

## INSPECTION REPORT

Fred Longworth High School  
Tyldesley

LEA area : Wigan

School Register Number : 106527

Headteacher : Mr A Colley

Reporting inspector : JE James

Dates of inspection : 4-11 October 1996

Inspection carried out under Section 9 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992

## Information about the school

Type of school :	Comprehensive
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	11-16
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Printshop Lane Tyldesley Manchester M29 8JN
Telephone number :	01942 883796
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Appropriate authority :	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Cllr. Brian Wilson

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	<b>Paragraph</b>
<b>Main findings</b>	1-10
<b>Key issues for action</b>	11
<b>Introduction</b>	
Characteristics of the school	12-17
Key indicators	
 <b>PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	
<b>Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school</b>	
Attainment and progress	18-23
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development	24-27
Attendance	28-31
<b>Quality of education provided</b>	
Teaching	32-36
The curriculum and assessment	37-43
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	44-47
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	48-53
Partnership with parents and the community	54-60
<b>The management and efficiency of the school</b>	
Leadership and management	61-66
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	67-73
The efficiency of the school	74-78
 <b>PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS</b>	
<b>English, mathematics and science</b>	79-96
<b>Other subjects or courses</b>	97-141
 <b>PART C: INSPECTION DATA</b>	
<b>Summary of inspection evidence</b>	142-144
<b>Data and indicators</b>	

## Main findings

1. Fred Longworth is a good school which is effectively led and well managed. It is a well ordered school which serves its community well and has some strong and developing features.

2. As pupils move through the school they make good progress and improve their standards of attainment. The results of standardised tests taken over the years on pupils' entry to the school indicate that, although the attainments of pupils follow a normal pattern of distribution, overall scores are skewed below the mean. In the national assessment tests taken in 1995 at the end of Key Stage 3, the number of pupils attaining Level 5 in English, mathematics and science is above the national average. It is also above at Level 6 in English but below in mathematics and science. By the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion who gain 5 or more GCSE grades A\* to C and A\* to G is above local and national averages although with variations and inconsistencies between subjects. These results, which are constant from year to year indicate pupils make sound progress.

3. In the work observed, the pupils' attainment matches and at times is above the national expectation in almost all lessons at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, pupils attain standards above or well above the national average in mathematics, all science courses, geography, music, sociology and some aspects of technology. They reach standards equivalent to the average in English language and literature, drama and history, and approach them in physical education. In some aspects of technology attainment is below the average, as it is in modern languages, art and religious education, although these three subjects are in a state of transition. In their lessons pupils attain better than examination results indicate. In almost all subjects, the exceptions being mathematics, science and physical education, girls regularly attain higher standards than boys to a more marked degree than is found nationally. The school is rightly addressing this. The good provision for special education needs enables all pupils to make sound progress. Oral skills are well developed and the school is making special efforts in an initiative to improve the core skills of literacy and numeracy to further support pupils' progress in the subjects of the curriculum. Attendance, apart from that of a small number of senior pupils, is above the national average. Fixed term and permanent exclusions are below average for the size of the school and are reducing. The particularly good behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are major contributions to the progress they make.

4. The overall quality of education provided is very good. Extensions to the building and subsequent remodelling will raise all remaining areas and the learning environment to a high level. The existing provision is used effectively. The curriculum is well thought out, broad and balanced but with too little time for religious education at Key Stage 4. Planning is a strength. Of note, is the helpful documentation related to cross-curricular initiatives and personal and social education. The quality of education is enhanced by a systematic planned range of popular extra-curricular academic sporting and cultural activities, visits and topics as preparation for adult life. Subject planning and schemes of work are generally good. Assessment, which overall is well handled, is not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels in all subjects to

help future planning. There is very good special needs provision and most teachers apply effective strategies when teaching pupils with differing abilities. Teachers have generally high expectations of pupils and maintain a good pace in lessons but the aspirations of senior boys for themselves in particular, are too low. Although homework generally supports learning, pupils do not keep good records of the work set. The consistency and cohesiveness of the good pastoral care and relationships contribute strongly to the quality of education, as do the pupils' thoughtfulness and positive attitudes. The school is well served by its teachers. The quality of teaching in two thirds of lessons observed was good or very good. This overall consistency of good teaching enables pupils of all abilities and in all age groups to make good progress and to begin to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers are knowledgeable, firm, friendly and supportive. They show loyalty, energy and a sustained commitment to the school.

5. Strong clear leadership and a sense of direction are embedded by the Headteacher. He is well supported by energetic senior staff and at all other levels within the school. Staff are sustained by the knowledgeable and experienced governors though the latter do not monitor policies sufficiently. Financial control is a strength. Teachers and administrative staff are well deployed although the provision of technician support for different subjects is not well balanced. Staff have a strong corporate identity and a tangible shared sense of common purpose has successfully been developed. Staff enjoy good levels of professional development and mentoring schemes for newly promoted and newly qualified teachers are well thought out. Accommodation, although tight is used effectively and improvements have been well planned. The attractive library is busy and efficiently organised and now requires a developed programme to regain its intended quality of provision. Attractive displays of work stimulate the overall civilised atmosphere for learning. Management of the site is well supervised, though whole-school risk assessment is still at an early stage. The targeted distribution of capitation has ensured a fair, adequate and in some areas good provision of resources, which are used well. Strategies for monitoring and evaluating the success and value of initiatives have yet to be fully developed however. The management of departments is sound and improving. Pupils are punctual to lessons and the school runs smoothly on a daily basis. The school gives good value for money.

6. Pupils' personal, social, cultural and moral development is very effectively promoted, particularly in music, drama and sport and is a great strength of the school and there is a positive, purposeful, welcoming ethos. Pastoral care is particularly strong and contributes well to this overall quality. Pupils are known, respected and supported as individuals and respond accordingly. Pupils enjoy coming to school; it is an orderly environment, they are mutually supportive and interact well together.

7. The unusually extensive and enterprising provision of successful extra-curricular activities is well supported by pupils. Cultural visits, residencies and field work reinforce awareness, which is further evident in generous charity work and in the community generally. A number of parents helpfully join staff in extra-curricular activities, but a few, despite strong encouragement from the school, display little interest in their child's education. The school's provision for pupils' cultural

development is very effective in many respects but a number of subjects do not contribute effectively to preparing pupils for life in a culturally diverse society.

8. The school's spiritual development of pupils is less overt. The school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship or provide sufficient time for teaching the Agreed Syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4. Whilst opportunities are taken in form time, music, geography, drama and English, to make a worthwhile contribution, pupils are provided with too little time in a busy day, for inner reflection.

9. There are extensive and productive links with the community, in which the school is well regarded and its achievements acknowledged, and with primary schools and post-sixteen providers. Pupils respond well to the school's provision, but are also willing to initiate opportunities to show their own leadership qualities, an important aspect of their personal development.

10. The combined benefits of the recent changes in structure and organisation and the development of effective policies are increasingly showing their worth as they become established and are bringing about better levels of educational experience for the pupils.

### **Key issues for action**

11. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of learning and provision, the governors and senior management should:

- build on the attainments in external examinations by;
  - \* intensifying monitoring and the setting of clear targets to improve the aspirations and performance of the boys in particular;
  - \* reducing the inconsistencies and variations of attainment between subject departments;
  - \* extending the good practice of the literacy programme to include vocabulary and writing skills in order to help development in all subjects;
- proceed with the planned improvements for identified areas of the building and accommodation in order to bring all areas to the same good level of provision;
- ensure that all subjects adopt assessment practice which is more closely matched to National Curriculum requirements so that;
  - \* they show the levels attained by pupils in relation to the National Curriculum;
  - \* pupils have a clearer knowledge of the progress they are making;

- \* teachers' planning is better informed;
- develop further strategies for monitoring and evaluating the implementation and success of school initiatives;
- ensure that arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements and that sufficient time is provided in Key Stage 4 to allow for the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education.

## **Introduction**

### **Characteristics of the school**

12. Fred Longworth High School is an eight form entry comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. It is maintained by Wigan Metropolitan Borough and serves the former mining and cotton town of Tyldesley and the surrounding urban areas including Astley and Atherton. The 1123 pupils, in almost equal numbers of boys and girls are drawn from eight main primary schools. Many pupils live locally and are able to walk to school, but their socio-economic backgrounds vary from those from homes in distinct areas of unemployment and social deprivation to comfortable middle class homes in well-established and newer commuter suburbs.

13. Originally opened in 1963, the school has been comprehensive since 1976. Although during this period extensive building developments have been carried out, the resources are fully stretched for the present numbers. A combination of the school's popularity and a number of recent local residential developments have led to the school being largely oversubscribed and there has been some local disappointment because of the consequent reduction of the traditional catchment. A building programme is currently under way that will allow the roll to increase by a further 150.

14. The intake is fully comprehensive. Although pupils' abilities follow the full pattern of distribution, the results of the Key Stage 2 tests taken at the end of primary school and cognitive tests administered by the school, indicate a distinct skew towards below average attainment.

15. Statements of special educational need are maintained in respect of 24 pupils, which as a proportion of the school's population, is about the national average. At 18 per cent, the number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is also close to the average of 17.5 per cent in Wigan and nationally.

16. Just over 1 per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority groups and no pupil comes from a home where English is not the first language. The proportion of pupils at 65 per cent who choose to continue in full-time education beyond the age of 16 is above the average for the local authority.

17. The formal mission statement, "Shaping the Future", and the overarching statement of aims, "By working together, we enable everyone to experience success and to fulfil their potential within a caring and effective learning environment", are underpinned by an appropriately broad range of aims for pupils' development.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3

for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1996	128	87	215

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	91	85	86
	Girls	71	52	52
	Total	162	137	138
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	75	64	64
	National	55	57	56
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	31	31	16
	National	20	33	25

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	61	89	93
	Girls	52	57	57
	Total	113	146	150
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	53	68	70
	National	61	62	59
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	23	29	36
	National	32	34	28

above				
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## Attainment at Key Stage 4

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

reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1996	127	97	224

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	50	106	111
	Girls	49	90	95
	Total	99	196	206
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	44.2	87.5	92.0
	National	41.2	87.4	93.5

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed

through absence for the latest complete

reporting year :

		%
Authorised Absence	School	7.2
	National comparative data	8.3
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.2
	National comparative data	1.1

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age)

Number
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during the previous year :

Fixed period	14
Permanent	1

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	17
Satisfactory or better	96
Less than satisfactory	4

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school**

#### **Attainment and progress**

18. Standardised tests, taken on entry to the school, indicate that the intake is comprehensive and that the ability of pupils follows the normal pattern of distribution, although with overall attainments that are skewed towards below the average.

19. Standards of attainment reached by pupils in National Assessment Tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly average. The proportion of pupils in the tests, achieving level 5 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is above the national average nationally. It is still above this in English at level 6 but it is below in mathematics and science. These results indicate that sound progress has been made by most pupils, including the low attainers, throughout the key stage and is consistent with pupils' attainments as observed in their lessons and work in subjects generally.

20. The school has identified literacy and numeracy as key areas to be developed in all subjects and is successfully carrying out an important initiative across the school to improve them. For example, time is usefully allocated for work on these aspects during each morning registration.

21. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils who gain 5 or more GCSE grades A\* to C and A\* to G is consistently above both national and local averages. This reflects pupils' progress and the school's contribution to raising their standards whilst they are in it. However, the overall figure masks variations and inconsistencies, both between subjects and between the performance of boys and girls. The attainments of the girls each year are better overall than the boys in almost all subjects to a more marked degree than is found nationally. The school is seeking factors to explain this and strategies to improve the performance of the boys in particular.

22. Results in mathematics, all science courses, geography, music, sociology and some aspects of technology have been consistently good or very good. In English language and literature, drama and history they are in line with national averages and approach it in physical education. Results in some aspects of technology, modern languages, art and religious education are below national averages, although classwork in the latter 3 subjects is showing improvement in attainment. In lessons and in work completed in Key Stage 4, the vast majority of pupils present make sound or better progress.

23. In relation to pupils' earlier attainment their progress is almost entirely sound to good or very good overall in a positive response to the quality of the school's provision. There is little under achievement and negligible variation between years or key stages in the progress made. The low attainers are doing well considering their starting points. The pleasing progress of pupils with special educational needs reflects the good attention they receive. Committed teaching and pupils' own positive attitudes

and motivation result in the acquisition and consolidation of their knowledge, understanding and skills in subjects effectively and successfully improve general literacy and numeracy skills.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

24. The pupils' attitudes are a strength of the school. Pupils' motivation and attitudes to their learning are almost invariably positive and do much to make their work effective.

25. Most pupils attend lessons prepared to work and behave well. They are well disposed to their teachers and fellow pupils and cooperate readily in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. They communicate their ideas effectively in discussion. The majority take care to work neatly and present their work well. Many exhibit high standards of self discipline.

26. The school is an orderly community in which good relationships prevail among pupils and between them and their teachers. Pupils are friendly and courteous to visitors. Mutual respect is evident between teachers and pupils and between pupils. Both in class and around the school pupils behave very cooperatively even in the occasionally trying circumstance of overcrowded dining rooms. The exclusions, temporary as well as permanent, have been dealt with appropriately within the school's clear expectation of acceptable behaviour. Overall, the very good behaviour and attitudes are recognised positively and are consistently reinforced.

27. Skills which enable pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning are being well developed. The use of the library and computer facilities is being used well to extend the pupils' research and independent learning skills. Pupils readily accept opportunities to take responsibility, for instance, in supporting younger pupils or as prefects. The popular and extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school are well attended and appreciated by those who attend.

### **Attendance**

28. Levels of attendance for most pupils are good. Overall attendance at above 91 per cent is in line with national averages. Authorised and unauthorised absences are falling, although the attendance of a small number of senior pupils is unsatisfactory and is a cause of concern for the school, which actively monitors absence to ascertain the causes. The good work from form teachers and close monitoring in collaboration with parents is having a positive effect.

29. The staff handbook gives clear guidance to form teachers on the use and completion of the electronic registration system. Teachers recognise that they have a primary role in fostering and reinforcing good attendance. Regular attendance is recognised and rewarded. In spite of the distance between some classrooms, pupils arrive punctually and eagerly to lessons which begin

promptly after a register has been taken. During part of morning registration, as part of the school's literacy initiative, pupils take the opportunity to read purposefully whilst form teachers use the time well to support individuals.

30. Legal requirements for the recording, monitoring and reporting of attendance, authorised and unauthorised absence are met well.

## **Quality of education provided**

### **Teaching**

31. The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory overall and good or very good in two thirds of lessons. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all departments and in several there are particular strengths. At times, the teaching is outstanding, notably in some science, music, history, sociology and modern foreign language lessons where demands are often challenging, the work is well organised and relationships are good. In the best teaching in technology and geography the planning is equally secure and good learning objectives are set. Pupils' research is often well directed in business education.

32. Throughout all departments, most lessons reflect the purposes of the schemes of work clearly. Teachers are generally knowledgeable in their subjects and at times achieve results of high quality. They adjust the work to suit pupils' capabilities and give good support to pupils with special learning needs. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally appropriate and they work hard to raise the pupils' attainments.

33. There is some variation in the effectiveness of teaching methods. Good lessons include features such as carefully guided questions, appropriate use of resources and activities which reinforce previous learning. Many lessons are exciting and clearly maintain the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In the less than good lessons, time is not used well and the pace and control of the lesson does not sufficiently challenge the pupils. Questioning techniques do not effectively extend knowledge and techniques such as recapping and reiterations to consolidate knowledge are often missed.

34. Field studies such as visits to places of geographical, historical and religious interest enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. Trips and exchange visits are well used in the modern language department to enhance the pupils' understanding and skills. Extra-curricular activities are well supported by staff.

35. Teachers are committed to, and work hard for, their pupils. Marking of the pupils' work is generally regular but comments are not always sufficiently helpful for them to improve their standards. Overall, homework is set regularly. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Class management and discipline are important strengths and contribute effectively to the strong working environment established in the school.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

36. The school gives a good deal of thought to planning its curriculum and has a clear

curriculum policy statement which links the curriculum, the timetable and the delivery of the course. The length of the taught week, at 24 hours 10 minutes is less than the national recommendation at both key stages and has been considered by the school. The curriculum is consistent with the aims of the school, helping it to meet the needs of all pupils. It is broad and reasonably balanced at Key Stage 3 and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Information technology is taught within design and technology and across the curriculum. An induction course for pupils is also built on and extended over the key stage. A well planned form period takes place on a rotating basis. Pupils are placed in mixed ability teaching groups in Year 7. In Year 8 pupils who have proved proficient in a modern language add a second. In Years 8 and 9 different subjects are able to organise their teaching groups as they wish and some set by ability. Some of these decisions result in gender imbalance and should be kept under review.

37. At Key Stage 4 all pupils study English, mathematics, science, a modern language, physical education and design and technology. There is also a sound personal and social education programme, which includes religious education, careers guidance and well thought out and documented cross-curricular themes with some specialist outside speakers, but which does not allow sufficient time to teach the Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Together these take up 75 per cent of the time allocation. In addition, pupils have three further free option choices, one of which should be a humanities subject. Although this system generally works well, the grouping of subjects can lead to teaching groups of wide ability in each block as, for instance in geography.

38. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. No pupil is disapplied from the National Curriculum. The school's well-crafted policy for special needs increasingly permeates the policies of each department and teachers have a good awareness of the pupils' special needs. Management and coordination are most effectively carried out and a governor is helpfully attached to the department. The requirements and terms of pupils' statements and individual education plans are properly carried out and pupils receive highly effective support, most of which takes place within their own class. Twenty-four pupils have statements of special educational need, covering a wide variety of learning and behavioural difficulties. In addition, the school has identified a further range of over 100 pupils, who are included on the school's register of special educational needs. Staff wisely have good regard for their needs in their lesson planning.

39. A particular strength of the school is the unusually wide and enterprising range of extra-curricular activities which are offered to support and extend the curriculum. They involve some parents and a substantial number of staff and are well supported by pupils. A substantial proportion of these regular activities focus on sports. Staff from a number of departments organise residential visits in the United Kingdom and abroad which allow pupils to study the environment, take part in outdoor pursuits, enrich their language and develop their cultural understanding. Day visits take place locally to theatres, museums, churches, galleries and provide opportunities for fieldwork. There are regular musical and dramatic productions and the choir, instrumental and drama groups also meet regularly. A wide range of other activities take place at break and

lunch time and after school, extending pupils' opportunities. This provision complements and contributes substantially to the enrichment of the pupils' experiences.

40. Assessment is well established and builds on primary school Year 6 attainment records. Mixed ability groups are formed using a combination of this information and diagnostic testing carried out by the school. Subject departments use periodic assessment to help them plan and organise their curriculum and there is an additional screening system at critical points to ensure that each pupil's effort is monitored and properly coordinated. This also involves parents who are expected to ensure that pupils attend regularly and check their daily readiness for school. Departmental work has been effectively coordinated, however different reporting formats are evolving. More consistency would be achieved with the sharing of good practice. For example, the application of National Curriculum Levels and criteria should be extended to include all relevant subjects.

41. Well-established Records of Achievement include individual learning targets and individual booklets, shared with parents serve to give additional measures of progress. Self-assessment varies between subjects but is a strong feature of drama and music. Pupils are given clear targets based on the National Curriculum in English and other subjects are also trialling material. Pupils who have special educational needs have individual education programmes which reflect detailed preparation and which inform daily teaching support, when it is available, well.

42. The school has usefully begun to look at overall assessment data to analyse its value added contribution.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

43. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are a particular strength of the school. They are based on mutual respect, resulting in a very calm and orderly atmosphere around school and in lessons. Pupils are courteous, polite, helpful and generally very well behaved. Adults, in turn, are caring and supportive of the pupils, setting them a good example and always encouraging them to do their best. The moral and social development of pupils are well promoted within this framework. Pupils have a keen sense of justice and fair play, of right and wrong. This is developed in subjects such as English, history and religious education. Some excellent and challenging work examining moral issues is undertaken in drama. Pupils care for the less fortunate and raise considerable amounts of money for charity. They are also engaged in regular work within the community, including parties for senior citizens, local "clean ups" for which they were awarded the Queen Mother's Birthday Award and community service through the Project Trident initiative. There is a general respect for school property and learning resources, with little vandalism.

44. Pupils' social development is enhanced well in lessons, where pupils work well together, either in pairs or in groups. They discuss work in a mature manner and many remain on task for sustained periods. Pupils are willing and keen to exercise responsibility throughout the school by acting as prefects and librarians, and

undertaking duties such as helping to run the many tuck shops. Some successfully participate in the school council which has representatives from all year groups. In Year 11, some pupils have taken the initiative in organising a drama group which meets after school on Fridays. This group is very effectively run for all pupils and staff who wish to participate.

45. Pupils' wider cultural development is supported and enhanced well through an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. It is also helped by a comprehensive programme of cross-curricular themes, including citizenship and environmental education. There is good enhancement of cultural understanding through media studies. In English, drama and music, most pupils participate well in a wide and challenging range of cultural experiences through the performing arts. Education for a culturally diverse society, however, is more limited and apart from a few examples, such as in geography, history and religious education, is not as well developed across the curriculum.

46. Spiritual development is less well promoted. The school has assemblies once each week and these are used for social purposes and for the sharing of information. Prayers are sometimes said but they do not always offer opportunities for inner reflection and worship. Morning registration periods do not contain daily acts of collective worship either and the school is not meeting legal requirements. Spiritual development is extremely limited in other areas of the curriculum, although some examples of pupils' inner reflection exist in English and geography.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

47. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The school successfully provides effective support and advice for pupils' personal development at each key stage. This ethos permeates the school and successfully reflects its aims of providing a caring and effective learning environment. The process of induction from primary school is effective, with written documentation for pupils and parents a particular strength of the process. Pupils in Year 7 settle well into form groups in which they remain for their school career. Form tutors and heads of year are an integral part of the pastoral system. They remain with their group for the full five years and are responsible for the welfare, attendance, discipline and monitoring of progress. They

provide stability and become very knowledgeable about all individuals in their groups. An atmosphere of mutual respect pervades almost all lessons. Pupils appreciate the easy access to guidance.

48. A clear, comprehensive and well documented cross-curricular programme supports pupils in their development covering a range of career, personal, health, and sex education related topics. The organisation and monitoring of this provision is good. It enhances the curriculum for pupils, sustains the important contact between them and form tutors and the knowledge they gain helps them to make informed and responsible choices. The additional life-skills course in Year 10 provides pupils with effective information on how to cope with the pressures of adolescent life. Residential visits which provide pupils with further opportunities to improve their decision making skills and appreciation of their place in the world regularly take place.

49. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in the life of the school. They receive very good support. Liaison with specialist agencies is well established and relationships are positive.

50. Clear procedures are in place to deal with behaviour and discipline issues. Careful records, which fully meet requirements, are kept of exclusions. The school has an explicit anti-bullying policy. Incidents are few, but, when they occur, they are speedily and appropriately dealt with. This is appreciated by pupils and parents.

51. A clear policy is in place on child protection. Procedures are generally sound and are well understood by staff. Suitably qualified staff administer first aid. The school is aware through its policies of its responsibility to promote the health and safety of all. Although individual departments assess and report health and safety risks, the awareness of whole school risk assessment and audit should be raised further.

52. The support, guidance and welfare of pupils is managed thoroughly and sensitively and helps to enhance the experience of pupils.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

53. There are clear and established lines of communication between home and school which are generally appreciated by most parents, all of whom the school tries hard to involve. Parents are encouraged to visit the school. Parents' meetings to discuss pupils' progress are generally well attended and most parents are willing to become involved in their child's education. A more consistently applied system of pupils' recording their homework would enable parents to help them more. Parents express themselves satisfied with the detail of the written reports on their children they receive. They also remark on the generally good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the positive benefits of the additional support which some pupils are given. They find staff are approachable and obtain a speedy response if they raise problems with the school.

54. The school prospectus is informative and well produced and generally meets

requirements. Information about collective worship and child protection are, however, omitted, although they appear later in the handbook issued to new parents. The school does not have a parents' association but some parents take the opportunity to become involved in areas of the school as volunteer help and in a range of extra-curricular activities.

55. Links with contributory schools are well established. Induction procedures for transfer from the primary schools are effective. Parents appreciate the considerable efforts made to ensure that pupils in Year 6 find out about the school and are quickly integrated. Curriculum liaison is good and teachers from the school teach Year 6 pupils in mathematics and science to assist continuity. Careers, option choices and post-16 opportunities discussion meetings are well organised and productively attended by specialist outside visitors. Parents who are unable to attend are contacted and offered alternative arrangements. Most parents of pupils with special educational needs respond positively and become fully involved in the regular reviews of their statements and individual plans. Parents on the governing body make a valuable contribution.

56. The school reaches out well into the community. An effective period of well monitored work experience brings almost all pupils into contact with a number of organisations. Local employers have a high regard for the conduct of pupils and have recorded their appreciation of this. Links with business, industry and commerce are healthy and are continually developing. As part of the Education Business Partnership, the school has already seen benefits in some curriculum areas and recognises the potential of this initiative to enhance the intellectual and personal development of pupils. Local business is represented on the governing body.

57. The community is also drawn into school for, such as, drama and musical events and makes extensive use of the wide range of sports provision. The school is a focus for adult education courses, from which it derives benefit.

58. A wide range of organisations and individuals, which include the police, health service and visiting speakers, contribute significantly to the breadth of opportunity provided in the school. Links with the wider community are developing through visits in Great Britain and exchanges abroad.

59. Many pupils reach into the community to extend citizenship through visiting elderly people and organising and taking part in collections and charities nominated by the pupils. The ethos of the school is respected by the community it serves.

## **The management and efficiency of the school**

### **Leadership and management**

60. The school has a sound and appropriate mission statement and a broad range of declared aims which it mainly fulfils successfully. These are endorsed and generally supported by both parents and pupils.

61. The governors have adopted a comprehensive range of statutory and non-statutory policies in line with the aims of the school. The governing body and its constituent committees discharge their responsibilities satisfactorily in the main, mostly ensuring compliance with statutory requirements. They have helped to bring about recent beneficial changes through their discussion and agreement of the school development plan. They now need to develop further procedures for monitoring the school's progress. A governor is helpfully attached to the learning support department in which the implementation and oversight of policies are a strength of the school. Arrangements for collective worship do not, however, meet statutory requirements.

62. Strong, clear leadership and a sense of direction are provided by the headteacher. He is well supported by the senior management team of two deputy headteachers and three senior teachers, each of whom has specific responsibilities. The team is supportive, aware and accessible and has successfully brought about considerable change and sustained development in the past two years.

63. The school is well organised through faculty and year teams. Relationships throughout the school are good. Good communication through daily briefings, bulletins and a well-coordinated programme of minuted meetings has been successful in bringing about a clear sense of common purpose, loyalty and concern amongst all staff. This obvious corporate identity gives a strength of the quality of the school's provision for its pupils. Faculties and departments are well managed and their documentation is of high quality reflecting their aims and policies. Departmental plans are well developed and support the requirements of the school development plan. Most departments are increasingly identifying targets for improvement and all staff are sharing strategic planning.

64. Internal and external communications are good. Parents say that the school keeps them well informed. The curricular intentions of the school are implemented effectively in the design of the timetable. The daily operation of the school is smooth, ordered, humane and efficient. Routines and duties are well established.

65. Overall, management and leadership are successful in promoting the school's positive self image, and in enabling it to provide successfully for the progress and personal development of all pupils.

## **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

66. The school has 65 full-time and 8 part-time staff, the equivalent of 68.02 full-time teachers. This provides a ratio of one teacher to every 16.5 pupils which is broadly in line with similar schools. The average proportion of the week teachers spend in teaching, 74.25 per cent is just below the national average. The amount of non-teaching time given to staff with equivalent responsibilities is equitable. Teachers are given the opportunity to teach the full range of ages and abilities.

67. The teaching staff are well qualified and generally well experienced. There is an adequate number of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum, and in most cases pupils are taught by subject specialists. However, in some subjects there is some non-specialist teaching. The school makes good provision to ensure the progress of pupils with special educational needs both from within its own staff and through the services of specialist support staff provided by the Local Education Authority. Teaching staff are well supported by administrative and technical staff, who make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school and to the production and maintenance of learning resources for pupils. However, the level of technical support for some subjects would benefit from review. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are very good and ensure they quickly become familiar with the school routines and the high standards expected of pupils. All staff have taken part in the appraisal process and most have taken advantage of opportunities for professional development to extend their expertise. The programme of staff development is very well organised and administered. It includes structured procedures for assessing the effectiveness of training on the quality of teaching and standards of pupils' achievements. The recently developed mentoring system for supporting staff forms an integral part of this process. Overall, staff are committed and work hard to support and extend the ethos of the school.

68. The school is heavily populated and accommodation is becoming increasingly tight as the number of pupils in the school increases. Overall, the accommodation is well managed and effectively used. Supervision is generally effective and is supported by conscientious prefects. Pupils are very considerate and their sensible and mature behaviour ensures that there are no problems in moving through the school. Dining arrangements are hampered by lack of sufficient space, but are efficiently organised and assisted by good behaviour. Throughout the school, in classrooms and public areas, the learning environment is considerably enhanced by the effective display of pupils' work. Cleaning and maintenance levels are satisfactory, although pupils' toilets need more attention. The school benefits from highly effective site management staff and from pupils who generally treat the building with respect.

69. The school occupies a pleasant open site with good leisure facilities. Many hard play areas have reasonably sound surfaces. Playing fields are on site, they drain adequately, but litter is sometimes obtrusive. Perimeter fencing is soon to be erected to control the very open site access. The school was built in 1963 and has undergone a number of modifications which have created some circulation difficulties with access to teaching areas from outside doors and through other teaching areas, often interrupting lessons when pupils pass through. Some areas lack natural light, noise

travels between some teaching areas, and ventilation needs improving. The school recognises the need to improve its present facilities. It has recently upgraded its accommodation in the mathematics, English, modern languages, drama and library areas. Some corridors and offices have also been effectively enhanced. The imminent, much needed, remodelling and suiting of nine science laboratories and the subsequent upgrading of the technology facilities will ensure more effective learning areas. These changes are to be immediately followed by the equipping of three new IT rooms.

70. In addition the school rightly intends to further improve the accommodation in the humanities and English areas. It also intends to bid to become a Technology College and build on its present work within the performing arts. It hopes, if its bid is successful, to focus on the improvement of the art, drama, and music areas.

71. Despite a lower than average proportion of the school's total budget being spent upon educational resources last year, most curriculum areas are at least adequately resourced, and some are well resourced, for the delivery of the National Curriculum. The spending on resources has been raised in the past two years to good effect. Funding is allocated following the submission of spending plans by budget holders. These bids are then evaluated against the school's development plan, against previous spending and changes in the curriculum needs of each faculty. The headteacher prepares the budget based on negotiated priorities. This year's priority allocation to GNVQ, modern foreign languages and music is significantly strengthening these areas in the school. Science and technology are about to be further improved as part of the imminent refurbishment and extension programme. Computer provision is relatively good; much of it is networked and well used, but funding is below that required for regular replacement costs.

72. The school has begun a concerted effort to significantly improve the library. The space has been remodelled, new fittings and furniture are on order; the addition of an IT suite has enhanced and extended the facilities and a new computerised stock control and issuing system has been introduced. There are plans to install a security system and to buy more books. Pupils use the existing book and computer facilities well during lunchtimes and breaks and small groups of pupils undertake research sensibly during lessons. During registration, some younger pupils read regularly to older pupils and adult volunteers. About half the pupils in the school currently have a book on loan. The library is well managed by an acting teacher-librarian, a library assistant and some pupils who give generously of their time. The school uses the resources of the LEA's school library service effectively to provide up to date and attractive material for a range of subjects. The major drawback to the effectiveness of the library is the limited book stock; currently, it is about half the recommended level for a school of this size and much of the non-fiction is out of date. The money provided for the library has been significantly increased in the last two years from a low base, although the school is aware that current levels of capitation are still insufficient to enhance the book stock as well as to renew and replace existing stock and is seeking ways of improving this.

### **The efficiency of the school**

73. The school's financial records are very well kept by the administration officer, who in partnership with the headteacher exercises detailed oversight of the accounts. The school is quickly able to produce up-to-date records and computer systems are efficiently used. The very supportive governors' finance committee meets regularly and maintains a strategic overview of the allocation of finances, many of which are reflected in the school's development plan. There is scope, however, for their further involvement, particularly in the areas of monitoring the outcomes of the expenditure and determining value for money. The most recent auditor's report made a few minor recommendations for improvement which have now been fully implemented.

74. The school does not have a Parent Teacher Association but is creative in raising money for its school funds. It is also active and successful in raising money from grants to improve its provision. These accounts are well maintained and audited annually.

75. The overall budget allocated to the school compares very favourably with the national average. The deployment of staff is mainly efficient. The average cost of employing teachers has been reduced over the last few years yet is still slightly above the national average. The school has restricted the number of teachers employed to keep the total teaching budget within affordable limits. One consequence, however, is that there are a small number of relatively large classes at Key Stage 3. Teaching is very effective and time is used well. Pupils are generally punctual and the pace of teaching is brisk. The non-teaching staff provide efficient and essential support. Spending on pupils with special learning needs is appropriate.

76. The deployment of teaching and resources is well planned. The spending on resources has been raised in the last two years and the good effects are apparent in many lessons. Plans are in place to raise the resource levels in departments awaiting refurbishment. The school recognises that the library stock is low and has budgeted to enhance the provision. The accommodation is well managed but has a number of deficiencies which the school has rightly identified, prioritised and has started to implement.

77. Overall, expenditure is tightly controlled and the school achieves a great deal. Pupils' personal development is very good and their academic attainments are consistently meeting the national average at GCSE A\* to C grades. These outcomes are achieved in often unsatisfactory accommodation. Overall, given the careful, well planned and managed developments, the school gives good value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **English, mathematics and science**

#### **English**

78. Standardised tests indicate that pupils enter the school with below average standards of reading and writing. They make steady progress during the five years they are in school so that by the end of Key Stage 4 standards overall are safely in line with national expectations. Entries are high for both GCSE English and English literature, and only poor attenders are not entered so that 90 per cent secured pass grades in both subjects in 1995 and 1996. Although the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C GCSE grades in 1996 was a little below the national average, it was above in both subjects in 1995.

79. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make consistent progress in developing their skills as readers, writers and speakers. Pupils answer teachers' questions with some fluency and confidence and contribute to class and small group discussions. Higher attainers can express their views supported by reasons and evidence while some middle and lower attainers need support to extend ideas and to adjust their speech to a range of audiences and purposes. Pupils read a good range of literary and non-literary and media texts; gradually they acquire and develop a range of reading strategies to extract meaning and identify evidence from the texts they study. In Year 11 lessons, of a full range of ability showed good understanding of characterisation, plot and language of 'Macbeth'. Pupils with severe learning difficulties make good progress as a result of consistent support. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to develop the habit of reading fiction for pleasure by the provision of a short slot of time in most lessons; a small proportion, especially some older abler pupils, are keen readers.

80. Pupils tackle a good range of writing activities including narrative, autobiography, poetry, letters, diaries, leaflets and essays. Many learn to improve on their first attempts and the writing of higher attainers in Key Stage 4 is well-structured and fluent. A considerable proportion need systematic support to improve the length, coherence and accuracy of their work but make steady progress over time. The use of information technology in two Key Stage 4 lessons successfully motivated pupils to develop their writing skills.

81. The vast majority of pupils are sensible, well-behaved and interested in their work. They discuss cooperatively in groups, settle quickly to tasks in lessons and persevere even when work is taxing. The teaching, which was satisfactory or better in almost all lessons and good in a half, encourages good working relationships and purposeful activity. In the best lessons, a variety of demanding and well-organised tasks develops pupils' skills systematically and at a good pace. In other lessons, teaching was well-planned but overdependent on a small range of activities with some loss of pace and consolidation of pupils' learning. All pupils are given detailed and evaluative written and oral feedback so that they can understand their strengths and weaknesses.

82. The departmental staff are a hard-working team, highly committed to the progress and well-being of pupils. More detailed schemes of work are needed at Key Stage 3 which capitalise on the strengths of individual teachers' planning and provide the basis for a consistent classroom experience for all pupils. Speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum.

83. The school recognises the need to raise pupils' standards of speaking and listening, reading and writing in all subjects in order to help pupils to improve their overall attainment. To this end, it has worked hard to introduce school approaches to the teaching and learning of spelling and to encourage the habit of reading. The vast majority of pupils bring books and concentrate during the five minutes allocated to silent reading during registration and the short slot at the beginning of English lessons.

Some pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 3 and older abler pupils, are beginning to develop the habit of private reading for pleasure. Although some pupils use the time well during registration, it is too short a time to help pupils to build stamina as readers.

Moreover, although pupils use the library's resources well at break and lunchtimes, the small and largely outdated non-fiction stock does not adequately meet pupils' leisure interests or fully support the curriculum. Whilst the provision of well-produced personalised spelling dictionaries for all pupils has much potential to help to improve pupils' accuracy, they are not yet used consistently by pupils.

84. When opportunities for a range of speaking and listening, reading and writing activities are provided systematically by teachers and integrated into their planning, pupils' attainment is raised significantly. This is particularly true of the teaching in science and business education and some geography, history, English and drama lessons. In these lessons, pupils answer teachers' questions and formulate their own, discuss in small groups, report back and evaluate their work, undertake independent research reading and are learning to structure their written work effectively. Intensive oral work in modern foreign languages is helping pupils to develop and sustain their confidence as speakers and listeners. A good proportion of pupils in science and geography produce extended writing of good quality. Overall, the writing of higher attainers in both key stages, particularly Key Stage 4, is coherently organised and largely accurate. A significant proportion of middle attaining pupils, however, in a range of subjects, finds it difficult to write accurately and to sustain the development of ideas in writing.

85. The school is in a good position to capitalise on the existing good practice and to renew and intensify its efforts to help pupils in all subjects to improve their literacy skills.

## **Mathematics**

86. In 1995 the results of both the end of Key Stage 3 national tests and teacher assessments matched national figures. In 1996 pupils performed better than in 1995. GCSE higher grade results have shown fluctuations over the last three years but in 1996 were well above the national average for similar schools. Girls' performances however did not match that of boys. Number work is good and calculator skills develop quickly. Pupils also reach expected standards in the full range of other national

curriculum topics including algebra, shape and space and handling data. At Key Stage 3, lower attainers successfully explore properties of cubes using combinations of squares. Pupils of average ability investigate movement patterns through active whole-class involvement and more able pupils successfully visualise 3D models on isometric paper. At Key Stage 4 all pupils successfully explore number, shape and space at appropriate levels. Those who have special educational needs receive good support and make good progress. Pupils are well prepared for external examinations and some additional classes are offered after school.

87. Progress is satisfactory in the great majority of lessons and in over half of them pupils achieve better than their prior attainments indicate. Understanding is greatly helped by neatness although this does not apply to all pupils. Progress is sometimes hampered by lack of basic equipment such as protractors and occasionally calculators. Broader cultural aspects are gradually being integrated to convey the full scope of mathematics.

88. Pupils' attitudes to their work are positive. They are confident in discussion and take a pride in work within an air of intense activity and concentration. Good attitudes are established at Key Stage 2 in weekly sessions when the staff work with invited primary children solving interesting mathematical puzzles. However, resources in the library are extremely limited offering little opportunity to further this interest in mathematical puzzles or for other research.

89. Teaching standards are satisfactory and about two thirds of lessons are good or very good. A common characteristic of teaching is the good and effective use of the white board and carefully selected and well prepared handouts. Where teaching is less good pupils are not always allowed the opportunity to fully enjoy the discovery of underlying patterns. Homework is well organised and marked and informative recording systems for effort and National Curriculum levels are evolving. There is a need to seek out the factors which contribute to gender differences in performance and the particular strengths of boys or girls in different target areas of the curriculum. Computers will shortly be available to enhance the breadth of provision. The department is strongly led with a very good team encouraging high standards within and beyond the school.

90. A strong feature of the school is the encouragement of mathematical skills across many areas of the curriculum. There is an emphasis on numeracy, encouraging all pupils in the development of calculation proficiency through regular practice. Pupils reach good standards in multiplication using decimals in both mathematics and science. Estimation is developed well in food technology and science. An effective use of perspective, scale and measurement assists visualisation in interior design projects in art.

91. The use of databases are well developed through work in business education and information technology and in history the census returns of 1861 are well used as for sorting and interrogation. Bar charts illustrate collated results of religious education questionnaires and the FT-SE index is followed in mathematics. Skills in the use of advanced graphs such as scattergrams and triangle graphs illustrate industrial and

other geographical studies. Strong primary school links are a feature of the school which has contributed to successful bidding for a major learning project in numeracy from which the school is set to gain many benefits.

## Science

92. Recent science GCSE results are outstanding and were better in 1996 than in 1995. A well above average proportion of pupils achieve A\* to C grades in either co-ordinated or modular science. An exceptionally large proportion of these pupils achieve the highest possible grade. Twenty two pupils between them were awarded 44 A\* grades in double science in 1996. Results in the 1996 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were an improvement upon the 1995 results, which were around the national average. In lessons inspected, the standards achieved by pupils in science are meeting or exceeding the national expectation at both key stages. Pupils in the higher sets achieve well above average standards and even the pupils in the lower sets are achieving close to the national expectation. All three knowledge and understanding science attainment targets receive good coverage. Experimental and investigative science is a growing strength at Key Stage 3 and is very strong at Key Stage 4. Investigations carried out at Key Stage 4 for GCSE are of a high standard and the department is skilled at organising and moderating this part of the course work. Pupils are given many opportunities to practise their oral and writing skills and the result is a generally good standard of writing, albeit with some room for improvement in clarity and conciseness. Sometimes too much is written, occasionally at the expense of the essentially scientific part of the account. Pupils are well able to handle the quantitative and mathematical aspects of science. A good standard of graphical work is much in evidence. Information technology, which is being built systematically into the work schemes wherever practicable is limited only by the limited availability of good quality hardware. Very effective use of a computer to display changing pulse rates was seen in Years 9 and 10.

93. Pupils make either good or very good progress throughout both key stages. They improve in using a growing range of equipment and materials correctly and safely, develop a greater breadth and depth of knowledge of science, and increasingly using more appropriate scientific vocabulary. Pupils have increasing confidence in the quantitative aspects of science and are able to search for patterns in how things behave. No particular group of pupils makes significantly less progress than any other. Attitudes to learning are generally positive. Most pupils are interested in their work and able to concentrate and remain on task. Pupils in virtually all lessons are courteous and show respect for their teachers, for each other, and for the school's and their own property. Pupils' self esteem is generally good, except for the occasional silliness in a few of the middle ability groups. They work very well together in practical sessions. In those lessons where pupils are allowed freedom within prescribed limits to make their own notes, take their own readings, plot their own graphs and write up experimental work in their own words, they do it well. Pupils are certainly able to take an appropriate level of responsibility for safe working in the laboratory. No exceptions to this were seen.

94. Teaching is a consistent strength of this department. Every teacher was seen teaching at least one good lesson and most teachers also taught one that was very good. The quality of teaching is almost never less than good, particularly at Key Stage 4. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject areas. They act as very good role models by the quality of their planning and preparation. Their expectations of pupils are very high and pupils usually respond well by producing work of a good or very good standard. Only occasionally is there a mismatch between the level of work and the capability of the group, for example, the reactivity of metals is being taken too far, too soon, with the youngest pupils at Key Stage 3. Methods and organisational strategies used are appropriate to the ability of the group. Management of pupils, classroom control and use of time and resources are all good. Relevant and appropriate homework is set at the end of most lessons, with clear deadlines for its completion. Assessment of pupils' work is systematic and effective, including the regular use of well designed end-of-topic tests. Routine marking of day-to-day work is positive and supportive, and usually very conscientiously carried out. It is often used to specify what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

95. Statutory requirements are fully met. Leadership, organisation and teamwork are all very good, as is the quality of technical support, although the number of hours is low for the number of laboratories. Accommodation needs improving and this is about to happen. Schemes of work, at Key Stage 3, need modification to eliminate mismatches between work level and pupils' capability and to ensure that some ideas taught at Key Stage 3 do not have to be untaught at Key Stage 4, for example, the hook and eye method of teaching valency, or that anhydrous copper sulphate 'dissolves' in water.

## **Other subjects or courses**

### **Art**

96. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are in line with and occasionally above what might be expected for observational drawing, mixed media work and print making. Sketchbooks are well used for homework and class work and represent a good range of visual research. Pupils show an awareness and appreciation of the work of the Fauves and Impressionists as well as of more local art resources. Reading and writing about art are less well developed, and spelling and notemaking problems have an adverse effect on the learning and standards achieved by pupils with special needs. In Key Stage 4 standards vary from in line with, to well above what might be expected nationally, with pupils displaying competence in producing observational drawing, expressive self portraits and sensitive symbolic prints after the style of Charlie Holt. GCSE results are significantly below national expectations for both A\*-C and A\*-G grades but pupils' attainments are improving as a result of newly structured practices and results should improve.

97. Painting techniques are underdeveloped, and information technology for research and graphics work has yet to be introduced in both key stages. Pupils progress at a

satisfactory rate in both key stages. The best progress is made in one to one situations, where individual problems are been discussed and possible solutions identified. Similarly, in classes where pupils support and help one another, progress accelerates.

98. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, in both key stages, with courteous behaviour a strong feature of the school. However, noise levels, often resulting from thoughtlessness on the part of younger pupils, have an adverse effect on the quality of learning of neighbouring art classes, made worse, by the open plan accommodation.

99. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and usually good or very good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and an ability to impart this to the pupils, although some staff require training in further use of IT. They are led by a newly appointed departmental head who has clear ideas of how to develop the role of art within the school, and to improve attainment in examinations. Good progress is already evident in the quality of displays and in initiatives such as the art gallery.

100. Statutory requirements are fully met, although assessment criteria for individual projects need to be more specific. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs do not relate to art concerns. The current timetabling arrangements are having an adverse effect on both key stages.

## **Drama**

101. Overall standards in drama are sound at both key stages but a small proportion of pupils achieve particularly well. This is reflected in both lessons and examination results. In 1995, the proportion of pupils who attained A\*-C grades was in line with the national average and the proportion who gained A\*/A grades was above the national figure. Most pupils work with conviction and concentration and understand a range of dramatic concepts. They can plan, rehearse and improvise in small and large groups, especially when the activities are closely structured or when they are working with a written text. Pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as their self-discipline and confidence are effectively promoted by well-organised, effective teaching. The work of the department is successfully underpinned by coherent and systematic planning and well-developed schemes of work. Higher attainers write detailed and evaluative accounts of their work, while other pupils need more help to be analytical. Drama is a popular subject. Lessons as well as extensive and innovative extra-curricular activities make a strong and consistent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Design and Technology**

102. In the 1995 GCSE examination results the number of A\* to C grades is below the national average in graphics, food, textiles, child care and business studies (option B), but in line with the national average in design technology and above in technology and business studies (option A). Girls achieve significantly higher than boys. By the end of both key stages, in the lessons seen, most pupils attain the national expectation and a few attain above it. In lessons, the skills of designing and making in textiles, food and construction materials are satisfactory and at times good. Pupils research and present information carefully and use graphics appropriately to enhance the presentation of their work. More emphasis is yet to be given to pneumatics. Information technology is effectively used.

103. The pupils have good positive attitudes to their work and make satisfactory progress in acquiring appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Good examples of pupils investigating ideas, solving problems and evaluating their solutions were observed. Most pupils are well motivated and able to work safely, both as individuals and in groups. In food technology pupils worked very effectively assessing each others' achievements. Pupils with learning difficulties are well integrated and other pupils and staff are sensitive to their needs.

104. The teaching is generally good. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Many lessons are lively and proceed at a good pace, while effective questioning by the teachers tests and develops pupils' understanding. Teachers are committed and work hard to ensure that the work is interesting and matches the pupils' learning needs. They provide good opportunities for pupils to research problems, justify their ideas, propose modifications and seek improvements.

105. The department is very competently led. The scheme of work generally meets the National Curriculum requirements. Teachers maintain suitable records of the pupils' progress and a portfolio of work marked to the levels of the National Curriculum is starting to be developed. The technology accommodation and resource levels are poor. The school has rightly invested this financial year in a remodelling programme to ensure that facilities are suited and resources upgraded. Display in some areas of the faculty is particularly good and enhances the working environment.

## **Information Technology**

106. The pupils' standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are generally in line with, and occasionally above the national expectation. At Key Stage 3 pupils benefit from most areas of IT being taught within design and technology, while data handling is included in mathematics and science. In addition, IT is effectively used in English, music and humanities. In modern languages, computers have only recently been installed and work is in the early stages of development. Much progress has been made in establishing this cross-curricular approach which is in the early stage of implementation and is yet to involve all subjects. Overall, pupils attain satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding, handle graphics data in a range of contexts, and use simple control programmes effectively. The majority can carry out

basic operations in word processing with increasing confidence. At Key Stage 4 pupils extend their skills appropriately using computers for communicating and handling information within the recently started GNVQ IT course, other GCSE courses, careers education and in short modular courses in Year 10. Results, however, in IT in the 1995 GCSE are below the national expectation.

107. The pupils at both key stages make satisfactory progress in using the computers with increasing confidence. Many are starting to turn to computers as a natural tool to help solve problems, present findings and enhance the presentation of their work.

108. Pupils work responsibly, enthusiastically and effectively, both individually and in pairs. They take a pride in the outcomes of their work. Those with learning difficulties are often encouraged by additional support and work well on their tasks. Their positive attitudes are also enhanced by access to computers in the library and specialised rooms at lunchtimes and after school. Throughout, the pupils' cooperative behaviour and good relationships increase the effectiveness of their learning.

109. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and often good. All pupils are well supported through the use of carefully planned programmes of work which match the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination courses. Teachers have appropriate expectations in information technology and motivate pupils effectively.

110. The management structure for IT is complex and needs to be rationalised. Work has started to ensure the use of IT in all areas of the curriculum. Clear aims have been agreed and appropriate schemes of work have been developed across some curricular areas. The system for assessing the pupils' achievements is being developed to reflect National Curriculum requirements, but a portfolio of pupils' moderated work is yet to be developed. Teachers of IT have good computing skills and most staff in the school have basic computing skills. The school rightly plans to continue to extend the range of computers and software and to increase the already good use and availability of computers for all pupils.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

111. Attainment in French and German is generally above national norms. GCSE results in 1996 were satisfactory, although only a minority of pupils sat GCSE in a language, and some pupils underachieved. However, in the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils regularly achieved levels of competence at or above that expected nationally. New pupils make a good start, and, after only 8 weeks, can give some personal information with a degree of confidence. As they proceed through the school, most pupils develop fluency and accuracy in speech,

and many in writing, in a range of topics. Pronunciation is good and understanding of the spoken and written language is secure. In many classes, pupils are able to apply language learnt to realistic situations in more complex activities.

112. Almost all pupils make good progress, some in two languages. Many pupils who began French as a second foreign language catch up during the GCSE course with pupils in other schools who have begun at age 11. Pupils in lower attaining groups, whilst working within carefully limited sentence patterns, consolidate their learning well, and acquire confidence and a secure knowledge. Although more girls tend to reach higher achieving sets, within each class boys and girls are progressing equally fast. Most classes work intensively to practise the language, but in some cases progress could be increased by more careful planning, leading pupils in stages towards more independent communication.

113. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good. Pupils are alert, listen attentively and boys as well as girls are keen to participate. Motivation is high, and most pupils clearly enjoy learning languages. Pupils are mainly comfortable when lessons are largely conducted in German or French. Relationships between pupils, and with the teacher, are excellent.

114. The quality of teaching is good in almost every lesson, and often very good. Teachers are confident in their ability to communicate in German and French, and lessons are conducted predominantly in the language. Teachers sensibly use English to reassure, check understanding or clarify an explanation, maximising the pupils' exposure to the language without jeopardising understanding. Lessons normally proceed at a brisk pace, giving intensive practice in a variety of skills through an interesting range of activities. There is careful consolidation of sentence structures within the context of specific topics. Sometimes pupils would benefit from a clearer and more explicit account of how the language works, which would help them to manipulate language and apply it to a wider range of circumstances. Expectations are generally high, so that pupils of various abilities often achieve better than is generally expected. In the best lessons, there is clear progression towards application of the language learnt in more extended communications and realistic contexts, for instance through letter writing or role play. In some lessons, there is insufficient revision of language learnt earlier, too little meaningful application, and a lack of direction, even though individual activities are well chosen and enjoyable.

115. All pupils (with the exception of the current GCSE year) study a language, and significant numbers learn two. The department is developing strong and active links with European schools, planning for cooperation with them on a range of interesting projects and a European week in November. These links develop pupils' understanding of other cultures. Pupils' work is conscientiously marked, with helpful comments and corrections. Teacher morale is high, and the subject benefits from the vision and purpose of a new and enthusiastic head of faculty. Accommodation is good, and display is very good. The school has dedicated a substantial budget towards improving resources, with the aim of raising achievement and interest further.

## Geography

116. GCSE examination results in 1995 and 1996 were significantly above the national average for grades A\* to C. Girls performed exceptionally well. Standards of attainment in lessons and in previous work varies from class to class, but generally pupils are working slightly above national expectations. They have good graphical skills and can extract information from a variety of maps and diagrams. Some have difficulty expressing their knowledge and understanding orally and in writing of quality, although when suitably challenged, pupils can use their knowledge and understanding of a topic to pose questions and give clear explanations. This was apparent in a Year 9 group who were planning interviews on the effects of an avalanche and in Year 8 when pupils were preparing to debate the relative advantages and disadvantages of road and rail transport. Although some boys and girls attain the highest standards, overall, boys achieve less highly than girls.

117. Pupils make at least sound progress at Key Stage 3 and where teaching and tasks are challenging, progress is good. At Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory overall in lessons and some pupils show good development of their understanding of geographical processes through extended written work including fieldwork reports and other coursework. Pupils with statements of special educational needs progress well in lessons where they are given sufficient individual support and work which is targeted to their particular needs. Their progress is slower when the geography tasks are not specifically planned to cater for their particular learning difficulties.

118. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work in geography. They sustain concentration for long periods when work is challenging and show enthusiasm for and curiosity in the subject. When required, they collaborate well, sharing ideas and negotiating tasks.

119. Teaching is variable, but generally at least sound and often good. The best teaching is well planned to achieve clearly defined learning objectives. Good use is made of a variety of teaching methods and a range of stimulating activities. Exposition is lively and questioning is challenging, focusing on extending pupils' knowledge and their understanding of geographical processes. Where teaching is less good, there is insufficient variety in teaching methods and tasks set do not always result in deeper understanding of the subject; opportunities are missed to work with individuals and small groups to diagnose problems and extend learning; pace is leisurely and interaction between pupils and teacher is at a low level.

120. The department is effectively led and curriculum documentation provides a clear basis for teaching. Further developments should identify specifically the range of skills and activities pupils are entitled to in order to increase challenges for all. Assessment procedures at Key Stage 4 are well established and imaginative formal assessments have been recently introduced at Key Stage 3. Further use should be made of day to day assessment to supplement judgements about pupils' levels of attainment and progress.

## History

121. At both key stages, most pupils attain the national expectation but some do better whilst others underperform. The levels of attainment are reflected in recent examination results in the GCSE which are broadly in line with the national average, although girls generally perform better than boys.

122. Across ages, many pupils have a sound background in historical knowledge and understanding. They know about the different features of topics being studied and many have a well developed sense of chronology. Some pupils, particularly the higher attainers, have good recall and can relate previous work to what is being currently studied. Such knowledge and understanding is reinforced by the ability of many to analyse and interpret both primary and secondary sources, with a sizeable number able to detect bias in such sources. Where achievement falls below national expectations, particularly among the lower attainers, limited reading and writing skills impede their progress. Most pupils have well developed skills in number work but their competency in using IT is limited.

123. Pupils of all ages and abilities generally make sound progress in relation to their prior attainment and, on occasions, progress is good or very good. They develop and consolidate their knowledge and understanding. They learn how to use and evaluate sources well. Where the progress of some is hindered, it is due to their lack of competency in the more effective use of English which limits access to texts and greater understanding of primary and secondary sources. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress where there is additional adult support but the progress of the other lower attainers is sometimes hindered as teaching methods do not always cater for their needs.

124. Pupils come into lessons quietly and settle down quickly. They are invariably well behaved. A substantial majority at both key stages are interested in the subject and some are very enthusiastic. Most pupils sustain concentration on the activities set and are keen to participate in discussions and, particularly at Key Stage 3, in reading out aloud. Most pupils undertake work responsibly and can work effectively on their own or, when allowed to do so, in pairs and in groups. Some have good background historical knowledge and are willing to speculate on answers based on their understanding of the evidence. They listen well to each other in pairs and in groups.

125. The quality of teaching is at least sound at both key stages and in a minority of cases it is good or very good. Lessons are well planned, with aims and objectives that are clear and often made explicit for pupils. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of the subject and their use of language and questioning skills enhance pupils' understanding. Good lessons are characterised by varied tasks and methods, using different primary and secondary sources, textbooks, the video recorder, computers and work in groups. These approaches encourage pupils to evaluate historical sources and enhance their knowledge and understanding. Pupils' historical skills are also promoted effectively through outside visits. Relationships in classrooms are friendly but firm and teachers have appropriately high expectations of all pupils. Where the quality of teaching is weaker, there is an over-emphasis on

the use of single worksheets, textbooks and long exposition by the teacher, which do not sufficiently cater for the needs of all abilities, particularly the lower attaining pupils.

126. The department is very well led and enthusiastically managed, and staff work hard. Further improvements could be achieved if the reading and writing skills of middle and lower attainers were improved. Assessment and recording procedures are being developed but there is a need for a more consistent approach to these approaches between teachers. Pupils also need greater access to IT.

## **Music**

127. At the start of Key Stage 3 attainment in music varies widely. Some pupils who have already had the benefit of several years of instrumental tuition are well ahead of national expectations, while most have had insufficient musical experience and have lower attainment than average for their age. By the end of the key stage, this gap still exists, but the whole cohort has been moved up so that the majority are achieving average or higher attainments. This is reflected in the growing number of pupils who choose to continue music at Key Stage 4, where they usually achieve examination results above the national average. There is a significant number of able instrumentalists, including more than a hundred who have lessons in school.

128. In both key stages pupils are well-behaved, cooperative and anxious to learn. They maintain good levels of concentration, show enthusiasm for the work and set high standards for themselves. They maintain good relationships with peers and teachers and seem to enjoy the subject. Work in groups develops good team skills and enables pupils to identify problems and select wisely from possible solutions. There is some peer assessment when pupils show respect for the work and feelings of others and have sufficient understanding of the criteria involved to evaluate accurately.

129. Teaching, by well qualified specialists is effective throughout the years. Schemes and lessons are carefully planned to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and are taught with energy, efficiency and infectious enthusiasm, Pace is suited to the activity and the needs of pupils. There is a sense of urgency and of pleasure. Homework, when set, is relevant to the current work. Expectations are high and pupils are aware of this. Information technology, which is taught in Key Stage 4 to aid work in composition, needs to be extended to Key Stage 3, where the recent addition of extra time should enable individual listening and performance skills to be further enhanced.

130. There is generous provision of extra-curricular activities. These include a choir, open to all, a brass band, a consort of recorders and several small ensembles. These are all well attended by pupils. More than a hundred pupils currently benefit from instrumental lessons. Competitions are organised and performances by pupils enhance the cultural life of the school and the community.

## **Physical education**

131. In Key Stage 3, standards are slightly above the average with a substantial majority of pupils achieving the national expectation. Skill levels are often good and in most activities boys and girls acquire and consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding. Progress is appropriate in many areas with a significant minority exceeding expectations including some pupils with special educational needs.. However, progress for pupils in gymnastics does not reflect their capabilities in marked contrast to their development in other aspects of the subject. In Key Stage 4 a similar profile is seen with attainment levels continuing to reflect above average standards. Progress is consistently satisfactory although the range and rate of improvement becomes wider. Pupils following the GCSE course are making good progress with attainment approaching the national average., and a number of high individual achievements. Until this year, boys have considerably outperformed girls in the examination and there is need to ensure all pupils' performances reflect their capabilities.

132. Pupils are cooperative and very well behaved and they display positive attitudes towards the subject. Levels of interest and motivation are high in both key stages, with some good levels of participation. Pupils join in fully, listen well to advice from their teachers and use it purposefully to improve their skills. They work physically hard and show energy and enthusiasm in sustaining their activities, particularly where the work includes a variety of teaching strategies set in a context of high expectation and positive feedback. Where this was the case, for instance in Year 7 hockey, Year 9 football and hockey and Year 10 swimming, pupils concentrate well, persevere with the tasks set and make good progress.

133. Teaching is nearly always satisfactory, is frequently good and on occasion very good. Subject knowledge and understanding are generally very secure. Work is well structured, although planning sometimes lacks depth and occasionally teaching and learning styles lack flexibility. Insufficient emphasis is given to engaging the pupils in planning and evaluating their work and progress. Work is usually well matched to developing the skills and capabilities of the majority of pupils. There is need, however, to ensure that tasks and resources required for the more gifted and least able pupils are more suitable. Relationships are very good, class management and discipline are normally good. Expectations in gymnastics are sometimes too low and teaching in this aspect requires consideration and review.

134. Curriculum planning is very sound. The requirements of the National Curriculum are covered through programmes of study in games, athletics, gymnastics and outdoor activities in Key Stage 3. Games dominate the pupils' experience, and there is need to review the balance to ensure appropriate breadth and depth, particularly in outdoor activities and gymnastics. Work is well planned with coherent, progressive themes of work for most activities. In Key Stage 4 opportunities are provided for some choice and specialisation by pupils.

135. Subject leadership is very positive and day to day administration is good. Development planning is good and there are clearly established priorities across a three year timescale. Strategic details would add further to this aspect.

Accommodation and resources are good, although changing accommodation is sometimes overcrowded. Facilities are well used by both the school and through an extensive community programme. GCSE theory work would benefit greatly if there were a general classroom available. There is an extensive range of well supported extra-curricular opportunities for boys and girls. Standards of attainment in these are often high.

### **Religious education**

136. Attainment in religious education is generally similar to that found nationally, but in a number of classes observed it fell below this, reflecting the past, inadequate status given to the subject. The absence of an examination qualification adversely affects its credibility amongst pupils and staff. The teaching of religious education in the school is already changing following the appointment of a new head of subject at the beginning of the school year. The pupils show that they appreciate the relationship of religion to the broad experiences of life and an ability to relate belief to everyday concerns although there needs to be more rigour in their studies.

137. Pupils' progress is satisfactory in almost three quarters of all lessons. Care is taken to employ a variety of communication skills and to encourage oral skills. Pupils are expected to pose questions, seek information and find solutions. However, greater attention needs to be given to writing skills. Progress is limited in some classes by activities which are designed to meet the needs of the complete class, whereas in other classes where work is prepared to suit the various levels of ability of pupils, progress is much better. The re-establishment of links with primary schools is aiding progress although boys are not making as much progress as girls.

138. Throughout the school pupils' attitudes are sound or better. Many pupils are well motivated and apply themselves well to their work. Levels of concentration are usually satisfactory and often good. In the best lessons pupils explore their own ideas, form a personal view and take responsibility for their own learning whilst respecting the views of other people. Learning through group work and personal study is encouraged. In Key Stage 4, in particular, pupils show the ability to discuss issues such as 'Euthanasia'.

139. The quality of teaching is always sound or good, promoting good educational standards in both key stages. Teachers' knowledge is good and lessons are well prepared. A wide range of approaches and strategies are employed to suit the curricular objectives of each lesson. Resources are well deployed and there is a suitable programme of visits and activities both locally and further afield. However, neither the level of challenge nor the pace in all lessons are uniform. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is imaginative and encourages pupils to develop a positive attitude towards the subject but the school's timetable limits continuity and progression. The amount of time available is much less than is recommended in the Local Agreed Syllabus and needs to be reviewed.

140. The subject is competently led, relationships are good and effective support for non-specialist teachers is provided. A positive ethos and a sense of purpose in the subject are being nurtured. Improved morale is reflected in the

quality of teaching and in the attitude of pupils. The accommodation and resources are effective, despite a congested learning area. The introduction of a GCSE course would improve the subject's standing and the curriculum of pupils. Benefits may accrue from a more structured development plan with clear goals and expectations.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

141. The school was inspected by a team of thirteen specialist inspectors who spent an aggregate of fifty inspection days in the school collecting evidence and inspected all subjects. Inspectors observed 271 lessons. All teachers present were seen teaching, most of them on a number of occasions. Planned discussions were held with the majority of teachers, including the senior management team and heads of department, with non-teaching staff, support workers and the Chairman and chairs of sub-committees of the governing body. In addition, there were informal discussions with both teaching and non-teaching staff and an informal lunchtime meeting to which governors and many professionals and visiting specialists associated with the school were invited.

142. All the work of a representative sample of six pupils from each year group was examined and planned discussions were subsequently held with these pupils. The inspectors visited all assemblies and many form and registration periods, together with a range of out-of-school activities, meetings and internal committees. Inspectors accompanied and observed a number of groups out of school on local assignments.

143. Correspondence was received from a variety of local firms, agencies and organisations. The school helpfully provided an extensive range of informative documentation which was analysed before and during the inspection. The inspection team was able to consider the 696 responses made by the pupils' families to questionnaires and the comments of the 65 parents at the pre-inspection meeting conducted by the Registered Inspector.

## Data and indicators

### PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on schools' register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR7 - Y11	1123	24	103	206

### TEACHERS AND CLASSES

#### Qualified teachers (YR7 - Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	68.02
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.51

#### Education support staff (YR 7- Y11)

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked each week	195.0

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

74.25

Average teaching group size:

KS3

23

KS4

21

### FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:

1996/7

Total Income

2,486,651

Total Expenditure	2,461,651
Expenditure per pupil	2,192
Balance brought forward from previous year	120,185
Balance carried forward to next year	145,185

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1000
Number of questionnaires returned:	696
Percentage return rate:	69.6

### 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	16	68	12	4	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	36	59	3	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	56	22	4	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	21	68	7	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	59	8	3	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	30	63	5	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	31	56	11	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	26	63	6	5	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	60	13	2	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	26	59	12	2	1

My child(ren) like(s) school

36	56	5	3	0
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