactory. Some facilities are first rate. For example, the library is very attractive to pupils and this is one reason why many pupils make good and regular use of it to support their learning. The art gallery provides the school with an area in which the school can publicly celebrate one of its strengths. However, there are other parts of the school that are unsatisfactory. There are not enough rooms for art, design and technology and science. This means that teachers are restricted in the range of activities they can plan for lessons when not in an art room, workshop or laboratory. There is not enough storage space for materials and pupils' work in design and technology. Changing facilities for physical education are inadequate. There is no sports hall and the playing fields are poorly drained. The quality of the sports facilities is restricting the standards pupils reach in physical education. Narrow corridors restrict the flow of pupils when lessons change. The school has plans to make improvements

for art, design and technology and physical education but these depend on being able to attract the necessary funding.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Overall, the provision for supporting vulnerable pupils through the ICAN base is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The alternative curriculum is more accessible and leads to better motivation of pupils.
- The safe and structured environment enables pupils to participate more fully and leads to better learning.
- The involvement of parents and a wide range of agencies means that vulnerable pupils are very effectively supported.

Areas for improvement

There are no areas for improvement.

68. The work done by the manager and staff of the ICAN base responds very effectively to a diversity of needs and does much to overcome barriers to learning for individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers assess pupils' needs very thoroughly and carefully, so that this support is effectively targeted where it is most needed. Meticulous record keeping and careful tracking of pupils ensure that difficulties are identified early. Teachers are then able to structure further support to best effect.
69. The outstanding provision of an alternative curriculum, which consists of challenges and achievable goals, means that pupils are better motivated. As a result, their attendance and learning improve during their time working with base staff. In Year 11, for example, pupils were mature and articulate, and could explain their work in a relaxed fashion to visitors. They take genuine pride on their achievements, and they readily acknowledge the part played by the base in their successes. This positive attitude is largely due to the secure, structured environment provided by the base, which enables pupils to participate more fully in education and leads in turn to better learning.
70. A wide variety of agencies successfully support the work of the base. This means that the school is able to offer pupils a broad range of emotional support programmes, for example, anger management, conflict resolution and the building of self-esteem. As a result of the intensive one-to-one work done on these programmes, the safe environment and the appropriate curriculum, there have been no permanent exclusions from the school since 1999. Pupils most at risk of exclusion for a variety of reasons have, therefore, been correctly identified, rigorously monitored and effectively kept in touch with their education.
71. The quality of leadership and management in the base is excellent. The base manager is a very accomplished practitioner who has an exceptionally clear vision for the future development of this provision. The extensive involvement of the many different agencies is the first step towards providing a 'full service' model aimed at supporting families in difficult circumstances. This is a significant development, intended to provide greater consistency and continuity of support for vulnerable pupils and improve communications between the various agencies and professionals involved in this work.

Special educational needs

Overall, provision for special educational needs is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers plan well for pupils with special educational needs and individual education plans are of good quality.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in skill-based subjects such as design and technology, physical education and music is good.

Areas for improvement

- More rigorous monitoring of the delivery of the special needs curriculum, and of the effectiveness of spending in this area.
- More support in the form of teaching assistants across a wider range of subjects.

72. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, at 21 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational need is above the national average. In 2001, 98 per cent of pupils at the end of Year 11 gained at least one GCSE qualification. Very few pupils, therefore, left school with no qualifications at all. This represents an improvement of two per cent on 2000.
73. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is below average, particularly in English and mathematics. Given their relatively low levels of attainment when they join the school in Year 7, they achieve well by the end of Year 9 in many subjects, and very well in art and design. By the end of Year 11 their level of achievement is satisfactory overall, but again very good in art and design.
74. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers plan well for pupils' needs and take care to ensure that they are involved and included in activities, for example through a sensitive approach to pupil grouping in a science lesson, or a session at a local rock climbing wall which involved close tuition so that all pupils could complete a climb successfully. Individual education plans are of a good quality; they are available to all teachers, and teachers take due note of them when providing tasks for pupils. They make efforts to ensure that pupils understand what they have to do and can succeed in the tasks set. This leads to good learning on the part of pupils, which in turn contributes to their levels of achievement. For the most part pupils participate well in lessons and show positive attitudes. Any incidences of inappropriate behaviour are usually well managed by teachers. The lack of direct support from teaching assistants is inhibiting pupils' progress in some areas, for example science.
75. The quality of leadership and management in special educational needs is unsatisfactory. This is due to the long-term absence of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The acting SENCO is working hard to ensure that the day-to-day running and work of the special needs area are at least meeting requirements, so that individual education plans are being generated and that the reviews of statements of special educational need are being carried out in accordance with procedures. There has been some training on the new Code of Practice, so that staff are aware of the changes and are implementing them in their routine work. The other responsibilities of the acting SENCO and the attendant workload, however, inevitably limit his effectiveness.
76. The rigorous monitoring of progress towards targets is insufficiently refined, and the monitoring of the impact and effectiveness of spending is insufficiently developed. The annual report of the governing body to parents complies with statutory requirements in that it contains a section on pupils with special educational needs. It is, however,

inadequate, in that it lacks precise detail on the implementation of the special needs policy, its overall effectiveness, and any changes to it.

77. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The major issue of assessment has now been resolved and this has resulted in better individual education plans that are more effectively employed by teachers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- Improve the attainment of pupils in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 by ensuring there is sufficient challenge for pupils and that lesson content is appropriately geared to the range of ability in classes.
[Paragraphs: 3, 5, 90, 95, 97, 142]
- Improve the leadership and management of special educational needs by monitoring the provision more closely, ensuring consistency between departments.
[Paragraphs: 56, 75]
- Focus strategies and resources on improving the evaluative and analytical writing skills of higher attaining boys by ensuring that literacy themes are regularly reinforced in lessons
[Paragraphs: 3, 58, 111, 112]
- Ensure greater consistency between departments in the use of assessment data to evaluate progress by regular monitoring and sharing of good practice.
[Paragraphs: 50, 76, 158]
- Improve the accommodation provision in design and technology, physical education and art to remove constraints on the effective delivery of the National Curriculum.
[Paragraphs: 67, 121, 139]

Other issues for consideration:

- Ensure a more consistent use of ICT resources and applications in subjects. Improve ICT resources in design and technology. [Paragraphs: 31, 66, 100, 121, 127, 141]
- Improve the quality and consistency of reports. [Paragraph: 53]
- Ensure greater consistency in the setting and monitoring of homework. [Paragraphs: 51, 102]
- Improve the provision for technicians and learning support assistants. [Paragraphs: 65, 101, 139]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	138
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	30	62	31	5	0	0
7%	22%	45%	22%	4%	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	721	-
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	118	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	144	-

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	80	67	147

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	49	49
	Girls	53	44	41
	Total	111	93	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (57)	64 (54)	61 (51)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (13)	28 (21)	22 (13)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	50	38
	Girls	45	45	36
	Total	89	95	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (53)	66 (55)	51 (43)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (10)	35 (21)	20 (9)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	42	66	108

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	12	36	41
	Girls	27	60	65
	Total	39	96	106
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	36 (25)	89 (80)	98 (92)
	National	48 (47)	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	31.2
	National	39.0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	715
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	106	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	82%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.76
Key Stage 4	28.10

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2194474
Total expenditure	2162335
Expenditure per pupil	2904
Balance brought forward from previous year	143439
Balance carried forward to next year	45578

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	720
Number of questionnaires returned	124

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	44	9	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	45	2	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	55	12	1	2
The teaching is good.	40	53	1	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	43	12	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	35	2	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	34	47	9	3	7
The school is well led and managed.	51	39	4	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	50	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	29	2	2	8

The inspection team agrees with the supportive views summarised in the table above. The absence of a whole school homework timetable results in an uneven spread of homework. The information parents receive is helpful but reports need to be more detailed on what pupils can and cannot do.

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 **very good**.

Strengths

- Very strong leadership of the department is driving up standards.
- Teaching is very good; there is some outstanding teaching.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and develop learning.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment data is insufficiently rigorous to provide precise, individual targets for improvement.
- The monitoring of the special needs provision in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

78. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the age of 14 are above the national average and well above the national average of schools from similar backgrounds. English results are better than those in many other subjects. The results reflect a trend that is broadly in line with national trends. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, English results are below the national average. Results in English literature are also below the national average. Standards are better than those in mathematics and science. Results in tests and GCSE represent good achievement overall since they are higher than would be expected from the pupils' attainments on entry.
79. In the work seen, attainment by pupils at the age of 14 is above average. This represents very good achievement and improving standards when taking account of below average attainment on entry. Literacy skills, in particular, have improved. This is partly because of the work done on the National Literacy Strategy. Not only are reading and writing a focus in subjects but also lessons are planned to incorporate a range of learning activities; higher standards in reading and writing are emerging. Pupils' oral skills are developing in classroom discussion and they are keen speakers in informal situations. A speaking and listening assignment, seen in a Year 10 lesson, was planned so that the pupils could develop persuasive speaking and understand emotive language. Pupils successfully highlighted persuasive language and were successful in presenting their own arguments. Writing standards are above average; pupils have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their work is generally well presented. High attaining pupils write successfully in a historical context. In a Year 8 lesson on 'The Island', pupils extended their knowledge of less familiar phrases such as thought tracking and reflective evaluation. The work of a small minority of pupils is less well presented. Recent initiatives to improve boys' standards include a sensitive choice of texts and rigorous teaching focused on test criteria and high expectations. These are beginning to have a positive impact. The standards of all pupils are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of writing assignments; there is an increasing use of ICT to aid the presentation of work. The use of extended writing is comparatively infrequent by middle and low attainers.
80. Attainment in English by pupils at the age of 16 is average; this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. All pupils write with understanding of Shakespearean texts and a range of poetry; higher attainers write sophisticated analyses. They read a wide variety of texts and can make inferences. A key feature in the pupils' work is their ability to place texts in a social context and then compare it with modern society. This

is because of the very good relationships, and teaching which challenges and informs the pupils. They are able to talk, read and write animatedly on injustice, inequality and race. They can evaluate character and theme and produce detailed writing assignments. Overall, presentation of work is careful, reflecting pride in it. Pupils can examine media texts and research references. Lower attainers do not always use standard and non-standard English appropriately. A minority of pupils rely too heavily on the teacher and their work is brief, and lacking in detailed understanding and insight.

81. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress by the age of 14 and satisfactory progress by the age of 16. Progress is not as advanced as that of their peers by the age of 16 because of a lack of monitoring, and imprecise targets.
82. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, and there are examples of inspirational teaching and learning. In a small minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons, pupils learn less because the pace is too slow and successful classroom management strategies are lacking. Work for different groups of pupils is not matched closely enough to their needs, so some can flounder and take up unnecessary amounts of the teacher's time asking questions. These lessons occur predominantly in Years 10 and 11 where the general quality of teaching is good. In the very good and excellent lessons there is a brisk pace; pupils are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Pupils enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Pupils respond very well to their teachers' care for their achievement and this helps develop the good relationships evident in the department. In a Year 10 lesson on King Henry V's "Once more unto the breach" speech, the pupils thoroughly appreciated working to produce a structured well-informed discussion. They consciously shaped language for a purpose and presented their findings on crescendo, juxtaposition and antithesis with confidence. This is because the teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking. In a Year 9 lesson lower attainers worked furiously to draft and polish their work and spoke meaningfully about writing styles. They produced a large amount of work and enjoyed it immensely; the teacher's enthusiasm infected the pupils, whose careful and sensitive analysis encouraged and developed their love of the subject. As in all lessons pupils' standards of literacy were developed by a focused, relevant activity. Drama is incorporated in the curriculum and Year 8 boys and girls presented powerful presentations with a lack of embarrassment and a willingness to display their dramatic skills. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the department makes satisfactory use of assessment information. More detailed analysis of data would target individual pupils to continue to help raise standards.
83. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear educational vision that inspires both teachers and pupils. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the pupils. They observe each other's lessons and this sharing of good practice is improving teaching styles, classroom management and pupils' learning. Procedures for assessment are clear but are not used sufficiently rigorously to set individual pupils' targets. Pupils' work is cross-checked for progress, standards and capability.
84. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen for pupils at the age of 14. Literacy teaching has been used effectively to target further improvements in English language. There is increased access to the computers, so pupils' opportunities to improve their skills of drafting and re-drafting work are improved. Teaching and learning have improved. Assessment requires more rigorous focus.

Standards are beginning to rise; some pupils need to become more independent in their learning.

Literacy

85. The National Literacy Strategy has been used to aid the teaching of literacy skills across the school. Catch-up lessons are not started early enough to begin to improve standards quickly. Staff and pupils are unclear about these lessons and this is recognised by the school as an area for development. The literacy co-ordinator is a member of the senior management team and is supported by the head of the English department. Work has also been done with the guidance of the LEA. Schemes of work, lesson plans and resources have been provided for all staff. Whole school training days and departmental workshops have helped to raise the awareness of literacy and its importance in raising pupils' standards. The provision is therefore good as this has been effective in raising standards in Years 7 to 9 and is emerging as a strength for older pupils.

Drama

The provision for drama is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good achievement of the pupils because of the very good teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils provide an atmosphere of high expectations and success.
- Excellent provision of extra-curricular activities enhances the social and moral development of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient textbooks.

86. The provision of drama in Years 7 to 11 adds depth and breadth to the curriculum. Results in national tests in 2001 were above the national average at GCSE and GNVQ. Pupils' achievements were better than those of most subjects that they studied. The standards of work seen were above the levels expected nationally; pupils continue to make good progress.
87. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes outstanding; it produces a similar quality of learning. The teaching of drama as part of English for Year 7 to 9 pupils not only broadens their curriculum but also improves their standards. Pupils are able to transfer the skills they have learned between subjects. Teachers are committed and contribute to the wider education it gives the pupils. In particular, the drama teachers successfully put emphasis on encouraging decision-making skills, and providing opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. Pupils learn so well because lessons are very well prepared and maintain a brisk pace. Consequently, all pupils gain the maximum insight into the subject as well as gaining knowledge of a wide range of sophisticated drama skills. Emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the pupils. In a Year 10 lesson, dramatic presentations were professional, carefully planned and executed, and skilful. This was because of the high expectations of the teacher and carefully targeted lesson planning. Pupils relish the subject and their enthusiasm and enjoyment are evident in all lessons. Very good relationships between the staff and pupils create an atmosphere of high achievement and mutual respect. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils dramatised equality, using symbolism and expressed sadness, anger and fear, which

moved the audience and the inspector. The lessons were conducted in darkness with only a spotlight for the performers. This helped create dramatic tension and a theatrical atmosphere. The teaching extends the learning of all pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs. This was seen in all lessons. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils worked collaboratively to develop mime and the least able pupils made stunning presentations. The contribution made by the department to the social and moral development of the pupils is also partly responsible for their success. They are able to discuss serious issues such as race, war and justice in an informed and sensitive manner.

88. A wide range of extra-curricular activities contributes to the positive ethos of the school. In the prestigious annual production, staff and a large number of pupils work with many departments, which encourages collaboration in different disciplines and develops relationships. Accommodation is very good; examination pupils are taught in a professionally equipped drama studio. Resources are limited, as there are insufficient textbooks and scripts to fully meet the demands of the GCSE and GNVQ syllabuses.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- A good range of resources provides good support for learning.
- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to pupils learning well in class.
- Pupils know that teachers value their work; this gives them confidence to learn.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of mathematical words; this helps them understand questions and what the teacher says.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure challenging work is provided to all pupils in every class to raise standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Develop pupils' powers of spoken and written expression.
- Provide pupils and parents with more information on exactly what pupils can do and how to improve, both in class and through reports.

89. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the age of 14 were below the national average but above average in comparison with similar schools. Mathematics results are lower than those in English. The results reflect a trend that is below that of the national picture. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, mathematics results were well below the national average. Standards were worse than those in English and science. Results in tests at Year 9 represent satisfactory achievement overall; they are in line with what would be expected from the pupils' low attainment on entry. The level of achievement in GCSE examinations is unsatisfactory.

90. Standards of work by pupils in Year 9 are at the national average. This is the same standard as pupils achieved in 2002 in national tests taken at the age of 14. Achievement in their first three years at the school is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils understand significant figures and can use algebra to describe any term in a sequence of numbers. They have met Pythagoras' theorem but do not give a full explanation of their work. Pupils with average levels of attainment are beginning to use algebra and know the angle properties of parallel lines. Lower achieving pupils can measure angles up to 90° but still have difficulties with basic arithmetic.

91. Overall the standard of work seen from pupils in Year 11 is below the national average. This is better than the GCSE results in 2002 because this is a different group of pupils. As the Year 11 pupils achieved results below the national average when they sat national tests when they were 14, their achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. By the age of 16, higher attaining pupils can use trigonometric functions and understand quadratic equations. These pupils still do not give full descriptions of their work. This means they gain lower marks for their coursework, which is part of the GCSE. Pupils of average attainment can draw simple statistical graphs and investigate data. Lower attaining pupils can work with simple decimals. They use their mathematics in everyday situations, such as writing a cheque.
92. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. One reason for this difference is the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. This provides a good framework for the structure of lessons in the earlier years. Learning is good in the first three years and satisfactory in later years. This reflects the teaching. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. This helps them learn. They get on well with their teachers and this increases their confidence. Pupils respond well to practical work. A Year 7 class was excited by a lesson in which they had to measure a number of objects in the room. They enjoyed thinking of the best way to measure the floor. They learnt well in this lesson because they were active. Using everyday examples also helps pupils learn. A teacher made good use of the current news story about a pay claim from fire-fighters to show how percentages are used. This interested pupils and they gave other examples. Learning is at its best when pupils are made to think. A good example was seen when pupils learnt about the angles in a polygon. The teacher had structured this lesson very well so that pupils had to come up with their own ideas and test them out. They enjoyed this and were not discouraged if their first idea did not work. In less effective lessons some of the class do not learn enough because the work is too hard for some pupils whilst not giving others enough challenge. Sometimes pupils lose interest because teachers do not move on to the next topic soon enough.
93. Teachers make sure pupils know special mathematical words. This means pupils understand both what the teacher says and questions in their textbooks. When teachers ask pupils to explain how they got an answer, pupils do not do this well. They do not realise that often they need to give more than one step in their explanation. Teachers mark work regularly. This tells pupils whether they have learnt or not. Teachers do not use marking to tell pupils what level they have reached or what the next step of their learning is. Reports to parents do not say what a pupil has learnt during the year. Consequently, parents cannot celebrate achievement or assist their child to improve.
94. There is a good range of resources to help pupils learn. The resources available in the new mathematics computer suite promote pupils learning. A good example was when Year 11 pupils explored the properties of quadratic equations. Because the computer drew perfect graphs, pupils spent time thinking about the equations, not just using a skill they had learnt before. There is a good range of textbooks and materials produced by teachers. The best lessons use many of these so that pupils of differing levels of attainment have work that best meets their need. Another good resource is the textbook each pupil keeps at home for homework. This means appropriate homework is set regularly. Homework helps pupils to gain confidence working on their own. The department has its own learning support assistant. He makes a good contribution in class. His work in classes with pupils with special educational needs is one very

significant reason why these pupils progress at the same rate as other pupils. He works closely with the teacher and knows how to help.

95. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. A new head of department has identified appropriate areas for development. New teaching programmes are being introduced for Years 9 to 11. A new GCSE coursework exercise has also been planned. In this, pupils will analyse data on fitness. This will be a good link with physical education and PSHE and make good use of ICT. A new computerised system to record pupils' achievements is being established. The inspection occurred too early to assess the impact of these developments on pupils' learning.
96. Since the previous inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 have risen but GCSE results have declined. Overall, however, satisfactory improvement has been made since that inspection.

Numeracy

97. The provision for the development of numeracy is satisfactory. The school has adopted a policy for developing pupils' numerical skills. A teacher has responsibility for the development of numeracy throughout the school. Regular visits are made to local primary schools so that teachers know what pupils have learnt before the age of 11 and how they were taught. In mathematics, the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 has been adopted. Pupils practise mental arithmetic at the start of each lesson.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Results at the end of Year 9 are above average and improving.
- Pupils achieve well in their lessons because teachers ensure that new learning is built on existing knowledge.
- Pupils' ability to describe and explain their work is improving in Years 7 to 9 because teachers make good use of key words.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of good behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Results at the end of Year 11 are not high enough because pupils have insufficient grasp of the technical language of science.
- Learning is sometimes unsatisfactory because pupils repeat work they already know.
- Homework is insufficiently well used to consolidate and extend learning from lessons.
- Pupils' progress towards their short-term targets is not monitored well enough.

98. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below average in 2001, but higher than those in schools with a similar intake of pupils; they have risen in line with the national trend over the last few years. In 2002, results were significantly better, particularly at the higher levels. GCSE results were well below average in 2001, representing well below average progress for these pupils in relation to their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. In 2002, the results were a little lower, mainly because boys did less well. At both stages, results in science were similar to those in mathematics, but lower than in English.

99. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 standards are about average; almost all can make simple predictions, though these are not usually based on scientific knowledge and understanding. They progress well in lessons and overall achievement is good. By Year 9, standards are above average, reflecting results of recent National Curriculum tests. Most pupils can identify results that do not fit a pattern and suggest ways of improving accuracy, for example when investigating the effects of heating different volumes of water with the same heat source.
100. Pupils continue to progress well in their lessons in Years 10 and 11. Standards in Year 11 are a little below average, but this represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils bearing in mind their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. Pupils reach higher standards in their lessons than in recent GCSE examinations because poor grasp of technical language inhibits their ability to recall earlier work; poor examination technique, partly resulting from lack of lesson time in Year 11, is a further factor that adversely affects performance. In one lesson, pupils failed to respond appropriately to a question that required them to draw a graph, although they knew how to do so. On the other hand, in coursework, higher attaining pupils show that they can reach very high standards, for example relating findings from an investigation into enzymes to their scientific knowledge and then commenting on the accuracy of the experiment.
101. Teachers make very good use of key words in Years 7 to 9 to help pupils' understanding and improve their ability to recall earlier work, for example by linking words such as 'conduction' and 'convection' to their meanings; however, this good practice is less marked in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' ICT skills are not well enough developed in science because access to appropriate equipment has been unsatisfactory until recently. Development of their numerical skills is satisfactory. Pupils handle laboratory apparatus carefully and safely.
102. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make similar progress to others. However, their learning in science is not well supported because pupils receive no help from learning support assistants in their lessons. Insufficient use is made of the library and Internet to extend the learning of the most able. Teachers show that they value pupils as individuals, as in Year 7 when the teacher sensitively ensured that a pupil working alone was able to join with a group. Although most pupils behave well in science lessons, some boys easily lose concentration when teachers do not organise seating arrangements appropriately.
103. Teaching and learning are good overall. Key features of teaching in the best lessons are using 'starter' activities to engage pupils' interest and help them build on existing knowledge, firm control at the outset while using humour to establish good relationships, question and answer sessions to encourage thought about underlying principles, and lesson content well matched to pupils' abilities. In Year 7, for example, pupils matched opposites such as 'shiny' and 'dull' to review their previous work on properties, before extending their learning to differences between metals and non-metals. The teacher demonstrated high expectations of good behaviour by dealing firmly yet quietly with an inattentive pupil; at the same time, pupils' enthusiasm for science was fostered because they were placed in the position of 'real' scientists when they discovered that observations do not always fit expected patterns. In less successful lessons work is not well enough matched to pupils' abilities. For example, pupils in Year 9 were unnecessarily given a work sheet to support their writing about convection and conduction, while pupils in Year 8 were unable to accurately describe a chemical reaction because they had insufficient grasp of appropriate key words. Learning is unsatisfactory when pupils repeat work they have done before without

carrying it further forward, as in Year 7 when many repeated work on classifying vertebrates that they had done in their previous school. Teachers usually mark pupils' work thoroughly and set targets for improvement, but do not follow through to ensure that pupils meet the targets set for them. Homework is not set consistently enough for pupils to benefit from consolidation or extension of their learning in lessons, partly because they do not have textbooks at home to support their work in school.

104. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The new national strategy for science teaching is being implemented very well; pupils in Years 7 to 9 are already benefiting because teachers are working together as a team in devising resources and sharing good practice. Changes are working through into Year 10, but have not yet resulted in improved examination results at the end of Year 11. Teachers work hard to engage pupils' interest in science by means of attractive laboratory displays. However, science lessons cannot be fully accommodated in laboratories; some take place in the excellent new computer suite. This restricts opportunities for pupils to use the suite individually or in small groups to work on research projects.
105. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Examination results were similar then. At the last inspection there were a few unsatisfactory lessons, as now, because work was not well enough matched to pupils' abilities. However, improved learning is now clearly established in Years 7 to 9 and is beginning to have a positive impact in Years 10 and 11.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are very good; this is conducive to very productive learning.
- Management is very effective in providing opportunities for all pupils to experience a wide range of creative activities. .
- The overall quality of teaching is very good, promoting high standards and opportunities for all pupils to succeed.

Areas for improvement

None.

106. On entry into Year 7 standards in art and design are generally below expectations. By the end of Year 9 the standard of work produced indicates that attainment in 2001 was above average when compared to national expectations. Progress for the majority of pupils is very good. Pupils with special education needs also make very good progress. In 2002, 14 pupils in Year 9 achieved GCSE grades A* to C in art and design. The overall achievement of the pupils from Year 7 to Year 9 is very good. In 2001, GCSE grades A* to C were above the national average, and better than all other subjects within the school. Over the past two years, all pupils entered for GCSE have achieved a pass. The achievement of pupils in 2002 in GCSE examinations is very good and shows an improvement over previous years. By the end of Year 11 in 2002 several pupils achieved double GCSE awards in art and design. In the three years from 1999, achievement has shown significant improvement. The overall improvement in the level of attainment from Year 7 to Year 11 is outstanding. There are no significant variations in the attainment of boys and girls.

107. Pupils have a wide variety of creative experiences. Most pupils show a deep interest in their work and are achieving considerable success. By the end of Year 9, a majority of pupils draw and paint with a degree of confidence, have experience of a wide variety of materials and improve their technical abilities well. They significantly increase their knowledge and understanding about significant artists and cultures. In Year 7, pupils are developing their skills in drawing and observation by working on still life compositions. In addition some computer-aided work has been completed in Year 7 using digital cameras and computers to develop portraits using manipulating techniques. Experience has also been gained in the use of *Photoshop*. In Year 8, pupils are gaining in skills and knowledge through an investigation into the creative techniques used by Aboriginal artists. Year 9 pupils are producing poster designs by developing ideas based upon the work of Warhol, Lichtenstein and Bridget Riley. Year 9 pupils are using computers to research Picasso and Matisse, and designing repeat patterns using geometric shapes.
108. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are provided with a wide range of creative opportunities including fine art, graphics, sculpture ceramics, chemical and digital photography and textiles. Homework assignments are improving research skills, and supporting the department literacy policy. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, which is a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, from Years 7 to 11, pupils make very good progress, including those pupils with special educational needs. The promotion by teachers of key words in many lessons is having a positive effect upon the pupils' understanding of technical language within the subject. Some pupils are producing reasonably good research, often using computers. The attitude of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is generally very good, often excellent in Years 10 and 11. A majority of pupils show interest in their work and of their achievements. Pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons.
109. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and excellent in Years 10 and 11. The best lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to progress. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The relationship between the teachers and the pupils is very good, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative appreciation and awareness. Connections are also established in many lessons to the school literacy strategy. Class discussions are an integral part of all lessons, affording pupils the opportunity to develop opinions and become more articulate. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures. All classrooms within the department and certain public areas around the school contain excellent displays of work, providing an opportunity for pupils to appreciate the standards of work being produced. Assessment is very effective in tracking pupil attainment and is used to influence future curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes pupil self-assessment and therefore when questioned a majority of the pupils are aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given target grades for attainment and are capable of discussing their progress. Work is marked at periodic intervals usually linked to the completion of a project. The marking of work is reinforced by supportive comments by the teachers. Pupils with special education needs are given individual learning targets, which are reviewed regularly by the teachers within the department.
110. The management of the department is excellent, promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction to both teachers and pupils. The schemes of work, project manuals and related department documentation are very detailed and used to very

good effect. A comprehensive range of exemplar materials has been produced to promote quality and challenge. The teachers work as an extremely effective team. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory. Attractive displays of pupil work can be seen in the department and throughout the school. Resources are sufficient and used effectively.

111. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. An issue at that time was insufficient books and learning resources available for Years 7 to 9; this is no longer the case. The library and art rooms are equipped with a good range of books. A number of lessons have to be taught in non-specialist classrooms outside the department which some times acts as a constraint on the effectiveness of teaching.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall the quality of provision for citizenship is **good**.

Strengths

- The PSHE programme makes a very good contribution to citizenship within the school curriculum.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to participate and take responsible action both at school and in the local community.
- Pupils are encouraged to become active participants in lessons.
- Group work skills are developed very well.
- There is a strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills.
- The subject is managed and monitored well.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils have limited opportunities to participate in assemblies.
- Some subjects are less proactive than others in promoting citizenship.

112. It is not possible to reach an overall judgement about standards as the school has only recently introduced the subject into the curriculum. In the lessons observed where citizenship could be identified, pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of different aspects of society. This was demonstrated well in a Year 9 lesson during which pupils discussed the issue of equal opportunities with regard to disability, using a school-based example of a Braille telephone in the Arts Centre. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are honing their skills of enquiry and communication well in order to become informed citizens. In this context, some very good presentations were seen from Year 10 pupils in a PSHE lesson on human rights and globalisation. These presentations were also instrumental in fostering the personal development of pupils, particularly in the areas of teamwork and presentation skills. Throughout the curriculum, pupils have ample opportunities to participate in school activities and take action within the local community. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those associated with the Arts College provision, and pupils take full advantage of these opportunities. They are also involved in charity work and older pupils visit local primary schools to talk about their experiences. The school council is an effective and well-supported body that allows pupils to participate in school life, including the appointment of new staff to the school.
113. During the inspection, some PSHE lessons were observed in which citizenship was a major focus and the quality of teaching was good overall. Teachers have high expectations and plan lessons well with clear aims and objectives that are shared fully with pupils. Teachers also have good classroom management skills, and this enables pupils to learn well. As a result, pupils have a positive attitude towards their studies and

enjoy discussing and debating major issues in society. A variety of techniques are used to support pupils' learning and, in particular, pupils are encouraged to work in groups and learn from each other; for example, in a Year 7 lesson during which pupils examined issues of truancy and produced some stimulating ideas in the subsequent group reports. Teachers show a good understanding of citizenship and this enhances pupils' understanding of major issues. This was shown to good effect in a Year 11 lesson, in which pupils discussed strategies for coping with stressful situations in a mental health context.

114. Citizenship is managed well in the school. Departments have carried out a thorough audit and this is currently being scrutinised closely by a member of the senior management team. There is a particularly strong emphasis on citizenship within the humanities curriculum and, during the inspection, a good example of this was seen in a Year 11 religious education lesson, in which pupils discussed their own reactions to protest movements and examined the life of Martin Luther King in this context. Other departments in the school, however, are at an earlier stage of development in the introduction of citizenship within their subject curriculum. Opportunities to reflect on issues within society are also provided in assemblies but pupils rarely participate in these occasions. ICT and the Internet are used well in many areas and some impressive *PowerPoint* presentations were seen from Year 10 pupils in their research projects on human rights.
115. Overall, citizenship is beginning to make an important impact on the school's curriculum and there is a commendable emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills through debate and discussion. The provision for citizenship is being monitored well and there are clear strategies for future development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management that is focused on raising standards.
- Universally good teaching with examples of very good and excellent practice.
- A team approach to development and a readiness to implement new curriculum strategies.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs; through good planning, provision and teacher support.
- Standards in the subject are improving.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT across all the material areas of the subject.
- The development of a design idea and associated drawing/graphic skills and techniques.
- The use of more rigorous assessment practices based on National Curriculum criteria.
- The accommodation, resources and technician support required for delivering the requirements of the curriculum.

116. The standard of work in Years 7 to 9 is similar to the national average. Formal teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards were below average in 2002. Attainment by boys was below that of girls. However, inspection evidence indicates that current standards are improving across all three year groups and moving close to the national average. Continued use of moderation exercises, and the application of National Curriculum assessment criteria in marking pupils work, will further improve standards.

117. The overall level of achievement is satisfactory. Girls generally achieve more highly than boys because they are more likely to complete work accurately and present it well. Inspection evidence indicates that boys have equally good ideas but are less skilled at presenting them well. In food technology, where there is very good teaching, boys are achieving similar standards to girls. The use of design project workbooks provides all pupils with a structured format for their work. As a result they are able to work through the linear design process with a good level of understanding. They are clear about the need for a design brief and with help can write good design specifications. However, pupils are not skilled at developing a design brief from their initial ideas. This is a skill that needs to be taught more directly using a much broader range of design techniques. Drawing and graphic techniques and skills are under-developed because there is no structured approach to drawing being developed as part of each project. Pupils are developing good practical skills because teachers demonstrate skills well and to a high standard. Pupils have few opportunities to use ICT as an aid to designing and making, due to a shortage of appropriate computers and manufacturing equipment. Consequently these skills are under-developed.
118. At GCSE level in 2002, the standard of attainment in design and technology courses was below the national average for A* to C grades and average points scores, but above average for A* to G grades. Girls attain higher standards than boys, but boys' standards are closer to girls' than is found nationally. Examination grades have improved consistently over the past three years. Inspection evidence indicates that this improvement is likely to be maintained and that standards of attainment will be similar to the national average in 2003.
119. The high standard of work produced by both boys and girls in food technology is due to the very good quality of teaching. Many pupils can work on their projects with a high degree of independence from the teacher, and therefore make particularly good progress. In textiles, pupils are encouraged to pursue themes that are of particular interest to them. This provides the stimulus for high quality work. The standard of work in resistant materials and electronic systems is more variable. This reflects a wider range of ability in resistant materials groups, and a recent change in the course studied in electronics.
120. In all year groups the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. The teachers have developed a strong inclusive approach. These pupils are fully integrated in classes, have access to materials appropriate for them, and are well supported by the teachers. As a consequence they perform well in class and achieve highly in relation to their differing abilities.
121. Attitudes, values and personal development are all good. The subject is popular with most pupils who respond well to the highly practical nature of the work. They work with interest and enthusiasm, establishing good relationships between each other and with the teachers. Homework is a key feature of the teaching strategy, but there is considerable variation in pupils' response. The standard of behaviour is universally good because teaching and learning are effective. In a majority of lessons, pupils demonstrated qualities that indicate good personal development.
122. Since the last inspection, changes have been good. The curriculum challenges and changes have been taken up and implemented through good management and leadership. Standards have improved and the quality of teaching strengthened. Although considerable work has been undertaken on assessment, this is still an area that needs to be addressed.

123. The quality of teaching is universally good in both the upper and the lower school. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and this comes through in lessons. For example, in one food technology lesson, the teacher had prepared a wide range of different foods that might be included in a salad. Examples of varied commercial salads were discussed and reasons established for including different foods in various combinations. This was well linked to the need to test products before going into production. The Year 8 pupils worked in groups to share ideas and work out new combinations. These were successfully produced and tested. The teacher's expertise was supported by the excellent work of the learning support assistant during preparation and in the lesson.
124. In all lessons pupils are clear about what they have to do and what they will learn. Lesson preparation is good and considerable time is spent on ensuring that resources are available. Some of the new equipment made available for the first time during the inspection enabled pupils producing electronic circuits to work at a much higher standard. The use of prepared work-booklets provides both teachers and pupils with a structure within which to work. However, inspection evidence indicates that in some lessons the booklet was a constraining influence on what might be achieved, especially by more able pupils. Lesson planning rarely made specific reference to activities that would stretch pupils identified as gifted and talented.
125. Analysis of pupils' work showed that teachers mark work regularly. However, there is considerable variation in the quality of marking. Some teachers mark and make written comments about the quality of the content, whilst others indicate only the degree of effort made or the fact that some work is not complete. There is a need to place greater emphasis on using National Curriculum criteria, involving pupils more in the process, and setting clear targets of what pupils needs to do next to raise the standard of their work.
126. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has worked hard at developing a team approach to raising standards. Schemes of work, lesson planning and departmental policies are of an extremely high standard. The literacy initiative has been fully integrated into planning and in the teaching of lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are benefiting particularly from new support materials and strategies for learning. There is a good development plan and supplement that give a clear sense of direction for the team, and illustrate areas of need for additional resources. Systems are in place for monitoring pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of moderating standards is an area for continued development.
127. Teaching spaces are currently split between two areas in the school. Some of the rooms are small and inhibit both what can be done and the number of pupils who can be safely taught. Facilities for ICT, including computer-aided design and manufacture, are unsatisfactory. This acts as a constraint on the effectiveness of the way in which GCSE courses can be taught. Computers are split between rooms because there is little scope to house them as a central resource that can be accessed as required. There is no technician support in the workshop areas, resulting in teachers spending time on maintenance and equipment issues rather than planning for lessons or assessing the standard of work. Resources have been inadequate over several years, but there are indications that this is to be addressed.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good across all years.
- Assessment and monitoring of work, and sharing it with the pupils, helps to raise standards.
- There is a strong departmental management so that there is a common high standard of expectation amongst the staff.
- Spiritual and cultural elements promote the development of personal expression and the formation of moral viewpoints.
- There are good attitude to learning in each class with good relationships among staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT for individual research.
- The development of literacy skills for evaluating and drawing of conclusions.

128. Standards in GCSE examinations have been below national averages. In recent years standards have been rising and in 2002 they rose to being closer to the school and national averages. The group sizes are small and vary from year to year. Generally there are more girls than boys choosing the subject. When pupils are 14, they are assessed by teachers as being below national averages, but achievement is satisfactory given their relatively low skills on entry. There are signs that standards at ages 12 and 13 are higher, as attainment levels on entry are improving.
129. At the end of Year 11 the standard of attainment in lessons is below average. Pupils know a good range of vocabulary in both physical and human geography. For example, they know the different categories of industry, primary, secondary and tertiary, and understand that changing technology is extending this classification. They have a firm basis of map and graphic skills and use computers to illustrate their coursework. The majority can recall basic facts and write clear descriptive passages on topics such as the relationship between the environment and people of Bangladesh. Their attainment levels are limited by a lack of higher skills in literacy, which means that longer pieces of work are largely descriptive. Evaluation of factors and drawing of conclusions, which are needed when researching global warming, are not sufficiently detailed. They make satisfactory progress in their last two years.
130. At the age of 14, pupils have made satisfactory progress from their below average levels on entry; attainment still remains below national expectations. The higher attainers can make comparisons, for instance between areas of tourism, with accurate descriptions and some simple evaluations, using relevant factors, such as climate, distance to travel and facilities. Most pupils understand differences and can use climate graphs as a basis for their writing about such different places as the Gambia and Majorca. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to the staff who ensure that their progress is satisfactory.
131. The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are meticulously planned with clear expected outcomes shown to the pupils. Low literacy skills are being ably tackled by the use of vocabularies of key words that are built up lesson by lesson. Frames for writing are provided so that pupils write in a structured way. The book and visual resources are effectively used and, where teaching is good, pace and a variety of methods are employed. For example, in a lesson on tourism, there was lively

discussion followed by quiet writing to ensure that the ideas from the group work were not lost. In a lesson on coastal erosion, lively use of a well-chosen text ensured that learning proceeded at a good pace, maintaining concentration and learning. Homework is an integral part of most lessons. Though in one lesson the use of the new computer room was good, ICT generally is not sufficiently used. Assessment of the work of pupils at the end of modules is well marked, with reference to how standards can be raised. More valuably this is shared with pupils on an individual basis, so that the pupils themselves can address the issues. In the development of discussion and in the study of many different societies across the world, the spiritual and cultural education of the pupils is expanded and deepened, and is well developed. The very good behaviour and positive attitudes of the pupils enable the teaching to achieve the objectives of the National Curriculum.

132. Management of geography is good within a faculty structure. Common approaches to teaching, the elements of literacy and numeracy and assessment are employed after discussion amongst all staff to ensure that pupils are well versed in what is expected of them. The application of a literacy strategy means that pupils make more rapid progress and achieve higher standards than otherwise. The well-administered assessments and the use made of them are key to improvement. Monitoring of teaching helps to ensure that best practice is shared. Fieldwork to local sites has been successfully introduced since the last inspection to complement what is being taught at the time.
133. Up-to-date material from the Internet is not sufficiently used and in consequence pupils are held back in the development of individual research skills. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Currently there is a good, shared commitment for improvement and a determination to succeed.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Regular and thorough assessment of work, which is shared with pupils.
- High standard quality of teaching.
- Good management that ensures effective application of policies.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, cultural and moral horizons.
- A good learning environment; good relationships among staff and pupils.

Area for improvement

- The development of higher order literacy skills to enable pupils to gain the higher standards of attainment.

134. GCSE standards are broadly in line with national averages. In 2002 the proportion of pupils obtaining A* to C grades were fewer than previously; few pupils attained the highest grades A* and A. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicate that pupils' attainment is below national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory given the relatively low level of attainment on entry.
135. The standard of work seen in lessons, at the end of Year 9, corresponds to that shown in National Curriculum assessments, and is below average. At the end of Year 11 attainment is in line with national averages. Achievement by pupils across the years is satisfactory taking into account the levels from which they start. By the time pupils are 16, they know a great many facts about the 20th century and in particular the two world

wars that dominated those years, and the struggle of the great powers at the end of the Century. While the majority recall dates, movements and personalities and describe with some accuracy the passage of the events, few show deeper skills of evaluation and coming to reasoned conclusions. They know the reasons for the start of the Korean War, and the names of prominent people. For example, they know that F S Truman was president of the United States. They describe the different political views and the balance of power that led to the conflict of the early 1950s. Under-developed writing and debating techniques hold them back in understanding the economic and political level of the conflict.

136. At the end of Year 9, pupils are similarly equipped to deal with such topics as the causes of World War I and know the alliances that were then in place. The majority present a lucid account of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in a well-designed format, and know how he came to be killed. Few, however, apart from a small number of higher attaining pupils, readily weigh the pros and cons of the causes of the war and how it might have been avoided. Strategies that allow pupils to express themselves better are employed and there is an improvement in Year 8 by the use of literacy skills and writing frames to show how arguments can be put. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to teachers who ensure that they reach the targets set out for them.
137. The overall quality of teaching is good. The planning and strategies used by all teachers lay a firm basis for the lessons, with clear learning objectives known to all pupils at the beginning of each lesson. The learning of facts and skills is underpinned by memorising the key words needed to write about the topics. All pupils know what is expected of them from the beginning of the lesson and how to attain the objectives. In a Year 9 on the causes of the Korean War, a lively discussion was skilfully guided and resources, including a video clip and a script downloaded from the Internet, were used to inform and expand the pupils' knowledge. Better lessons allow discussion among pupils to arrive at a conclusion, and then talking in conference groups to argue a point. This not only consolidated knowledge and understanding of history but also helped pupils to express themselves more fluently. Lessons with lower attaining pupils are equally lively and stimulate interest and appetite for knowledge, as in a lesson at the end of which pupils not only know the difference between the Roundheads and Cavaliers, but also how it felt to be in a Civil War battle. The regular and thorough assessments at the end of modules are shared with pupils so they know where they stand and how they can raise their own standards by their own efforts. During the lessons, pupils' spiritual moral and cultural horizons are broadened by the consideration of how events can affect people and vice versa, for example when learning that the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo was a catalyst for the beginning of World War I. Teachers know which pupils have special educational needs and by individual attention ensure that they reach the targets set for them. Boys and girls are equally integrated into discussions and questioning.
138. The quality of management is good. The sharing of views and strategies helps to ensure that the best practice is used both in teaching and in assessment. Monitoring of teaching is instrumental in making sure that the good methods of all are shared and used. The uniform system of assessment across the three subjects of the faculty ensures that pupils are tracked in a way that can be used to check progress of one subject against others. The common approaches to teaching and the application of the literacy strategy mean that pupils do not have to adapt to different styles of learning.
139. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Higher levels of attainment are difficult to attain by pupils who are above average but who do not have the skills of

expressing ideas and values in pieces of longer writing, and the literacy strategies have not been established for long enough to ensure good results. The use and application of ICT in the department is of a high standard. The staff are committed to attaining higher standards and have the capacity to carry it through.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Good teaching leads to pupils achieving well at the end of Year 9.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject and concentrate upon their work well.
- Improved resources provide better opportunities for pupils to improve their ICT skills.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Tracking of pupils' progress in order to improve attainment.
- Technical support to maintain the ICT system and equipment.

140. Pupils' work seen during the inspection shows that attainment is average at the end of Year 9. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 were below national expectations but the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is rising. More girls reach the higher levels than boys. Pupils enter the school with varied experience of using ICT; achievement, in relation to this, at the end of Year 9, is good. No courses leading to examinations at the end of Year 11 have been taken in ICT until the current year. The attainment of pupils currently following GCSE courses in Year 11 is average. The progress made by these pupils is satisfactory. Girls' attainment in this group is better than that of boys. Those pupils not following GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 have satisfactory ICT skills.
141. Most pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 is average compared with national expectations. Their experience of ICT on entry to the school is varied but most make good progress as they move from Year 7 to Year 9. Boys and girls progress at similar rates. For example, pupils in Year 7 can produce a good slideshow on arguments for and against foxhunting using presentation software that many had not used before. Most pupils can access their work on the network and manipulate the *Windows* environment successfully. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 can use spreadsheets to perform calculations and set queries successfully when using databases. Lower attaining pupils can import pictures into a word-processed document. Pupils use the Internet effectively for research but they do not receive enough direction from their teachers to enable them to quickly find the resources they are seeking. Most pupils use word-processing software competently. Pupils with special educational needs make only satisfactory progress as no extra support is provided in ICT lessons.
142. Standards reached by pupils following the GCSE course in Year 11 are average. The attainment of these pupils has been adversely affected by the insufficient time allocated to the course. The level of these pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most of these pupils show good understanding of the purpose of web pages and the importance of providing a logical structure to their design. Pupils following the GCSE course in Year 10 are making good progress as they have an appropriate time allocation. All of these pupils could link together different pages in their websites. Pupils that follow the key skills course develop satisfactory ICT skills. For example, most pupils in Year 10 understand the main functions of spreadsheets. Higher attaining pupils can use more complex analytical commands successfully to draw conclusions from spreadsheet

data. Most pupils can use word-processing software effectively. However, lower attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding of how to move data from one application to another.

143. The quality of teaching is good overall. Learning is also good. The individual needs of pupils are met by the good personal support given by teachers; this is a major reason for the good learning that takes place. All teachers continually move around the room checking pupils' work, answering queries and offering advice. In this way all pupils, especially those with special educational needs, are included in the lesson. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, which enables them to advise and guide pupils effectively. Pupils learn successfully from good demonstrations when teachers use a screen that all can see. However, projectors are not available in all ICT lessons. As a result teachers are not always able to clearly demonstrate computer commands and pupils cannot show their work to the rest of the class. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and gives points for improvement. However, pupils are not given targets in order to improve their attainment. Lesson planning is good with appropriate tasks being set for most pupils. Most learning takes place in lessons where the aims of the lesson are clearly outlined and pupils are challenged. Learning in these lessons is further enhanced by a good review of what the pupils think they have learned at the end. Teachers use this information well to plan future lessons. Good behaviour in most lessons means that learning proceeds effectively. The setting of appropriate homework is inconsistent. There is a good emphasis on improving pupils' literary skills in most lessons. In a small number of lessons, pupils make less progress because teachers do not exercise firm control.
144. Overall, pupils have good attitudes to the subject. Most behave well and show interest in their work. Most concentrate well throughout the lessons. A particular strength is their willingness to help each other when sharing computers. Many pupils appreciate the support that working with others provides. Relationships between pupils, and with their teachers, are good. This results in a learning atmosphere in most classrooms that is purposeful. However, in a minority of lessons some boys do not apply themselves fully to their work and, as a result, their learning is limited.
145. The management of ICT is satisfactory. The subject enjoys the strong backing of senior managers and governors. New computer facilities have been successfully introduced and there are plans to enhance it further in the near future. There is a clear vision of how ICT can enhance learning across the school, backed up by a good development plan for its implementation. Effective schemes of work are developing but more opportunities for pupils to use ICT to control and measure events are necessary. However, there is no technical support. This puts considerable demands on the ICT co-ordinator to maintain the ICT systems and further develop the subject. As a result the monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic. Also, the amount of progress that pupils make is not clearly tracked as they move through the school.
146. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and the department has the capacity to improve its standards still further.

Key skills in ICT

147. The contribution that other subjects make to pupils' development in ICT is satisfactory. At the time of the inspection much of the ICT equipment was new and subject areas had yet to fully utilise it as an aid to teaching and learning. ICT resources are now established in most subject areas. However, its use in design and technology is undeveloped due to a lack of equipment. The school has plans to remedy this

deficiency. Some subjects, notably art, use the computers, and other technology, very well for design and research. ICT is also used effectively in English for drafting, re-drafting and modifying work. There is good use of music sequencing software by pupils in Years 10 and 11. Most subjects include some provision for using ICT for communicating information. Many pupils use ICT in Years 10 and 11, for example, to enhance their coursework files. This is particularly evident in geography, history and religious education. Pupils in mathematics use specific ICT programs to investigate the properties of quadratic equations. However, there is no framework to monitor the contribution that each subject makes to the development of pupils' ICT capability and experience. There are good opportunities for pupils to use the ICT facilities outside lesson times in the library, and teachers often provide access to other rooms as required. The well-designed whole school network allows pupils to easily access their work on any computer. Internet access is quick and always available, as the school has invested in the latest technology. There are good, firm plans for the future development of ICT that will provide more opportunities, in all areas of the school, for pupils to become more independent users of ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall the quality of provision in French and German is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and good relationships with their teachers.
- Pupils have a good understanding of grammar in French and German.

Areas for improvement

- Standards attained in French and German are below average.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use the languages for themselves.

148. Standards attained in French and German are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. Pupils' reading and writing skills are broadly average but listening and speaking are well below average. In 2001 the proportion of candidates achieving A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in German was very low when compared to the national average. In French a large proportion of candidates gained A* to C grades but any comparison with national figures is unreliable because of the very small number of pupils entered for examination. In GCSE examinations in 2002 the proportion of candidates achieving A* to C grades improved compared to the previous year. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate broadly average standards; however, in work seen during the inspection standards are below average. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of grammar rules in the languages and are able to apply them fairly accurately in writing. Year 9 pupils could say the different parts of verbs in German, and Year 11 pupils could explain word order rules in German and construct their own sentences using the rules. In French, Year 8 pupils could explain gender and adjectival agreements to describe the colours of clothes. Writing is usually accurate but is limited in range and by the end of Year 11 pupils write accounts of their holidays, their family and leisure activities in the past present and future, lower attaining pupils following a model. The majority identify the main points and specific detail from short texts and extracts of speech with some guidance. However, pupils are not confident in using the languages for themselves and rely heavily on written notes to communicate their ideas or to respond to questions about themselves and others. The emphasis on accuracy and on the written form of the language inhibits rather than facilitates their progress. Speaking and listening are not well developed because of the

limited use of French and German in lessons and the limited opportunities pupils have to try out the language for themselves to give and gather information.

149. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and good relationships with their teachers. Behaviour is good and pupils settle quickly and listen attentively to the teacher and to others. They are keen to participate in games and oral activities in class and, when given the opportunity, they work well in pairs, concentrating on tasks set.
150. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach but they do not always use the language being learned effectively to develop pupils' listening and speaking skills in lessons. Lessons are usually well planned with appropriate resources, and activities are well sequenced, enabling pupils to build effectively on what has gone before. Objectives are usually clear and shared with pupils, and teachers make good use of review at the end of lessons to reinforce the main points and key words. Year 8 pupils rapidly understood and used new language to describe clothes in French because of the clear presentation and practice of new language using the overhead projector. Pupils are encouraged to lead oral activities themselves in some lessons. They are keen to take part and make good progress when they take a full part in activities. However, too often activities are led by the teacher for lengthy periods, decreasing opportunities for individuals to use the languages for themselves. Pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally in pairs but this is not well developed and is usually restricted to rehearsal of known or prepared dialogues rather than to exchange real information.
151. The provision for the subject in the curriculum has been unsatisfactory in the past, resulting in very few able linguists being entered for examination and depressing the GCSE results in 2001. This is no longer the case. The provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. These pupils have only one lesson per week compared to two for other pupils. This hampers their progress considerably. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good. However, National Curriculum level descriptors are not used as effectively as they might be to determine the kinds of activities pupils should do in lessons or to plan for pupils' progress on a day-to-day basis.
152. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. After a difficult period of disruption due mainly to staffing difficulties, the department has begun to work well as a team, to share ideas and develop teaching and learning strategies. They have already achieved a good degree of consistency. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject have improved, as have staffing and resources. Standards have remained below average but the department now has a good capacity to improve.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and results in pupils learning well.
- Pupils show very good attitudes to learning and are very well behaved in lessons as a result of the very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The department's contribution to pupils' personal development is very good as a result of opportunities provided in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
- The music accommodation is very good and enables pupils to work effectively in groups.

Areas for improvement

- Provide opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to use ICT to develop their performing and composing skills.
- Link assessment procedures to National Curriculum levels.
- Develop a more detailed scheme of work for Years 10 and 11.

153. In 2001 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A* to C at GCSE was in line with national averages. Examination results for 2002 show an improvement, with all pupils achieving grades A* to G. Since the previous inspection results have improved steadily.
154. Most pupils enter the school with below average musical skills but by the end of Year 9 standards are average, reflecting good progress. In Year 7, pupils choose sounds and compose short melodic ideas, which they notate, to create and perform effective compositions with titles such as 'The fairground' or 'London'. In Year 8, pupils use music vocabulary well, and know how to play chords and how to develop and extend their compositions. Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the 12-bar blues and can improvise well over the 12-bar blues chord pattern. They develop good keyboard and guitar skills but their reading of music notation is under-developed. Higher attaining pupils develop their understanding of musical elements and knowledge of technical terms very well but their keyboard skills are held back by having to share keyboards.
155. By the age of 16 standards are average and pupils make good progress. Many pupils receive instrumental or singing lessons which certainly help their GCSE work. In Year 11 the standard of group singing is very high. Their part-singing in a performance of 'Bridge over troubled water' was very strong. Pupils can compose original pieces of several layers, which show good understanding of harmony but do not always develop their ideas within a clear overall structure. They can use music sequencing software on computer effectively to compose and notate their pieces.
156. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching, and results in pupils learning well. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The teacher's good subject knowledge results in pupils developing their musical skills effectively through the integrated activities of composing, performing, listening and appraising. The teacher's frequent links to the work of professional musicians brings learning to life for the pupils so that they understand the purpose of what they are learning. However, particularly in Years 7 to 9, the work is not always challenging enough for those pupils with particular musical talents or who play instruments very well. Very effective management of pupils with well-established routines and very good relationships result in pupils showing very good attitudes to their work and behaving very well in lessons. The teacher is very effective in assessing pupils' work while they are working so that they are very clear about how to improve what they are doing. The teacher's good use of wireless microphone and recorded backing tracks enables the teacher to talk to the whole class and to support individual pupils while they are performing. The teacher encourages pupils taking GCSE music to use ICT effectively to develop their composing skills but opportunities are missed in Years 7 to 9.
157. Opportunities for pupils to receive instrumental and singing lessons and to take part in extra-curricular activities are very good. As well as developing pupils' performing skills, they also contribute greatly to pupils' personal development. Pupils take part in the school show, the singing group, various district orchestras and ensembles and contribute to local community activities such as village fairs and the Great Aycliffe Show. They also enter national competitions and were winners of the Millennium song-writing competition.

158. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has clear ideas for moving the department forward and makes very good use of other adults with musical expertise and opportunities outside school to enhance pupils' learning and cultural experience. For example, pupils took part in a singing workshop with two gospel singers, and a professional recording engineer regularly supports the department with recording pupils' performances. The department development plan very clearly identifies the main priorities for improvement with appropriate targets and strategies. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work and progress are satisfactory overall but there is no system for linking assessment to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. Also, schemes of work do not show the learning in sufficient detail for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The music accommodation is very good and enables pupils to work effectively together in small groups, developing their compositions or rehearsing pieces for performance. ICT resources have improved since the last inspection, as a result of the school receiving Arts College status, but the range and number of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments are inadequate. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, which results in good achievement by pupils.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject; they apply it well in their teaching.
- Very good relationships and very positive pupils' attitudes contribute to a very good learning environment.
- Leadership of the subject is good; physical education staff work well together as a team.
- Teachers have good expectations of pupil participation.
- Participation in extra-curricular activities is good; participation in residential and outdoor education, and community tennis is a very good feature.

Areas for improvement

- Both indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory; they constrain activities and learning.
- There is inconsistency in the marking of GCSE coursework and pupils' files.
- Improved tracking of pupils' levels is needed so that pupils improve GCSE results.

159. Results in GCSE physical education and dance had remained broadly average until 1999. Over the last three years the number of pupils taking GCSE in both subjects has declined. Low literacy levels mean that pupils often do not perform well in the written papers. School data indicates that pupils do as well in physical education as they do in their other subjects. Standards in 2001 GCSE examinations were below average; however, there were too few candidates taking GCSE physical education and dance in 2001 to allow valid statistical or gender comparisons. There is a similar pattern in the 2002 GCSE results.
160. Pupils enter Year 7 with skills marginally below average; by the end of Year 9 pupils reach standards that are above average, which represents good achievement. Pupils by the end of Year 9, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of physical activities. During the inspection lessons were seen in gymnastics, netball, dance and hockey. By the end of Year 9, pupils know the reasons for warming up the body prior to taking part in physical activities and are able to take responsibility for their own warm-up. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the

rules, and appropriate skills to enable them to participate successfully. This was well demonstrated in Year 9 hockey lesson where pupils successfully officiate and apply rules fairly. Players accept the decisions of those who officiate. Performing safely is a feature of lessons; for example, Year 7 pupils in both dance and gymnastics learn to move safely when working in contact with a partner. In both dance and gymnastics, pupils work successfully in developing sequences, with high attaining pupils beginning to develop quality work, especially in dance where they include gesture. Most pupils know the importance of good footwork in order to outwit an opponent, as seen in a Year 8 netball lesson; the majority successfully do this in a two against one situation using good footwork and signalling for the ball. In a boys' Year 9 football lesson, they show good basic ball control skills, and mark attacking players successfully, knowing to keep on the goal side. High attaining pupils produce an effective lofted pass from mid-field into an attacking situation. The development and reinforcement of pupils' literacy are successfully developed in most lessons through use of key technical words, for example, deltoids, posture and body tension.

161. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average; all pupils achieve at a good level in relation to their work in Year 9. Work seen shows standards are improving. By the end of Year 11, pupils continue to have responsibility for their own warm-up. However, they are now better aware of some of the physiological changes that occur in the body that help performance. Pupils following the GCSE course show a basic understanding of factors contributing to fitness. High attaining pupils show a secure knowledge of the factors contributing to fitness and prevention of injury. Many know the major bones and muscle groups and how they work when the body exercises. While their practical skills are above average, their written work is below average standard, a consequence of restricted literacy skills. Orally they show a good grasp of the factors that constrain performance like flexibility, speed and age. They start to understand about optimum ages for best performances, like gymnasts and games players. Year 10 pupils enjoy their rock climbing; they know the basic safety calls, knots to use when using a safety line and the importance of three-point contact. All pupils successfully make a low level traverse and high attaining pupils are well challenged by a nine-metre climb with rock over-hang. In a Year 11 dance lesson, pupils very successfully choreograph their own small group dance to the music 'Thriller' with gesture and the start of facial emotion.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is good with a proportion of very good teaching. Overall, teachers have a very good knowledge of physical education; they apply their knowledge well in order to promote the pupils' learning. This was evident in a Year 10 rugby lesson on the ruck where the teacher was able to draw upon his wealth of rugby teaching and coaching. Learning is encouraged by the teachers' high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, as seen for example in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson; in this example, challenging questioning enabled the pupils to both improve their knowledge and make good evaluations. Good probing questions stimulate pupils' thinking regardless of their levels of attainment and this is a strong feature of the majority of physical education lessons. Pupils respond well to such questioning and give spoken responses of good quality. However, scrutiny of work in Years 10 and 11 shows pupils' written responses are often not as good. In most lessons there is an emphasis on literacy through the use of key technical words. Numeracy is well planned in the schemes of work but not always seen in lessons. Good examples were seen of spatial awareness, especially in Year 10 rugby; spatial awareness is less well developed in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers are very flexible in their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. They make good use of individual education plans and adapt their teaching to meet individual needs; this was well exemplified in a Year 10 lesson on rock climbing where the teacher took special pains to help a pupil overcome his fear of leaning away from the rock surface which was affecting his ability

to climb. No learning support assistants were seen operating on inspection. Overall, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their work; pupils respond very well and put a lot of effort into physical education and as a result standards are improving.

163. Overall, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are very good, because lessons are interesting and demanding.
164. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department offers a range of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all pupils, which both support and extend their work. However, both indoor and outdoor facilities are unsatisfactory; they constrain the breadth of the traditional curriculum and inhibit learning. Offsite visits to facilities such as the squash club and the indoor rock-climbing centre are well planned to compensate for the accommodation inadequacies. Accreditation in the junior sports leader award and the Duke of Edinburgh award started in September 2002; there are no results at present. The marking of GCSE coursework and pupils' files shows inconsistency within the department. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' work are good; however, improved tracking of pupils' levels is needed so that pupils gain the higher GCSE grades.
165. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teaching is now good or frequently very good. This is an improvement and a consequence of new teaching staff, who teach consistently well with great enthusiasm. The curriculum is now broader in Years 10 and 11 with certification for the junior sport leader award and the Duke of Edinburgh award; first results are due in 2003. The range of extra-curricular work has been maintained with additional community and school involvement in tennis. However, unsatisfactory accommodation still remains an issue as it imposes constraints on the teaching of the subject. The department works closely together and the staff are very supportive of one another; they are all very enthusiastic and committed to raising standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils develop subject skills rapidly from Year 7 onwards.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge very well to promote good learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their lessons.
- The subject is managed very well.
- There are very comprehensive assessment procedures to monitor pupils' progress.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- More time is needed for core religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- The attainment of boys at GCSE needs to be improved.
- Pupils have insufficient time at the end of lessons to reflect on their progress.

166. There have been relatively few entries in recent years for the full GCSE course in this subject, but the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C and A* to G grades has fluctuated at or above the national average. Results fell below national norms in the most recent examination, but the department has analysed the reasons for this and has developed clear strategies for improvement, particularly in terms of the attainment of boys.

167. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 9, despite the fact that many pupils enter the school with low levels of subject knowledge. Achievement in these circumstances is good. Pupils rapidly develop a sound understanding of Christianity and other major world religions from Year 7 onwards. They also develop confidence in discussing religious issues and their oral progress is good. During Years 8 and 9, pupils develop their subject skills more fully; for example, some very detailed and impressive work was seen from Year 8 pupils on visits to local places of worship.
168. Standards at the end of Year 11 are in line with national averages. During Years 10 and 11, pupils on the GCSE course develop their subject skills in more depth, and, in particular, Year 11 pupils have produced some very good extended writing on rites of passage in different religions. Overall achievement is good. Religious education for all pupils at this stage is part of the key skills programme leading to an ASDAN award and important issues are covered in these lessons that enhance pupils' understanding in the areas of citizenship and personal development. However, more time is needed for the subject at this stage, so that pupils can examine spiritual and moral issues in more depth. Throughout the age range, higher attaining pupils make good progress and have ample opportunities to develop their independent learning skills in depth through the key assessed tasks. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, also make good progress and are supported well in classrooms. This has addressed successfully an issue arising from the previous inspection about the underachievement of lower attaining groups.
169. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very secure subject and knowledge and considerable classroom management skills and these are used very well to promote learning. Lessons are planned well with clear aims and objectives, and expectations are high throughout the age range. As a result, pupils learn well and make good progress. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 8 lesson, during which pupils reflected on their recent visit to local churches and were encouraged to examine similarities and differences between places of worship. This lesson produced a very high level of discussion. Care is taken to include all pupils in the learning process through well-targeted questions, and a wide variety of techniques are used to stimulate pupils' interest, including video extracts, artefacts, group work, class discussion and short written tasks. In order to build on this positive picture, pupils would benefit from more time to reflect on their progress at the end of lessons. Relationships are very strong and, as a result, pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They show respect for their teachers and for each other, and they show maturity in their class discussions. Above all, they are eager to participate in lessons, and enjoy their learning. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 GCSE lesson, in which pupils examined in considerable depth differing Christian interpretations of Bible stories. All pupils showed maturity and confidence in their oral responses during this lesson.
170. The department is managed very well and, in particular, the assessed tasks at the end of each unit give pupils a very clear idea of how to improve their work. There is a commendable emphasis throughout the curriculum on the development of literacy skills and the subject makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of all pupils, particularly in the area of multi-faith education. The department also has a wide range of home-produced materials to stimulate learning both in classrooms and in the learning resources area. ICT is now making a strong impact on the subject curriculum and the religious education website is a very useful addition to subject resources.

171. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. This is a strong department with dedicated and effective teachers who promote good learning. The key challenge now is to encourage more pupils to study the subject at GCSE and to raise the achievement of boys at that level.