

INSPECTION REPORT

MIDDLETON TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL

Middleton, Rochdale

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105842

Headteacher: Mrs P Coward

Reporting inspector: Mr T Wheatley
10013

Dates of inspection: 10 – 14 March 2003

Inspection number: 249117

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Kenyon Lane
Middleton
Manchester

Postcode: M24 2GT

Telephone number: 0161 6435116

Fax number: 0161 6546024

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Harwood

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10013	Ted Wheatley	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The schools results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9132	Janet Godfrey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2919	Phillip Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27803	Joe Clark	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	
10275	John Cosgrove	Team inspector	Religious education	
27503	Marie Foulds	Team inspector	Science	
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History	
32339	Kath Metcalfe	Team inspector	English Drama	
10308	John Paddick	Team inspector		
12118	Allan Paver	Team inspector	Geography Educational Inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
30901	Sue Schofield	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
32774	Barry Upton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	

The inspection contractor was:

North West Education Services
Cheshire House
164 Main Road
Goostrey
Cheshire
CW4 8JP

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Middleton Technology School has 1,073 pupils and numbers have risen in recent years. There are more boys than girls in all years. Pupils are mainly of white United Kingdom background and there are small numbers of pupils of black Caribbean, black African, Asian, Chinese pupils and white European backgrounds. A small number of pupils have English as an additional language, but none are in the early stages of English language acquisition. A very small number of pupils are from refugee and traveller families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average and it is falling. The school is in a socially deprived area and one in which levels of unemployment are high. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is close to average and is rising slowly. The percentage on the school's register of special educational needs is below average. The areas of pupils needs are mainly for dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry to the school is below average, but it is rising. Pupils' literacy skills are below average and the proportion of higher attaining pupils entering the school is below average. The attainment on entry of the year group of pupils who took their GCSE examinations in 2002 was well below average.

The school is a technology school with a city learning centre (CLC) attached. It has recently received beacon school status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with outstanding features. Pupils achieve well overall and many pupils achieve very well. Pupils' personal development is very good. Teaching is good overall. Much of it is very good and sometimes excellent and there is a very high level of commitment to maintaining high standards. The headteacher provides outstanding direction for improvement to continue. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are rising. Overall pupils achieve well and many very well.
- Teaching is good overall and much of it is very good and sometimes excellent.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and direction for the school to improve further.
- Teachers, governors and all other staff have a very high level of commitment to ensuring that standards continue to rise.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the great majority of pupils are very good.
- The school's procedures for dealing with unacceptable and oppressive behaviour are excellent.
- Procedures to assess pupils' attainment and to set targets for improvement are excellent.
- Governors play a significant role in planning the school's development.
- The school makes excellent use of the funds at its disposal.

What could be improved

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not provide a wide enough range of choices for some pupils.
- Reports to parents do not provide sufficient information about pupils' progress or give enough guidance on what they need to do to raise standards further.
- Marking does not always help pupils focus on improving their literacy skills, particularly their spelling.
- There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills.
- The accommodation for science and physical education 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 very good improvement since it was last inspected in April 1997. There have been extensive improvements to the external condition of the buildings and to the grounds. Pupils' reading skills have improved considerably, attainment in mathematics and music has risen steadily and teaching in music has improved. Teaching is observed and evaluated, and procedures to help teachers improve what they do so that pupils learn better are very effective. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved as the school now has a city learning centre, and standards in ICT have risen considerably. Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved.

STANDARDS

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

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

In the National Curriculum tests taken by 14 year olds in 2002, the attainment of pupils was above average and this was very good progress taking into account that these pupils entered school with below average literacy skills. The percentage of pupils obtaining the average level 5 was well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The proportions of pupils obtaining the higher levels was above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Results have steadily improved over recent years. Compared with similar schools, the attainment of pupils was very high. Inspection evidence matches these results and shows that standards are being maintained. In other subjects, standards are above average overall; they are well above average in music and design and technology and average in art and design, geography, history, physical education and drama. Overall, the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very good.

In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002, pupils' performance was above average based on their average point score. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades and five or more A*-G grades was broadly average and the percentage of pupils obtaining one or more pass at GCSE was well below average. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average overall though the percentage of pupils obtaining at least one GCSE pass grade was below average. Taking into account these pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests taken when they were 14, they have made very good progress. Overall, results are improving from year to year at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Results were good in most subjects, including in information and communication technology (ICT). They were below average in English and geography due to staffing difficulties that have now been resolved. Inspection evidence shows that standards are above average overall. They are well above average in ICT and design and technology, above average in mathematics, geography, citizenship and religious education and average in English, science, art and design, history, German, music, physical education and drama. In all subjects significant numbers of pupils perform at above and well above average levels. Overall, achievement is good and for many pupils is very good or excellent.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall due to the high quality support they receive. A small but significant proportion of pupils, including some who are disaffected, does not make enough progress because the curriculum does not include enough work-related experience to match their particular needs.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly average, which is good considering pupils' low starting point. Standards in ICT are well above average, due mainly to the focus on ICT the school has provided through its very good facilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They enjoy being in school, they are keen to learn and they are proud of their achievements. Pupils are interested in their work and participate well in activities provided by the school. They concentrate and persevere.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. They move around the school purposefully and treat other pupils, adults and the buildings with respect. The rate of exclusion is generally low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and extra lessons. They become responsible and older pupils show particular care for younger ones.
Attendance	Broadly average and has improved over recent years. Punctuality to school and lessons is very good and has also improved.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

Teaching and learning are good overall. In about two in five lessons teaching is very good and in about one in ten lessons it is excellent. Teaching is good in one in three lessons and satisfactory in just less than one in four lessons. There was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and music.

The distinctive features of the best teaching are very high expectations, both of pupils' performance in their work and in their attitudes. They instil a sense of belief in pupils that they can succeed. Teachers' subject expertise is very good. Coupled with good lesson planning, activities matched well to pupils' learning needs, the extremely good use of ICT and very good relationships between teachers and pupils, pupils learn well and frequently very well. Pupils' concentration and perseverance with their work is very good. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally good. The quality of marking is generally good and pupils respond well on the advice they are given on how they can improve their work. Teachers use homework effectively to consolidate work done in school and sometimes to engage pupils in independent learning.

Where teaching is not quite so good, there are occasions where there are limited opportunities for independent learning and where teachers do not always pick up on pupils' careless spelling.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers are generally well-informed of pupils' learning needs and work closely with learning assistants and mentors to ensure pupils' learn to the best of their capabilities. The needs of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are fully met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the great majority of pupils. However, there are too few work related courses to meet the needs of the lowest attaining pupils. There is a comprehensive personal, social and health education course. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good overall. Teachers and learning assistants provide a very good level of support whether it is in lesson or by withdrawal from lessons to work in the learning support unit.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is very good for the pupils with English as an additional language and for those pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, with particular strengths in the planned provision for moral and social development of pupils. The school involves staff fully, outside agencies and pupils in maintaining the quality of provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and behaviour are very good. Procedures for eliminating unacceptable and oppressive behaviour are exemplary. Assessment procedures are excellent, though reports to parents on pupils' progress do not contain enough information.

The school works closely with parents and has done much to raise the importance of education to them. Consequently, the great majority of parents are supportive of the school and have a positive view of what the school does.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The direction for further improvement given by the headteacher is outstanding. Staff in management positions carry out their responsibilities in an exemplary manner and there is a very high level of commitment to improvement among all staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They work very closely with the school to plan improvements and carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good and frequently excellent. Throughout the school there is high level of commitment to evaluating and improving performance. The priorities for development are excellent and the action taken to meet the school's targets are outstanding.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The purchase of all resources is closely linked to the school improvement plan. The business manager and governors ensure that the focus of spending is on obtaining the best value for money in the context that good quality resources used well, lead to good progress by pupils.

Staffing is very good and the resources available are good. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, accommodation for science and physical education are unsatisfactory.

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 going to school. • Children make good progress. • Children behave well. • Teaching is good and the school has high expectations. • The school deals with parents' concerns well. • The school is well led and managed. • Pupils become mature and responsible. • There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel they are not well enough informed about pupils' progress. • Some parents consider that the school does not work closely enough with them.

Inspectors are in agreement with the strengths that parents identified. Inspectors also agree that parents are not given enough information on how well pupils progress – reports are not detailed enough. However, inspectors judged that the school makes considerable efforts to work closely with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in 2002 was below average overall, and most noticeably in their literacy skills. Over recent years attainment on entry has risen; the year group of pupils taking their GCSE examinations in 2002 entered the school with well below average levels of attainment, as did the year group who will be taking GCSE examinations in 2003. Attainment entry in 2000 and 2001 was close to average though literacy skills, and writing in particular, were below average.

2. In the National Curriculum tests that pupils took at the end of Year 9 in 2002, results showed that attainment was above average. The proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 or higher was well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The proportion reaching the higher levels in English and science was above average and in mathematics it was well above average. Compared with schools where prior attainment was similar, the proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 or better and the higher levels was above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Compared with schools with a similar percentage of free school meals pupils' performance at level 5 or higher was very high in English, mathematics and science. For pupils performing at level 6 or higher, attainment was very high in mathematics and science and well above average in English. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls and based on the average points score, the trend in the school's results was above the national trend over recent years. The school's targets were realistic and it exceeded them. Considering that pupils' literacy skills were below average on entry to the school, they have made very good progress across Years 7 to 9. In teachers' assessments in other subjects, attainment was well above average in art and design and in design and technology, above average in information and communication technology (ICT) and German and average in geography, history, music and physical education.

3. Inspection evidence shows that standards reached by Year 9 pupils are above average overall and that they achieve very well. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science with significant numbers of pupils performing at well above average levels. This is good taking into account poor literacy skills on entry. In music standards are well above average indicating a rise in standards after some staff changes. Standards are also well above average in design and technology indicating the effectiveness of monitoring, evaluating and changing provision to focus on raising standards. Standards are above average in ICT, German, religious education and citizenship and are average in art and design, geography, history, physical education and drama. Overall, pupils achieve very well. Pupils with English as an additional language and those from different ethnic backgrounds achieve very well.

4. In the GCSE examinations taken by Year 11 pupils in 2002, the attainment of pupils was above average, based on the average points scored by pupils. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades was in line with the national average, as was the proportion obtaining five or more A*-G grades. These results were aided by pupils' success in the GNVQ (general national vocational qualification) ICT course. Compared to similar schools the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grade passes was well above average and was above average for five or more A*-G grades. Based on their prior attainment the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades was well above average and the percentage obtaining five or more A*-G grades was above average. The percentage of pupils obtaining at least one A*-G grade at GCSE was well below the national average and was below average compared with similar schools and those with similar prior attainment. The school's targets for 2002 were realistic. It exceeded its targets for pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades and for the average points scored by pupils. It met its targets for five or more A*-G grade passes and missed its target for one or more A*-G grade passes. Pupils performed best in design and technology, ICT and statistics. Performance was worst in art and design, drama, English and geography. Where results were not as high in English, drama and geography, this was due to staffing difficulties which by the time of the

inspection had been resolved, and in art and design teachers are focusing on the specific needs of pupils which is leading to rising standards.

5. Inspection evidence shows that standards reached by pupils in Year 11 are above average overall, and many pupils are performing at well above average levels. Standards in mathematics are above average and in English and science are broadly average. In design and technology and ICT standards are well above average. In geography, religious education and citizenship they are above average and elsewhere they are average. Pupils achieve well overall and many achieve very well because teaching is often very good in interesting pupils in the work, setting high standards and providing considerable levels of support. The support provided by the learning mentors is particularly good, motivating and involving pupils who would otherwise run the risk of losing interest and achieving little.

6. The achievement of pupils is good overall and for many pupils is very good. The small numbers of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language achieve well. The school has worked hard to raise the status of education among pupils and parents, and for the most part it has been very successful. Pupils achieve well because they experience good teaching with high expectations, a variety of teaching methods matched to their particular needs and very good relationships between teachers and pupils. These are effective. Where achievement is occasionally not quite as good as it could be there are missed opportunities to engage pupils in independent learning so that they learn to research and find out for themselves. Instances of these missed opportunities were seen in art and design and history.

7. Overall, standards of literacy are broadly average, but there are differences across the curriculum. Standards are above average in English, drama, geography, music, art and design technology. The main school focus has been to increase pupils' skills in reading aloud and to support the development of their writing. All pupils read aloud in class and with increasing confidence and fluency. Pupils' oral work demonstrates increasing confidence, with very good progress made in speaking and listening skills, especially in English, art, design technology, geography and drama lessons. Discussion work across the school is a strength. Where standards are good, pupils have secure knowledge and understanding of technical vocabulary and demonstrate this in their structured written responses. Pupils' writing shows an improving awareness of form and expanding vocabulary. Progress is hampered by the lack of accuracy in spelling generally and of key vocabulary in particular. There are insufficient opportunities to practise extended writing and this is limiting progress particularly in drama, physical education and religious education.

8. Standards of numeracy are broadly average. Within this, the work of some departments, such as ICT and geography support numeracy effectively. In science results of practical work are analysed appropriately and graphs of all types employed well, including ones using negative axes. Work in business education made good use of numerical methods and in history graph work is used well when looking at World War I and 2 casualties.

9. Standards of pupils' ICT skills are well above average. In all subjects pupils use computers confidently and develop a wide range of skills that enhance the work they do. They use a wide range of applications well.

10. Most pupils with special educational needs attain the standards they are capable of and make good progress. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have made enough progress to take the National Curriculum tests. In the 2002 results, the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs, exceeded expectations. More than 90 per cent of special needs pupils, including some with the most severe learning difficulties, achieved at least five GCSE grades including ICT. Pupils who are withdrawn for help with basic skills make good progress in improving their reading and spelling skills. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make very good progress in geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and information and communication technology. In other subjects progress is good. In Years 10 and 11, progress is good in all subjects except geography, information and communication technology and music where it is very good. Progress against targets set out in individual education plans is very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. Relationships and personal development are very good. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and punctuality is good. Nearly all parents agree that their children like school.

12. The very good attitudes of pupils in lessons have a positive impact on learning. They like the school and are keen to learn. They are interested in their work and very attentive in lessons. Most pupils concentrate hard and work purposefully. A few lower attaining pupils, especially in Year 9, have difficulty in concentrating, and some younger pupils have not yet acquired the very good working practices of older pupils, but attitudes are always at least satisfactory. Homework is usually completed conscientiously. Pupils speak confidently and are not afraid of making mistakes. They respond very well to the high expectations and challenges set by teachers.

13. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good, including those pupils with identified behaviour problems. Pupils know how to behave properly and respond very well to the high expectations of good behaviour. Pupils are polite and helpful to each other, staff and visitors. They behave very well in assemblies and show very good respect during periods of reflection. Pupils are trustworthy and behave very well at break times. They take very good care of resources and equipment and have good respect for their school environment. In the last reporting year, there were 55 fixed term exclusions involving 47 pupils, mostly boys, and only one permanent exclusion. This is low compared with similar schools. The use of exclusion is effective as very few pupils are excluded more than once. Exclusions are for persistently breaking school rules, smoking, violence and bullying. The rate of exclusions rose last term as a result of temporary staffing problems that have now been resolved.

14. Relationships are very good and contribute positively to pupils' learning. Pupils form very good and constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers. The relationships established with form tutors provide very good support and guidance for pupils as they go through the school. Pupils work very well in pairs and groups and happily share resources. Pupils listen respectfully to one other and applaud each other's contributions. They show a genuine concern for others in the school community. Pupils are very sympathetic to the feelings and beliefs of others. Relationships across age groups and genders are very good. As a consequence, pupils grow in confidence and maturity. The Year 10 'Guardian Angels' look after new Year 7 pupils very well and help them settle into school. Younger pupils are happy to turn to them for help. They are a particular strength of the school and help to create a happy and caring community. Bullying and racism are very occasional problems, and the school deals with all reported incidents quickly and effectively often through the 'Guardian Angels'.

15. Pupils' personal and social development are very good. Pupils are very good ambassadors for the school. They enjoy the many opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. Pupils appreciate their role in a democratic society, especially through sport, drama productions, the school council and by being 'Guardian Angels' or prefects. The two school councils have their own budgets to manage, members are elected by their peers and aim to improve school life, for example, by improving the décor and environment. Pupils apply to be Guardian Angels in Year 10 and prefects in Year 11. Applications far outweigh the number of posts available and pupils go through an interview before appointment and training. Prefects help to maintain an orderly school during break times. Pupils also act as librarians and sports captains. The Year 8 receptionists perform their duties very responsibly and are very helpful. All pupils know the systems well and are very good at performing routine classroom duties such as handing out books, moving chairs and tidying up after lessons. Pupils are developing into mature and responsible citizens.

16. The good participation in a wide range of residential and curriculum visits, sports and performance activities contributes very positively to personal and social development and to academic progress. For example, about 40 Year 7 pupils visit France on a history trip, 40 Year 9 visit Germany to improve their German speaking skills and 25 Year 10 go on a residential science visit to Bangor University. Pupils enjoy day visits to art galleries, museums and the theatre. Annual performances, for example, this year's production of 'Grease' and a Christmas concert, increase pupils' opportunities to work with other pupils

and to take on specific responsibilities. There is very good involvement in the large number of activities that happen before school and during lunchtime, especially those involving the computers. Extra classes and homework clubs are very well supported. 39 Year 11 pupils take part in three Young Enterprise projects and the profits are donated to charity. There is sound support for other charitable fund raising events such as the current Year 8 conservation project to support rain forests and the collection of food to supply Christmas hampers to the elderly. Breakfast club, before school starts, is a popular and enjoyable social occasion.

17. Attendance is satisfactory. In 2001/2 it was broadly in line with the national mean. There has been good improvement since the previous year when it was below the national average. Authorised absence is broadly in line with national averages, and the rate of truancy is slightly above the national mean. Attendance continues to improve and in the last autumn term it was even better than the previous year. There is a very small number of pupils whose poor attendance affects their overall achievement. Following a punctuality drive by the school in January, punctuality to school has improved and is good. Pupils arrive on time to classrooms and lessons generally start promptly.

18. Pupils with special educational needs develop very positive attitudes due mainly to the encouragement and support they receive from teachers and learning assistants. These positive attitudes make a significant contribution to the good progress made in lessons. Pupils cooperate with their teachers and get on well together. Behaviour in class is nearly always good and is often very good or excellent. Even pupils with the most severe emotional and behavioural problems generally show respect and consideration for their teachers and learning mentors. The learning support unit makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development, providing good role models and encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own actions. Across all years, pupils with special educational needs mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. Their personal development is very good. They understand how their actions can affect others and can distinguish right from wrong. This is particularly evident in the way pupils who attend the learning support unit learn to manage their own behaviour.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching and learning are good overall and have improved significantly since the last inspection. In the lessons seen teaching was excellent in about one tenth of lessons. It was very good in about two in five lessons and good in about one third of lessons. It was satisfactory in the rest – and never unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are very good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and music. They are good elsewhere.

20. In the very best lessons teachers' expectations are very high and pupils respond very well to this. Teachers make sure that they present challenging work to pupils in such a way that pupils feel they can succeed. Questioning, for example, in science is skilfully done so that all pupils can contribute to discussion and gain a sense of having learned something. As a result of challenging work and high expectations pupils' intellectual and creative efforts are good, they develop a good understanding of the work they do and they work industriously and at a fast pace. Teachers establish very good relationships in lessons that not only lead to very good management of pupils' behaviour, but also make pupils feel confident that they can join in discussions without risk of criticism and plan their own learning. The range of activities that teachers choose to use also contributes to good learning because pupils are interested and concentrate well. Teachers are careful to adjust activities to pupils' learning needs and to make sure that pupils *do* learn. Usually this works well, though in a few subjects – art and design and history – for example, pupils do not receive enough planned opportunities to undertake their own independent learning and this limits the progress that can be made, in particular, by the highest attaining pupils. Mostly, however, the highest attaining pupils learn very well because work is well matched to their needs and they do receive opportunities for independent learning.

21. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and question pupils to ensure that they have a firm grasp of how good their learning is. Teachers follow this up with setting targets, making sure that pupils know what they need to do to make further progress and then supporting them where necessary. While marking is generally good, teachers do not always correct poor or careless spelling and this undermines work done to improve pupils' literacy skills.

22. Teachers use homework well. The quality is good, teachers set it regularly, make sure it consolidates what work has been done in lessons, and occasionally provide opportunities for pupils to develop independent research and learning skills. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and teachers reinforce its importance by providing facilities out of school time for pupils to do homework under supervision if they so wish.

23. Overall, teachers use a wide range of resources effectively. They employ learning assistants, mostly effectively, but have not quite resolved how they could be usefully employed in the introduction and final sections of lessons. Videos are used well in geography to provide graphic illustration of world events. Interactive white-boards are used effectively to enhance learning in many lessons and the school makes good use of the CLC to support pupils' learning.

24. The teaching of literacy is good overall and better than the current standards would suggest. Teachers are very aware of the need to build literacy skills and work hard at it. Literacy is planned for and classrooms prominently display key words, with good examples of levels of work displayed effectively across the school. Pupils have opportunities to practise extended writing in a variety of styles and particularly in English, where their writing is further supported by well-structured guidance. In geography, teachers use a similar approach though the opportunities for extended writing are not so frequent. In science there is a big effort to improve writing and good use is being made of specially devised literacy booklets. Inspection evidence, based upon a scrutiny of work across subjects, revealed that the recent move to 'light touch' marking has resulted in insufficient correction of spelling mistakes, particularly of specialist vocabulary. As accuracy, particularly spelling, has not developed in line with pupils' understanding and increasing ability to write at length, the full impact of the strategy has yet to impact upon their achievements in written work.

25. Teaching of numeracy is generally good and pupils' learning of numeracy skills is good overall. Despite there being few departments with a numeracy policy, teachers of subjects such as business education, ICT, art and science make good use of numeracy skills. In art numeracy skills are reinforced when pupils consider tessellations following from a study of the work of Escher. In science scatter graphs and lines of best fit, are used by the teacher to help analyse the results of investigations and pupils' numeracy skills benefit. In geography teachers use a wide range of numeracy skills effectively, helping develop pupils' capabilities of using graphs, to correlate numerical information and interpret conflict matrices.

26. Teaching of ICT skills is good overall with some excellent practice in mathematics, and good use made of ICT to enhance teaching in geography and for children with special educational needs. Pupils' acquisition of ICT skills is very good. The very good resources and imaginative teaching used in many subjects results in highly interested pupils who work hard and learn effectively.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of each pupil's needs from the information provided by the school's co-ordinator. Most lessons are well planned with a suitable range of teaching methods and using a variety of resources. In Years 7 and 8, pupils have their English and mathematics lessons with a member of the special needs department. Teaching in these lessons is very good and pupils make very good progress in improving their basic skills. Teachers generally make effective and flexible use of support assistants, for example, in physical education and design technology, where pupils with severe physical disabilities are given individual support. Very good use is made of computers to support pupils' learning. An independent learning system, both in lessons, before school, and at lunch times, helps pupils improve, particularly in reading and spelling.

28. The teaching of the small numbers of pupils with English as an additional language and those from different ethnic groups is good. Staff check on these pupils' progress carefully and though no pupils are in the early stage of acquiring English language, staff ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged in any way.

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

29. The quality and range of learning opportunities is very good overall. It is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The statutory curriculum is in place and the breadth, balance and range of the whole curriculum is very good, being better before the age of 14 than on the GCSE courses. The requirements of the National Curriculum and the Local Agreed Syllabus for religious education are fully met.

30. The strength of the curriculum is that it is very well managed with a focus on raising standards of achievement, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The curriculum reflects effectively the proposals of the National Key Stage Three (Years 7 to 9) Strategy and the curricular priorities of a specialist technology school. Time for each subject in Years 7 to 9 is carefully managed to increase the amount available for teaching English, mathematics, science, technology and ICT, whilst allowing sufficient time for all other subjects to be covered. One modern foreign language is taught, dance is taught as part of the physical education curriculum and drama and personal and social education are offered as additional subjects. The timetable is completed early, in the previous summer term, so that problems of balance and time can be resolved by consultation with subject leaders.

31. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is organised with the same care. The school has obtained formal permission from the DfES for pupils not to study modern foreign languages and only German, is offered within the option system. Arrangements for teaching technology allow for pupils to move on immediately to extra lessons after the formal school day has finished. This adds great strength to the technology curriculum and underpins very good GCSE results. Art is not afforded the same privilege though it is difficult to promote practical work in, for example, ceramics in a 50 minute lesson. The arrangement for Year 11 games on Friday afternoons is good because it attracts some pupils who are likely to truant to stay in school.

32. Overall strategies for teaching literacy are satisfactory. The school began to address the issue of improving basic literacy skills well in advance of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy in secondary schools in 2001. Training is provided by English staff and has focused upon building awareness and supporting the development of the strategy across departments, particularly in relation to the use of systematic approaches to looking at texts and a better understanding of what the national average looks like in Year 9 National Curriculum tests. The school's self-review procedures are effective and are leading to further development. The literacy policy is being systematically implemented across the school and literacy forms an integral part of teachers' planning with significant progress being made in speaking and listening, reading for meaning and understanding, and in the structure of pupils' written responses. The school is aware of the need to give pupils help in structuring their writing, more opportunities to write at length and to improve the accuracy of spelling.

33. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. The school recently held a whole day of training to highlight numeracy in other subjects. This day was well received and a number of departments have raised the profile of numeracy in their work. However, the effects overall have been patchy, with many departments failing to include numeracy in their schemes of work. As a consequence, they fail to link numeracy into their teaching. The overall impact of this inset is unco-ordinated, and as yet has not been maximised.

34. Curriculum provision for ICT is generally good, with excellent resources and accommodation in the City Learning Centre which are used very well by most subjects. Some departments lack sufficient hardware for further development, most notably art and design, design and technology and music. There is unsatisfactory provision in physical education, where ICT is not used enough by pupils following the GCSE course.

35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils have full access to the national curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. In Years 7 to 9 there is good extra provision in the form of paired reading opportunities, the use of computers, and withdrawal from some lessons for extra help with basic literacy skills. Pupils are entered for the full range of GCSE subjects but there is no work-related curriculum available to supplement their diet of GCSE subjects. There is good provision for pupils who are withdrawn from lessons to attend programmes to help raise their confidence and bring about an improvement in their behaviour and attendance.

36. Provision for extra-curricular activity is very good. Provision for extra-curricular physical education is good and that for music is very good. The school makes excellent use of the City Learning Centre to raise standards in ICT through use to support the curriculum and for before and after school activities. The voluntary provision of extra lessons from every GCSE subject outside the formal school day is well organized, very strong and plays a significant part in raising standards. It offers effective support to all pupils and particularly to those pupils who are identified as being capable of obtaining better grades at GCSE than have been predicted.

37. Equality of access and opportunity is good overall. The school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to learn well in a secure environment where achievement is recognized as the important goal. Effective contact with parents of pupils who cannot or do not come to school regularly ensure that school work is provided at home. Learning mentors are trained to visit homes, support pupils and fetch and carry work. Pupils in the learning support unit are withdrawn from class but not from their studies because subject departments support them with appropriate work. All pupils are entered for examinations and intermittent attenders are well supported in the core subjects to ensure that they gain a grade if at all possible. All pupils are valued highly and individual success is celebrated.

38. Although some lower attaining pupils are discouraged from studying German, there is capacity amongst staff for an increase in numbers should they expand. There is no limit imposed on choice, but traditionally more pupils have chosen to study geography than history. The school is taking action to build the position of history as a conventional subject to GCSE. Provision for pupils to follow pre-vocational and vocational courses between the ages of 14 and 16 are limited. Pupils do not have access to courses such as the Youth Award Challenge from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) which affords pupils the opportunity, through various challenges, to develop key skills in areas such as literacy, numeracy and ICT. The school has offered the course, but had few interested pupils and vocational GCSEs are not yet offered. The full GNVQ course in ICT provides access to the AVCE and to higher education but the ICT content of business studies is insufficient to allow students to follow a full A-level in ICT. This limits the choice of subject at advanced level.

39. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The programme has been reviewed and improved. It is very well planned and is taught by a team of 24 teachers. Sex education and drugs awareness issues are well covered and supported by visiting speakers and by 'Guardian Angels', a group of especially trained older pupils who provide advice and support to pupils, particularly over drug related concerns. The course links well with citizenship and pupils are taught to take responsibility for their own actions and to show concern for the welfare of others. The school uses a good range of resources and puts a great stress on the effectiveness of the programme by involving pupils in self-assessment at the end of each unit of work.

40. The quality of careers and vocational education is good overall; careers education and guidance is very good. Disaffected students are identified early in their educational careers, and benefit from close supervision and guidance from the Connexions adviser until they leave, though their experience of work

related courses is limited. All Year 9 and 10 students have personal interviews and make extensive use of careers computer software as part of their programme. In September of Year 11 all students undertake a work experience placement and attend college open days and careers presentations. These have a positive effect on helping pupils realise the availability of employment, the qualifications and skills needed and further education and training possibilities. The only vocational course currently on offer is a GNVQ in ICT; a future course in Health and Social Care is under active consideration.

41. The contribution made by the community is good with a very significant contribution from the City Learning Centre which, as an extension of the community into the school, offers the use of excellent, modern facilities. All courses offered to adults at the centre are full and with waiting lists. Local primary schools and a local special school receive teaching at the centre and there is very good technical support for improving and maintaining ICT in partner primary schools. Pupils benefit from visits by local business personnel and practise interview sessions. Local organisations provide training for older pupils who take on responsibilities as counsellors for younger pupils. The school makes a very good contribution to the community. The school raised funds for the provision of two community mini-buses and they are available to any community organization, or the school. Drivers are community volunteers and are properly trained.

42. Relationships with partner institutions are very good overall. Public relations with the local primary schools are very good; consequently the school is heavily over-subscribed for entry in 2003. Transition from primary to secondary school and the transfer of records is well managed. Cross-phase curricular links are less well established and this is a target for development. Links with providers of further education are less secure and most pupils go out of district for education beyond the age of 16. The number going into education and training together is above the national average. It has been constant over the last three years at about a quarter of the year group. The number going into college courses has risen sharply over three years but is well below the national average. Very few pupils go directly into employment. Overall the school is now sharply aware of what happens to pupils when they leave. Under the Excellence in Cities (EiC) Challenge, the increase in numbers going into further education and working more closely with local colleges are targets for improvement.

43. The school has strong and growing networks, locally, regionally and nationally through its technology school status, its leading role in the EiC Challenge for Rochdale, and most recently through its beacon school status. Cooperation and support is offered at all levels within the school: attainment in all Local Education Authority (LEA) schools is monitored and evaluated for the LEA and targets prepared using the school's unique skills in assessment of attainment; some departments lead the local authority's Key Stage Three Strategy work in their subject, and a strong network for training support staff for other schools is well established. Through the Portal Project, the City Learning Centre supports local partner schools to develop good practice in ICT and particularly to develop good on-line materials in English, geography, history, ICT and science. This represents a heavy additional burden on many already heavily committed staff. The very great strength of the school's relationships with partner institutions lies in the very significant part it plays in supporting the LEA and partner schools to raise standards.

44. Overall the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good. It has particular strengths in the provision for their social and cultural development and in the way in which pupils, staff and outside agencies are involved. The school does not have a written whole-school policy to draw together the very good provision and to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness. Consequently, provision within different subjects is inconsistent and follows no particular policy.

45. The provision for spiritual development is good. It embraces assemblies, form tutor periods and subjects throughout the curriculum. Collective worship is provided by form tutors in their tutor groups and the school monitors this provision. Generally, the quality of collective worship is good, though the quality varies a little because so many people are involved. In assemblies and registration periods there are consistent, but not universal, moments of reflection on set themes. These themes, such as *Bullying* in inspection week, carry a clear moral message. However, following the set theme means that the opportunity to explore topical themes such as *Lent*, the start of which coincided with the inspection, was

missed, and would have helped to fulfil the requirement that, over a period of time, the worship should be wholly or broadly Christian in character. There are good opportunities in the curriculum for reflection and spiritual development. Examples of this occur in English, drama, music and religious education. The history trip to the Normandy beaches and the military graveyards has a strong spiritual element. Special events such as the carol service at Christmas make a further contribution. That part of the spiritual dimension which is connected with the pride of performance and self fulfilment is very evident in drama and in music. Some of the practical activities in the school such as the work of the “Guardian Angels” are based on a spiritual notion of the worth of each individual.

46. The provision for moral development is very good and an improvement on the last inspection when it was good. The school has high expectations, a code of conduct which most pupils willingly follow, and very good ways of meeting the challenge of misbehaviour. Very good behaviour and relationships are features of the school. This is particularly striking at breakfast, lunch and break times when it is obvious that the school trusts its pupils to behave well. The “Guardian Angel” scheme is an outstanding example of uniting several strands of school and community life into one very good initiative involving learning mentors, staff, older pupils, younger pupils and outside agencies. There are very good opportunities to raise moral issues in English, drama, history, religious education and personal and social and health education. For example, discussions on the Holocaust, choices about abortion and divorce, sex and drugs, war and peace, cloning, environmental issues and world poverty engage pupils usefully in developing a moral standpoint of their own. General moral concern shows itself in charitable activities such as collecting hampers for local elderly people but the range of such activities is not as wide as it might be.

47. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils learn *about* society in various subjects. They also learn to work *in* the school as part of a society. The work in several subjects aids the learning about the wider society, and the shouldering of responsibility in the school council is an impressive contribution to the training in citizenship. Most subjects show that the pupils work co-operatively with staff and with each other. The behaviour around the school is indicative of very good social relationships. The PSHE course and the humanities make a good contribution to citizenship. Residential visits, for example to Snowdonia, Bangor University, France and Germany and field trips, visits to museums, ice-skating, discos help the process of socialisation. Some of the opportunities in physical education for social and moral development are very good. Successful sporting activities promote team spirit and bring a sense of pride that comes with success. Moral concern interlinks with social education when visits are made to a drop in centre for drug addiction, a probation office, a health centre, or an anti-homophobic bullying centre in Manchester. There are good relationships with the local church, local schools, shopkeepers, bus drivers and elderly persons some of whom know that when they contact the school about any misbehaviour something will be done about it.

48. The provision for cultural development is good and an improvement on the last inspection when the cultural life was not rich outside of lessons. Drama, music and art play a good, and often a very good, part in cultural development although art tends to be more focused on European themes than the multicultural influences found elsewhere. The school and its immediate locality do not furnish many examples of first hand multicultural experience but opportunities exist in the curriculum to study other cultures, religions and races, and the school does promote appropriate attitudes to racism. Pupils are introduced to Christianity and other major religions and cultural traditions. Visits to Skipton Castle, the Helmshore Textile Museum, Hadrians Wall and France make a good contribution to social and cultural development. Geographical studies help to introduce a multicultural dimension. Opportunities are taken as they arise to develop the cultural provision so when the Commonwealth Games were held in Manchester steps were taken to introduce pupils to foods of different nations. Visiting artists and poets add to the widening cultural horizons of the pupils. As befits a technology school there are good examples of introducing pupils to the modern technological culture of the twenty first century. This occurs in ICT and in design and technology where the course on resistant materials has an element on the social, moral and cultural aspects of the topic. There are trips to the Museum of Science and Industry.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The school provides a very good level of pastoral care for pupils, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is very good educational and personal support and guidance to enable pupils to make further progress with their learning. The school takes very good care of pupils' welfare.

50. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. There is very good liaison with primary schools and a well-organised induction process. There is a good programme of PSHE to support pupils' personal development. The key stage managers, heads of years and form tutors play an important role in supporting and mentoring pupils. Pupils are confident in turning to them for help and support. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are well tracked. There are regular pastoral meetings to ensure pupils maintain good progress. The learning mentors provide very good support for a number of targeted pupils that increases pupils' confidence and maintains enthusiasm for school. Very good use is made of outside agencies to support pupils. Pupils are very well prepared for adult life.

51. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. The electronic registration system is used very effectively. Registration is efficient and the time is used well for pupils' personal development, for example, during inspection week it was used to raise awareness of prejudice in society. In form time, tutors establish good and supportive relationships with pupils and monitor homework diaries. The school rightly raises the importance of good attendance with parents and discourages them from taking their children on holiday during term time. There is a wide range of effective strategies to improve attendance such as telephone calls to parents or carers on the first day of a pupil's absence and rewards and certificates for good attendance. Registers are also marked electronically at the start of each lesson to ensure pupils do not miss individual lessons. Support for a few disaffected pupils has led to better attendance. Support from the Educational Welfare Service has been unreliable in the past but has recently improved. There are very good systems to encourage punctuality. The strategies employed have been very effective in improving attendance and punctuality since the last inspection.

52. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The behaviour policy is positive and all staff have received training in the effective management of pupils. They have very high expectations of good behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. Pupils feel that discipline is used fairly and very effectively. Exclusions are an effective deterrent to poor behaviour and few pupils are excluded more than once. Very good records are kept of all incidents of poor behaviour, bullying and racism and those resulting in exclusions are properly recorded. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating bullying and promoting racial equality are excellent and have a positive effect on how pupils treat each other. The 'Guardian Angels' are well trained to deal with relationships, welfare and bullying and make an excellent contribution to making the school a safe and secure environment for learning. Awareness of gender issues, bullying and racism is promoted in assemblies and form time. Pupils are happy to report incidents directly to the Guardian Angels or members of staff or discreetly using the 'worry boxes'. They are confident that any reported incident will be resolved quickly and to their satisfaction.

53. The school takes very good care of pupils' welfare. Procedures to ensure the health and safety of all pupils are good. Risk assessments are very good in most subjects areas and for visits out of school; risk assessments are not up to date in physical education. Teachers are careful to follow safe procedures in lessons. Evacuation drills are carried out regularly and recorded properly. First aid procedures are good and the medical room is useful. There are very good procedures for dealing with child protection issues and the school maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies.

54. Assessment procedures are outstandingly good, and the school has made major contributions to the work of the authority itself. The work is extensively computerised but not dogmatically so; where departments rely on paper records these are left in place. The aim is to reduce the work-load on teachers by organising the data into manageable blocks focused on specific purposes. The data manager provides a high level of support for staff, and this has led to wide acceptance of the value of assessment as a very effective diagnostic tool for raising attainment. The procedures have been developed over a number of

years and are fully accessible through the school's computer network. All information received from primary schools is linked to pupils' records in this school and are used effectively to track pupils' progress.

55. The information is used very well. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for assessment monitors pupils' performance and involves staff in a dialogue about pupils who are causing concern by underachievement. Form tutors are fully involved. They review the information regularly and set and review pupils' targets. Pupils are aware of their targets and of what they need to do to reach them. Teachers use the information to plan their teaching and to review the teaching groups pupils are in. The use of assessment information is excellent in design and technology and science. In these subjects, teachers track pupils several times a year for several aspects of their performance, comparing them against potential attainment. Very effective action then follows, with lunchtime classes for pupils who are borderline in relation to their expected levels in the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests, after school revision classes and Saturday morning classes for the gifted and talented. Pastoral information is also included, linked with the well-established mentoring system for Year 8, which seeks to ensure that poor performers do not adversely affect the performance of others.

56. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs and how to bring any concerns to the attention of the learning support department are very good. Primary school links are good and by the time pupils enter the school in Year 7 a clear picture of each pupil's needs has been established. Pupils are tested for reading on entry and re-tested at regular intervals after that to ensure sufficient progress is being made. The work of the school's support assistants is good. They are well trained and know their pupils well, assisting in the writing of their individual education plans. Through regular weekly meetings with the special needs coordinator, they carefully monitor pupils' progress. There is a Catch-up course in Years 7 to 9 for pupils who perform well below average. For pupils with a reading age less than ten years, a Reading Partnership scheme helps them improve. Pupils who attend the learning support unit receive very effective support in managing their behaviour, improving their attendance and improving their social skills. This is a vital school resource in preventing exclusion and improving attendance. Learning mentors work effectively with pupils providing valuable support in improving confidence and raising self-esteem. However, in its present location, the unit is too small and lacks space for pupils to work quietly away from other pupils or talk confidentially without being overheard. Lunch-time clubs such as the FAB4, help pupils with their homework and support assistants are on hand to offer advice and support.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The school's links with parents are good. The school has a good reputation in the community and is oversubscribed. Parents who attended the meeting for parents and those who responded to the parental questionnaire are pleased with the school. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is sound. They make a good contribution to their children's learning at home but most still have only a limited input in the life of the school.

58. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about students' progress, is unsatisfactory. This is because pupils' reports in most subjects do not give information on what pupils know, understand and can do, the targets for improvement in each subject are too vague, and there is no PSHE report. The school is currently working to improve reports and those in drama, art and music are now more useful. Other aspects of communications with parents are good. Parents find interim reports for Year 11 pupils helpful. There is an academic consultation evening each year for parents and attendance is satisfactory. Newsletters and occasional letters are informative. The prospectus, which incorporates the governing body's annual report to parents and open evening booklet, provides parents with much very useful information although there are a few minor omissions. It does not contain information on the next election of parent governors. The school provides useful information on how parents can support their children's learning.

59. Learning mentors and pastoral staff have very good contact with parents and homework diaries are used well to communicate between home and school. The school has good support from the parents of individual pupils with behavioural problems. The school makes good efforts to include parents in their children's education. There is no effective parent teachers association, but parents support their children's education by ensuring their good attendance and many provide Internet access at home to help develop study skills. The parent governors have a very good impact on the work of the school.

60. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully consulted and involved in annual reviews. The school places great store on the attendance of parents – and pupils – at annual reviews and makes great efforts to ensure their attendance. Parents are provided with good information about Parent-Partnership and other support agencies available to parents. Before they start the school in Year 7, the co-ordinator meets with parents and pupils so that a mutually trusting relationship is established at the outset. Learning mentors make regular contact with the parents of pupils who attend the learning support unit

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The leadership and management of the school are excellent and the direction provided by the headteacher for continuing improvement is outstanding. This shows in the significant increase from year to year that the school has seen in its GCSE results, the changing attitudes of pupils and parents and the high esteem in which the school is held both locally and nationally. The headteacher is extremely well supported by a dedicated senior team with a wide but clearly defined range of responsibilities which they carry out with enthusiasm and professional expertise. Responsibilities are generally delegated well throughout the school and staff are supported and trained to carry out their work effectively. The exception is where one person carries significant responsibility for two subjects, the learning resource centre and part of the PSHE provision; this is too much to expect of one person and means that it is difficult to prioritise efforts. Nevertheless, there is an extraordinarily high level of commitment among staff to the school and to their own contribution to the education of pupils.

62. Job descriptions are very clear for all staff. They have a focus on raising standards and are expressed in such a way that an individual's performance can be evaluated against the major target of improving GCSE results. Curriculum area managers have a wide responsibility for their subject areas that includes an element of providing support and development for staff in other schools, as part of the school's status of beacon school. Overall the quality of management of departments, year teams and other aspects of the school's work is very good.

63. The leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. The interests of pupils with special educational needs are positively promoted, both in lessons and for examinations, and there is a shared sense of purpose both within the team of specialist staff and throughout the school. Very good documentation and procedures underpin both policy and practice. Good links with a local special school have been established to the benefit of pupils in both schools. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Staffing levels have improved, more pupils have individual education plans (though they do not always have subject specific targets), there is improved contact with parents, and a learning support unit has been established. GCSE results of pupils on the special needs register have improved significantly. The school is fulfilling the requirements of Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. The learning support unit is very well managed and ensures that pupils who attend the unit do not miss out on the curriculum that other pupils experience.

64. The school's priorities for improvement are excellent. The improvement plan is very detailed. It focuses on raising standards and reviewing and changing or introducing procedures that enable this to happen. Consequently, the drive to improve attendance and punctuality, for example, while upsetting a small number of parents, has had a very positive effect. Pupils want to be in school, they make a real effort to be on time and their attitudes to school are that they are there to learn. All elements of the school improvement plan are carefully linked to costs, personnel taking responsibility, training or development, evaluation and further improvement. In every respect the school is determined on continuing to improve provision for its pupils and the actions it takes as a result of this are outstanding. Development plans from departments are closely linked to the school improvement plan.

65. Governors work very closely with the school. Their contribution to the school's plans for improvement is very good. They have been instrumental in the considerable improvements that have taken place with the buildings since the last inspection and provide a high level of support for the headteacher and staff. They know the strengths of the school and what changes are needed to aid further improvement. Many of them visit the school frequently and are well informed about the school's work.

66. Overall provision for staffing is very good with the match of teachers and support staff meeting the demands of the curriculum very well. Few teachers teach outside their immediate specialism and there is very good support for pupils with special educational needs. Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is very good and leads to teachers having very high expectations of their own performance. The school produces a substantial list of staff strengths suggesting those people whose lessons could usefully be visited in order for particular skills to be observed. Excellent induction and support systems are

available to teaching and non-teaching staff new to the school. Systems are also in place to provide very good training for all new staff. Support staff, very much members of the school's team, provide a wide range of high quality support functions. Specialist visitors to the school provide a good range of extra skills to the benefit of pupils. These range from the broad field of instrumental tuition to specialist inputs to strengthen the activities of the 'guardian angels' in Year 10. The school experiences no problems with staff recruitment and retention.

67. Accommodation is satisfactory with strengths and weaknesses. There has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The Harwood building has been rebuilt following a fire. The external condition of the premises has been improved by the replacement of windows on a rolling programme and repairs made to the flat roofs. There is now a secure perimeter fence. The accommodation for mathematics, information and communication technology and drama is good. Accommodation for science and physical education is still unsatisfactory. There are too few science laboratories and some are too small. Inadequate indoor accommodation for physical education has a detrimental impact on standards. Most subject teaching areas are grouped together and the classrooms are a good size. The school makes good use of the City Learning Centre that has recently been built within the school grounds. The displays around the school contain an attractive mixture of pupils' work, photographs and published material that enhances the learning environment.

68. Learning resources are good overall. The learning resources centre is an attractive and well-used facility with an area dedicated to class use. It is steadily being restocked with new books following a fire five years ago, but is still a little depleted. It houses a number of computers for pupils' use and there is good provision for the study of weather via local sensors and satellite. There is only a limited collection of periodicals, but the small careers section is well resourced and is well used.

69. ICT provision across the school is very good. The number of computers is above average for the size of school and provision is greatly enhanced by the new city learning centre. Whilst many computers are centrally arranged, most curricular areas have their own adequate provision. In some departments such as maths and science, ICT resources for teachers use are particularly good.

70. In almost all departments, there are sufficient books and reading materials for pupils to use, with the exception of history, where there is a shortage of textbooks for year 9. Other learning resources are very good in maths, science, ICT and drama, and good in English, modern foreign languages and religious education. In the remaining subject areas they are satisfactory, but there is a shortage of keyboards in music and insufficient artefacts for the multicultural aspects of art.

71. The learning support unit provides a pleasant and well-organised working environment for small numbers of pupils. It has good ICT provision and is very well resourced with books and many other materials that support the curriculum.

72. The strategic use of resources, including all specific grants is excellent and the management and control of finances is of very high quality. Resources are carefully and skilfully marshalled to meet the school's clearly established priorities. The LEA auditors recently placed financial procedures in the first category. The very effective business manager has a training function in the LEA for those managing finances and for a range of other support staff. She also disburses funds on behalf of the LEA from their Excellence in Cities grant. The procedures of the school's finance committee are open and according to standing orders. The chair of finance has a sharp professional familiarity with good practice and his committee receives very good information from its secretariat on which to base its clear decisions. These are led by curriculum needs.

73. The school's basic budget is average and this meets all staffing costs which are tightly managed. Some parts of the buildings are very expensive to maintain in fit condition. The strength of the financial management is that the very substantial additional grants received by the school are skilfully and very effectively spent on developments to support teaching and learning. The high special educational needs grant is doubled by contributions from the basic budget and the school makes very good use of these

funds to support these pupils. The school has well above the average proportion of learning assistants and they are very effectively trained to have the maximum impact in the classroom. Thus pupils with special needs are making good progress towards their targets.

74. The technology school grant is very effectively spent on equipment to develop learning. Advanced technology is used in every classroom to promote interactive learning. Teachers are moving well beyond basic training in the use of computers as the school manoeuvres to raise the computer skills of all staff in using advanced equipment. Standards in ICT are rising in all areas. Technicians are managed centrally so that they can support the whole staff and other schools; they are enthusiastic, increasingly skilful, and very well trained to accomplish that task. The school makes excellent use of new technology in support of its administrative purposes.

75. The school receives extra funds for being a beacon school and these are used very effectively. Support is provided for local schools in administration, management, teaching and technical areas. The school's own structures for development and raising standards are the basis of this support so that very good and excellent practice are shared very effectively.

76. The school is innovative in its approach to making best uses of its available funds. The cost of supply staff is very high so that the school has appointed and trained one full-time cover supervisor and four part-time cover supervisors from its support staff. These cover approved teacher absence arranged in advance, some sickness absence and they accompany school trips managed by teachers. The intention is to guarantee for teachers almost all of their non-contact time so that there is assured time for preparation and so that continuous training to meet individual targets identified by the processes of internal monitoring can take place in school time.

77. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and evaluating its processes. Taking effective action to meet perceived weakness is what makes this school distinctive. It gives very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. This is a very good school that has a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. All of the key issues are in its improvement plan. The headteacher, governors and staff should now:

- I. Improve the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 by providing:
 - work-related courses to meet the needs of some of the lowest attaining pupils,
 - alternative courses in ICT to support pupils wishing to take the subject to Advanced level once they leave the school.(paragraph: 38)
- II. Improve the quality of reports to parents by providing:
 - information about what pupils know, understand and do in each subject,
 - targets to help pupils further improve their achievement,
 - clear guidance to help parents to understand reports.(paragraph: 58)
- III. Ensure marking helps pupils maintain improvements in developing their literacy skills, particularly spelling.
(paragraph: 21)
- IV. Provide planned opportunities for pupils to further develop independent learning skills.

(paragraph: 20)

V. Improve the accommodation for science and physical education as soon as is practicable

(paragraph: 67)

Minor issues the school should also consider are:

- i. Delegating management responsibilities at departmental level equably to ensure no single member of staff is unduly overloaded with work.
- ii. Increasing teaching time for art and design, particularly for examination classes.
- iii. Ensuring that the good ICT resources used in most subjects are available and used in physical education, art and design, design and technology and music.
- iv. Keeping risk assessments in physical education up-to-date.
(paragraphs: 31, 34, 53, 61)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	166
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	18	71	54	23	0	0	0
Percentage	11	43	32	14	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7- Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1073
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	210

Special educational needs

	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	100

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	109	105	214

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	85	88
	Girls	92	86	81
	Total	170	171	169
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (57)	80 (72)	79 (70)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (19)	56 (48)	41 (38)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	89	90
	Girls	77	85	82
	Total	148	174	172
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (60)	81 (61)	80 (66)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (16)	55 (39)	42 (33)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	78	83	161

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	37	72	73
	Girls	47	76	78
	Total	84	148	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52 (54)	92 (86)	94 (93)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.2 (39.3)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1037	53	1
2	0	0
2	0	0
6	1	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
4	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
12	0	0
1	0	0
4	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	871

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.5
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	3 047 291
Total expenditure	2 950 258
Expenditure per pupil	2 898
Balance brought forward from previous year	175 062
Balance carried forward to next year	272 095

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1 073

Number of questionnaires returned

156

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	49	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	40	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	54	8	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	58	8	3	2
The teaching is good.	52	39	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	47	13	5	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	37	3	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	44	12	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	58	31	4	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	38	6	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	37	8	4	16

Other issues raised by parents

Parents attending the meeting held with the registered inspector before the meeting were pleased with the way the school works and were complimentary about the standards the school achieves.

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

- Pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The monitoring, evaluation and strategies to improve teaching are excellent.
- The department makes a significant contribution to raising standards of literacy skills.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and provide very good support.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' spelling is frequently inaccurate.
- ICT is not used enough.
- Personal reading is not monitored effectively enough.

79. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above the national average and the school's results have shown a steady improvement over the last three years. Boys and girls performed well in these tests in 2002 and while girls did better than boys, the difference was in line with the national difference. This is an improvement because in recent years the difference between boys and girls has been more marked. Compared with pupils in similar schools, pupils performed very well. On entering the school in Year 7, the attainment of these pupils was below the national average. Consequently, the standards reached by the end of Year 9, in 2002, demonstrated that these pupils had made very good progress.

80. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in 2002 was well below the national average in English language and below average in English literature. GCSE results have declined over the last three years and this was a direct result of the impact of past staffing problems. The result has been in an increase in pupils, especially boys, attaining grade D and overall results were poorer than in other subjects. Pupils' performance was worse than their performance in mathematics and science, with more girls getting A*-C than boys in line with the national trend but too few pupils attained the higher grades. Nevertheless, taking into account the disruption to teaching these pupils experienced, an upheld dispute the school had over the GCSE results and their below average results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests, they achieved satisfactorily. Their achievement in English literature was good.

81. Standards in Year 9 are above average, with more boys and girls demonstrating competence at the higher levels than in previous years. Pupils achieve very well from the generally below average level of attainment on entry in Year 7. Pupils' writing skills were poor on entry and the school has worked hard to improve basic literacy levels with very good results. By Year 9 standards of writing are above average overall and pupils write in a range of styles, showing good sequencing and increasing fluency in their written responses with good control over punctuation. The least capable pupils write using paragraphs and show some awareness of speech punctuation. The most capable pupils write complex sentences

supported by effective punctuation. Reading skills are above average although there is insufficient monitoring of personal wider reading. All pupils read aloud in class and with increasing confidence, showing a growing awareness of punctuation and interpretation. Pupils' oral responses are good and demonstrate very good understanding and a mature and confident approach to work. Their work displays levels of perception and insight beyond that evident in their written work, a direct impact of the drive to improve literacy skills across the curriculum, but especially within English. Work on non-fiction texts, bias and reading for meaning are particular strengths.

82. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are broadly average. This represents very good achievement taking into account well below average levels of attainment on entry to the school and staffing difficulties experienced by these pupils in the recent past. Girls are still performing better than boys but the gap is narrowing. This is because the teaching strategies are engaging boys' interest more and improving their attitudes towards English. Speaking and listening skills are above average. Pupils' responses in lessons are articulate and they make very perceptive observations about texts they have read. Pupils' writing about non-literary texts is a real strength; essays are well structured and show good awareness of writing techniques. Pupils write effectively for a range of audiences and purposes. Examination coursework on media is a particular strength. However, although pupils can identify literary devices, their writing about literature lacks the technical sophistication apparent in their media coursework. Their writing places too little emphasis on the impact and effect of language patterns and imagery and progress is further hampered by inconsistent spelling. The strategy of teaching pupils in groups based on the capabilities and the use of extension work is enabling the higher attaining pupils, including gifted pupils, to achieve well, and pupils in Y10 are already performing at much higher levels as a result. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs, the very small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those for whom English is a second language, all achieve well.

83. Teaching is very good and is the main reason for the improved progress being made by almost all pupils. Pupils learn very well because of high quality, innovative teaching. All staff, including those staff appointed since 2000, have worked successfully to overcome the setbacks pupils experienced during the period when staffing was disrupted. The best lessons are well structured and move at a fast pace. Almost all lessons observed during inspection came into this category and pupils know what they are doing and why, and what they need to do in order to improve their performance. Resources are well planned and carefully matched to pupils' learning needs. Teachers use an effective mix of published and individually produced resources, have high expectations and offer a high degree of challenge in all lessons. Planning also reflects teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of different learning styles. Pupils are expected to participate actively in class, whether in group, paired or whole class work and teachers use questions effectively to assess understanding and progress. The quality and breadth of curriculum coverage sometimes limits the time available for effective summarising at the ends of lessons. Teachers have already identified this as an issue and are working towards improving their practice. Teaching assistants know what is required of them and work closely with teachers to plan their deployment very effectively. Assistants are particularly skilful in supporting lower attaining pupils when reading aloud and do this in an unobtrusive and sensitive manner, thus promoting self esteem and maintaining good pace.

84. The pupils respond very well to the high quality teaching. Behaviour is very good as is the commitment to learning. Classes settle quickly at the start of lessons and pupils remain focused throughout and work productively. Relationships between pupils are good and they have a very good rapport with their teachers. Pupils work well in pairs and in small groups and take pride in their work and completion rates for coursework are high.

85. The subject is very well led and managed and there is a clear focus on raising standards. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are effective in improving provision. Assessment procedures are very good and teachers use prior attainment information effectively to set targets and to ensure pupils are in appropriate teaching groups. The organisation of the curriculum is very good and incorporates many features of the National Literacy Strategy evident in schemes of work, planning and lessons throughout the whole school. The department provides good in-service training and support for the development of

literacy across the school. Common errors identified through marking are addressed in lesson starter activities but there is insufficient emphasis on improving the accuracy of spelling. Literacy skills are further supported in Years 7 to 9 through class book boxes which are supplemented by extension readers for the gifted and talented. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have regular library lessons where research skills are taught and pupils have opportunities to use ICT resources. There is generally too little use of ICT, but it is improving and is starting to have a beneficial impact on both classwork and coursework.

86. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in the monitoring of teaching and learning. Staffing is now stable and is leading to improved learning. The fact that this better learning is beginning to impact upon standards is reflected in all areas of work observed but particularly in the achievements of pupils in Years 7 to 10.

87. Provision for the teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, but good in English, geography, music, art and design and technology. Work on improving standards of literacy has been effective, particularly in improving the pace of lessons, providing opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills and in providing structured support for the development of writing. Effectiveness of the literacy policy is evaluated, further development is planned with a consequent continuing improvement in pupils' literacy skills.

88. Literacy is clearly planned for and pupils are given the opportunity to read aloud in most lessons. Pupils display growing confidence in oral work across the school and enthusiastically engage in discussion and debate. Systematic approaches to reading for understanding and writing to express ideas clearly are encouraged. Key words, examples of assessed work and structured guidance on writing are features of well-planned lessons, particularly in English and to a lesser extent in geography. Where standards are good, pupils have secure knowledge and understanding of technical vocabulary and demonstrate this in their writing. Oral work demonstrates a degree of control and understanding not evident in pupils' writing as yet. Pupils have too few opportunities to write at length in drama, physical education and religious education. Overall, teachers' marking of pupils' work, does not always help pupils to focus on improving their literacy skills, particularly their spelling.

89. The school does much to support pupils whose literacy skills, on entry, are particularly weak. Successful summer schools are held. These help pupils joining the school in September who would otherwise be disadvantaged by their weaker literacy skills. The computer facilities in the City Learning Centre are used effectively to support Year 7 pupils before school each day and Year 8 after school. There is also effective peer support for weaker readers, mentor support and Saturday booster classes leading up to the National Curriculum tests. Good liaison with feeder primary schools focuses on developing pupils' writing and speaking skills. An annual Book Week and public speaking competitions provide extra curricular support for literacy. Although the annual Book Week is organised by the English department, it is supported by the whole school, reinforcing the importance of developing good literacy skills. Graded book boxes in English support wider reading and the library provides an attractive and inviting environment for literacy work. Staff in the Learning Support Centre recognise and fulfil their responsibility to encourage reading.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is very good.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- The department makes very good use of ICT.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress

Areas for improvement

- The coordination and application of numeracy across the school is underdeveloped.
- Late arrival at some lessons by pupils in Years 7 to 9 limits the time spent at the end of lessons consolidating the work done
- Some pupils' work, particularly that of boys, is careless.

90. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests taken by Year 9 pupils results were well above average. The percentage of pupils reaching the average Level 5 or higher, was well above the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. There was no significant variation between the results of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels, was very high compared with the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. Again, gender differences were slight. These results continue the improving trend of the past four years, with the rate of improvement greater than that nationally. The results are better than those of both English and science. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were well above the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C, with girls performing markedly better than boys. All pupils obtained a grade A*-G. The results for mathematics are better than those of both English and science. The overall trend in GCSE has been generally upwards. The 2002 A*-C result, which was a drop from the high of 2001, can be attributed to a change in the examination policy which was entirely justified. The school also entered groups of pupils for the GCSE statistics examination, and has done so for some years. In the most recent examination, all pupils entered achieved grades A*-C.

91. Overall, standards of work are above average at all ages. Pupils' achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 overall. In Year 9 higher attaining pupils begin work on direct proportion with enthusiasm, but many rely on calculators rather than mental agility when, for example dividing 8 by 32. In previous work pupils had worked fluently with breaking large numbers into prime numbers, and with identification of highest common factors. Pupils of average attainment also deal effectively with work on ratios, but again, display a weakness with number, taking some time to see that 4:36 could be simplified to 1:9. In earlier work these pupils had coped very well with trial and error techniques to find solutions to algebraic equations. Lower attaining pupils also cope well with the concept of ratio. With one class, a valuable opportunity to practise mental arithmetic, by playing electronic darts was lost, when the subtraction of numbers was permitted using calculators. Pupils with special educational needs, although concentrated in lower sets, are present in most groups. They play a full part in lessons, particularly as the learning support assistants (LSAs) work closely with the teachers and help these pupils to concentrate very effectively, ensuring they make good progress. All lessons are planned well and reflect the recommendations of the National Numeracy strategy, and this helps many pupils. In most cases, however, the final part of the lesson where work is consolidated is either rushed or non-existent as a result of misjudging time. Gender differences at this stage are slight in terms of work rate or level of understanding, or of achievement but the work of boys is less orderly than that of girls, a result of the school policy of not marking class work in enough detail.

92. By Year 11 standards of work are above average; pupils achieve very well and sometimes excellently. Higher attaining pupils work very well using the probability "AND" and "OR" rules and the probabilities relating to independent events. In their warm-up session at the start of the lesson, many showed confusion over the use of indices, writing 8^0 as 'zero'. Pupils of average attainment in one class deal well with algebraic inequalities and are fluent in turning inequality symbols into phrases such as 'N is greater than 5 but less than 10'. In a warm-up session, this group found difficulty with simple operations such as division by 0.1. In past work, pupils of lower attainment had worked effectively with graphs to

determine the line of best fit for correlation purposes. Gifted and talented pupils have the opportunity to work on open-ended tasks and so make good progress. As with younger classes, pupils with special educational needs are present in most groups, though most numerous in lower attaining sets. They play a full part in lessons; work at the same rate and with the same degree of success as their classmates and make good progress, as do the very few pupils of ethnic minority origin. Boys and girls work at the same rate and with generally the same degree of success. However, the gender difference in the layout and orderliness of work is marked, that of many boys being slapdash and unhelpful for revision purposes. Pupils of all ages disguise their weakness with basic computation with an over reliance on the use of calculators. In the statistics courses, standards are high. Pupils are able to determine index numbers from a table of year-on-year price changes, and talk sensibly about comparisons with the base year.

93. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is better with older than with younger pupils; many lessons with older pupils being rated excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The very best teaching is characterised by high expectations of behaviour and effort, good teacher-pupil relationships, a high level of demand linked to a good pace, and the teacher making regular checks that pupils understand and are ready to move on. In these lessons the frisson of excitement is evident, as the pupils take real pleasure in tackling seemingly intractable problems under the informed guidance of the teacher. Less effective teaching displayed many of these strengths but did not carry all of the members of the class with it; the errors made by a small number of pupils were not corrected by the teacher. Homework is set and marked regularly by teachers and is a useful extension of classwork. Marking of homework is good and along with on-going assessment is used effectively to give pupils good direction on how to improve their work. Reports to parents are brief and do not indicate what needs to be done for the pupil to improve.

94. Leadership and management are very good. Analysis of individual and group test results is detailed and the subject of much departmental discussion. This information is used to identify under performing pupils and provision made to support them, both via extra lessons for GCSE pupils, and Easter 'SAT attack' sessions for invited pupils from Year 9. A good whole-school training day on numeracy, although followed up by additional inputs has failed to establish numeracy securely in the work of many other departments. Monitoring of teaching within the department is very good and every opportunity is taken to share the good practice that exists. The National Literacy Strategy impacts effectively on the work of the department with opportunities taken for extended writing in course work and reading aloud in class. The lack of teachers' marking of classwork has not helped with spelling, however. The National Numeracy Strategy is firmly embedded in the department's work with younger pupils but few lessons were seen where the session at the end of lessons was used to good effect; the teacher often running out of time. Over-use of calculators means that opportunities to strengthen basic numeracy skills are often lost. ICT plays a significant role in the teaching of mathematics and helps maintain pupil interest, particularly when the class is allowed to use the inter-write pad control.

95. Standards of numeracy are broadly average and provision for developing pupils' numeracy skills is broadly satisfactory in all years, but only a few subjects embrace it fully. This is despite a concerted effort on behalf of the mathematics department. Science employs numeracy to good effect, with substitutions in formulae and different kinds of graph work both carried out well. Art makes use of tessellations inspired by the work of Escher. Work in geography makes wide use of numeracy, reinforcing pupils' skills in collecting, plotting and analysis of original data, and the use of scatter graphs. Many departments fail to include a policy for numeracy in their planning notes and this is a shortcoming.

96. Since the last inspection improvement has been very good. Standards have risen markedly so that now, standards in all years are above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically and ICT now plays a full role in the teaching of mathematics.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Management and leadership are outstanding.
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Laboratories are too few in number and too small in size and limit the amount of practical work pupils do.

97. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 9, results were above the national average. The proportions of pupils achieving the national average, level 5, and the higher level 6, were both above the average for all schools. The results were better than those in English but poorer than those in maths. When compared with similar schools, they were very high. From 2000 to 2001, test results improved dramatically. They rose again in 2002 with a trend steeper than that seen nationally. Although the boys performed much better than the girls in 2001, in the most recent tests, there is little disparity. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in science was in line with the national average. All pupils obtained an A*-G grade; results were above average overall. When compared with similar schools, the results were well above average; they were poorer than in maths but better than in English. Over the last three years results, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades has fluctuated. The proportion achieving the highest grades of A*-A, however, has risen significantly.

98. Standards of work are above average in Year 9 and reflect the National Curriculum test scores. The most capable pupils have very detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. They recall past work confidently, grasp new work effectively and use scientific terminology very well. Middle to lower attaining pupils have less detailed understanding, but their knowledge is often good and their recall, sound. Relative to their attainment on entry to the school, pupils across the ability range make very good progress; their very good attitudes and behaviour contribute to this significantly. The implementation of a very well organised literacy policy is having a positive effect. Whilst literacy skills, especially spelling, are relatively weak in Years 7 and 8, they are much improved by Year 9. Pupils have good numeracy skills; they show good use of number when doing calculations in chemistry and physics, and can use a range of graphs to represent experimental data. They have good investigative skills, relative to their prior attainment.

99. Overall, standards seen in Year 11 are broadly average and for some pupils, higher. The highest attaining pupils follow separate biology, chemistry and physics and the standards they achieve are well above average. Their understanding is very good and they have an in-depth knowledge of topics such as the properties of waves, the chemistry of carbon compounds and the physiology of living organisms. Their investigative work is of a high standard. Higher attaining dual award pupils have average knowledge and understanding, and their investigative work has less depth and their evaluation is less sophisticated. Middle attaining pupils are less advanced in their use of scientific terminology. They have below average knowledge and understanding of their work and written and verbal expression is imprecise. However, at foundation level and within their limitations, they apply their knowledge to reason and explain novel situations. Some, but not all, of the pupils taking single award science, have lower ability. They find the written work challenging, but the introduction of the certificate course in science is stimulating motivation and enhancing progress. Pupils across the ability range achieve well overall through Years 10 and 11; many achieve very well considering lower than average standards on entry to the school. However, achievement is good overall rather than very good because temporary staffing instability interrupted the progress of some pupils, but the department is working hard to minimise the effects. Good, and often very good, attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils contribute much to the progress they make. Little unsatisfactory behaviour was seen during the inspection and hence all lessons progressed without interruption.

100. Overall, pupils with special needs make good progress. The curriculum and teaching are adapted appropriately and extra support, when available, is of a high standard.

101. Teaching is very good overall and this results in very good learning for all pupils, now that staffing difficulties have been resolved. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Most teaching seen was very good and a little was excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject material and this impacts positively on pupils' learning. Lessons are very well planned and structured, they have clear aims, time and resources are generally used well and the pace of learning is good. Most lessons conclude with a summary that is focused on learning. Teachers generally use questions skilfully, ensuring pupils think and contribute to the development of lessons. Explanations are very clear and in almost all lessons, pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and think for themselves. Consequently, most teachers have high expectations of their pupils. In a class of high attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, challenging questions enabled pupils to formulate the outcomes of linking variation within a species, with the competition for resources. ICT is used particularly well in many lessons to develop a clearer understanding and create interest. In one year 10 lesson on earthquakes, for instance, animated diagrams clarified the nature of wave emittance, whilst maps of the week's tremors over England, downloaded from the Internet, emphasised the realism of the topic and stimulated mature discussion. Classes are managed very well; there is a high expectation of good behaviour and the good discipline that ensues contributes to the efficient pace of working. There is a very well structured departmental literacy policy and as a result, the teaching of literacy skills is very good. Although there is no departmental policy on numeracy, pupils have many opportunities to apply their numerical skills. Technical support is very good and much valued by teachers.

102. Leadership and management of the department are outstanding. The curriculum area manager has a clear vision of how to raise standards and over the last few years, has implemented a range of strategies, focussed on raising standards. There is excellent support from the departmental deputy manager and deployment of responsibilities within science is well organised. Within the curriculum, there is very good provision that meets the needs of pupils of all ability levels, though schemes of work include too little on spiritual and cultural issues. Teaching and pupils' work are monitored very thoroughly, and there are excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress. Formal assessment and support for target groups is outstanding and reflects the commitment and dedication of the whole teaching team to raising pupils' achievement. Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. The use of assessment in curricular development is excellent. Resources in science are very good and have a very positive impact on teaching and standards. Accommodation however, is unsatisfactory. The laboratories are too few in number and far too small for the size of classes, especially for practical lessons.

103. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection. Standards in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations have risen. The curriculum is better suited to the wide range of pupils' capabilities; most pupils now take dual award science and separate sciences are available for the higher attainers. There is extensive use of ICT in a range of different contexts and the teaching of literacy is well developed and formalised. Teaching is better and there is a wide selection of in-house resources to support learning. There is a wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities, increased use of ICT to monitor and analyse pupils' progress and improved target setting and feedback to pupils to help them improve standards further. There is also increased laboratory space, created by refurbishing a teaching room.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are good and frequently very good.
- Pupils respond positively and their attitudes and behaviour are good
- The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Standards obtained by boys in the GCSE examination are not high enough.
- The good learning in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is not reflected in pupils' progress over the whole course.
- Assessment analysis is not used effectively enough to raise standards and not enough demands are made of the higher attaining pupils.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to build on their independent learning.

104. The teachers' statutory assessments in 2002 indicated that standards were well above the national average and better than in 2001. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the percentage of pupils obtaining A*-C grades was very close to the national average and all pupils gained a grade A*-G. Girls performed better than boys and the number gaining the highest grades was above the national average, but pupils did less well in art than in their other subjects. The boys' results were well below average and they underachieved. Results for the number of pupils gaining A*-C in the GCSE examinations have been inconsistent since the last inspection. In 2000 they dropped to well below the national average but have risen in the last two years.

105. Inspection evidence shows that standards are broadly average in Year 9, and this represents good achievement given pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7. Pupils experience a variety of creative techniques and as a consequence of the level of provision, combined with effective teaching, the majority of pupils show an interest in their work and are achieving success. Most pupils draw and paint with a reasonable degree of confidence and have experience of printmaking and three-dimensional construction. ICT is used well to develop understanding and pupils show an increasing knowledge of art and artists. For example, in Year 9, pupils working on a project on tessellation demonstrated a clear understanding of the work of Escher and manipulated imagery to produce designs based on his work on the computer. Higher attainers produced complex designs using irregular shapes whilst lower attainers used simpler geometric forms. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with a wide range of experience and skills, though many have below average levels of skill and understanding. However, pupils learn quickly because teaching is good. In Year 7 pupils develop a sound understanding of the formal elements such as line tone and texture and look at how these are used in the work of artists such as Modigliani. This is built on in Year 8 where pupils learn, for example, to simplify form in a graphics project. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress where lessons build on techniques. Good literacy and numerically strategies are in place and are improving standards. In lessons, boys and girls achieve at a similar rate.

106. By Year 11, standards are average. Pupils reach sound standards when interpreting whole class themes and most confidently use a range of materials and processes to express creative ideas. Pupils demonstrate the ability to explore and investigate when researching areas such as Surrealism for a poster design for an art gallery. For example, a higher attaining pupil produced innovative results when using the work of Dali and extended work further into a piece of sculpture. Where work is below the expected standard, pupils fail to develop ideas and produced work without sufficient planning. The level of the pupil's technical skill is often good and work in folders demonstrated a sound level of observational analysis. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when working in mixed media, for example, when translating observational drawings of zips into three dimensional relief's using corrugated cardboard. In Year 11, pupils take responsibility for their own projects and they make greater progress where they use independent learning skills to extend their own work, though this is not evident for pupils of all capabilities. Although pupils' learning is good in lessons, their achievement over the examination course is only satisfactory. The achievement of girls is better than boys. Boys work frequently reflects less attention to detail and an over reliance on imagination. Pupils do not always finish their work in a project before a new one is started. The lack of consistency in adhering to deadlines fails to build on pupil's organisational skills and slows the rate of progress made by pupils. Lesson time is too short as there are no timetabled double lessons and this has an effect on continuity. Too much time has to be spent on getting started and clearing up.

107. Teaching and learning are good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teaching was very good in nearly half of lessons observed. Projects are well-planned using interesting resources and include a range of enjoyable and challenging activities. In the best lessons teachers give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques effectively and build in an element of humour to maintain pupils interest. This gives pupils strong direction on what they have to do to achieve, and results in good learning. The teachers manage pupils well, which results in good use being made of time and resources and creates a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. Most pupils respond and behave well. In Years 7 to 9 most pupils are lively, enthusiastic and at times demanding, but they interact well with the teachers and most want to do their best. Once they have settled down, they listen well to instructions and are keen to participate in discussion, which is positively encouraged. Teachers have a good command of their subject and regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order to raise creative and visual appreciation. This strongly supports learning, particularly in the Years 10 and 11 where the high quality of individual advice plays an important role in raising standards. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well because teachers channel their strengths into successful outcomes. Homework arising from projects is set regularly and is used effectively to consolidate drawing skills but it is underused to develop pupils understanding of artists work and to develop independent research skills. Connections are established in many lessons to the school's literacy and numeracy policies and specialist vocabulary is built into projects and displayed well in the art room to support learning. ICT is used very well to extend and develop work and the teachers have set up a resources site which pupils can access. Schemes of work are well designed for the abilities of most pupils but the most able pupils are not always provided with the level of challenge that they need in order to maximise their potential in gaining the top GCSE grades of A* and A.

108. The small department is well managed. Departmental plans are clear and informative and give sound direction to the teachers who have a strong-shared commitment to raising standards. A high emphasis is put on evaluation and assessment in lessons but the analysis of results is insufficiently used in Years 10-11 to track pupil's progress and influence curriculum planning. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory but, as mentioned in the last report, the length of lessons still restricts the delivery of a wide curriculum. For example, the department has good facilities for ceramics but these are underused due to time restraints. Accommodation is well organised and used by the department but two classes have to be taught in non-specialist room. Classroom displays are good; they show examples of both artists and pupil's work to support learning. The curriculum is enriched by visits to art galleries and extra classes at lunchtime and after school.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Management of the subject is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Extra-curricular activities are used well to support the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to monitor and evaluate the subject are under-developed.
- Links with the community to give pupils first hand experience of local community affairs are under-developed.

109. The introduction of citizenship has been very well managed. A thorough audit was made of elements of citizenship already being covered through curriculum subjects, and through personal, social and health education (PSHE). The decision was made to teach the subject, in its first year, principally through PSHE and the humanities, but still to be addressed in all subject areas. A co-ordinator was appointed to manage

a whole school approach to the provision and assessment of citizenship. Assessment procedures have been carefully thought through and information is collated on a database. This database is being piloted in Year 8, and will lead to subject reports for pupils in Year 8. Extra-curricular activities, which encourage pupils to become more informed and active citizens, have been extended and further developed, and they contribute positively to the citizenship programme. Among these, the “Guardian Angels” scheme, through which Year 10 pupils act as attached confidential advisers to younger pupils, is a notable success.

110. Standards are above average in Year 9. During the inspection, nine PSHE lessons were observed, in which some elements of citizenship were focused upon. By Year 9, pupils have a very good understanding of the role of central government and the constitution of parliament. They demonstrate an awareness of the problems in modern British society related to health, education, employment and asylum seekers, and debated these matters sensitively, and with conviction. Overall, pupils achieve well.

111. Standards are above average in Year 11 and pupils achieve well. Four PSHE lessons were seen in which there were elements of citizenship. Pupils considering anger control, and its balance with assertive but acceptable behaviour, came to positive conclusions about anger-coping strategies. Pupils revealed themselves to have a comprehensive understanding of what makes a good citizen. They thoroughly debated issues of prejudice in one lesson, and presented some original views when discussing whether racial abuse or selling drugs was the most serious offence.

112. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9, and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned and are delivered at a fast pace. Teachers use a good range of strategies, such as role-play exercises, to make lessons interesting, and they use data and videos effectively to stimulate debate. Brainstorming sessions and group work activities are most productive. Lessons are well planned and include opportunities at the end for pupils to give presentations, which demonstrate the progress they make. Teachers have worked hard to familiarise themselves with the new subject material, and have carefully considered new strategies for teaching the subject.

113. Systems operate for an on-going monitoring and evaluation of how citizenship is being taught across the school, but other timetable commitments restrict the co-ordinator from making personalised evaluation of the quality of provision. Extra-curricular activities contribute positively to raising pupils’ awareness of citizenship. Links with the local community are developing but have not developed far enough to give pupils a good grasp of community affairs.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards reached in the GCSE examinations by both boys and girls have risen significantly since the last inspection and are now very high.
- A very high proportion of pupils achieve the top grades of A*-A.
- The achievement of pupils is very good.
- Leadership and management are excellent and the shared commitment of staff promotes high expectations and opportunities for all pupils.
- The relationship between the teachers and the pupils are very good and promote a very effective learning environment in lessons.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.

Areas for improvement.

- The breadth of the curriculum is limited in Years 7 to 9 due to the difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified staff.
- There are not enough specialist rooms for examination classes.
- Some class sizes are too large.

114. Results of the 2002 teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and were higher than in 2001. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002, results were very high compared with the national average. They were a good improvement on 2001 and were among the best results in the school. The percentage of pupils gaining the grades A*-C in design and technology was well above the national average. Half of the pupils gained the very highest grades of A* and A. Pupils achieved very well in textiles and the results were particularly impressive in design technology and food technology. Both boys and girls performed significantly better than in their other subjects in the school. The achievement of boys was excellent in relation to national trends. Since the last inspection there has been an exceptional rise in the standards attained by pupils in the GCSE examinations.

115. By Year 9 standards are well above the national average. This represents very good achievement as pupils' attainment on entry was below average. Pupils use the design process as a common feature in their work. They analyse information from a range of sources and apply this effectively to their own designs. The majority of pupils use numerical data well. For example, in resistant materials, higher attaining pupils gathered and processed data in the form of charts, graphs using ICT, and costed materials for projects, analysing the effect on manufacturing. Lower attainers calculated voltage using the colour code table when designing electrical circuits. Folders show that knowledge and understanding of the materials used is good and a fundamental part of the work researched and used as part of designing and making. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve very well. This is further supported in the Years 7 to 9 by the use of cross-curricular initiatives with science, mathematics and ICT. Pupils working on the project 'Bubbles', produced stimulating poetry, used plastic shaping techniques to produce packaging of bubble-bath and made scarves and hats decorated with logos using computer aided design and manufacture. The teaching of literacy is effective, for example, pupils annotate their drawings with a good level of detail and accuracy, explaining the features and methods of constructing their designs.

116. By Year 11, standards overall are well above the national average and pupils' achievement is very good, and this is due to the very high quality of teaching. Teaching focuses on providing the means for pupils to meet the examination requirements. Pupils develop and build on independent learning skills and in areas such as resistant materials pupils work through projects at their own pace and take responsibility for recording their own progress and achievement. This results in high quality investigation. For example, after being given an open brief in resistant materials, pupils made their own contact with nursery and primary schools to research areas of design before making their decision on what to make. Pupils gain a broad range of ideas and include a good variety of construction and manufacturing techniques. For example, in textiles, pupils' research into how garments are designed and planned for manufacture was very good and included investigation into the use of computer aided design and machining. Completed articles, such as a tailored mans suit style jacket and a lady's evening dress display a high level of innovative design with an excellent level of finish. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils are given very good support by their teachers, enabling them to complete each stage of the design process well and produce work that is frequently in line with national standards. Through Years 10 and 11, pupils handle tools equipment, machines and materials with increasing confidence, accuracy and skill and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. The increasing use of ICT for manufacturing is adding quality to the practical making in all areas. Pupils use the Internet well for research and investigation.

117. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Overall three quarters of the lessons seen were very good or excellent. Teachers have very high expectations and lessons provide all pupils with opportunities to progress and to attain levels of achievement matched to their capabilities and aspirations. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching and specially designed tasks. Absent pupils are well supported to help them complete the examination course. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and higher attaining pupils are challenged to extend and develop work. In one excellent lesson the teacher had produced a computer programme based on the ones used in industry so that pupils could use the processes of how a

designer would modify designs to the manufacturer's specification directly on line. A very high level of individual support is given to pupils, including accurate and informed feedback, which encourages them to value their efforts and raises levels of motivation. In most lessons teachers share the aims of the lesson with the pupils so they were aware of what they should achieve by the end. In a small minority of lessons this was not done and objectives were not made clear. Teachers emphasise the development and use of technical vocabulary, which pupils use accurately both in their writing and when asked to explain work. This focus on language is having a positive effect on pupils' literacy skills. Teachers skilfully guide pupils to evaluate at each stage of the design process and by Year 11 pupils show a very good level of evaluating the degree of success against original design specifications. Numeracy strategies are built into all planning and well used in all projects.

118. The relationship between pupils and teachers is very good and this results in well-motivated pupils and creates a positive learning environment, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils in examination classes attend classes after school and independently complete work in their own time. Folders reflect a high degree of pride in their work. Younger pupils work well collaboratively, enjoy discussing work and respond readily to questions.

119. Leadership and management are excellent and staff are committed to continued improvement. There is a very clear vision for the subject and its continuing development and there are very effective procedures which are driving up standards to a high level. Schemes of work and policy statements are clear and informative, regularly subject to review and in response to changing demands. Assessment is very well structured and well used to guide curriculum planning. Monitoring of teaching is very thorough and the sharing of good practice results in high standards throughout the department. Due to difficulties in recruiting staff food technology is not presently taught in Years 7 to 9. This restricts the breadth of the curriculum but meets statutory requirements. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and standards have risen. Most of the areas identified have been addressed very effectively but there are still shortcomings in accommodation. Two specialist rooms are very well equipped and one room is in the process of being refurbished. However, there are insufficient specialist rooms and classes are held after school to make sure that all pupils have access to specialist equipment. Some class sizes are very large and conditions are cramped, impacting on movement and use of equipment. A stimulating environment has been created in most areas by the use of good quality displays, which support learning, and build on the ethos of the subject.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising, particularly in performance work.
- Drama contributes very well to the personal development of all pupils.
- Teaching and learning are good and are improving.
- Contribution to citizenship is excellent and liaison with the English department is good.
- Good contributions are made to improving literacy skills, especially through reading and speaking and listening.
- Pupils self and peer evaluation skills are very good.
- Pupils work together and co-operate very well.

Areas for improvement

- The length and quality of written work does not prepare pupils adequately for the new format of GCSE written examination or contribute enough to developing literacy skills.
- Very good classroom assessment is not properly recorded.
- Prior attainment information is not fully used.

120. Teachers' assessments in 2002 show that the attainment of pupils in Year 9 was broadly average. On entry to the school, pupils had results that were below the national average, with poor literacy skills. Consequently, by the end of Year 9 in 2002, these pupils had made good progress. GCSE results have fluctuated over the last three years but the results achieved in 2002 showed significant improvement on the previous two years. The numbers of pupils attaining grades A*-C increased significantly but remained below the national average, although the gap is narrowing. This cohort of pupils achieved results in teachers' assessments in Year 9 that were below average, consequently the results they achieved at GCSE demonstrated that satisfactory progress had been made by the end of Year 11.

121. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Years 9 and 11 are broadly average, better than recent test results would suggest. Pupils throughout the school achieve well demonstrating that standards are improving. Drama is taught as a separate subject within the creative and performing arts department. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 get a drama period a week and there are currently two option blocks offering drama at GCSE with a significant rise in the number of pupils choosing to continue to study drama in Years 10 and 11. Staffing has completely changed over the last two years and two very committed specialist teachers teach the whole drama curriculum in well-appointed studios.

122. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show increasing confidence in performance. Their improvisations demonstrated increasing self-esteem and self-respect. This is particularly evident in their ability to give and receive positive and constructive critical evaluation of their work. Peer evaluation is a particular strength and as such drama makes a very significant contribution to citizenship as pupils work together and co-operate to achieve agreed goals in small group and whole class practical assignments. Pupils from Year 7 upwards display a secure knowledge of stagecraft and understand and make effective use of dramatic techniques such as 'freeze framing' 'hot seating' 'thought in the head' and 'tableaux'. Work observed in Years 10 and 11 support the judgement that performance is a real strength with pupils of all abilities able to discuss, evaluate and portray above average perception of theme, character and dramatic techniques in both scripted and non-scripted work. Written work lacks this level of sophistication, depth of analysis, level of accuracy and opportunities for extensive writing. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to research and explore ideas in writing in order to narrow the gap between their written and practical performance. Lower attaining pupils who do not excel in written work are given scope to make significant contributions to group achievements. The few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, or with English as an additional language, integrate well in small group work and the minority of pupils with physical disabilities are shown great sensitivity by their peers and contribute fully in lessons.

123. The reason standards and achievement are improving is that teaching and learning are good and much of the practical teaching is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and lessons observed all have good pace are well planned. Although there is good oral modelling of ideas, teachers miss opportunities to demonstrate this level of competence in writing. Written work is marked for content but not for accuracy. Classroom management is very good and the activities offer challenge and successfully promote the intention that 'drama is fun'. As a result, pupils learn well. The teachers create a safe and secure environment and pupils can explore issues such as bullying, jealousy and conflict without fear of intimidation or reprisal. Ongoing assessment, through use of probing questions and detailed peer and teacher feedback, is good with clear targets given at the end of each performance and progress praised and acknowledged by teachers and peers alike. Increasing use is made of the ICT resources the school has to offer and scrutiny of work revealed some evidence of internet research, use of interactive programs and desk top publishing but this remains an area for development.

124. Leadership and management are good. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons are very good, as is the support offered to newly trained staff and to students on placement. There is good liaison with the English department and a shared understanding of the assessment requirement for speaking and listening and for scripted plays. Schemes of work have been rewritten to support the study of Shakespeare in Year 9 and the development of oral skills throughout the school. The development of literacy skills is well supported. Learning objectives are made clear and key words written on the board at the start of lessons. Strategies used include key words in both studios vividly displayed as word walls and clear level

descriptors in accessible language. Vocabulary is explored in discussion but less so in writing. Throughout the school, pupils have opportunities to read scripted work aloud, with the emphasis on supporting fluency and feeling in their reading. The contribution to improving oral skills is a major strength of this department. Citizenship has been mapped against the curriculum and is an outstanding aspect of the work and development of the department. The department is very well resourced and has clear priorities for development. Pupils have increasing opportunities to perform to the community, to experience workshops with professional actors and to go on theatre trips. Despite the good assessment evident in lessons, and the introduction of a departmental assessment process, too few assessment outcomes or individual pupil targets are recorded. Teachers do not make enough use of prior attainment information, particularly to support the development of written work at GCSE.

125. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject and their attitudes and behaviour are very good. The subject contributes very well to the personal development of all pupils, as they explore moral issues and work co-operatively in lessons. Many pupils take advantage of the extra curricular opportunities on offer and participation rates in school productions are good. The increasing strength of self-evaluation and the dynamic and energetic teaching are already impacting upon standards and improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HUMANITIES

126. Geography, history and religious education, along with child development are part of the humanities faculty. The faculty is housed in a separate block suited for its purpose and is supplied with all necessary facilities. The curriculum area forms an orderly and well-integrated part of the school.

127. The newly appointed curriculum manager is in a strong position to take this area forward. There is a good match of expertise and experience amongst staff and responsibilities are well allocated to provide good career development experience. The team spirit is good and day-to-day relationships are cordial. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good overall. One head of department manages both religious education and history as well as carrying two other major responsibilities in the school. The curriculum area plan for the humanities clearly identifies the main issues for necessary further improvement and recognises particularly the need to raise the profile of history at GCSE.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress.
- The subject is well led and managed and the capacity for further improvement is good.
- There is a constant drive to raise standards.
- Lessons have a climate of high expectation in which pupils work hard to achieve their best.
- The use of assessment information to inform planning and to raise standards is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough opportunities for extended writing.
- Teachers' marking is not drawing pupils' attention to inaccurate spelling and punctuation.
- Small numbers of lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve as well as they could.
- Curriculum links with partner primary schools are underdeveloped.

128. Attainment on entry is below average. Many pupils do not recognise the shape of the British Isles or know the countries and capital cities of Europe. Curriculum links with partner primary schools are underdeveloped.

129. In teachers' assessment in 2002, the attainment of 14 year old pupils was broadly average and had improved on recent years. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 attainment was significantly below the national average and lower than in recent years because of temporary staffing difficulties. Nevertheless, pupils made satisfactory progress and girls performed better than boys. Pupils performed less well than they did in their other subjects, though in previous years pupils' progress was consistently good.

130. Inspection evidence shows that by Year 9 standards are broadly average and that many pupils perform at higher than average standards. Pupils have good basic geographical skills such as the use of atlases and have a grasp of scale, direction and conventional map signs. They can find their way around the map of the world confidently. They are familiar with pressing world problems and gain a good knowledge of world citizenship issues and interpret the world around them as a dynamic blend of physical and human influences. Pupils' achievement is good overall and they make good progress. Pupils of higher prior attainment make very good progress and those with special educational needs make very good progress towards their targets. The majority, of average and slightly below average prior attainment, make good progress. However, a small number of pupils with slightly below average prior attainment do not achieve as well as other pupils and the school is focusing on providing support to help them do so.

131. By Year 11, standards obtained by pupils are above average overall. The highest attaining pupils have a good understanding. For example, they explain the factors, particularly with reference to motorway communication, that affect the growth of high-tech industries and answer questions clearly and accurately. Pupils of broadly average prior attainment recognise where high-tech industries are on maps, but have some difficulty explaining the reasons for their location. Technological aids are used with increasing effectiveness. For example, in a good lessons about the decline of the South Wales coal industry, video and overhead projector were used effectively to illustrate the differences between modern and older mining methods. Pupils' achievement is good and pupils are on course to meet their GCSE targets. Planned, weekly additional lessons offered voluntarily outside the school day provide strong support to all pupils to complete course work and improve standards.

132. Teaching is good overall. It is often very good and is sometimes excellent. The scrutiny of work in pupils' books confirms that teaching over time is good; consequently learning is good between the ages of 11 and 16. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this aids effective planning and the management of lessons. The teaching of basic skills is very good. Teachers ensure pupils practise speaking, listening and reading in the great majority of lessons. Key technical vocabulary and meanings are taught in every lesson and there is a requirement to write extensively in a variety of forms, although this is not often enough. Teachers use numeracy as part of lesson routine. For example, teachers give higher attaining pupils in Year 9 storm hydrographs to draw and to extract information from. Teachers use computers frequently: the statutory obligation to teach part of the programmes of study of geography through ICT is met. Model making illustrates slum dwellings in Brazil and the morphology of volcanoes. There is a very good programme of local fieldwork for pupils in Years 7 to 9 which supports course work for GCSE. Teachers conduct lessons at a fast pace and keep pupils fully engaged. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and they sustain their concentration. Homework is well used as a means of extending learning. Pupils' homework planners and the completion of homework are checked as another routine. Pupils frequently complete homework using the computers made available in school outside of lesson time.

133. Teachers' have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and create a secure atmosphere where pupils enjoy working hard. Work is challenging and pupils are increasingly obliged to use what they know and understand to answer questions and resolve problems. In an outstanding lesson about industrial development, for example, pupils' demonstrated excellent thinking skills and could say accurately how to improve their work further. Assessment procedures are very good. Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding well, checking responses written on individual plastic white sheets and through good

questioning. Remedial action is effective. Pupils know their target grades or levels and have some notion of how to improve though this part of assessment needs further work. The light marking policy enables teachers to use their time more efficiently but fails to pick up on inaccurate spelling and punctuation.

134. Leadership and management of the department are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen, teaching has improved, provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and basic skills are taught more effectively. Staffing is good although two members of the department have heavy additional responsibilities. Well-trained classroom assistants make a very good contribution to teaching and learning, particularly for those pupils with low prior attainment. Staff work together well and the commitment to further improvement is very good and there is good capacity to do so. The department is very well supplied with computers and other advanced technology but there are insufficient text books in Year 9. However, the quality of materials produced by teachers is very good. The department makes good contributions to the personal development of its pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching leads to individual teachers' targets for improvement within the school's clearly defined goals and the support and development of teachers is very good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers collaborate closely so pupils learn well
- Provision for lower attaining and pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Attitudes, behaviour and relationships in classrooms are good

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities for active and independent learning in lessons
- The arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject

135. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 as measured by teachers' assessments has risen over recent years, and the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the national average was broadly average in 2002. The attainment of pupils in the GCSE examinations, both in terms of the overall pass rate and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C has fluctuated over recent years, usually slightly below national averages. The difference in attainment between boys and girls was less than it was nationally, although the small number of candidates in 2002, 15 in total, means that comparisons with national statistics for that year are not very secure.

136. There is great variation in the standards attained by pupils at the age of 14 but overall they are average and all pupils achieve well. Pupils entered the school with below average attainment, especially in literacy; the good progress they make in lessons and work seen reflects the efforts made by the department to improve standards in this area. Pupils read aloud regularly and competently, and listen carefully and respond readily to questions. The standards of written English and grasp of chronology, especially among lower attaining pupils, are not always as good as they might be, and written work is sometimes limited in quantity or incomplete. Standards of attainment at the age of 16 are also average. The majority of pupils complete large quantities of written work in usually accurate English although some of the shortcomings seen in the work of younger pupils are still present at this level. Good quality extended writing is seen in individual coursework and on topics such as Rowntree's investigation of poverty in York. Pupils show a good understanding of the social conditions of the time. Source handling skills are well developed as pupils have plenty of practice at examination style questions.

137. The quality of teaching is good overall and more than half of lessons seen were good or very good. Common elements in these lessons included careful planning and detailed subject knowledge, high expectations, a brisk pace and very good classroom management. Pupils learn well because their good behaviour, willing attitudes and positive responses make an important contribution to productive classroom

relationships. Teachers have worked closely together to address issues from the last inspection; for example lesson planning and textbooks used now cater well for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, who are well supported in their learning and make good progress as a result. In a Year 8 lesson on differing interpretations of Oliver Cromwell, sources were carefully selected and constructed to ensure they were accessible to all, so that by the end of the lesson pupils could confidently select positive and negative aspects of Cromwell's image and convincingly justify their choices. In lessons where learning was not more than satisfactory, a lack of subject knowledge on the part of non-specialists, or tasks unsuited to stretching the entire ability range, resulted in insufficient challenge and limited progress. In spite of teaching being good overall, there are occasions when pupils are not sufficiently involved in their own learning. The planned opportunities for ICT have not been implemented, mainly due to break-ins this year.

138. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school's arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject divide responsibility between the curriculum area manager and the subject leader. Although the day to day leadership of the subject team is good, substantial additional responsibilities elsewhere in the school constrain the potential for further improvement. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and much is very good.
- Pupils' achievement is very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Resources are well above the national average.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have access to the full range of applications.
- Some ICT rooms are not organized in the way most suited to aid pupils' learning.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have opportunities to take GCSE courses in ICT.

139. In teachers' assessments of 14 year olds in 2002, attainment was above average and showed considerable improvement over 2001 when it was below average. Improved teaching and the use of more specialist teachers have brought about this rise in standards. The GCSE examinations results taken by pupils in business education in order to obtain a GCSE ICT qualification were well above average. The majority of pupils in Year 11 take the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in ICT and results in 2002 were above average; some pupils in Year 9 take the GNVQ Part One examination and results in 2002 were well above average. The trend in all ICT examinations indicates that attainment is improving.

140. By the end of Year 9 standards are above the national average. Pupils use all applications to a good standard. They use Internet effectively to search for information and have a good understanding of electronic communication methods such as e-mail. They show good use of research skills and most of them can evaluate websites and presentations using appropriate technical language. Lower attaining pupils do not always write clearly and they sometimes need help with technical language. Pupils use word processing packages very effectively and their presentation skills are above average, incorporating words and pictures. They use presentation software and create slides, inserting text, pictures, sounds and animation. Most pupils have a good understanding of spreadsheet construction and can use simple formulae. Pupils create and retrieve information from a database and generate charts and graphs from

the data. Given their attainment on entry to the school, achievement is very good. Two groups of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are given the opportunity to study at a more advanced level, completing units from the General National Vocational Qualification Intermediate course two years early.

141. By the end of Year 11 attainment is well above average. Given their attainment at the end of Year 9, achievement is very good. Standards in communicating information, using multimedia presentations and using the Internet for research are well above average and those in data handling and using spreadsheets are above average. The GNVQ and GCSE courses are biased towards business applications and pupils have too little experience of using computers to monitor and measure external events. Pupils are aware of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues surrounding the use of new technologies. They are confident and autonomous users of ICT and most have developed the independent learning skills expected of pupils of this age. Most pupils do not have access to the GCSE qualification but are achieving well above average success in the GNVQ examination.

142. In the small number of discrete ICT lessons observed teaching and learning were good overall, but evidence from pupils' work indicates that there is some very good teaching and learning. Very good subject knowledge is a common feature of the teaching and an important factor in motivating and encouraging pupils to learn. Lessons are well structured and consistently organised. They have good pace and energy and pupils respond positively to the challenge. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good; they are prepared to listen to explanations and instructions at the beginning of lessons and move from discussion to practical activity without losing time or pace. Effective classroom management ensures that the unhelpful layout of some of the ICT rooms is not allowed to disrupt learning. Relationships are very good and gives pupils confidence to ask questions and risk making mistakes. In general, work is planned to take into account the needs of different levels of attainment within the groups. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. They make good learning gains in most lessons and make good progress over time especially where they are given specific tasks to complete. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress and are offered valuable extension tasks to extend their knowledge and skills. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls. Very good use is made of computers before and after school and at breaks and lunchtime. This enables pupils without access to computers and the Internet at home to have equal opportunity to use ICT for extension and homework tasks.

143. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of teachers is very good and has identified factors that will lead to raised standards, which is the focus for development. Courses have been introduced which are well matched to most pupils' needs, for example, the vocational GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11, but there is no GCSE in ICT for those pupils for whom the qualification might lead to Advanced Level studies. The department has a systematic process for assessing pupils' work and pupils are involved in self-assessment so that they are aware of the extent and level of their achievements. However, not all class work is marked for spelling and this limits literacy developments particularly of pupils who are weak in basic skills. The department is collecting more accurate information about pupils' standards when they arrive in Year 7 and this will help make targets more realistic. Standards throughout the school have improved since the appointment of specialist staff. They are committed and enthusiastic, keen to develop and enhance their teaching skills, and there is an extensive training programme to help their development. Resources are well above the national average, with sufficient computers for every pupil to have exclusive use of a machine and a good range of software programmes in lessons. Accommodation is above average overall and while the facilities in the CLC (City Learning Centre) are excellent and enhances pupils' learning of ICT in other subject areas, two of the rooms used for specialist teaching lack the flexibility for discussion and teacher-led activities.

144. Provision of cross-curricular ICT is good and the overall the teaching of ICT skills is good. All teachers are given good training and support to develop ICT skills and this has had a very positive impact upon the quality of provision and standards across the school. The use of excellent resources in the CLC for much of the work done by subjects provides opportunities for pupils to improve their skills as well as enhancing subject skills. In mathematics especially, very good practice was seen involving the use of interactive whiteboards in developing pupils' understanding of geometric shapes, and other subjects

reported good use of the Internet for class work and homework research tasks. The use of specialist software has helped pupils with special educational needs make good progress in basic skills. However, there is insufficient use of ICT in physical education, especially in Years 10 and 11 option courses and some subjects do not have ready access to available computers. Among these were art and design, design and technology and music. The CLC is a well-managed resource, which enhance provision, and the school has good systems to track the teaching ensuring better coverage of the range of ICT applications.

145. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All key issues have been addressed and when the specialist area for control technology is complete there will be better coverage of the full range of applications.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teachers' expectations are very high.
- Teachers manage their pupils very well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good

Areas for improvement

- ICT is insufficiently used to support learning
- Planning does not take sufficient account of the National Numeracy Strategy.

146. In the teachers' assessments in 2002 the attainment of pupils in Year 9 was above average, a significant improvement on the results of 2001 when results were below average. German is the only language taught, and only one class took GCSE German in 2002. Results were well above the national average, and three pupils obtained grades A or A*. Taking into account their prior attainment pupils achieved well. In relation to their other subjects pupils performed at about the average level for the school and when compared with national figures. Standards at GCSE have been rising for ten years from a very low level, and over the last five they have been above or well above average, albeit with a small cohort of pupils.

147. Pupils are below average in terms of basic literacy skills when they enter the school, but they make very good progress in their first three years, and by the end of Year 9 standards in German are above average. This represents a very good achievement for pupils. All skills are addressed, and pupils learn listening, speaking, reading and writing equally well. However, their progress in basic skills is only average; whilst their developing knowledge of grammar furthers their literacy skills they do not have sufficient opportunities to use number, nor do they have sufficient access to ICT to further their learning. More traditional language learning is good because pupils are well taught and are well supported by the culture of targets which surrounds them. Pupil workbooks give good opportunities for pupils in Year 9 to work independently of the teacher, which is an important contribution to their very good achievement.

148. In Years 10 and 11, German is taught in one block of several subjects although initially it is offered more widely – few pupils choose to take the subject. Two groups are taking the course in Year 10, three in Year 11. Their work is of an average standard, which is good achievement for the Year 11 pupils from a position where they were below average in Year 9 two years ago. Pupils' speaking skills are generally sound and they question each other successfully. Their pronunciation is less secure, and they do not always recognise their own weaknesses.

149. Pupils with special needs are very well known and supported by language teachers, who plan appropriate work for them in specialist groups, sometimes with the help of teaching assistants. They achieve very well in relation to prior attainment in basic literacy. One low attaining Year 9 was seen;

known for challenging behaviour in other lessons they were nevertheless working well in response to very good teaching and very good pupil management. A small number of pupils with special educational needs take German after Year 9. Their progress is satisfactory.

150. Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, an improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. Of the lessons seen, one third were very good and one was excellent. Teachers have very high expectations of themselves and of their pupils, who are left in no doubt as to what they have to do to improve to their target grade. Teachers manage the pupils very well, and relationships are very good. Many references to Germany give a sense of realism to pupils' learning, and great enthusiasm has been generated by a forthcoming school trip to Germany. On the other hand, in the lessons seen technological aids to learning were not used as much as they should have been.

151. In all classes seen pupils showed good attitudes to foreign language learning and behaved well. They showed respect for the efforts made by teachers and by other pupils. Pupils concentrate and work hard and their learning benefits from this.

152. Leadership and management are very good, and has established a cohesive team of staff with shared values and a commitment to success. Monitoring and evaluation of both teaching and of learning are well developed. They are most useful when carried out by modern languages specialists. They communicate to all concerned a determination to achieve the best they can.

153. Since the previous inspection in 1997 there has been good improvement both in the quality of teaching and in outcomes at GCSE.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent.
- Teaching is very good and often excellent and leads to very good learning.
- Pupils have very good attitudes.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough ICT to broaden pupils' experiences, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- There are insufficient keyboards, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and rehearsal rooms are too far apart for teachers to adequately supervise pupils practising with musical instruments.

154. End of Year 9 assessments over the past two years have shown a gradual rising of standards, with pupils attaining in line with the national average in 2002. In the past two years, GCSE results were above the national average. In 2002, pupils made very good progress through the GCSE course, and for many of the eight candidates, music results were the best grades of all the subjects they were entered for. Numbers opting to take music are now significantly rising, with seventeen pupils in Year 10 and eighteen pupils in Year 11. Pupils of all musical ability are being accepted on to the course, an improvement on past practice.

155. By the end of Year 9, attainment is well above average, a reflection of the continuing rising standards. Most pupils have standards below average when they enter Year 7, though there are a few who have started to learn musical instruments, and who are above average. The very good progress pupils make across Years 7 to 9 leads to very high levels of attainment in each year: this is due to the very good, and often excellent teaching, and to the very good attitudes of the pupils. Work seen in Year 7

revealed the competent technical and creative skills pupils had acquired in only a term and half. Pupils of all ability in Year 7 read notes fluently on the treble clef, understand quite complicated rhythms, and correctly identify time signatures. All use the correct fingers on keyboards, and successfully play right and left hand parts together. Singing in Year 7 is confident, well projected and lively. In Year 9 lessons observed, pupils demonstrated well-developed composition skills, and a very secure knowledge of how to write melodies and add appropriate major and minor harmonies. Group performances showed great creativity, with performers using discords, harsh dissonances, Gothic organ combinations and ambitious rhythms to produce effective mysterious sounds in one lesson.

156. By the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with the national average. In the current Years 10 and 11, most pupils started the course with modest standards of practical performance, but are making very good progress in each year. Their composition skills are developing well. They can write attractive melodies for a range of instruments and voices, and add appropriate major and minor accompaniments. The music department does not have sufficient computers, or any specialist software, for GCSE pupils to adequately create their compositions, record and print them.

157. Pupils have very good attitudes to music. They enjoy the practical work, and are very committed to learning music literacy skills in order to be effective when composing with keyboards. Before and after school and during breaks, pupils are always to be found practising individually in the music rooms. Large numbers of pupils are involved in extra-curriculum activities.

158. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and there are some excellent features of teaching. Provision has been thoroughly reviewed and reorganised recently. It is now systematic, developmental and thorough, and this is the reason why pupils make such very good progress and gain very good standards by Year 9. Lessons ensure that pupils of all ability are included, and that they make appropriate progress. All pupils know at what National Curriculum levels they are working, and what they must do to improve. Teachers have very high expectations, and present high degrees of challenge. Lessons are paced at a fast rate, and this contributes significantly to the progress pupils make. With the fifty-minute lessons, most of which start late due to pupil movement between lessons, it is necessary for teachers to develop lessons very quickly in order for them to get through the requirements of the National Curriculum. This puts additional pressure upon the teachers, particularly as pupils in Years 7 to 9 have only one lesson each week. Keyboards are used effectively for the teaching of music literacy. There are not enough keyboards for pupils to have one each, which restricts their learning in some lessons in Years 7 to 9. Assessment procedures are very good.

159. Leadership and management are very good overall. There has been an excellent rate of improvement since the last inspection, with all aspects of providing music education in the school having been thoroughly reviewed. The department contributes very positively to pupils' social and cultural development, and to the life of the school, through its high quality extra-curricular provision. School choirs, for example, acquit themselves very well at local music festivals. The department also contributes positively to pupils' awareness of citizenship through, for example, studying Caribbean protest songs. Visiting instrumental and vocal teachers work closely with the head of department, and are influential in contributing towards the reputation the music department now has. The accommodation is inappropriate. Practice rooms, and instrumental teaching rooms are a considerable distance from the main teaching room, which makes their use for group ensemble difficult to manage. The music teachers have to trust groups of pupils to work effectively on their own when they are working away from the main room.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

- Pupils have good attitudes and enjoy their lessons.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching time in Years 10 is inadequate and 11 is holding down standards for pupils who do not do the GCSE course.
- The poor accommodation is restricting learning opportunities.
- Pupils' planning and evaluating skills are under-developed.

160. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicated that attainment was above average. GCSE results for 2002 were average. In previous years results had been above average. Staffing changes affected results in 2002. The proportion of higher A* and A grades was almost half the national average. Girls' results were better than boys', as they were at the previous inspection. However, the gap in achievement between the girls and boys narrowed significantly in 2002.

161. By the end of Year 9 standards are broadly in line with the national average. This represents good achievement when measured against a below average starting point in Year 7. Standards are highest in performance, where students show competence and versatility, particularly in games. Girls' gymnastic skills are above average. In dance, which is taught as an extra-curricular activity, higher attaining girls show good variety of movement and a developed sense of audience. Boys' standards are well above average in soccer. Higher attaining pupils have very good ball control skills. They can link movements together to bypass opponents. They have good balance and high levels of fitness. Standards in hockey and netball are average. Pupils' involvement in their own learning is very limited. They have little experience in selecting and applying skills, observing and comparing how well they are doing and using these evaluations to improve their work. Pupils' independent learning skills are below average. They are not given opportunities to warm up independently of the teacher and the early changers have to wait for the rest of the group before the activity can begin.

162. By the end of Year 11 standards are average which represents satisfactory achievement given their average standards at the end of Year 9. In spite of good teaching, standards have not improved during this period for two reasons. Firstly, poor accommodation restricts the quality and range of opportunities that the school can offer. Secondly, for the majority of pupils who do not take the GCSE course, there is barely time to cover the National Curriculum in the fifty minute weekly lesson, given that on average twenty minutes is spent on changing. Standards in GCSE practical groups are above average. In basketball, girls have good dribbling skills and can drive and lay-up a shot with a high degree of control and accuracy. Higher attaining boys in Year 11 have above average soccer skills and perform well in inter-school competitions.

163. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. This is due to the high quality support they receive in lessons from the department's full time assistant who works very effectively with small groups or individuals, practising skills and improving confidence and self-esteem. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress in acquiring skills but their analytical skills are underdeveloped.

164. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching was never less than satisfactory and was good in most lessons, occasionally very good. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and make progress; they are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about physical education. They demonstrate good technique, and devise practices and routines that help pupils acquire new skills across a range of activities. Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and this helps them focus on what it is they are supposed to be learning as the lesson proceeds. Pupils are very well managed and little time is wasted establishing control. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good, based on mutual respect and high expectations. Consequently most pupils have good attitudes, behave well and work hard. They enjoy their lessons. Teaching would be even better if more attention was paid to teaching pupils to select and plan their own skill practices and provide opportunities for them to discuss and evaluate their own and others' performance. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to support

pupils' learning. The teaching of GCSE theory lessons is good overall. Where it is very good, pupils are involved in their own learning, marking is effective in helping move pupils on and teaching is stimulating and challenging. Where theory teaching is only satisfactory, pupils spend too much time note-taking and listening to the teacher. Teachers do not consistently encourage the use of research, extended writing and the use of computers, for example, in making group presentations. This places some limits to the grades pupils achieve, particularly the higher GCSE grades. The marking of GCSE work is inconsistent. Some very good marking is helping pupils recognise what they need to do to gain a higher grade. Other marking is not regular or informative and gives pupils little idea of what they need to do to improve. Where pupils do not participate in the lesson, perhaps for medical reasons, they are rarely used as observers, referees, evaluators, or as helpers.

165. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection although there is still an inadequate amount of teaching time in Years 10 and 11. A well thought out and comprehensive development plan is in place. Monitoring of teaching and learning in the department is underway and good assessment procedures have recently been introduced. The curriculum imbalance in Years 7 to 9 has been tackled. Pupils are better motivated and there is very little non-participation. A good range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' learning. There is still much to achieve. The range of teaching styles within the department is too narrow with too few planned opportunities to improve pupils' planning and evaluative skills. The scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 is temporary and has not been revised in the light of the latest curriculum guidelines. The range of activities offered in Years 10 and 11 is too narrow. An audit of computer skills in the department needs to be undertaken to identify where training is needed. Risk assessment has not been done. Accommodation is poor. Staffing is excellent with only specialist teachers teaching the subject assisted by an able, full time teaching assistant.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall and very good specialist teaching leads to consistently high GCSE results.
- Provision in Years 10 and 11 is very much improved since the last inspection.
- Leadership and management of religious education within the humanities are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching should be concentrated into fewer specialist hands.
- The time allocation is the minimum acceptable.
- Inflexible timetable arrangements limits the use of use of specialists.

166. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils attain standards above the expectations of the local agreed syllabus and this represents very good achievement and progress in the light of the prior attainment on entry into the school. All of the pupils who took the short GCSE course in 2002 obtained an A*-G pass grade and the percentage obtaining an A*-C grade was well above the national average; this has been a consistent pattern in recent years. Girls performed better than boys. Taken together, this means that achievement and progress over the Years 10 and 11 is good for all pupils, and for a significant minority, it is very good in the light of their prior attainment on entry to the school in 1997.

167. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Years 7 to 9 have above average knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major religions as required by the agreed syllabus. They describe the chief beliefs and the significance of signs and symbols and holy scriptures of different groups of believers. They show themselves to be respectful and co-operative learners and they respond well to the generally good and very good teaching they receive. What they learn *about* religions is a little more

obvious that what they learn *from* religions in the sense of what they apply to their own personal set of values but they do express opinions and they develop a respect for the opinions of other people.

168. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the advantage of following a common course which can lead to entry for the short GCSE course or to a non-examined course. The majority achieve standards above the expectations of the local agreed syllabus, particularly in terms of knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major religions, and this represents good achievement and progress over Years 10 and 11. They have a good knowledge and understanding of such topics as the existence of God, war and religious attitudes to creation and the natural world. They discuss moral issues such as marriage, divorce, world poverty, and peace and they can express personal opinions. Those sitting for the GCSE examination select and organise evidence in order to arrive at and express considered personal opinions and many achieve high marks. Taking both groups together this represents very good improvement on the situation described in the last inspection report when the pupils in Years 10 and 11 showed poor attainment, progress and attitudes because they had no platform of prior knowledge on which to build.

169. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs and those designated as gifted and talented attain appropriate standards and make good progress because the department makes good use of modified materials and teaching styles and uses extra support in class. Satisfactory strategies for improving literacy skills help all pupils to cope with technical vocabulary and presentation and the use of numeracy skills is satisfactory. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are used to good effect for research purposes and for the presentation in graph form of subject information. Plans are in hand to make even better use of ICT such as for a visual tour of places of worship. The assessment and tracking of pupil progress is good and the religious education provision makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.

170. Teaching and learning are good overall. Some of the teaching seen was very good and some of the specialist teaching was excellent. Because of a system of blocking the lessons on the timetable some teachers, mainly non-specialist and teaching only one lesson per week, could not be seen. The good and very good teaching was characterised by good planning, organisation and delivery by brisk purposeful steps so that clear objectives were achieved in a good learning atmosphere. The satisfactory teaching occurred when a technically competent non-specialist teacher supervised co-operative pupils learning from textbooks and departmental worksheets, but missed opportunities to inject some depth and sophistication into the teacher-pupil relationship. Teaching by non-specialist teachers in Years 10 and 11 is good. The excellent teaching in Year 7 involved the use of a lap-top presentation and the effortless inclusion of pupils at three different levels of attainment into a class of generally lower attainment so that the needs of each group was catered for with the help of some individual attention, modified worksheets and the help of a teaching assistant. On another instance in a Year 10 lesson, a non-specialist teacher taught a potentially difficult class about what we can learn from important figures such as Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King and kept their attention by the use of a mixture of over-head projections, tape, solid worksheets and humour. Whilst the blocking lessons can be a disadvantage in the flexible use of specialist staff, this Year 10 lesson showed that it can also mean that senior management team plays an active role in the teaching of the subject at strategic points. The good and very good teaching and the good results are achieved on a time allocation which is about the minimum that could be considered acceptable.

171. Leadership and management of the religious education provision within the humanities is very good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Statutory requirements are met. Good policies are in place for marking, monitoring provision and teaching, and for tracking pupils' progress. Results in external examinations are consistently very good and obvious progress is made by all types of pupil including those with special educational needs. Strengths identified at the last inspection are maintained and resources for the GCSE courses have been improved significantly. The status of the subject has been raised but could be raised still further. The subject is taught by too many non-specialists. The blocking of the lessons at the end of the week has some advantages for the school and some disadvantages for the subject. But the general picture is a good one with some very good features and good prospects for the future.

MANUFACTURING

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

Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- The achievement of pupils is very good
- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave very well.
- Management promotes very high standards and quality.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough ICT facilities within the classroom to extend the opportunities of applying technology.

172. Attainment on entry to Year 10 is average in this group of 39 boys and girls. Attainment in lessons is above average and pupils meet the criteria for the Full Award course, which is equivalent to four GCSE grades. They achieve very well and make very good progress producing assignments where the focus is on real processes from the world of work. Pupils with special educational needs make as good progress as the rest of the group.

173. Teaching is very good. Very good subject knowledge and skills, as well as a very good understanding of the syllabus style and content were features of the teaching observed. This was demonstrated in explanations to pupils of the requirements to raise their grades. The traditional craft workshop provides a good base, which is used well to offer a range of opportunities for practical learning. This has led to project work involving the manufacture of clocks and jewellery. Pupils respond favourably to high expectations and show respect for the environment and the work they and others produce. Their individual projects show a well above average degree of enthusiasm and motivation. The pupils are confident with their skills and this is reinforced by good feedback to individual pupils. Pupils' project folders were of a very good standard and show that they are familiar with a range of processes. Literacy is reinforced through a good standard of extended writing which is well presented, and number skills are demonstrated throughout their projects, for example in measuring and marking out materials.

174. This vocational subject is well established and well managed and currently runs as an option only in Year 11.