

INSPECTION REPORT

Edge End High School
Nelson

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119766

Inspection Number: 184581

Headteacher: Mr. M. E. Burgess

Reporting inspector: Mr. W. K. Baxendale
2928

Dates of inspection: 28th September – 4th October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708176

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. H. Simpson
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

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		The quality of teaching
		Leadership and management
Mrs. S. Elomari, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Mr. H. Abbott	Modern foreign languages	
Mr. J. Clay	Design and technology	Curriculum
	Information and communication technology	
Mr. E. Forster	Art	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr. J. V. Glennon	English	
Mrs. P. Hooton	Geography	
	History	
	Non statutory and vocational courses at Key Stage 4	
Mrs. M. Hunt	Physical education	
Mr. P. J. Ingram	Mathematics	The efficiency of the school
		Assessment
Mr. W. S. Johnson	Music	
Dr. E. Metcalfe	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr. M. Morecraft	Science	
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Mr. A. Younger	Special educational needs	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
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REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 4
Key indicators 5

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 6 - 16
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 17 - 21
Attendance 22 - 25

Quality of education provided

Teaching 26 - 33
The curriculum and assessment 34 - 48
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 49 - 55
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 56 - 61
Partnership with parents and the community 62 - 68

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 69 - 80
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 81 - 84
The efficiency of the school 85 - 89

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science 90 - 115

Other subjects or courses 116 - 179

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 180

Data and indicators 181

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- It has a very good learning ethos in which each individual is equally important; overall behaviour and relationships are very good.
- It caters particularly well for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- It generates very strong support from its local community through which it fits its curriculum well to the pupils' future needs.
- It adds very considerable value to the pupils' education, especially at Key Stage 4.
- Compared with similar schools, it has well-above average performance in most subjects at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education).
- It supports the pupils very effectively; their welfare and guidance are real strengths and its tracking systems efficiently help them to improve through clear target setting.
- The pupils make very good progress in religious education and aspects of design and technology.
- It has very good leadership and management that create a very strong commitment, purpose and clarity of direction for improvement.
- The good quality of teaching has a significant impact on the rising standards.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Its management of information technology is weak and it does not meet the National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4 in this subject.
- II. Standards in information technology and modern foreign languages are very low: they are not good enough.
- III. The management of geography is unsatisfactory: the number of pupils choosing the subject at Key Stage 4 is falling rapidly.
- IV. The evaluation of teaching and of pupils' work by deputy heads and some heads of subject is not systematic.
- V. The physical education provision is seriously unfit for its purpose; it jeopardises health and safety and prevents the pupils from learning and enjoying their full programmes of study.
- VI. The misbehaviour of a small number of boys, mainly at Key Stage 4, can adversely affect learning.

This is a dynamic school in which many and increasing strengths outweigh weaknesses. It has a very good capacity for further improvement.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has progressed very well since the previous inspection report in 1995. Although still well below national averages at Key Stage 3 and below them at Key Stage 4, the pupils' standards now rise more rapidly than before and are well above those of pupils in similar schools by the time they leave as 16 year-olds. The school has been clearly successful in its progress towards meeting the requirements of the key issues of the previous inspection report. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. There is a very effective system for evaluating the pupils' progress and performance; this also helps to raise standards. Although there is room for improvement in the ways teaching quality is evaluated, the school has made progress in monitoring how its policies are put into practice and developments are now closely tied into the budget. Recent appointments of some good heads of department, working with improved job descriptions, have helped to raise the effectiveness of this tier of management. Attendance rates have improved, though there is scope for further progress. The daily act of collective worship now meets legal requirements and is particularly effective. The school is in a very good position to sustain its improvements and to go further.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3 test	E	C	
GCSE examinations	D	A	

Overall, the results in the three core subjects, English, mathematics and science, tested nationally at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below average, but broadly in line with the average of similar schools: they are, however, not good enough. Generally good progress in lessons indicates potential improvements.

GCSE results for both the higher-grade range and for the full-grade range are below average for all schools. They are, however, well above average compared with similar schools, mainly due to the good progress the pupils make at Key Stage 4. The strongest GCSE subjects are religious education and Urdu where results are well above national averages for higher, A*-C, grades. Results in GCSE English literature are close to national averages and the pupils do better in most aspects of design and technology than in their other subjects. Results in English and mathematics are below average; those in science are well below. The weakest results, which are very low compared to the national average, are in modern foreign languages. Results in vocational courses are below the national average, as too many pupils do not complete assignments on time.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Science Religious education	Modern foreign languages
Years 10-11	Good	Religious education Design and technology	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The overall quality of teaching is good and much better than at the previous inspection. Teaching was at least satisfactory in more than nine in every ten lessons; it was good in nearly two-thirds and very good in nearly one-quarter. Teaching was slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Improvements in the quality of teaching are a main reason underlying the pupils' rising standards. Sometimes at Key Stage 3, the teachers do not stretch higher-attaining pupils enough. Weak teaching methods and a lack of understanding of the subject matter characterise the now very much smaller amount of teaching that is unsatisfactory. Teachers manage challenging behaviour well, but are occasionally prevented from giving very good lessons by a need to discipline some boys.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good: it has a positive influence on nearly all pupils' progress.
Attendance	Satisfactory: a significant improvement since the previous inspection: long absences abroad reduce individuals' standards.
Ethos*	Very good: the school's purposeful intention to improve is clear.
Leadership and management	Very good: very strong leadership gives clear purpose, met confidently through strong teamwork. Excellent tracking of pupils' performance, but the evaluation of teaching is not systematic.
Curriculum	Good: meets all requirements, except in information technology at Stage 4. There are effective vocational courses and collaboration with industry.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good provision: most make good progress, but individual education plans are not precise enough.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good overall: a key to the school's very good progress since the previous inspection.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall: sufficient well-qualified staff and it is generally well resourced. The school has ample space but very poor provision for physical education reduces standards.
Value for money	Good: much better teaching and rising progress and attainment in lessons indicate improvements can go further.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>VII. It is very easily approachable with questions or problems.</p> <p>VIII. Its pupils enjoy attending.</p> <p>IX. It enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work.</p> <p>X. It encourages the pupils to get involved in more than just daily lessons.</p> <p>XI. It encourages the parents to get involved.</p>	<p>XII. The uneven nature of the homework</p> <p>XIII. The quality of the information to keep</p>

Inspection findings agree with the parents' views. The school is easy to approach and is very active in the local community. The response of some parents does not match the school's endeavours and so the partnership for improvement is weakened. Homework does help to raise standards, but some parents do not check that it is done satisfactorily. The pupils like the school; they feel thoroughly involved and know that they are prized as individuals. They benefit from having targets set for improvement.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

- ◆. Ensure consistency of quality in the evaluation of teaching and of the pupils' work across all subjects by focusing the attention of senior and all managers of departments more rigorously on them. Report outcomes regularly to the governors.
See paragraphs: 75, 99, 136, 144 and 150.
- ◆. Ensure that the statutory requirements are met in information technology and improve its management and teaching so that the pupils may have their full entitlement and make better, identifiable progress.
See paragraphs 11, 31, 34, 36, 39, 46, 64, 74, 80, 81, 86, 136, 144, 145 and 147.
- ◆. Ensure that teaching improves in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3 and physical education by a full application of the good teaching techniques that characterise most lessons in these subjects.
See paragraphs 26, 27, 28, 32, 44, 45, 81, 154, and 166.
- ◆. Improve the management of geography by better interpretation of the head of department job description in the monitoring and evaluation of quality, by the spread of good teaching practice to stimulate the pupils' interest and by introducing information technology to extend learning.
See paragraphs 11, 73, 75, 81, 134, 136.
- ◆. Improve the quality of the accommodation for physical education to allow the department to provide the required breadth and balance at Key Stage 4 and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and health and safety.
See paragraphs 77, 83, 87 and 169.
- ◆. Improve the behaviour of some boys, mainly at Key Stage 4, so that it does not affect the learning of some others adversely.
See paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 32, 77, 113, 120, 124, 127, and 148, 164 and 172.

In addition to the key issues above, the following important area should also be included in the action plan.

- . Continue to make greater demands on the pupils at both key stages to write at length.
- . Ensure that all teachers continually improve their skills as teachers of English.

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. Edge End School is an increasingly popular, mixed comprehensive school educating 617 pupils in the 11-16 age-range. Boys outnumber girls in all years, except Year 9. The pupils come mainly from inner-urban areas. There is, however, a distinct shift: nearly 90 per cent of pupils at Key Stage 4 are from an Asian heritage but only 60 per cent of pupils at Key Stage 3 are from that heritage. At present, 437 pupils come from a home where English is not the first language used: this is well above average. Around half the pupils are entitled to a free school meal, well above average nationally. Substantial numbers of pupils start or leave the school at random moments during Key Stages 3 and 4.

2. Available data indicates a well-below average attainment range upon entry, although there are clear signs of improvement. With over one-third of the pupils recognised as having some special educational needs and with 34 pupils having a statement of special educational needs, the school has well above average proportions in both categories. It receives one of the highest rates of funding in the county for extra help for these pupils. The school also receives funds from the Ethnic Minority Achievement grant.

3. The school aims to develop the pupils' minds and hands, with a clear emphasis upon the individual in the curriculum, the pastoral structure, the sports field and the worlds of work and of the arts, so that every child is able to identify with the school's provision. Its intention is to create self-reliant, adaptable and independent young people who are well qualified to take active part in society. It will do this by fostering knowledge, skills and understanding that lead to strong personal development with due consideration for others.

4. The school sets itself demanding targets and in the past two years has surpassed these substantially in its higher-grade GCSE achievements.

5. Key Indicators

5. Attainment at Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	49	49	98

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	26	18	8
	Girls	38	9	4
	Total	64	27	12
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	65	27	12
	National	65	60	56
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	43	14	6
	National	35	36	27

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	12	28	11
	Girls	21	28	15
	Total	33	56	26
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	34	58	26
	National	62	64	62
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	17	18	11
	National	31	37	31

Attainment at Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	75	39	114

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	23	62	72
	Girls	13	33	36
	Total	36	95	108
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	32	83	95
	National	44.6	89.8	95.2

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	35	57
National		79.2

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	7.2
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	2.3
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	55
Permanent	7

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	23
Satisfactory or better	92
Less than satisfactory	8

5. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

5. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

5. **Attainment and progress**

6.The current Key Stage 4 pupils' achievement was very low when they entered the school as 11 year-olds. Less than one pupil in ten, for example, was able to read at the expected standard for that age. Improvements, boosted by the broadening of the intake, show in the current Year 7, where four in every ten pupils now read at the appropriate standard.

7.Although the pupils make good progress in many subjects through Key Stage 3, standards of achievement remain well below average compared with the national statistics in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This is partly because neither pupils nor many parents realise the importance of the National Tests. The pupils also tend to do better in subjects that make fewer demands on their detailed knowledge of English; language difficulties prevail throughout this key stage for many.

8.In 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching the National Test Level 5, the one expected of 14 year-olds, was close to the national average in English, but very low in the other two subjects. The boys did less well than boys nationally in all three subjects, whilst the girls did better than the national average in English, but were below it in mathematics and in science. In 1999, the proportions reaching Level 5 in the tests fell back in English and were similar to those in mathematics and science. Inspection scrutiny shows these English results to be more realistic. The proportions reaching Level 6 or higher in each of these core subjects were well below the national average in 1998. In comparison with those in similar schools, the pupils' overall results were close to average. Teacher assessments were well below the test results in English and above them in mathematics and science. They compared closely with inspection findings in these and other subjects. Teacher assessments were just below average in design and technology, information technology, history and geography and they were very low in modern foreign languages. Attainment in art, music and physical education is close to that expected.

9.At Key Stage 4, standards have improved since the previous inspection report, in spite of substantial mobility amongst pupils: many started the school at random moments during Key Stages 3 and 4. Compared with national averages, the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE passes or GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) equivalent at grades A*-C was, in 1998, still below average and the proportion obtaining 5 or more grades A*-G was well below. Based on averages over the previous three years, these same statistics were well below the national average. Compared with standards in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the average GCSE/GNVQ points score was, however, well above average. Over a five-year period, this same score has shown a rising trend at a much faster rate than the national average. Significant falls in the proportions obtaining no grades A*-G and continuing increases in the average number of higher-grade passes are clear indicators of the successful development of the school's tracking systems and better teaching. Over this period, the girls have outperformed the boys, but by 1999, the boys were catching up, with the most significant improvements amongst Asian boys. Considering the attitudes and behaviour of some, there is still scope for further improvements amongst these pupils.

10.The pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4 and their progress compared with pupils in similar schools is very good. Most have fewer language difficulties and the curriculum is tailored well to their interests and reflects the school motto that combines 'hand and mind'. The school's comprehensive data on each pupil and its close monitoring of their performance shows a very substantial improvement over what was predicted for them at strategic stages through their school career. County LEA (Local Education Authority) estimates suggested, for

example, 8% of pupils to gain 5 or more higher, A*-C, grades in 1999; the school's target was 23%, yet 28.6% actually reached this standard. This was a fall from the previous year. Data clearly shows greater value added, however, from the pupils' overall lower starts when only one in every fourteen read at the expected standard as an 11 year-old. GNVQ results are below national averages, as too many pupils do not complete assignments on time. Numerous certificates and records of achievement complement national examinations. However, often due to prolonged absences or failure to complete coursework, around one pupil in every ten fails to gain suitable qualifications upon reaching 16 years of age.

11. GCSE results are well below the national averages in English and double-award science and below them in mathematics. Resulting from the good quality of teaching and the reflection of the candidates' cultural heritage, the best GCSE results, which are well above the national average, are in religious education. Urdu results are also above average, due to the pupils' identification with the culture. Results in aspects of design and technology are close to national averages and are well above average for the school, as the pupils are well taught and cope better with the practical than the more academic demands of some other subjects. However, English literature results, obtained mainly by higher attainers, are also well up to national averages and above the school average. The geography results do not compare easily with the school's overall attainment range because there are so few candidates. GCSE results in all other subjects are below the national averages for higher grades. Standards in modern foreign languages are too low: GCSE results fell very sharply under previous management. Similarly, standards in information technology are unsatisfactory; no pupils take a GCSE in this subject.

12. Whole-school and departmental language across the curriculum policies do not work consistently. Standards of speaking and writing across the curriculum are not sufficiently developed. With the exception of religious education and some English lessons, some teachers do not ask enough open-ended questions so, for example in mathematics at Key Stage 4, the pupils answer in a single word and miss the opportunity to organise their thoughts into language. Similarly, in many subjects, particularly at Key Stage 3, pupils are required to write only in single sentences or short paragraphs. At Key Stage 4, there are examples of more sustained writing, notably in English, geography, history and religious education. Listening skills, however, are well developed in all subjects and are particularly strong in physical education. Pupils read with sufficient understanding to make increasing progress in all subjects. Pupils with low attainment benefit from the simplified material provided in English, geography and music.

13. Number skills are effectively developed throughout all aspects of mathematics and are used and developed in a range of other subjects. In geography, collecting, categorising and presenting data, orienteering in the school grounds, six-figure grid references, climatic data, and diagrams of the hydrogen cycle give a comprehensive picture concluding with an outstanding traffic survey project, which presented all the information in a pie chart relating angles to percentages. Maps, used in humanities subjects, improve numeracy and tables and graphs effectively show population changes. Family trees, time charts and bar graphs show the use of a monk's day and are good examples of how the pupils' competence in numeracy is improved. In science, graphical work develops in accuracy from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, structural formulae are used in chemistry, speeds and forces and their turning effects are calculated. The costing of food materials in food technology relates processes to economic factors.

14. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving at a satisfactory level, commensurate with their attainment and they make generally good progress through both key stages. There is a small number of pupils whose attainment would often deny them access to a mainstream education but sensitive teaching and a significant amount of support is enabling them to access the full National Curriculum and make good progress overall. All pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans (IEPs) but the targets within these plans

are often vague and do not provide an effective tool for measuring or monitoring progress. Pupils do have more specific targets within individual teachers' planning, but these are not easily accessible. The paired-reading programme, which matches weaker readers with older, more fluent ones, contributes well to their progress in this area but, very occasionally, the teaching of reading does not have the necessary specialist skills and this slows progress.

15. Nearly all the pupils make good progress in most subjects at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, because their standards of technical English are comparatively weak, the pupils make many spelling and punctuation errors and at Key Stage 4, even the higher-attainers still make some errors, although standards do improve. The pupils develop a reasonably wide vocabulary and at Key Stage 4 their understanding of the finer points of literature is satisfactory; some converse entertainingly. Most pupils make good progress, however, from their starting points in English and in mathematics. The standard of mental mathematics improves through Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4, the pupils use charts and tables effectively to retrieve information. Literacy standards still restrict progress in this subject and in science, where practical work improves the pupils' understanding at both key stages. They gain a command of scientific terms and complete straightforward written pieces. Progress in science is good at Key Stage 3, but only satisfactory at Key Stage 4, where it is inhibited because many older pupils are content with copying, remaining reluctant to think their work through.

16. Standards in lessons are below average at both key stages, but progress is frequently good. In art, the pupils produce increasingly sophisticated designs and drawings, but their standards of speaking about art are lower. In design and technology, the pupils produce good work under close guidance, but their skills in designing and the choice of materials are lower. They do make effective progress in information technology applications in this subject. Standards in food technology have risen appreciably since the previous inspection report. Girls achieve more highly than boys in geography, where pupils have too limited opportunities to reflect, but do well in fieldwork. Standards rise in history, as the pupils do research from several sources in their work. The subject attracts an above average proportion of lower-attaining pupils; as a result progress is slower than in other humanities subjects at Key Stage 4. Writing standards in modern foreign languages are poor at Key Stage 4, although the pupils are making some better progress through improved teaching, especially at Key Stage 3. Good progress in music leads to standards that are close to national expectations; there are no clear differences between the standards of boys and girls. In physical education, many Asian girls have insufficiently developed body management skills, but they make good progress through effective gymnastics teaching. Others, who are able to see what they need to do to improve, also make good progress. Progress in religious education is above average throughout and the pupils' factual recall and debate are good. Progress is unsatisfactory in information technology, as the management of the subject fails to ensure that the pupils cover all the required skills.

16. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

17. The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are at least as good as at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are especially strong when teachers plan activities that involve more than just writing. For instance, they get keenly involved in many music and art lessons and show positive interest in practical science activities. In many subjects, some pupils tend to drift off task easily through their reluctance to write at any great length or with the required speed. Most pupils enjoy learning, even to the point where their enthusiasm is somewhat tempered by the occasional lack of self-discipline, as in a Key Stage 3 English lesson. In many lessons, especially at Key Stage 3, they are keen to be involved. Lower-attaining pupils are not embarrassed to ask questions and most pupils answer questions enthusiastically and sensibly thus showing that they are listening carefully to the views and opinions of others. Only occasionally is this not the case, such as with some groups of older girls who appear more self-conscious and are less inclined to join in with class discussions. The main area of weakness regarding pupils' attitudes to work is that of a number

of boys who are often rude and clearly do not wish to benefit from the learning opportunities the school provides. Also, some pupils do not persevere in the face of adversity and remain dependent upon teachers to push them: these pupils have only brief concentration spans and give up too easily, as observed in a Key Stage 4 Spanish lesson. There are exceptions, a good example being when pupils in a Key Stage 4 information technology lesson voluntarily stayed in at break to finish their work.

18. Pupils' behaviour is very good and this contributes significantly to the very good learning ethos and to the good progress they make. This is, in large measure, due to the unceasing vigilance and adeptness of especially senior staff in controlling behaviour in what is potentially a difficult school. Nearly every pupil spoken to was happy in the school and only a small minority of parents feel that their children are not so. Pupils are happy because they do not feel threatened or intimidated; nor are they suspicious, they remain very welcoming to visitors and to new pupils. Very good behaviour means that teachers are nearly always able to teach more effectively. Occasionally, however, the unacceptable misbehaviour of some boys in, for example, some English, science and design and technology lessons does affect teaching and the learning of others adversely. Although sometimes boisterous in corridors, behaviour out of the classroom is good. Pupils queue patiently to enter the dining room, often for long periods and remain good humoured. Their manners are good and midday supervisors confirm that there are rarely any problems in the dining room. In the past year there have been 7 permanent exclusions, but there have been many fixed-term exclusions for bullying or fighting, mainly arising from out of school incidents.

19. Relationships are very good. When given the opportunity, pupils work co-operatively and in harmony with one another. This is especially evident in art where this skill is positively promoted. In most lessons, and around the school, pupils relate well to each other, but there are occasions when older boys at Key Stage 4 show insufficient respect for girls of their own age and tend to dominate discussions and activities. Despite this, the mainly courteous and responsible behaviour of these same pupils towards teachers contributes significantly to progress in lessons. Courtesy is not reserved only for senior staff. Classroom support-staff, midday supervisors, cleaners and visitors generally feel respected by pupils. Sometimes, however, this breaks down and, in most subjects, relationships do occasionally become strained when, at the end of Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 some boys disregard the otherwise generally accepted convention regarding behaviour and relationships.

20. Pupils' personal development is good overall. The more responsible become prefects and help with supervisory duties and each class elects a representative for the school council. Throughout the school there are good examples of higher-attaining pupils helping the lower-attainers and assuming simple responsibilities. A very good example is the paired-reading programme where a group of Year 10 pupils offers regular support, in their own time, to low-attaining and younger pupils. The main weakness in personal development is that pupils are not being encouraged sufficiently to become self-reliant. Pupils work well and make good progress when being directed, but are given too few chances to take risks by working independently. Too often, many pupils are happy for the work to be done for them: they do not take initiatives easily.

21. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils with special educational needs are good overall. A small number of pupils have identified behaviour problems but the support systems within the school are very good and this usually helps them to thrive.

21. **Attendance**

22. Since the previous inspection, attendance rates have improved and attendance is now generally above 90%, although remaining slightly below the national average. Attendance for 1998 to 1999 was satisfactory. The rate of unauthorised absence has been significantly reduced, but remains too high.

23. The attendance patterns of pupils with special educational needs are not significantly different to those of the rest of the school population. Attendance figures are, however, adversely affected by the long-term absence of many pupils visiting Pakistan. Although the school ensures they take work with them and supports them upon return, such absences have a harmful effect on the pupils' learning and progress. The school takes in a significant number of pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools, often with a long-established record of poor attendance. In Year 11, some stop attending school prematurely and do not achieve any qualifications as a result.

24. Standards of punctuality are satisfactory for most pupils, but there is significant morning lateness. Nearly all lessons begin punctually, but in physical education they can start up to twenty minutes late: this reduces standards.

25. The school complies fully with statutory requirements to record and report attendance.

25. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

25. **Teaching**

26. The overall quality of teaching is good; it is slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. The difference is mainly due to some teachers not extending the higher-attaining pupils enough at Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection; very nearly one-quarter of all teaching is very good and this proportion rises to over one-third in science and to almost one-half in physical education and religious education. Very nearly two-thirds of all teaching is at least good. The incidence of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen from about three in ten to now less than one in ten lessons; there is still room for further improvement, especially in the ways teachers challenge pupils and develop their literacy competence. Around one-fifth of all physical education and modern foreign languages teaching has weaknesses that outweigh strengths, more than in any other subjects. In those lessons in which weaknesses outweigh strengths, weak teaching methods and a lack of understanding of the finer points of a subject are the most frequent deficiencies. However, better teaching quality is clearly a main reason for pupils' greater progress and higher attainment than at the previous inspection. The quality of Key Stage 4 religious education teaching is remarkably good; it is the foundation of the well above school and national average examination results in this subject.

27. In all subjects, however, the specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of what they teach are good at both key stages. A group of qualified new appointees, combining with some teachers of longer standing give substantial strength to the teaching force's knowledge and understanding, not only of the subjects taught, but also of professional techniques that merit wider sharing amongst the staff. Many teachers have a rising self-belief that contributes substantially to better teaching. At Key Stage 3, however, some teachers still lack expertise in teaching spoken language, and do not make up for the difficulties a proportion of pupils brings with them. Teaching's impact upon learning and progress is sometimes unsatisfactory in physical education, particularly at Key Stage 4, and mathematics due, for example, to a teacher's lack of up-to-date knowledge of the subject or poor use of time. Non-specialist teaching in information technology also lacks the knowledge to extend pupils appropriately.

28.The teachers' expectations of pupils are satisfactory at both key stages. Improving target setting is helping this process. In the best cases, very energetic English teaching at Key Stage 3 pitches work at demanding levels. An underlying assumption is that good progress will be made and regular checks ensure it. Sometimes, however, the teachers' expectations of higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 lack challenge. For example, in science the pupils are sometimes not expected to write at sufficient length or to research work thoroughly. Similarly in some design and technology and modern foreign languages lessons, the pupils are not taught how to make their own decisions; learning lacks some depth as a result. Infectious enthusiasm permeates much Key Stage 4 textiles teaching: standards rise. Occasionally in some subjects, the teachers' expectations of inattentiveness, due to the short concentration spans of some pupils, restrict the range of teaching methods to the detriment of learning.

29.Planning is good at both key stages. Teachers frequently prepare stimulating and interesting lessons that have a broad content. Lessons generally have appropriate stages and fit clearly into an overall scheme of work. Planning makes good use of the school's resources and draws substantially upon the experiences of all pupils. Whilst grouping by attainment arrangements cater adequately for the learning needs of most pupils, this is not universally so. Planning does not always cover appropriately the gender imbalances that predominate in some lower-attaining groups. The use of IEPs for the pupils with special educational needs is improving as specific short-term targets, to be met through closely focused support, are taking effect.

30.The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the standard of teaching throughout the school. Where pupils are withdrawn they receive good teaching, overall, from well-qualified teachers with sufficient knowledge and understanding to make programmes of study meaningful and accessible. Within this specialist provision relationships are very good and teachers have a very good understanding of individual needs. Careful lesson planning is well informed by good ongoing assessment through sensitive marking of work and discussion of problems with individual pupils. This facilitates appropriate expectations. What weakens the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is the occasional mismatch between support teachers' skills and the specific needs of pupils. This was evident in an English lesson for a low-attaining group being taught by a non-specialist teacher who did not have the necessary skills to teach reading effectively. An example of very good support was evident when a specialist food technology teacher helped lower ability pupils in a physical education lesson to understand the importance of diet to fitness.

31.Teaching methods and lesson organisation are generally satisfactory at both key stages. Introductory briefings and, when appropriate, demonstrations are confident, often probing and efficient. A very good balance of activities typifies the best teaching at both key stages. Teaching in religious education is frequently characterised by excellent techniques that make the pupils think and use their sometimes-inhibited language skills constructively. Most science lessons proceed at a good pace and demands are sustained throughout. Skilful questioning in this subject makes the pupils delve into their store of technical and everyday language, giving them much-needed practice. Effective time limits for the completion of work make the best mathematics lessons proceed with appropriate urgency. Teaching methods are not always at this standard. In a number of subjects, the teacher's methods do not match the school's language development policy. Whilst most science teaching is very effectively organised, making, for instance, very effective use of practical work and models to illustrate abstract ideas, it occasionally provides answers too readily, failing to make the pupils tease them out. The range of learning activities provided in Urdu is very narrow. The use of information technology to enhance learning is a relative weakness, particularly at Key Stage 4.

32.The management of pupils is good at both key stages: it contributes significantly to the improving learning ethos and to rising standards. Good class management ensures that lessons proceed at a lively pace and that demands made upon pupils are sustained throughout: time is used well and pupils are normally sure about what they are intended to do.

From the start, the best teaching shares the lesson's themes clearly with the pupils and keeps them consistently to the task in hand. Sometimes, in classes where the pupils have a short attention span, the methods used do not fully recognise the need to provide variety and, for instance in the occasional modern foreign language class, poorer class management prevents the correction of pronunciation errors and checks on understanding. Generally teaching makes good use of time and the good availability of suitable resources. In some design and technology and information technology lessons, particularly, the pupils are happy to continue to work well into break or lunchtimes to complete or extend their work.

33. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment are good, books are marked regularly and mainly in line with the school policy, although correction does not always give the pupil satisfactory guidance as to how to improve. Whilst generally helpful to the pupils, some marking in mathematics, for example, is unclear. The best teaching in mathematics and science is enhanced by effective continuous assessment of how the pupils are doing. Probing questions in group work, drawing classes together to press points home give teaching a positive impact upon learning in these and other subjects. The use of homework to enhance learning is a regular feature of teaching. Teachers of pupils with special educational needs often discuss homework thoroughly with them so they know what to do. Homework is efficiently followed up in history and it is embedded in the planning of religious education and mathematics teaching. The pupils and most parents acknowledge homework's significant effect upon the standards they achieve.

33. The curriculum and assessment

34. The school provides a good, relevant curriculum, the aim of which is to enable all pupils to achieve to their capacity. It is broad and balanced and makes provision for the core and foundation subjects and matches the requirements of the National Curriculum closely, but not fully, as there is a breach of regulations in the provision of information technology at Key Stage 4. Concerns expressed at the previous inspection in respect of art and English have, however, been met.

35. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is good. It complies fully with National Curriculum requirements. Pupils are taught in mixed attainment tutor groups for design and technology, drama, art, physical education and personal and social education. The teaching of English, mathematics, science, history, geography and religious education is in appropriate classes of similar attainment. Modern foreign languages and music are taught in mixed attainment groups in Year 7 and are grouped by attainment thereafter. Most teaching caters satisfactorily for both forms of grouping at this key stage.

36. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has good breadth. It meets statutory requirements, except in the provision of information technology, which is inadequately coordinated: the school fails to make sure that all pupils cover the programmes of study, particularly in using computers for controlling, measuring and modelling. As well as an appropriate core of 7 subjects, the Key Stage 4 curriculum expands to offer, following consultation with parents, other GCSE courses in art, business studies, drama, music, physical education or religious education. There are also opportunities to study Urdu, a second modern foreign language and a humanities subject. Work-related courses, which include pre-vocational GNVQs, meet the needs of a significant number of pupils during Key Stage 4. However, the teaching time for physical education allows only superficial coverage of the programmes of study and the time dedicated to GNVQs is less than would be expected for the equivalent two GCSE courses.

37. The curriculum is interestingly characterised at both key stages by a relevant emphasis upon the pupils' personal development with particularly impressive, appropriately themed tutor periods that start the day and culminate in a uniformly respected 2-minute silence for reflection. These periods contribute well to the pupils' education and to establishing the school's very good learning ethos. Together with weekly assemblies they satisfy the

requirement for a daily act of worship. Equally, the statutory requirements in respect of religious education and drugs and sex education are all fulfilled. A good programme of careers education starts in Year 9 and forms part of the personal and social education programme. Built into it is a sequence of contributions from outside speakers who enhance the school's contacts with and support from its host communities. Taking a proportion of the time allocated to the daily personal and social education and registration and the 24 one-hour teaching sessions, the length of the taught week is 25 hours; this meets recommendations.

38. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good. All pupils are given full access to the whole school curriculum through a system of customised support for a range of needs, including physical disability and varying degrees of learning difficulty. A particularly good development is the move towards a work-based curriculum for lower-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4. This is significantly increasing the relevance of the curriculum for older pupils and helping to motivate them.

39. The curriculum provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. However, due to their very weak command of English, a few pupils are disapplied from a modern foreign language. Planning for continuity and progression is good in most subjects apart from information technology where the absence of an overall scheme of work leads to a lack of both continuity and progression between pupils' experiences of information technology in most subjects; design and technology and mathematics are exceptions.

40. The range of extra-curricular activities has been broadened to include more physical and arts-related activities. Provision and participation have increased since the previous inspection and are good. The provision for the arts has improved because of this and the inclusion of drama for all at Key Stage 3. Activities include a popular summer-time activities week for all. Some pupils engage in outdoor activities such as sailing and canoeing through one-day and residential courses. Many subjects make good provision for pupils in lunchtimes and after school and there is an effective summer school that provides participants with a chance to improve their literacy skills and to enjoy appropriate outdoor activities.

40. ***Non-statutory subjects at Key Stage 4***

41. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. It is appropriately broadened by a focus on non-GCSE courses leading to qualifications with unit accreditation, including GNVQs that extend academic provision and introduce a relevant vocational slant. These courses improve the equality of opportunity and access to all pupils. They prepare the pupils for working life through close links with industry, business and continuing education by involving Education and Business Partnerships, Young Enterprise, a Compact scheme, Crest Awards and vocational partnerships among others. The pupils value these and make satisfactory progress. They develop improved independence and a sense of responsibility for their work. Its partners value the school's participation and it was recently commended for its high level of education/industry activity in the curriculum and its openness to initiatives. The school has won consecutive Schools Curriculum Awards for the ways it benefits from its involvement with the community.

41. ***Assessment***

42. The school makes very good use of its considerable assessment information. It has a clearly defined assessment policy and has very good procedures in place to monitor closely attainment and progress of individual pupils in all subjects. The school makes good use of this information to inform curriculum planning.

43. Substantially improved since the previous inspection, the school makes effective use of nationally standardised tests and Key Stage 2 National Test scores in the core subjects to provide benchmarks from which the pupils' progress is thoroughly monitored throughout. It makes, for example, appropriate analyses of a pupil's different subject performances and results of Key Stage 3 National Tests. The setting of individual targets for pupils includes

forecasts of GCSE grades that stem from these and the value-added project and national comparisons between similar schools. From this very substantial base, the school sets its own ambitious targets that outstrip substantially, for example the LEA database. The school makes some use of information provided by primary schools in English and mathematics, but fails to do so in science.

44. Each subject has its own attainment target and target setting for individual pupils is successfully undertaken in many departments, particularly in mathematics, but less successfully in Urdu and physical education at Key Stage 4. Assessment in information technology and modern foreign languages is not carried out in a systematic way and is a weakness. Portfolios of pupils' work are appropriately moderated in most departments. This is particularly effective in, for instance, design and technology, where outcomes of moderated assessment are used to alter the scheme of work in visual design in textiles courses.

45. The school has a marking policy, which is successfully followed in all subjects apart from the addition of assessment comments in English and, in some mathematics, the follow up to correction. Inconsistencies in application also mar correction in modern foreign languages.

46. Reports are sent regularly to parents. They do not include a statement of attainment in information technology at both key stages and are limited by the use of impersonal standardised statements to describe attainment and progress: they do not match the school's otherwise very well interpreted policy of valuing the individual.

47. Since the previous inspection, considerable progress has been made in developing assessment procedures which have led to raised standards and provide a good base for curriculum planning.

47.

Special educational needs assessment

48. The assessment of special educational needs is good. There is a good programme whereby all newly arrived pupils with or without previously identified needs are tested. These tests include standardised reading and spelling tests. The many pupils arriving at the school outside of normal admissions dates are thoroughly assessed as a prelude to placing them in appropriate groups. This is good, but it should not necessitate their entry on to the register of special educational need at stage 3 of the Code of Practice as is presently happening. This is distorting figures on that register, leading to the impression that there are more pupils at Stage 3 than at either Stage 1 or 2. The practice of attributing reading age rather than reading quotient to pupils is good as it means that improvements in reading are much more pronounced and meaningful to pupils and their parents. It also helps teachers to select appropriate and accessible texts. The main weakness in the assessment of pupils with special educational needs is that the results of this testing are not sufficiently used to inform the setting of precise targets for pupils in their IEP. Neither are the means whereby progress towards these targets will be assessed, nor the criteria for success, included in those plans. A very recently revised support programme for individual pupils is to be reviewed every sixth week. It is a promising initiative, but its impact is not yet clear.

48.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

49. Overall there is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is a cornerstone of the school's continuing improvement. The school aims to help pupils to develop the spiritual side of their nature and promote a sense of personal moral worth and self-respect. It does this well through a specifically designed personal development programme. Teachers mainly fulfil their responsibilities for the development of the whole child but this aim does not yet permeate all subjects. Nonetheless, the staff provide good role models for pupils by setting examples of courtesy and by working in a rigorous and honest manner which communicates itself to pupils.

50.All the strengths reported from the previous inspection are maintained. The school has since linked relevant themes to a thought for the day so that there is now a clear, collective focus during the excellent daily two minutes silence for thought and prayer. This silence is observed with impressive reverence throughout the school and fulfils the requirement for the daily act of collective worship.

51.There is very good provision for spiritual development in the strong religious education curriculum and in the range of weekly faith meetings for all. Christian, Muslim and non-religious groups meet separately to consider aspects of life that touch on spiritual matters. Spiritual development is also promoted in science when pupils look at things beyond their immediate experience such as the recent solar eclipse. In history, pupils are encouraged to have empathy with the lives of people who suffered as during the Industrial Revolution or during the blitz, or with the suffering of the Jews in Europe and the slaves in America. In music, history and English there are theatre visits, arts festivals and performing arts clubs, which help to make pupils aware of spiritual aspects. However, there some areas where more use could be made of the subject matter to promote spiritual awareness as, for example, in dance and English poetry.

52.Provision for moral development is also very good. Pupils are given a clear sense of right and wrong and what constitutes responsible behaviour and self-discipline. Moral issues such as wealth and poverty, the environment, abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and war and violence are examined closely in religious education. Moral issues are also studied specifically in history and geography where pupils learn how to interpret evidence to make moral judgements regarding the environment; superpowers and their influence; exploitation and conservation of natural resources; pollution; migration and political influences on the lives of people in a range of countries.

53.The school makes very good provision for pupils to acquire appropriate social skills. They are expected to behave well in lessons and around the school and do so with a good degree of self-discipline although there is some boisterous, playful behaviour on the corridors on occasions. There are good relationships between pupils. There is mutual respect evident between teachers and pupils. Social development is promoted well in physical education by playing to rules and conventions and by effective teamwork. Pupils are taught how to handle success and failure sensibly and are given a good sense of sportsmanship. Social aspects are also studied formally in religious education where they are linked to the range of faiths studied. In other humanities subjects, the pupils look at community issues and are made aware of the social changes over the centuries. Pupils learn social skills in group-work and role-play in a range of lessons. All departments encourage pupils to respect resources and accommodation.

54.The school enhances social development by involving the pupils with special educational needs fully in all of the day-to-day activities. All pupils are encouraged to work in pairs or small groups. The paired-reading programme helps older pupils to demonstrate their growing responsibility and at the same time helps younger and low-attaining pupils to respect people who are willing to give up their own time to help them. The move towards a work-related curriculum is helping lower-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 to maintain and develop self-respect as they realise that, whatever their academic attainment; they can make a valuable contribution to society.

55.The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils study music from a range of cultures from European to Chinese, Asian, American and Caribbean. World music is also a topic for GCSE. In history, pupils study lifestyles past and present from a range of countries including immigration of Irish, Jews and Asians into their own town in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In physical education, cultural development is promoted in a range of dance styles from country-dance to Asian dance, with visiting companies used to enhance the provision. In geography, pupils study the cultures of Europe and the world. In music and English, a

conscious effort has been made to increase the amount of material from other cultures. Pupils are given a good understanding of cultural diversity in religious education in their studies of the major world faiths.

55.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

56.The very good support and guidance provided for all pupils are a significant strength of the school. They are effective in raising standards. Pastoral care has a high profile and teachers carry out their duties conscientiously. Parents and pupils appreciate the friendly, caring ethos.

57.The monitoring of academic progress is very good. The school uses comprehensive data collection and analysis efficiently to guide individual progress and to encourage pupils to set themselves targets for improvement. Pupils at both key stages appreciate the generous time teachers spend helping them to improve their work. At Key Stage 4, most pupils achieve their Compact goals, keeping them focused on their Year 11 studies. Low-attaining pupils within mainstream groups are usually well supported. A new system whereby this support is allocated in response to a specific need is a promising development. Often good small-group withdrawal support enables pupils to improve in mathematics and English. There is good liaison with outside agencies, such as psychologists, who provide a degree of support exceeding the school's quota in recognition of the fact that their input is appreciated and put to good use. IEPs include the pastoral needs of pupils, but are not sufficiently specific. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are generally well supported and all teachers share the responsibility for the development of language skills, but with varying effect.

58.The monitoring of personal development is very good. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is very good. Form tutors, heads of year and senior management apply their close knowledge sensitively to guide their work. Parts of the personal development course, now undergoing revision, are good. Good work at Key Stage 4 on careers education and guidance and preparation for work experience are well supported by the work of the careers officer. The careers library is in the process of being re-developed and arrangements are in hand for support for information technology.

59.The school has very good, consistently implemented policies and procedures, including a code of conduct, which promote and monitor good behaviour. In general, pupils like receiving commendations and state that the discipline, though firm, is fair. The high profile of senior staff around the school makes a positive contribution to the promotion of good behaviour. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal quickly and effectively with any reported incidents of bullying or harassment and the importance of reporting such incidents to an adult is regularly reinforced. Exclusion procedures are clear and are rigorously followed. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that teachers will listen to any concerns they may have.

60.Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very good with a wide range of effective initiatives to promote the importance of regular, prompt attendance. Electronic registration enables frequent, structured monitoring of attendance. Absences are followed up, but contact is not routinely made with parents on the first day of absence. The school provides work packs for pupils going on extended leave to Pakistan and works hard, but not always successfully, to help them catch up on their return. Appropriate procedures also support those returning after lengthy illness. Certificates for 100 per cent and for improved attendance and for good punctuality help to raise their profile with pupils.

61.The well-understood policy and procedures for child protection are very good. First-aid procedures are also good, but insufficient personnel have appropriate first-aid training. The school is well equipped for pupils with physical disability. Regular health and safety checks are carried out and health and safety matters are thoroughly respected in practical work. There are, however, a number of serious health and safety concerns outstanding, in particular the unacceptable state of the physical education facilities. Leaking glass corridor roofs create dangerously slippery surfaces during heavy rain.

61. **Partnership with parents and the community**

62.Partnerships with the parents and especially with the community are good. The school has the confidence and support of parents who are very happy with the standards of work and pastoral care of their children. However, despite the school's best efforts, very few parents choose to be actively involved in school life. Each pupil has for example, a homework diary that parents are expected to sign, but this is not always an effective channel of communication between home and school.

63.Parents are kept well informed of school matters through effective communications including the prospectus and annual report of governors, which contain all required information. A well-produced, prize-winning school newspaper attractively provides information about forthcoming events and celebrates sporting and academic achievements.

64.Parents' reactions to the annual progress reports rightly lack enthusiasm. Reports relate too frequently to enjoyment and effort and do not provide an accurate reflection of progress. The practice of compiling reports from a computer-generated comment bank leads to repetition and some lack cohesion; information on the curriculum is scant and there is an overuse of jargon. Reports do not meet statutory requirements, as information technology is not included. Parental support of information and consultation evenings is growing. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately informed and are invited to their child's annual review. Each pupil's IEP states what parents can do to help the child. The reluctance, or inability, of many parents to attend reviews, however, means that these are rarely negotiated and as such they represent the wishes of the school rather than the involvement of parents with their child's education. There is an embryonic parent association that merits more participation.

65.The school has an appropriate and well-established induction programme for new pupils, which is appreciated by both parents and pupils. Close links have been established with the local primary schools and the transfer of information is effective. At present, curriculum links are under-developed, for example in science, but the school is seeking to improve links to support literacy at Key Stage 3. Links with local colleges are well established and help pupils plan the next stage of education or training.

66.Recognised by 4 consecutive Schools Curriculum Awards, the school has very profitable links with the community and with local business and industry as well as a wide range of external support agencies, which contribute positively to pupils' personal development. All Year 11 pupils undertake a two-week work placement. Arrangements for this are good and it is well supported by work carried out in the personal development programme. The school has been involved successfully for some years in the Young Enterprise scheme. Links with the Education Business Partnership and Training and Enterprise Council are strong and are used well to enhance the vocational curriculum. The school is a member of an effective Compact initiative, in which all pupils at Key Stage 4 are given clear targets, for example of attendance, to achieve. At present, its appropriate emphasis is on successfully raising aspirations and developing self-esteem.

67. In recent years the school has been involved in a number of initiatives with local community and sporting organisations. In particular, the support of the Christian and Muslim communities has been sought to ensure that materials and methods used in teaching sex education, for example, are entirely appropriate. The Building Bridges project, aimed at enhancing understanding between faiths, has been strongly supported by the school.

68. The school organises educational visits to enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils visited the Tate Gallery as part of study in arts and in English pupils sometimes have the opportunity to see the play they are studying. The school raises money for charities but no opportunities are provided for community service outside the school.

68. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

68. Leadership and management

69. Leadership provides an excellent direction and sense of purpose to the school. Its substantial impact shows clearly in the rising standards since the previous inspection report; it uses excellent tracking systems to monitor the pupils' standards. Leadership is instrumental in improving the quality of teaching. The quality of leadership is the reason for improvements in both the numbers and levels of attainment of the pupils now admitted to Key Stage 3, and the strong sense of community and purpose in the school. The school is very well managed, although work remains to be done to build upon current achievements.

70. The school has relevant aims that emphasise the importance of the individual. They seek to promote self-respect and confidence in preparing the pupils' for the challenges of life after school. The aims underpin effective planning and practice. As a result, the school has close associations with employers' organisations that, in turn, speak enthusiastically about, for example, flourishing Education and Business Partnerships in key skills, the Compact scheme, teacher placements and vocational projects that improve the pupils' employability prospects.

71. Since the previous inspection report, leadership has created situations that now enable pupils who entered the school as 11 year-olds with very low levels of attainment to acquire qualifications that, in 1999, outstripped the governors' comparatively ambitious planned targets for the year 2000. This success has improved the school's attractiveness to parents and, in the last two years, has rightly produced intakes with a much broader attainment profile.

72. Only newly appointed at the previous inspection, the shrewd, purposeful headteacher, very ably helped by members of his senior team, has clear strategies on how to continue to improve. Knowing the local communities very thoroughly and, enjoying their considerable support, has enabled him to create a thriving family community school. Assessment and record keeping are used particularly effectively as a management tool: key to raising standards is a complex information system, through which the headteacher monitors individuals' progress very closely. It indicates immediately pupils whose standard of work is falling below expectation. Effective measures to get such pupils back on track are through now mainly good management of departments and very effective pastoral support structures. The adoption of these procedures coincides with the start of significant improvements in GCSE standards over the last four years.

73. Very supportive governors continue to hold the school reasonably well to account, mainly through a very strong policy and resources sub-committee. Together, senior management and governors have not shrunk from difficult decisions, for example in improving the management of some departments. Opportunities seized from created vacancies have ensured recent quality appointments to key middle management posts. Standards in physical education, science and modern foreign languages are starting to rise, as a result. The contributions of other governors' sub-committees are weaker, due to changes of membership, lack of training, infrequency of meeting and members' non-attendance. Progress in improving the

effectiveness of governors has been insufficient since the previous inspection report.

74. Teachers and other staff work to appropriate job descriptions, although the management of decline in the recent past has left a few unresolved weaknesses that still affect adversely, for example the quality of some teaching in mathematics and physical education and the management of information technology. The management of geography is also weak: the subject is in decline at Key Stage 4.

75. Structures to evaluate the quality of teaching are improving but are insufficiently systematic. Effective classroom observations and evaluations typify practice in design and technology, for example, but rigour and system are absent in some other subjects. Amongst many other important and well-executed duties, the evaluation function of deputy heads is not given sufficient prominence. Considering particularly the number of new managers of departments and the clear needs, for example in geography, modern foreign languages and information technology, it is insufficiently rigorous in evaluating quality, both of teaching and the standards of work the pupils do in different subjects.

76. Development planning has improved and now meets the previous inspection report's key issue to tie finance more closely to planning, although some aspects of planning are not priced in detail. The way the school follows policy into practice is much improved and effective: analysis of progress towards whole-school development targets is clear. Responsibilities given to heads of departments to do this are especially effective in design and technology, as the subject's work is interwoven with whole school aims and priorities. This deserves extension, as others lack such symmetry. The quality of leadership and management of this subject and that of religious education raises standards and contributes significantly to the pupils' comparatively better results. In science, individual staff responsibilities are specified, but there is a lack of focus on team approaches to, for instance, planning, curriculum and teaching development, and assessment.

77. The school has a very positive learning ethos and intention to improve. This shows in the strength of the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The school emphatically celebrates pupils' successes in all areas. Except for serious deficiencies in the physical education facilities, it provides a mainly effective learning environment. The very good personal guidance and welfare of pupils and the energetic management of the supervision of pupils in school leads to very good learning opportunities, which are only occasionally spoiled by some boys' misbehaviour.

78. The senior management has a clear commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity and this permeates the work of the school. Performance is carefully analysed by gender, ethnicity and attainment. The school is actively involved in a number of initiatives with the community, including the setting up and use of a homework centre, aimed at raising the attainment of Asian pupils.

79. Special needs provision is diligently managed. The forceful coordinator does not allow the special educational needs of pupils to be neglected and there is a clear view of how the provision can continue to be improved. Relevant and achievable targets for the department have been identified and progress towards them is being monitored. The reporting of special educational needs in the Governors Annual Report to parents is excellent.

80. Statutory requirements are met except, due to the ineffective management, in the provision of information technology at Key Stage 4 and its reporting to parents.

80. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

80.

80. **Staffing**

81. Except for mathematics, where the combination of staff expertise does not match the pupils' curriculum needs, all subjects are adequately staffed. Overall, the teachers' qualifications are well matched to the subjects they teach. This has a positive effect upon the pupils' learning and is a substantial improvement over the situation at the time of the previous inspection. The provision of learning support staff caters adequately for pupils with special educational needs. All those who work predominantly with these pupils have appropriate extra qualifications. One teacher is primary trained: this adds an important further dimension to the available expertise. There are good procedures for the induction of new, trainee (including licensed teachers) and newly-qualified teachers. Professional training has a marked impact upon practice and has contributed significantly to the improvements since the previous inspection. There is, however, a clear need to improve staff expertise further in promoting literacy, teaching information technology and good practice in geography, physical education, modern foreign languages and mathematics, especially.

81. **Learning resources**

82. Resources are good in most subjects, especially mathematics, English, design and technology, religious education, music and art, with an increased resource to reflect cultural diversity. Resources are sufficient in science. Resources to support drama are inadequate. There is a shortage of dictionaries in modern foreign languages, which is affecting progress and, in common with special educational needs, there is a similar deficiency in software for use with computers. Resources for information technology are much improved since the previous inspection, but access to computers by individual subjects is poorly organised and so the investment does not raise attainment sufficiently. Pupils with visual impairment use large-type learning materials; sufficient specialist furniture is available for those with physical disabilities. The library cum learning resource centre is well stocked and organised: staff are consulted over the selection of library material. It has newspapers reflecting the pupils' heritage backgrounds and appropriate video and information technology facilities for the pupils to research via CD-ROMs and the Internet. It is an effective, well-used resource both for groups and for individual learning, with a good percentage of pupils regularly borrowing books.

82. **Accommodation**

83. There is ample accommodation for the school's curriculum needs. Some improvement projects have, since the previous inspection report, transformed parts of the school and are, in science, music and art, for example, starting to help to improve the pupils' standards of work. The physical education accommodation, however, clearly has an adverse effect on learning. A single, small gymnasium prevents full coverage of the subject's programmes of study. The boys' shower area is out of use due to the badly deteriorated state of the building. The changing rooms for both boys and girls are inadequate. The equipment storage area floods in wet weather, and the continued usage of the girls' showers poses a health and safety risk. The development of tennis and netball skills is hampered by the poor state of the courts. The glass-covered walkways around the inner court leak badly and make movement hazardous. Handrails have been provided and facilities for the disabled improved. The school has made significant improvements in the use of display to help learning and to celebrate success, but some corridors remain dismal places.

84. There is a good base for special educational needs, which is used well for teaching groups of pupils that are withdrawn from other classes. The room is situated in the heart of the school; it is large, light and well furnished and provides good accessible, storage space for resources and records.

84. The efficiency of the school

85. Financial planning is very good. The school ensures that careful planning supports educational developments very closely. Effective strategic planning over time is clearly seen in the school development plans that show substantial improvements since the previous inspection. They ensure, for example, carefully allocated funds that have appropriate evaluation procedures built in, as well as items of recurrent expenditure. The close relationship between the headteacher, senior management and governors' policy and resources sub-committee enables a delegated budget with strong supporting evidence to be presented to governors for thorough scrutiny and approval. With the approach of the next financial year, senior management prepares an expenditure budget related to the school development plan, which allows carefully planned expenditure to proceed. After a period of restricted finances, the school now has a small surplus and has the procedures to put this to good use.

86. In general, effective use is made of staff, accommodation and learning resources. There is a good level of resources in all curriculum areas and heads of department are becoming increasingly involved in financial controls. Teaching rooms are used efficiently apart from the new information technology room, which is not fully used. Below average amounts are spent on buildings and physical education facilities are in a poor state of repair. Other new facilities such as the science laboratories, music and art rooms are put to effective use.

87. All finance delegated to the school to aid the support of pupils with statements of special educational need is carefully accounted for to ensure that these pupils benefit. Additional funding is also well accounted for. The very recently introduced system whereby support is clearly directed towards individual pupils for a fixed period, and only continued on the recommendation of an internal review, appears a very good means of ensuring that money attached to special educational needs is efficiently spent. Its effect is, as yet, unproven.

88. Financial control and school administration are good. Governors have a full statement of financial controls. The school follows the recommendations of an annual county-conducted audit report. Day-to-day management is good.

89. Standards of attainment are improving but are below national averages, due to the often very low standards of attainment of pupils on entry to the school. Progress by pupils of all attainments is good. Since the previous inspection, the school has made very good progress. It has a very good capacity for further improvement, due to very good leadership, the provision of very good support for pupils, good standards of teaching and very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Currently, therefore, the school provides good value for money.

89. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

89. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

89. English

90. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average. Results in the National Tests at the end of the key stage in 1998 were broadly in line with the national average, having improved over the past three years. The average of results over the past three years is, however, well below the national average. Pupils' performance in the National Tests in 1998 was well above that of pupils in similar schools. Teacher assessments and pupils' attainment in lessons do not support the improvement indicated by the 1998 test results. Test results in 1999 were substantially lower and more realistic. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys by a slightly greater margin than is true nationally.

91. By the end of Key Stage 3, high-attaining pupils read fluently from quite complex texts. They draw inferences from what they read and make sound judgements about characters in literature. In their writing they use complex sentence forms and a reasonably wide vocabulary. Their writing is interesting to the reader. However, they make spelling and other mechanical errors. The speech of low-attaining pupils is usually restricted to short phrases, but many pupils develop their ideas in greater detail and can converse quite fluently. Low-attaining pupils read simple texts accurately and learn how to approach more difficult words. They understand the main points in what they read. Their writing is limited to fairly disjointed sentences and a simple vocabulary. They make many punctuation and spelling errors. The pupils' language difficulties affect their standards in some other subjects, particularly science and Key Stage 4 mathematics.

92. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades, A*-C, in GCSE in English in 1998 was well below the national average and has changed little over the past three years. The proportion of pupils gaining grades, A*-G, is in line with the national average but the proportion entered is not as high as in most schools. In GCSE English literature, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades, A*-C, has risen steadily over the past three years and was close to the national average in 1998. The results of girls are significantly higher than those of boys in both English and English literature but by less than the national difference.

93. By the end of Key Stage 4, high-attaining pupils understand themes, plot and character as developed by writers in literature. In their written work all pupils communicate their meaning successfully, but even the highest attaining pupils make some mechanical errors. The best work shows good language control. The highest-attaining pupils can converse entertainingly. In formal situations they hold the interest of their peers by the content of what they have to say and by their use of expression, although vocabularies are not extensive. Most pupils of all attainments read with at least fair accuracy, as the well-tailored reading material corresponds to individual reading standards. Most pupils write appropriately for different situations. There are examples of sustained writing especially on literary topics. The low attainers' speech is confined to short responses and limited vocabulary.

94. Most pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3. Their reading skills benefit from the department's policy of providing time for teachers and support teachers to listen to them reading. They are given opportunity to write in a range of styles and, on suitable occasions such as the preparation of a drama script, they have the use of information technology. There are examples of lessons being specifically aimed at improving pupils' listening and speaking skills, but not enough emphasis is placed on this aspect of the curriculum.

95. Most pupils make good progress through Key Stage 4. They benefit from being shown how to prepare notes for speaking in formal situations. They increase awareness of how language is aimed at different audiences by comparing articles from a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper. They develop understanding of literature from a structured approach as in a lesson where a matrix was used to prepare an answer on the weird sisters in "Macbeth".

96. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages. They benefit from being taught in relatively small groups. They particularly benefit from the regular reading programme. Lessons are generally split into a number of suitable activities to hold their interest. A Year 9 lesson successfully challenged pupils to sustain their concentration while listening for an extended period.

97. Pupils' response in lessons is good. Nearly all are interested in their work, well-motivated and well-behaved. Written work done since August is carefully presented and shows a big improvement on the untidy handwriting and layout seen in last year's books. Pupils respect the school fabric and equipment. Most work well together in pairs or in groups but a few low-attaining pupils show lack of consideration for both fellow pupils and teachers by interrupting lessons.

98. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and the overall standard is good. At Key Stage 3, most lessons are at least satisfactory and nearly half are at least good. Approximately one lesson in ten is very good; but one in ten is poor. At Key Stage 4, teaching is nearly always at least good. One-quarter is very good but there is an occasional unsatisfactory lesson. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are generally pitched at the correct level to ensure progress. Planning is good and varied strategies are used although these could be further extended. More use is made of information technology than at the time of the previous inspection. Teacher-pupil relationships are very good. In some cases, questioning techniques do not give the higher-attaining pupils especially, enough opportunity for extended speech. Marking standards are uneven. Many comments on pupils' books do not tell them how to improve, and there are not many examples of comments being pursued in later work. Pupils do not have targets to which comments could be linked. In the best lessons, the objective is kept constantly in focus and the teacher's enthusiasm encourages the pupils, as in a lesson where Year 9 pupils were being taught how to use a wider vocabulary. In unsatisfactory lessons, the teacher is unsure of how to meet the objectives and standards of discipline are low.

99. The department works well together. The head of department is instrumental in establishing harmonious relationships and provides good support for teachers. Monitoring is insufficiently focused on raising pupils' standards by, for example, ensuring that all teachers apply the department's marking policy. The criticism in the previous report that there were no clearly defined schemes of work has now been addressed. The department is a major contributor to the good cultural development of pupils with a good programme of public speaking opportunities and film and theatre visits. There is now more material available from other cultures than at the time of the previous inspection.

100. Teaching drama as a separate subject improves the curriculum. Early indications are encouraging. Teaching standards are good and, although the attainment of pupils is at present low, they are well motivated and are making good progress. The room used for drama is just suitable for current small group sizes. More resources, such as lighting equipment, are needed in order to meet GCSE requirements.

101. GCSE results in media studies are good with over half the pupils achieving higher grades, A*-C. This proportion has not changed over the last three years. Teaching is good. Lessons were observed in which pupils were making good progress in understanding the techniques of producing TV "soaps" and in questioning how far the press is entitled to intrude into people's privacy.

101.

Mathematics

102. Pupils enter the school with attainment in mathematics that is well below national averages. However, in the current Years 7 and 8, attainment on entry is significantly higher than this, although still below national averages. Attainment as indicated by the National Tests at the end of Key Stage 3 declined over a three-year period from 1996 to 1998 to well below national averages. While full national comparisons are not available for 1999, attainment as measured by the National Tests shows a significant improvement at all levels and particularly at Levels 5, 6 and 7. Overall attainment at Key Stage 3 is, however, below average. GCSE attainment, over the five years to 1999, has improved steadily in the proportions of pupils obtaining higher grades, A*-C, but remains below national averages. The proportions of pupils achieving all grades has fluctuated, depending upon the numbers entered for GCSE. Some pupils obtain worthwhile recognition of attainment through the Certificate of Achievement examination.

103. The pupils make good progress at both key stages. There is no significant difference in that of boys and girls and Asian boys have made significant increases in progress and attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainments. Attainment in mathematics is below that in English but ahead of that in science as measured by GCSE.

104. Since the previous inspection, there is an improvement in the standard of mental mathematics in response to teaching and testing at both Key Stages 3 and 4, although this is below national averages at both key stages. This and the rise of scores in National Tests represent an improvement since the previous inspection. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils construct straight line graphs after substituting numbers in algebraic formulae, use a range of graphical forms to display information, can construct isometric diagrams of solid objects from different viewing angles and apply good number work to problems of probability. All pupils at Key Stage 3 are starting to use appropriate language to describe answers both verbally and in written form. Pupils carry out simple investigations and higher-attaining pupils look for and express relationships between series of numbers both in mathematical and written English terms.

105. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils can substitute in and re-arrange formulae to find the areas and volumes of different shaped objects and parts of a circle. They can calculate fractions and compare the size of different fractions and all pupils can retrieve information in numerical form from charts and tables. Pupils carry out investigations related to number and shapes in space. Pupils are entered for levels of GCSE related to secure forecasts of their grade. As many are entered for lower level papers, they encounter only a limited range of mathematical experiences. In general, the standard of spoken and written work is not as high as Key Stage 3, being mainly confined to one-word answers.

106. The attitude of pupils is good and most work enthusiastically. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and relate well to them. In a small minority of cases, pupils are inattentive towards the end of one-hour lessons or when the aims of the lesson are not made clear to them. In general, pupils make good progress through both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, because of these good relationships. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection.

107. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory with over half of it good, with some very good.

About double the school average is unsatisfactory, mainly because of non-specialist's inadequate subject knowledge and unawareness of teaching techniques. Most lessons are appropriately planned and there is generally good class and time management. Teachers are concerned that pupils succeed and there are many good examples of question and answer technique both on a class and individual basis. All pupils have opportunities for individual investigations. While most teaching is concerned with basic mathematical processes, in one lesson good use was made of open-ended questioning to make pupils think about the relationships of numbers. Support for lower-attaining pupils can be very effective, for example when related to the needs of pupils and lent by a teacher who was fully aware of the aims of the lesson. Occasionally, non-specialist teaching lacks confidence to make clear the aims of the lesson and to outline basic processes. Insufficient demands are made, especially on higher-attaining pupils. Homework is set regularly and provides good reinforcement of work in class. Work is marked, but occasionally pupils do not always complete or correct work after marking. Overall, the standard of teaching shows a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers frequently provide effective extra support for pupils' learning after school.

108. Under-pinning all the work of pupils and staff is a comprehensive range of information of attainment used consistently to monitor and assess pupils' attainment and progress. Targets are set in terms of GCSE grades for individual pupils in Year 10 and the faculty sets targets for future overall attainment. National Curriculum requirements are met at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Schemes of work are appropriately linked to this and the targets set. Some progress has been made at Key Stage 3 in preparation for the introduction of information technology with assignments linked to information technology attainment levels.

109. The head of mathematics, confirmed in post one year ago, provides good leadership. Teachers are appropriately deployed and resources are well managed. Good support is given to newly qualified teachers, but there is not enough support for experienced non-specialists who are unaware of current practice. Day-to-day management is good and schemes are kept under review. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection and, due to the greatly improved standards of teaching, has the capacity for further improvement.

109. **Science**

110. Attainment is well below national averages at both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 3, the proportions reaching Level 5 or above in National Tests are very low. Performance in science is below English and mathematics, and is well below average for pupils from similar schools. Results follow a similar pattern over the past four years, but there is an upturn in the most recent results, especially the proportions reaching Level 4 or above. Given the very low attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 and the extent of language difficulties, positive additions to attainment occur. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining higher, A*-C, GCSE grades in double sciences is, however, well below national averages. The percentages gaining A*-G grades is also below such levels. This pattern of results is paralleled in previous years, with 1998 showing a downturn. Results are lower than those achieved in English, mathematics and most other subjects. Some pupils gain Certificate of Achievement awards. Many boys attain lower grades. Extended absences affect adversely the standards of many pupils.

111. In two-thirds of lessons, standards of attainment are below average at Key Stage 3 and in almost three-quarters at Key Stage 4. However, there are notable positive aspects. Practical work enhances the pupils' grasp of scientific ideas and procedures; their attainment in this and in oral work is significantly better than it is in often-laborious written work. By end of the key stage, pupils use scientific terms confidently. Most can make predictions and carry out fair tests. By the end of Key Stage 4, they carry out investigations satisfactorily, and complete straightforward written records of topics studied. However, there is a prevailing culture, most evident with older pupils, of preferring to engage in an undemanding task, such as copying from the board or a book. Many are reluctant to make the necessary efforts to think through.

for example, observations and the reasons for experimental results.

112.Improved teaching since the previous inspection ensures that most pupils' progress is good during Key Stage 3; they are beginning to grasp scientific ideas and they make increasingly effective oral contributions, though many remain too brief. Sometimes their understanding is weak because they are still gaining in confidence and have poor fluency in language. In turn, this affects how scientific ideas are understood and developed. Practical work builds confidence and skills with equipment and material; it consolidates understanding and helps progress in observation, comparison, and searching for explanations. In a Year 8 practical lesson investigating the way we see, low-attaining pupils asked appropriate questions and drew on their own experience to test their hypothesis. Progress in written work is more limited, and is often very dependent on teachers. Higher-attaining pupils produce well presented work with a fair measure of independence. It goes beyond simple descriptions and recording of results. Here, progress occurs, for instance in evaluating experimental variables, imaginative accounts of the view from the moon, and thinking about the symptoms of bubonic plague using the old nursery rhyme! Diagrams, simple calculations and graphs are well used. However, for most pupils written work lacks continuity and development; extended writing is often absent. Notably, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in practical work and oral responses. Progress during Key Stage 4 is mainly satisfactory. Again, gains in understanding come best through oral and practical work. Lack of confidence and fluency in language still limit progress. Written work often requires considerable support and input from teachers, but practical work mitigates this a little. Many pupils are reluctant to probe, analyse, test hypotheses, or critically evaluate what has been said or done. Often, they prefer to be given a simple "right answer" to put down. There are examples of higher-attaining pupils producing well-presented work that has critical and evaluative aspects. Such work uses well-drawn graphs, symbolic and structural formulae, and calculations.

113.Many pupils enjoy science and are positive towards it: the behaviour of most has a helpful impact on standards. Concentration spans are satisfactory, though levels are sometimes superficial. Pupils enjoy practical work and benefit from it. Many however, show some lack of curiosity or willingness to think further about observations. A few older pupils, mainly Asian boys at Key Stage 4, not only display little intention to work hard or consistently, but their personal behaviour is rude and offensive: these pupils impede progress for themselves and others.

114.The quality of teaching throughout both key stages is always satisfactory and is most often good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and they stimulate interest. Lessons have clear purposes and are well planned. Teachers' interesting introductions and further explanations are clear and help understanding. In a Year 7 lesson on heat, for example, a story about cannon balls on a ship provided a focus that few will forget. Effective discussion and question and answer form an important part of many lessons. Purposeful practical work is well organised: it builds and extends understanding. In a Year 11 lesson on sound, demonstrations with a guitar and an oscilloscope enhanced the pupils' involvement. The pace and demands of the lesson ensured all were involved in thinking about wavelength and amplitude. Effective uses of analogies and "models" illustrate abstract scientific ideas. In a Year 10 lesson pupils had to investigate the process of absorption through the intestinal wall by appropriate experiments using different tubes. They were made to grapple with what was going on and why. Especially good and effective teaching is characterised by high expectations beyond straightforward answers; consistent emphasis on such questions as "why do you think this?" or "what if..?" improves standards by making the pupils think more deeply. In a Year 8 lesson on light and seeing, experiments were linked with a continual pressing of such questions. Sometimes, however, teaching, often at Key Stage 3, fails to make enough demands upon the higher-attaining pupils to write at length or to think in sufficient depth. Cut and stick exercises do not extend the pupils enough.

115.There is a purposeful atmosphere. With the appointment of a new head of department

this term, the department is actively reviewing organisation, teaching and motivation strategies. Some priorities are beginning to crystallise, with the clear intention to address issues relating to the improvement of standards of attainment at both key stages. The formal assessment scheme works effectively. The department has a clear organisational and planning framework, but because schemes lack specific learning objectives and outcomes, assessment is not currently used to inform curriculum planning. Staff set good examples of courtesy, empathy, honesty, and of rigorous approaches to work. They encourage pupils to look beyond their immediate experience, as in observations of the recent solar eclipse. The impressive refurbishment of laboratories has a positive impact on the motivation and work of staff and pupils. There remains, however, a lack of information technology hardware, as there are no computers with data-logging facilities.

115. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

115. **Art**

116. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils reach expected standards and some attain higher than this. The proportion of pupils gaining higher-grade GCSE results, A*-C, was above the national average in 1997 and 1998. The proportions fell in 1999, as accommodation difficulties restricted the range of work. Attainment is higher in art than in many other subjects in the school.

117. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils have a growing knowledge and understanding of the work and styles of established artists such as the Futurists. The art of other cultures is effectively woven into practical work. The pupils use different media satisfactorily, drawing, for example, organic forms in line and tone. They record images accurately from direct observation and create satisfactory imaginative work in multi-colour typeface designs. Pupils with special educational needs' standards are at about expected levels and they make good progress. Pupils' work in class matches the previous GCSE examination results and is above average at Key Stage 4. They acquire and use appropriate skills and techniques. They work effectively in the style of well-known artists such as Patrick Caulfield and develop these into their own original work. Pupils with special educational needs equally reach standards comparable with the national expectation.

118. The pupils' standards of speaking about art are under-developed; they rarely use appropriate technical vocabulary, restricting themselves to short factual comments. Few express well-considered opinions, but class readings at Key Stage 3 effectively promote greater knowledge about artists.

119. Pupils make good progress at both key stages. From often below average standards as they start Key Stage 3, they improve their practical craft and design skills, due to the teachers' help and gain a good foundation for further, Key Stage 4, study, where work builds well upon this. Here, pupils make good progress with pastel as a new medium, producing sophisticated imaginative landscapes from the stimulating local environment. Independent study skills develop well and they also respond well to high-quality guidance as to how to improve. Visits to galleries help Key Stage 4 pupils to progress by increasing their understanding of contemporary art.

120. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good. This is a direct result of the enthusiasm the teachers bring and the high standards they consistently set. Pupils respond well to challenges in what are now pleasant, well-provided working conditions. Pupils organise themselves effectively and help each other, as when in Year 8, small groups construct card sculptures, sharing ideas and appreciating each other's contributions. The quantity and quality of course and homework reveal a very positive attitude to the subject. In most groups at Key Stage 3, a few pupils, notably boys, have poor attitudes and behaviour; they fail to apply themselves and underachieve. Support staff have a positive effect upon behaviour in these groups.

121. Teaching is consistently good and has a positive effect upon standards at both key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and very good technical and craft skill, which is often seen in practical demonstrations. Teaching is particularly effective in motivating pupils to produce imaginative visual ideas, based, for instance, on Pop Art. Teaching supports pupils very well as independent artists, helping them to improve ideas. Day-to-day assessment and marking are thorough and are used effectively to move pupils on. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teaching gives equal consideration to pupils of all levels of attainment, thus, for example, helping the pupils with special educational needs make the progress they do.

122. The subject management is good and leads to the department making significant contributions to meeting the school's aims on artistic skills; there remains scope for further development of the pupils' spoken English skills.

123. Since the previous inspection, the accommodation and computer resource issues have been resolved and teaching now builds well on prior achievement and systematically develops basic skills.

123. **Design and technology**

124. Pupils make good progress at both key stages as a result of a well-planned scheme of work and the quality of teaching, much of which is very good. Overall, pupils achieve standards that are only just below average at Key Stage 3 with more than half reaching the expected standard for their age. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of the whole age group achieving grades A*-C in their GCSE examinations was below the national average in 1998 and they achieved similar grades in 1999. Attainment is, however, higher than most other subjects in the school. In the GNVQ examinations in manufacturing a higher than average proportion of pupils fails to gain the qualification. Overall, attainment has risen since the previous inspection and, especially at Key Stage 3, is continuing to rise. The standards achieved by boys and girls are broadly similar; some Asian boys achieve less well because of their poor attitudes to work.

125. Pupils make particularly good progress in all areas of the subject, achieving above average standards of making at Key Stage 3. This is because they are systematically introduced to all aspects of design and technology during the key stage. Standards in food technology have improved since the previous inspection when they were judged to be not sufficiently demanding. Standards of drawing, particularly freehand, are below average and consequently pupils' use of drawing to design, and their ability in visual designing, are below average and make excessive use of cartoon characters and commercial images. The quality of pupils' decision making varies; in food there is some good work in experimenting and selecting ingredients but, whilst pupils learn correct techniques for working resistant materials, they rarely learn how to choose appropriate techniques. Pupils make effective use of modelling to resolve three-dimensional problems, but the range of alternatives considered is often limited. Use of computer graphics and CAD/CAM is a strength although there is some dependence on clip-art. Teacher assessments are accurate and show attainment on a rising trend with more than half of the pupils achieving the expected standard for the end of the key stage in 1999. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over the key stage.

126. Pupils make good progress in learning to carry out more sustained designing and making during Key Stage 4. Standards in GCSE examinations in food technology were well above average in 1998 and were approximately average in resistant materials, graphics products and textiles but were well below average in electronics products. Standards of making are good. Accurate construction and well-finished pieces are particularly evident in resistant materials, as is the use of modelling and sound working drawings. Drawing and rendering are weaknesses, although there are some good examples in folders in graphic products and resistant materials. Design in textiles is improving with the use of a range of images as a visual source. Elsewhere, pupils tend to use commercial images such as cartoons less successfully. Pupils experiment and evaluate well in food technology. There is insufficient design and testing of circuits in electronics. The weakness in the GNVQ manufacturing results is the amount of incomplete coursework. Overall, all pupils continue to make good progress during this key stage.

127. Nearly all pupils work hard and behave well but there is a minority, mostly boys in Years 9, 10 and 11, who try to avoid working and to disrupt others. Many pupils are keen to continue their work at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils mostly use equipment and materials responsibly and are willing helpers, such as those who regularly help food technology teachers with preparation and routine tasks. Most pupils have a limited ability to work independently and still require considerable guidance by the time they produce their GCSE design folders.

128. Almost all teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and some is good, with an amount that is very good. At Key Stage 4, all the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and half were very good. The best lessons are well planned and pupils are given clear objectives. Expectations are high and an ethos of hard work is created, in the case of food and textiles by enthusiasm, and in resistant materials by very good organisation to ensure that potentially difficult pupils work hard. Where teaching is unsatisfactory there is not sufficient structured teaching to enable pupils to make progress and tasks are inappropriate for the capabilities of the pupils. The vast majority of lessons are well planned and effective. In most lessons at both key stages, pupils need to be taught how to make decisions independently. Teachers have sound knowledge of their specialisms and it is to their credit that most have acquired information technology skills that are incorporated effectively into their teaching. Teachers' knowledge of drawing and visual design is more limited. Assessment is thorough at both key stages and pupils are given clear guidelines for improvement. In food technology this is closely linked to National Curriculum levels. Teachers ensure that the teaching covers all aspects of the GCSE and GNVQ mark schemes. Overall, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.

129. Improvements since the previous inspection are substantial. Planning is a model of good practice and the quality of management contributes effectively to the pupils' good progress. Good provision is made for all pupils, including the provision of GNVQ Manufacturing as well as GCSE for appropriate pupils. The scheme of work is well focussed on learning objectives, which enables regular modification in the light of assessment and enables all teachers to play an effective role in raising standards. Teaching is monitored very effectively and regular department meetings discuss curriculum development as well as routine matters. Commitment to high standards is evident in high quality displays.

129. **Geography**

130. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average, although consistent with that of pupils in similar schools. Girls achieve significantly higher levels than boys. By the end of the key stage, the highest attaining pupils show how human intervention creates benefits and problems in a range of countries. They use maps and compasses and geographical terminology with ease, and have relevant opportunities for fieldwork in the locality. They have limited opportunities for reflection and making moral judgements.

Insufficient challenges in handling several sources of information, or ways of thinking how to improve a skill, undermine standards for many.

131.The overall attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 is below the national average, although the proportion achieving GCSE higher, A*-C, grades has improved since last year. Attainment in lessons is average. By the end of the key stage, pupils understand the economic effects and moral dilemmas arising from the management of urban and natural environments. They test hypotheses and carry out fieldwork investigations gathering a range of data and viewpoints.

132.Most pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3. They improve their understanding of how landscapes change through tourism, farming techniques and business activity. Their skills in data handling and using geographical terminology develop accuracy through using maps, graphs, diagrams and statistical tables. Higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress when they choose how to present and organise information as in Year 8 work on evaluating co-operative farming in Denmark. They do less well when they are not challenged to make judgements as opposed to analysis. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress when they are actively involved and have short tasks to reinforce skills in different ways. This was clearly shown in a Year 9 lesson where pupils learned to use and talk about the compass, referring to the need of Moslems to find the direction of East. Progress is slow when pupils have no alternative tasks matched to their attainment.

133.Most pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4. Their knowledge of the global economy, the influence of multi-national companies, glaciation and National Parks increases through using a range of source material, including CD-ROMs. They take notes efficiently and use a question sheet while collecting information from video. Higher-attaining pupils can speculate and make deductions fluently. Fieldwork investigations are thorough and scientific. Lower-attaining pupils are less efficient at collating data from surveys and need simpler guidance for their fieldwork. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when there is learning support and when teachers involve them in reading aloud and using key words.

134.Behaviour in lessons is mostly good and pupils dutifully volunteer to read aloud and answer questions. In response to the previous inspection report, there is more active learning but there is still too much use of questions that fail to make the pupils think and develop ideas. This was intensified in one class where pupils perceived the task too easy and relationships deteriorated: the pupils became bored.

135.Teaching is satisfactory overall, although at Key Stage 3 pace and challenge are often too dependent on the teachers' enthusiasm and relationship with pupils. Consequently, a proportion of teaching has weaknesses that outweigh strengths, as it does not receive enough professional advice on how to improve. Subject knowledge is strong and evident in resources and the use of terminology. In response to the previous inspection report opportunities exist towards the end of Key Stage 3 for organising and re-drafting work and writing extended paragraphs. Teaching often fails, however, to use extension work to stimulate pupils to try harder. They have to rely too much on the teacher who has difficulty in sustaining the interest of the range of pupils in the class: pupils' attention then wanders. Expectations are high at Key Stage 4. A range of resources challenges pupils and occasionally good questioning leads them to refer to each other's theories and to test ideas.

136.Schemes of work are a clear guide, but leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Collaboration with link senior managers is not strong enough to ensure improvements. Monitoring teaching and sharing good practice remain weaknesses since the previous inspection. The pupils' unenthusiastic perceptions of geography at Key Stage 3 are affecting take up at Key Stage 4. The absence of information technology at Key Stage 3 is a weakness and materials matched to levels of attainment are not provided.

136. History

137. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average, although consistent with that of pupils in similar schools. Girls achieve higher levels and boys predominate at lower levels. Attainment over three years has improved. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have an overview of Roman, Islamic and European Empires, of Britain from Medieval times through upheaval following the Industrial Revolution and two World Wars. They understand how past and present events affect their lives and make judgements about the social consequences of major events.

138. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. The number of pupils gaining higher, A*-C, GCSE grades has fallen over the past three years and is well below the national average, although results are above those in similar schools. This is mainly because the subject attracts disproportionate numbers of lower-attaining pupils, many with special educational needs, compared with other humanities subjects. While attainment in lessons reflects this, most pupils outperform predictions, some impressively so. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can explain the link between industrial change and social reform. They understand how and why immigration in Nelson and the winning of rights by Suffragettes affects their lives. As standard practice they search and interpret a range of sources for information, contradiction and bias. Writing at length develops through opportunities for re-drafting and note-taking. There is not enough access to computers to increase pupils' creativity and independence.

139. Most pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Their knowledge of significant events increases steadily because they can select and compare information from a wide range of source material. In studying a claim by a mill owner that he had improved the lives of working people, Year 9 pupils were able to compose a reasoned response. Higher-attaining pupils said they could find evidence for both sides of the question and make satisfactory progress when they are challenged in this way. They lack opportunity to conduct enquiries. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress when they read source material aloud and search for key words.

140. Most pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Their knowledge of human beings as victims and initiators of events in history increases because they interpret a complex range of sources to arrive at a balanced judgement. Two lower-attaining pupils in a Year 10 group were able to interpret the symbolism of a "Punch" cartoon during their poster work on reforms and public health. Higher-attaining pupils can develop an argument at length. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through specially designed materials and teachers' awareness of IEPs.

141. Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. In all lessons pupils listen well to each other and move efficiently from activity to task to feedback. They are at ease in pairs, sharing equipment. They volunteer enthusiastically to read aloud and answer questions.

142. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4: none is unsatisfactory. Teachers are good role models of patience and respect. There are no longer concerns, as in the previous inspection, about non-specialist teaching. Deep-rooted subject knowledge and active learning promote confidence and accuracy in written tasks. Materials are suitably adapted for pupils with special educational needs. Providing key technical words at the start of lessons effectively widens the pupils' vocabulary. The use of statistics and graphs as evidence is an important contribution to numeracy skills. In some lessons at Key Stage 3, written tasks are too prescribed and undemanding in terms of individual planning and extended writing although there is good use of homework in consolidating what has been learned. At Key Stage 4, preparation for examinations is impressive where pupils write to GCSE criteria and know their targets.

143.The history curriculum integrates spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning through its choice of material and demands for judgements and empathy on the part of pupils. Presentations by the Blue Silver Theatre Company based on aspects of the Industrial Revolution and on life in Nazi Germany are stimulating and moving experiences for pupils.

144.Leadership in the department is thorough. Minutes of regular meetings are a working guide for colleagues and reflect school policies. Training of teachers in information technology has led to better use of computers, but this remains a comparative weakness, as the work is not part of an overall plan to improve learning and computer skills.

144. **Information and communication technology**

145.Rates of progress at both key stages are unsatisfactory due mainly to poor co-ordination of information technology across the curriculum leading to a lack of continuity and progression in pupils' experience. Overall standards of attainment are therefore below average at the end Key Stage 3 and well below average at the end of Key Stage 4. This is a decline since the previous inspection. Some pupils take GNVQ examinations in information technology and, although the attainment of those who complete all aspects of the course is average, a well above average proportion of pupils do not complete all aspects and hence receive no award.

146.Although the overall progress of pupils during Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, their progress in individual lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils acquire a basic knowledge of using word-processing, spreadsheets and a database in Year 7 and they have some further experiences of using this software, CD-ROMs and the Internet within other subjects, notably history, mathematics, religious education and science. However, any planned progression within these subjects is not co-ordinated to ensure that pupils make significant overall progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress when using computer graphics within design and technology although many are over-reliant on clip-art. They also make satisfactory use of computers for control and carry out some good CAD/CAM work, for example a pendant designed using computer drawing that is transferred to a numerically controlled miller to make a mould and then cast. Pupils with special educational needs use computers to support development of their literacy. There are no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls. Overall standards are below average and have declined in relation to the national average since the previous inspection.

147.During Key Stage 4 overall progress of pupils preparing for the GNVQ is unsatisfactory, largely as a result of poor attitudes to work on the part of a substantial proportion of pupils, mainly boys, who do not complete their work. Progress of the other GNVQ pupils is satisfactory, they are able to carry out tasks such as producing a macro, setting up a system and data handling, to an average standard for the qualification. Although there are some good examples of other pupils using information technology, such as presentation of design folders and English essays, spreadsheets in mathematics and the school newspaper, there is no overall planned experience to ensure that the National Curriculum programme of study is covered by all pupils. This is a breach of statutory requirements. Most pupils do not experience controlling, measuring and modelling at Key Stage 4 and many pupils make only very limited use of information technology in any aspect of their work. Hence some pupils make very little progress from the standards which they achieved at the end of the previous key stage. Consequently overall progress, including that of pupils with special educational needs, during Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory and overall standards are well below average.

148. At both key stages, most pupils are keen to learn and are sometimes enthusiastic. Many pupils make good use of the facilities in the library and in classrooms outside lessons to enhance their computing skills. In GNVQ lessons there are some pupils, mostly boys, who require a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time to keep them on task: these respond better when engaged in practical computing. During Key Stage 3, pupils sustain concentration well when trying to understand difficult concepts. All pupils treat the computers well and share them without misbehaviour. Overall, pupils' response is good at Key Stage 3 and mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 4.

149. Information technology is not taught as a separate subject at Key Stage 3, although some design and technology lessons are specifically devoted to it in each year. These lessons are well planned; organisation is sound and discipline good. Teachers make good use of individual teaching to support pupils of different prior attainment. Teaching is satisfactory in other subjects, although most teachers do not have sufficient knowledge to exploit the subject widely enough. In GNVQ lessons, teachers are well prepared and have clear objectives for their lessons. In good lessons, the teacher conveys enthusiasm to the pupils. Teachers make good use of individual teaching to encourage poorly motivated pupils to make progress. Overall, in lessons specifically directed at information technology, teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good.

150. The deterioration in progress and attainment since the previous inspection is a direct result of poor management of the department. Although there has been a curriculum audit in each of the past three years this has not led to a co-ordinated scheme of work which achieves continuity and progression. Each subject plans its use of information technology in isolation. As a result, the National Curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 3 is only covered at a minimal level, largely through a planned scheme covering most areas of the programme of study through design and technology. The requirements of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 4 are not satisfied. There is no significant monitoring of what is actually taking place, as opposed to what is planned, in subjects. Overall assessment and reporting are insufficiently co-ordinated at either key stage hence statutory requirements for reporting are not fully met. Although there is a long-term plan for developing facilities, this is not linked to a curriculum strategy to raise standards. There is no back-up network management with consequent effects on reliability and access leading to the cancellation of planned work. A factor in the poor co-ordination is the combining of two very time-consuming responsibilities that affects quality adversely.

150. **Modern foreign languages**

151. GCSE results for French and Spanish in 1998 were very low compared to the national average, with few pupils achieving higher grades. They were lower than at the previous inspection and lower than other subjects in the school. At Key Stage 4, most pupils' standards of attainment are below national expectations and are not good enough; only a few reach expected standards. Whilst still below average overall, many Key Stage 3 pupils are starting to produce standards of work in line with national expectations, with fewer underachieving. Many pupils from Asian backgrounds, mainly but not uniformly boys, fail to use the advantages of already having learned one foreign tongue: they do not reach appropriate standards. They are too ready to have answers given to them and fail to learn vocabulary by heart.

152. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their listening skills at both key stages and many can extract information and summarise from taped material or from language spoken by the teacher, particularly at Key Stage 3. Overall progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Standards of speaking are satisfactory and, by the end of the key stage, many pupils can also produce short sentences of their own in written work using memorised language. Reading is an underdeveloped skill in both key stages. Progress over time is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. At this key stage some higher-attaining pupils can use their knowledge of different tenses to write letters and to express opinions. However, many pupils, including the highest attainers,

write with poor levels of accuracy and most pupils are unable to produce extended spoken language. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have few opportunities to read aloud and their progress is limited as a result. Most pupils with special educational needs cope well with the appropriately modified demands of language study, although some lack confidence in their oral abilities. Overall, pupils with special educational needs are making good progress.

153. Pupils show an interest in their work at both key stages, but many do not know how to learn. Most are courteous when addressing the teacher and work collaboratively with their peers when required. In written and oral work, a significant minority of pupils engages too often in conversations unrelated to the task in hand and exhibits behaviour that undermines good learning. Such behaviour is, in part, due to a lack of pace and challenge, with insufficient extension work provided by the teacher. Pupils do not show initiative in seeking information and are too dependent on the teacher. All levels of attainment show little initiative, for example, in using dictionaries or support materials to develop their skills as independent learners.

154. Whilst the quality of half of the teaching is very good, there is more teaching in which weaknesses outweigh strengths than in other subjects at Key Stage 3. A new team of now ably led teachers does still show too many inconsistencies. On the whole teachers prepare lively and imaginative work to stimulate pupils' interest and pitch their use of the foreign language at the right level for the pupils' attainment levels. In the best-taught lessons, where the teacher sets strict time limits to complete a task, pupils maintain a sharp focus and make good progress in their learning. In these lessons, teachers check what pupils know and can do and give immediate feedback to them on how to improve their work. Such methods are not applied consistently, especially at Key Stage 3. The higher-attaining pupils are not, for example, always encouraged to make full use of the foreign language, for example when requesting information from the teacher. The lack of consistency fails to bring improvement overall in pupils' standards of work. Marking and recording the results of assessment are inconsistent across the subject. Homework is set regularly and reinforces effectively the work covered in class.

155. Although the department has a range of textbooks that are well used, there are insufficient dictionaries and reading materials to promote reading for enjoyment and to encourage pupils to work independently.

156. There has been some limited progress since the previous inspection. A new head of department has been appointed very recently and clear priorities for the development of the department have already been identified. Positive effects upon the pupils' attitudes and interest are already very clear. The modern foreign languages accommodation now encourages good teaching and learning.

156. **Music**

157. Standards of attainment are close to national expectations at Key Stage 3. At the time of the previous inspection there was no opportunity for pupils to study music at Key Stage 4. The school now offers a GCSE music option but the numbers taking it are too small for any valid statistical comparisons to be made, but scrutiny of written work, observation of lessons and examination results indicate standards close to national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are in line with average national expectations. The pupils control keyboards with facility and perform melodic pieces using staff and letter notation. A few use appropriate fingering techniques. The pupils are familiar with chord structures and sequences, have competent listening skills and use correct technical vocabulary. Boys and girls perform equally well and there are no significant differences between pupils from different ethnic heritages. Performance levels are good for low-attainers in relation to their ability, for example, a class of pupils with special educational needs all managed to perform a twelve bar blues sequence using a clockenspiel. Higher-attaining pupils' standards are not high enough as the

demands made of them are too low. Extra-curricular groups and instrumental pupils achieve good standards of performance.

158. Pupils make good progress in both key stages. In lessons they improve and consolidate their practical skills and there is good evidence of continuity from one lesson to another and from year group to year group. Other than the higher attainers, they are set tasks that allow them to perform at a level appropriate to their prior attainment. Boys and girls make equal progress and a good feature is the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

159. The pupils have a good attitude to the subject in all its aspects; they take it seriously and concentrate well when listening and during practical work. They are courteous and have good relationships. For example, in class they listen attentively to each other's performances and discuss and evaluate them. They work well independently but have few opportunities for collaborative work. In class they work with enthusiasm and behaviour is good. The numbers opting for GCSE courses and instrumental teaching are well below the national average and the department lacks strategies to attract pupils to these activities.

160. The overall quality of teaching is good at both key stages: although there are a few weaknesses, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The staff know the subject and expectations are usually high, particularly in relation to lower-attaining pupils. Planning is effective with lessons well sequenced and containing a wide variety of activities. Oral style is lively with clear explanations, which result in good progress for lower-attaining pupils. However, the amount of time spent on explanations is sometimes too great so insufficient time is spent on practical activities. The management of pupils is very good and standards of discipline are high. The good relationships between staff and pupils are a positive factor here. The management of the department has improved considerably since the previous inspection: the curriculum and schemes of work are now clear and well documented. They comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum and offer a balanced programme of study that includes a good representation of music from non-European cultures, however, notation skills are not taught systematically across Key Stage 3.

161. The accommodation has been significantly improved since the previous inspection, as have the resources, which now include a computer and software. These factors contribute to the good ethos and rising standards that exist in the department.

161. **Physical education**

162. Most Year 7 pupils are at expected levels; they exhibit a satisfactory range of basic actions although the body management skills of many Asian girls are underdeveloped. During Key Stage 3, grouping by gender allows pupils to work with consistency and confidence. Progress is satisfactory and girls' rates are especially good in gymnastics. Lower and higher-attaining pupils make good progress where they are grouped by attainment, where sensitive teacher intervention helps individuals and where group sizes are small. Some pupils, for whom English is a second language, make insufficient progress without appropriate language support. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at expected levels; most pupils adapt and refine existing skills by identifying strengths and limitations in performance. For example, in gymnastics, girls analyse movement sequences accurately and make perceptive suggestions for improvement. Throughout both key stages pupils have insufficient understanding of the principles of promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

163. GCSE results improved in 1998 and were above the average of results within the school; they remain below the national average. There were no entries for 1999. Standards in the current courses point to further examination improvement. Pupils on the GCSE course progress well, they apply technical knowledge to refine the quality of their games skills. In core physical education lessons, progress is less evident especially in some boys' lessons where teaching gives insufficient opportunities for planning and evaluating or for developing strategic games play. For example in football, some boys have a limited understanding of attack and defence principles. Consequently, the attainment of pupils who do not follow the GCSE course is below expected levels.

164. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good; participation rates are high and standards of dress are good. Where teaching is purposeful and enthusiastic pupils show commitment and good levels of concentration. Relationships and discipline are good. Behaviour only deteriorates in some boys' lessons where pupils are over-directed and unchallenging tasks result in inactivity and boredom. Across both key stages pupils have insufficient opportunity to take responsibility and to use extended speech.

165. The quality of Key Stage 3 teaching is almost all very good, with some that is satisfactory. Strengths include good subject knowledge and effective use of pupil assessment. For example in some football lessons, teaching helps boys' understanding of possession and co-operative team play. Weaknesses include poor knowledge of the National Curriculum requirements, ineffective use of time; very late starts to some lessons, lack of pace and poor task management. On these occasions, pupils are unclear of the purpose of the activity and what they, as individuals, need to do to improve.

166. Teaching is less than consistently good at Key Stage 4. Although most of it is good, one-fifth is poor. Good features include effective planning and organisation promoting high levels of physical and intellectual challenge. Teaching at GCSE, for example, helps pupils to categorise their knowledge of energy requirements for physical activity. Weaknesses involve low expectation, lack of challenge and insufficient reference to planning documents. For example in football, some teaching involves a commentary on the game, which results in a superficial understanding of games-playing principles.

167. The extra-curricular provision participation rates and pupil commitment are much improved since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards with some very good representation at regional level.

168. Since the previous inspection a new head of department has made significant improvement in leadership and management has been very effective in addressing most of the shortcomings. However, the inadequate facilities continue to adversely impact on the breadth and depth of the Key Stage 4 curriculum and are a major cause of unsatisfactory standards. The unacceptably poor quality of the changing rooms, shower areas and toilets have further deteriorated and are now a serious hazard. Time allocated to the subject at Key Stage 4 is insufficient and results in superficial coverage. Poor teaching is still evident in some boys' lessons.

168. **Religious education**

169. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils' attainment is above the national expectation. In Year 7, they have a good knowledge of Christian Baptism and understand that naming ceremonies imply belonging to a faith. They know the correct vocabulary. In Year 8, they can find chapter and verse in the Bible quickly. They have a good understanding of the parables and can convey the messages in good depth in role-play. By Year 9, pupils can use their knowledge of the use of water, light, flowers, and dress to speculate on why such symbols are used when they are introduced to a new practice. They have a good understanding of different aspects of prayer, can remember the correct terms and can recall the order of

ceremonies such as the Hindu Puja.

170. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above average and very high for the school. Attainment in GCSE religious education has improved steadily over the past three years, to reach well above average successes for higher, A*-C grades in 1998 and even better results in 1999. Again, the school builds well on pupils' prior knowledge of major world faiths. Pupils have good knowledge of Christian and Islamic marriage ceremonies, including knowledge of written tracts from the Bible and Quran. They can analyse problem areas and identify solutions. Pupils can look at and identify issues such as racism rationally while acknowledging incidents that arise out of ignorance. They can examine ideals such as Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" and speculate on the degree to which this can be a reality. They consider the ideas of eminent scholars such as Aquinas, and Newton when studying topics such as war, suffering and evil.

171. Progress is good at both key stages. The pupils gain knowledge in a logical progression throughout. They learn to view all subjects from a range of views and perspectives. Pupils learn to focus on the essential aspects of major world religions first in Year 7 and then explore the ideas and practices in greater depth later. Good teaching, improving command of specific vocabulary and remembering the names of artefacts used in different traditions, beliefs and ceremonies enhance progress. The subject specific vocabulary introduces a very wide range of unfamiliar terms and leads to good progress in oral and written language. They become aware of the common elements in all major world religions and use knowledge gained to evaluate specific situations. Pupils with special educational needs get appropriate individual attention, particularly with the use of language and they make good progress. These pupils' needs are well monitored in all lessons.

172. Pupils have very positive attitudes; they show keen interest in their work. They are courteous and trustworthy and show respect for property. Artefacts and books are well cared for and in good condition. The proportion taking GCSE is much higher than average. Pupils respond well to the introduction of a short core GCSE course. Pupils sustain concentration well. They develop a good capacity for personal study through regular open-ended research topics. There are constructive relationships. They behave well in class with a significant number of Asian boys being more vociferous than girls. However, they do not disrupt lessons, but command more of the teachers' time. The pupils work well collaboratively in pairs or in small groups in role-play as required. They show a respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. They show good initiative generally and can take responsibility for classroom tasks.

173. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. It underpins the well above average standards the pupils attain. Teaching builds on the pupils' strengths; the knowledge gained from their faith backgrounds is used to good effect. Teaching presents the subject as having great significance in the pupils' lives and as a serious academic subject in its own right. It is very good in one out of six lessons at Key Stage 3 and in four out of five lessons at Key Stage 4, and is occasionally excellent. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and have high expectations of their pupils. There is a charismatic approach to the subject. Teachers have good class management skills and discipline. Challenging lessons are well planned, have good pace and a range of responses is elicited. Resources are good and are used effectively. In Year 10, there is good use of information technology for research and evaluation. Assessment is planned thoroughly and is ongoing in all lessons, informally through discussion and formally in written tasks. Standards also rise through effective homework, written tests and examinations at the end units of work. Plans indicate how assessment is used to inform planning.

174.The schemes of work are in accordance with the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus. The school offers three different GCSE examination courses. It explores the human condition in good depth and covers Christianity and some of the other major world religions such as Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. The department is well managed and resources are maintained in meticulous order. All the good features identified in the previous inspection report remain and the shortcomings have been rectified: there is now no significant underachievement. Planning is now good and all pupils are fully challenged.

175.The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

175. **Urdu**

176.The provision for Urdu has been reduced since the previous inspection report. It is now only taught at Key Stage 4, but standards have remained above average, as at that time. The GCSE results in the last three years have been above average. The results in 1997 were well above the national average and in 1998 they were above it. Results in 1999 improved significantly over 1998. Girls performed better in 1997, but the attainment of boys was significantly higher in 1998 and 1999. Standards in lessons at Key Stage 4 and current work are in line with the national expectations.

177.Most pupils in both Years 10 and 11 are making satisfactory progress. There is, however, a small number of pupils especially in Year 10 whose progress is affected because of their poor attitude to work. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 cope well with oral work. They respond well to teachers' questions and speak with confidence. Their pronunciation and intonation are good. Most pupils can read and write sentences and short texts. They do, however, make spelling and grammatical errors in their written work. Higher-attaining pupils are not reaching their full potential, as they are not fully challenged. There is no evidence of the development in higher order skills such as problem solving, research and investigation in any of the lessons observed. The use of dictionary skills is under developed.

178.Most pupils are well behaved, can sustain concentration and their attitude to work is good. They show interest in their work and relationships are good. More so in Year 10 than in Year 11, there is a small number of pupils who are rather slow to settle and often tend to waste their time talking to each other.

179.Teaching is only just satisfactory. Although inexperienced, teaching is, nonetheless, underpinned by sound knowledge and understandings of the language, but the techniques of teaching are very limited. Expectations are appropriate, but the lessons are not always effectively planned. All are mainly teacher-centred and opportunities for the pupils to work independently or in-groups are limited. There is a lack of differentiated work to cater suitably for pupils in mixed-attainment classes. For example, in one Year 10 class the same worksheet was provided for all pupils to read: weaker pupils found this well beyond their reach. There are no pupils with special educational needs. Too little use is made of audio-visual aids such as overhead projectors, tape recorders or videos. Homework is given and marked. Pupils' written work is regularly marked and useful comments are made to improve the quality of work, but there are also instances where pupils do not always complete their work. For example, in Year 10 class some pupils left their work incomplete.

179. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

179. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

180. The team comprised 14 inspectors who spent 49 inspection days over one week in the school, observing a total of 149 lessons (88 at Key Stage 3 and 61 at Key Stage 4) at an average of 50 minutes per observation. In addition, a sample of registrations, assemblies and extra-curricular activities was evaluated. The part and full-time teachers present were seen teaching at least once and many several times. A comprehensive range of planned discussions was held with governors, staff and various members of the wider community. Inspectors scrutinised the work of a sample of three pupils from each year. They held planned discussions with these pupils on their work and experiences in the school. Large quantities of relevant documents were studied before, during and after the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 22 parents and considered 130 replies to a questionnaire issued by the governors, seeking parents' opinions of the school. The outcomes are published at the end of this section.

181.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	617	34	216	164

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	40.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.23

Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked each week	340

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	72.7
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	22
	KS4	19

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	1 476 223
Total Expenditure	1 480 483
Expenditure per pupil	2 509
Balance brought forward from previous year	37 665
Balance carried forward to next year	48 700

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	617
Number of questionnaires returned:	130

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	28	63	5	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	40	58	2	1	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	20	57	15	4	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	25	62	9	2	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	28	53	9	6	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	36	53	7	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	42	49	4	1	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	34	54	4	6	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	26	55	12	3	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	32	52	11	3	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	47	45	4	3	1

NB Not all parents responded to all questions

Other issues raised by parents

Around one response in ten had extra comments; most of these told how well pupils new to the school had settled. Parents were very impressed by the pastoral support their child enjoyed. Those who had moved their child from another school were particularly enthusiastic about the school's positive ethos.

Individual respondents felt there was too little homework, some indiscipline and unresolved bullying. None of these issues alarmed parents who spoke during the parent meeting. They were very complementary about each item on the agenda, especially the values and attitudes the school endeavoured to develop and the support given to their children.