

INSPECTION REPORT

Connaught School for Girls
Leytonstone

LEA area : Waltham Forest

Unique Reference Number : 103095

Headteacher : Miss P. Barford

Reporting inspector : Mr. D. Gosling
T12130

Dates of inspection : 5th - 9th October 1998

Under OFSTED contract number: 700779

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Comprehensive
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	11 to 16
Gender of pupils :	Girls
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Miss I. Memory
Date of previous inspection :	24 - 28 January 1994

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D. Gosling, Registered Inspector	Careers Individual and society	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Efficiency
V. Alsford, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
L. Farraway	English Equal opportunities	
J. Edge	Science Special educational needs	
R. Robinson	Design and technology Information and technology	
V. Morris	Geography	Staffing
B. Downes	Modern languages	Curriculum and assessment
L. Bappa	History Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
J. Wilson	Art Music	
H. Housden	Physical education	Accommodation and learning resources
M. Sims	Urdu English as a second language	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The good progress made by pupils, especially at Key Stage 4.
- The dedicated and skilful staff.
- The high quality support for pupils' spiritual and moral development, and the outstanding contribution to broadening their cultural interests and understanding.
- A very caring community which values individuals and provides very good guidance.
- The very good behaviour of pupils and their enthusiasm for learning.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities which is making a significant contribution to the vitality of the school and the quality of learning.
- The wide range of subjects on offer.
- The display of work and efforts taken by staff and pupils to produce the very attractive learning environment

Where the school has weaknesses

- Strategic planning at whole school and departmental level, and the quality of school policies.
- The teaching, accommodation and curriculum for physical education.
- The development of information technology skills throughout the school.
- The monitoring of teaching and the evaluation of how well targets have been met.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. It is well-ordered and is characterised by an enthusiasm for learning and the commitment of staff. There is a clear insight from the senior management team about what needs to be done to improve the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Overall, the school has made sound improvement since the 1994 inspection. Pupils continue to perform very well, compared with those from similar schools, and progress is good. There was a decline in the mathematics and science Key Stage 3 results in 1998. The improvement in GCSE results from 1994-7 was broadly in line with improvements nationally but there was a significant increase in the 1998 GCSE results. There are fewer weaknesses in teaching than in the previous inspection, though less very high quality teaching is taking place. Although there are budgetary and accommodation constraints, more progress could have been made in developing physical education (PE) and information technology (IT). There are still weaknesses in strategic planning and some aspects of monitoring and evaluation, but there have been some significant improvements in the past year. The school is in the process of establishing systems which will enable it to sustain and build on its success. The school's targets for GCSE results were met in 1998.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE in 1997:

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

In 1997 results in Key Stage 3 tests were in line with national averages in mathematics and science and above national averages in English. In all three subjects pupils' performance was very high when compared with those in similar schools. There was, however, a significant decline in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests in mathematics and science. English results showed a slight improvement. Although this was a weaker cohort, teaching at Key Stage 3 is not as strong as that at Key Stage 4. Results at GCSE were above national averages in 1997 and, again, the pupils performed very well compared with those in similar schools. The improvements at GCSE in 1998 show this pattern to be continuing.

The strongest subjects at GCSE in 1998 were Expressive Arts, Modern Languages, Classical Civilisation (only four pupils entered), drama and music (only five pupils entered). The weakest subjects were English Literature, history and physical education. The history results, however, were a significant improvement on the 1997 results.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Teaching is good in design and technology, history, music, religious education, drama.	In no subjects was teaching unsatisfactory. Teaching in English, mathematics, science, modern languages, information technology, art, geography, physical education, and special educational needs is satisfactory.
Years 10-11	Good	Teaching is good in mathematics, history, geography, modern languages, religious education, Urdu, drama, art.	In no subjects was teaching unsatisfactory. Teaching in English, science, physical education and information technology is satisfactory.
English	Sound		
Mathematics	Good		

The overall quality of teaching is good and teaching was at least satisfactory in 96 percent of lessons. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is stronger than at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, nearly 23 percent of lessons were very good or outstanding, whereas at Key Stage 3 there were only 11 percent. 60 percent of lessons were judged to be good or better at Key Stage 4, compared with 47 percent at Key Stage 3.

Teaching was not judged to be unsatisfactory in any subject. Teacher expertise and the management of pupils are particular strengths.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very Good. Pupils are very polite and co-operative.
Attendance	Very Good
Ethos	Excellent. Committed and hard working teachers and enthusiastic pupils.
Leadership and management	Sound and improving. Weaknesses in strategic planning and evaluation.
Curriculum	Sound. Generally well-organised but IT and PE not meeting statutory requirements.
Pupils with special educational needs	Sound, but weaknesses in the school policy and use made of pupils' individual education plans.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good overall. Outstanding provision for pupils' cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing provision sound. Weaknesses in resources overall, and the accommodation for PE.
Value for money	Good value for money is provided. The pupils make good progress; teaching is good; and resources are used efficiently.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards being attained by pupils • The very good behaviour of pupils • The help and guidance provided for pupils • The range of extra-curricular activities • The quality and quantity of homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well the school handles complaints • The encouragement of parents in the life of the school • Some concerns expressed about standards in mathematics and PE, compared with other subjects

The inspection endorses parents' views about the school's strengths. The school recognises that its system for dealing with complaints is not sufficiently clear and is currently addressing this. The number of complaints made by parents, however, have been negligible. Standards in mathematics results are sound overall. In Key Stage 3 tests, however, pupils perform less well in mathematics than in English and science, even taking national differences into account. The 1998 GCSE results were similar in all three subjects and there was a significant improvement in mathematics grades at A*-C. GCSE results confirm that standards in PE are lower than those in other subjects. The inspection found that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school.

At the parents' meeting, the overall judgement by parents was that the school was excellent.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to build further on its success the school should:

1. Improve the quality of strategic planning at whole school and departmental level by ensuring that: the school development plan clearly identifies the main priorities for the school; and departmental plans contain more specific activities which relate to the improvement of standards, teacher expertise and the curriculum provided. (Section 6.2 Leadership and Management) - paragraphs 92, 97.
2. Improve the curriculum provision for PE and IT and ensure that it complies with statutory requirements. (Subject reports for PE and IT) - paragraphs 201, 204, 233, 234.
3. Improve monitoring and evaluation especially:
the monitoring of teaching; and
the evaluation of the school development plan and work of departments. (Section 6. 2 Leadership and Management) - paragraph 98.

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan: the use made of assessments to inform departmental and lesson planning; - paragraphs 62, 63 and the use made of individual education plans by subject teachers - paragraphs 43, 64.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

Connaught School caters for girls aged 11-16 years of age and has 616 pupils on roll. The school is oversubscribed and, as a result of successful appeals by parents, the current Year 7 is larger than other year groups.

Reading test scores and end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum results show the attainment of the intake to be below average. There are 128 pupils on the special educational needs register, which is above the average for this size of school. The school draws pupils mainly from relatively deprived backgrounds: the proportion eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very high compared with national averages.

The school has set itself nine aims - to foster: (1) a sense of mutual respect (2) a facility for self-discipline (3) a sense of responsibility for others and the environment (4) self-confidence (5) a sense of achievement (6) positive attitudes to all racial groups (7) positive attitudes to women (8) the best possible achievement (9) a desire for further education. The whole school priority in the school development plan for the past two years has been to foster the best possible achievement of pupils by improving their literacy skills.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	0	120	120

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	86	54	51
	Total	86	54	51
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (70)	45 (56)	51 (69)
	National	65 (56)	59 (60)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	38 (25)	23 (32)	21 (35)
	National	35 (23)	36 (37)	27 (29)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	75	48	57
	Total	75	48	57
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	60 (70)	38 (51)	43 (79)
	National	n/a (59)	n/a (63)	n/a (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (29)	20 (31)	25 (39)
	National	n/a (28)	n/a (37)	n/a (29)

n/a = data not available

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to 1997r

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	0	132	132

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	0	0	0
	Girls	77	132	132
	Total	77	132	132
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	58 (46)	100 (96)	100 (97)
	National	46.1 (43.3)	87.3 (88.5)	93.5 (94)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year : 1997/8

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4.94
	National comparative data (1996/7)	8.1
Unauthorised Absence	School	.06
	National comparative data (1996/7)	1.0

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	15
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	16
Satisfactory or better	96
Less than satisfactory	4

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

The overall standards being attained by pupils are in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 3 and at the end of Key Stage 4.

In the 1997 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, the pupils' results were in line with national averages in mathematics and science and above national averages in English. The proportion of pupils gaining an A*-G grade at GCSE in 1997 was well above national averages, though the pupils gaining five or more higher A*-C grades was in line. In 1998 there was a significant decline in Key Stage 3 results in mathematics and science. There was, however, a slight improvement in English results. Evidence from Year 7 tests shows this year group to have fewer higher attainers, but teaching is also not quite as strong at Key Stage 3.

Results at GCSE, however, rose significantly, with the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades at A*-C increasing by 13 percent. Comparisons with national averages are not yet available for 1998.

Although pupils are attaining at an average level compared with the national picture, in 1997 they achieved exceptionally high standards compared with pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds. A national comparison with schools which have similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and speaking English as an additional language showed the pupils to have attained very high standards at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. This represents a considerable achievement on the part of the school.

There is a trend of improvement in GCSE results in the four years from 1994 -1997 which is broadly in line with the rising trend nationally. As mentioned, however, there was a significant rise in 1998. The Local Education Authority (LEA) analysis of GCSE results shows the trend of improvement to be one of the best in the borough. This analysis shows the rate of improvement now to be significantly higher than it was before the previous inspection.

Analysis of GCSE grades by ethnicity shows the school's pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds to be performing well compared with those in other borough schools. Those from African, African-Caribbean, and Bangladeshi background perform particularly well.

The standards attained in mathematics in the 1997 and 1998 end of Key Stage 3 tests were significantly below those being attained in English and science. In 1998, 60 percent of pupils gained a level 5 or above in the English test, compared with only 38 percent in mathematics. There was a similar picture in the 1997 GCSE results, but the 1998 results show a significant improvement in mathematics. At GCSE in 1997, when compared with attainment in other girls' schools, the pupils did least well in science, geography, history and mathematics. In 1998, however, attainment in each of these subjects improved significantly.

The observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that standards are in line with national averages at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. In four out of five of the lessons observed pupils were attaining at least average standards. The standards being attained at Key Stage 4 are generally higher than at Key Stage 3, taking age differences into account.

At the pre-inspection parents' meeting, parents were very happy with the standards being attained by their children at the school. It was thought, however, that standards in mathematics and physical education were not as high as those in other subjects. The inspection found standards in mathematics to be similar to those in other subjects overall, but in 1997 pupils did perform worse in mathematics than in English and science, even taking national differences into account. Numeracy skills are less well-developed than other mathematics skills. Standards in physical education are below those in other subjects.

On entry, the standards being attained in English by pupils are below average. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, however, pupils are attaining in line with national averages. Standards in reading are average. All pupils

entered have gained an A*-G grade in English GCSE for the past two years. Most pupils can cope with some challenging texts, and reading for information is a strength in English and other subject areas. Standards in speaking and listening and writing are higher than those in reading. Pupils are able to speak fluently and accurately and they can speak in front of small groups and larger audiences. Another strength in English is the pupils' ability to produce extended writing in a variety of styles. Handwriting and the presentation of work are also good. Grammar, spelling and punctuation are areas of relative weakness.

Standards being attained in mathematics are in line with national averages at the ends of both key stages. GCSE results improved considerably in 1998 but there was a decline in the end of Key Stage 3 tests from 56 percent of pupils gaining level four or above in 1997, to 38 percent in 1998. Pupils have sound skills in algebra, shape and space and data-handling. Numeracy skills are not as strong and they are particularly weak with middle and lower attaining pupils. The school has recognised this and has implemented strategies to improve mental mathematics. Mathematical skills are transferred very successfully to design and technology, geography and science where good use is made of number work, graphs and charts. In modern languages there is also evidence of numeracy skills.

As with English and mathematics, standards in science are in line with national averages at the ends of both key stages. All pupils were entered for science GCSE in 1998. The pupils are particularly good at scientific investigation. Standards in knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes are sound. There are no significant weaknesses.

Standards are also in line with national expectations in art, geography and history at the ends of key stages 3 and 4, and modern languages and design and technology at Key Stage 3. They are sound in religious education. Standards in music are above national expectations at the ends of both key stages; they are also above national expectations in modern languages and design technology by the end of Key Stage 4; standards in careers education are good and in Urdu they are very good. Standards in information technology (IT) and physical education (PE) are below national expectations. In IT the pupils are weak at controlling IT systems; in PE they are weak at games skills, and planning and evaluating their work.

A strength running through a wide range of subjects is the pupils' ability to investigate and experiment. This is particularly apparent in science, art, design and technology, history, music and religious education. Pupils are enthusiastic and confident in their use of research skills.

The standards being attained in the arts - music, art, drama, dance - are good overall. Pupils can perform skilfully and confidently in front of larger audiences. The pupils perform well in role in drama; they produce imaginative and exciting work in art and music; and they move with poise and expression in dance.

The school did not set a target for GCSE for 1997. The target set for 1998 of 54 percent of pupils gaining an A*-C grade was exceeded by 4 percent.

Overall, the pupils are making good progress at both key stages, with progress slightly better at Key Stage 4. The standards being attained by pupils when they join the school are below average, but by the time they leave they are attaining in line with national averages and expectations. As stated in the previous section, attainment is generally very high when compared with that of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. However, there was a significant decline in Key Stage 3 results this year.

In lessons observed, the progress being made by pupils was good overall; in nearly all of the lessons progress was satisfactory or better. It was stronger at Key Stage 4, than at Key Stage 3 and this has contributed to the higher standards being attained at GCSE than at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998. At Key Stage 3 progress was judged to be at least good in 45 percent of lessons, compared with 59 percent at Key Stage 4. The recent national analysis of pupils' progress from Key 3 to GCSE points to very good progress having been made by last year's Year 11. The school was in the top 5 percent of schools in the country in terms of the rate of progress of this cohort.

Lesson observation show a close correlation between the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. One of the reasons for better progress taking place at Key Stage 4 is that teaching is slightly stronger in terms of: knowledge

and expertise, the challenge to pupils, planning, the way lessons are organised, the use of time and resources, and the use of homework.

In the parents' meeting, parents were happy with the progress of all pupils. They thought that teachers challenged and extended pupils of all levels of ability. In general, this was confirmed by the inspection. High attainers are being extended in most lessons. The 1998 GCSE results show that those with potential can attain high standards. Two pupils gained 10 grade A passes at GCSE and a total of 17 A* grades were gained. The higher attainers are not progressing at a sufficiently fast pace in some mixed-ability English lessons and the Year 7 mixed-ability mathematics lessons. The Year 7 mathematics classes will, however, be set by ability in the second half of this term.

The progress being made by pupils with their basic literacy skills is sound overall. It is strongest in writing, though difficulties in spelling, punctuation and grammar are hindering progress in English. In some mixed-ability English lessons work set for the lowest attaining readers and writers is not sufficiently based on an analysis of their weaknesses and this is adversely affecting their progress. All departments are contributing to the pupils' literacy development, in line with the priority in the school development plan. The history department is making a particularly significant contribution to the pupils' reading research skills. The progress of pupils in numeracy is slower than in literacy, but is satisfactory overall for the range of mathematics skills.

The progress pupils make is good in science, history, modern languages, DT, music, Urdu, careers education, and RE at both key stages. It is also good in drama at Key Stage 3, and art, individual and society and Urdu at Key Stage 4. Progress in English, mathematics and geography is sound at both key stages. It is also sound in art at Key Stage 3 geography and physical education is sound. Progress in PE and IT is unsatisfactory, though this is due to a restricted curriculum offer rather than the quality of teaching. The progress made by pupils in Urdu at Key Stage 3 is very good.

The pupils are making good progress with their artistic skills and aesthetic understanding. They develop in confidence as they move through the school and by the end of Key Stage 4 many can compose and perform high quality work. The well-organised Creative and Performing Arts department and skilful and enthusiastic teaching are having a significant impact on progress of pupils in music, art, dance and drama.

The progress being made by pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is sound overall. The school analysis of reading ages shows some significant improvements from the pupils with SEN in Year 9 with an average improvement the highest since records began in 1990. The lowest attaining pupils who receive intensive literacy support in withdrawal groups make good progress. The progress of pupils in subjects is sound overall. Reviews of the pupils' progress with their individual education plans also indicate sound improvement.

The progress of pupils in English for whom it is an additional language is sound overall but there is a wide variation depending on the expertise of the teacher. The active approaches to teaching and the collaborative work in lessons is leading to good progress being made by pupils across the range of subjects. The assessment data on ethnic minorities mentioned in the previous section points to their making good progress. The group with the lowest attainment is that of the indigenous white girls from deprived backgrounds.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

Attitudes to learning are very good. The pupils are very well-motivated and show a keen interest in their work. They listen attentively and recognise the need to work hard and to meet targets set. From 1994 - 1997 nearly all Year 11 pupils have continued with their education into the sixth form. One good example of the way pupils apply themselves well is the Year 8 Latin lessons where the high expectations of the pace of learning are met by pupils. They respond to challenges and show initiative, for instance in the health project which was set as part of the individual in society course in Year 11. Pupils contribute positively and with enthusiasm in role-play on assertiveness in the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) in Year 8. Some pupils are reluctant to answer or pose questions in lessons but when encouraged they make a valuable contribution.

The behaviour of the pupils is very good. It has a positive impact on the quality of learning and high standards achieved. The pupils respond well to the good management skills of the staff and conduct themselves confidently in a responsible manner. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are extremely rare. When they do occur, sanctions are imposed immediately and firmly. Pupils understand and accept the system. There was one permanent exclusion and there were eleven fixed term exclusions during the past academic year across the range of racial groups. This is well below the national average for 1997.

Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and this is recognised and praised by the parents. The school is a happy and racially harmonious community. The continuity of form tutor groups and heads of year through the school promotes a strong bond between the pupils and the staff. Pupils are polite and courteous to visiting adults. There is an effective code of conduct which is reflected in the orderly running of the school.

Relationships between pupils are excellent. Pupils support each other and often take responsibility for their own learning. They revise for tests and examinations in a sensible and focused manner. Pupils respond well to the range of opportunities available in work experience and in the lunchtime clubs available. They appreciate the efforts made by the staff. The library is well-used.

The older pupils respond well to the opportunities offered to take responsibility for a range of tasks about the school. For instance they become prefects and take part in paired reading with the younger pupils. Representatives from each tutor group serve on the school council; this increases their self-esteem and brings about improvements to the life of the school.

The pupils are confident and ably represent the school on English Speaking Union and Rotary Club public speaking competitions. Many pupils participate in music and drama both within school and out in the local community.

The pupils take part in many successful fund-raising activities for local and national charities which not only demonstrates their willingness to help others, but also creates a favourable impression of the school in the wider community.

The high standards of attitudes and behaviour are a significant strength of the school. They have been maintained since the last inspection and are appreciated by the parents.

Attendance

Attendance is very good and is well above the national average; it has improved since the last inspection. During 1997/8 the attendance rate was 95 percent overall, compared with the 1997 national average for girls' schools of 91.4 percent. The rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Attendance figures have improved and the incidence of extended holidays has fallen since the last report. Parents are fully aware of the school's rules on attendance.

Punctuality is an important part of the school's code of practice and the level of lateness is kept low. Travelling time between sites can cause some delay in starting a lesson but everyone tries to take as little time as possible in order that lessons can start punctually.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

In questionnaires, nearly all parents thought that the school enabled the pupils to achieve a good standard of work and the high quality of teaching has generally been sustained since the previous inspection. In the 1994 inspection 92 percent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better, compared with 96 percent in the current inspection. This indicates slightly more consistency in the quality of teaching. The proportion of lessons judged to be good or better has fallen, however, from 63 percent to 52 percent. There has, however, been an improvement in the subject knowledge of teachers since the last inspection.

The overall quality of teaching is, nevertheless, good. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is stronger than at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, 23 percent of lessons observed were very good or outstanding, whereas at Key Stage 3 there were only 11 percent. Also, in this inspection, 60 percent of lessons were judged to be good or better at Key Stage 4, compared with 47 percent at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, teaching is slightly stronger in terms of: knowledge and expertise, the challenge to pupils, planning, the way lessons are organised, the use of time and resources, and the use of homework. This is reflected in better progress at Key Stage 4.

Each subject in the school is taught to at least a satisfactory level. Teaching is sound in English, art and physical education. It is good in mathematics, science, modern languages, design and technology, music, history, geography, information technology, religious education and Urdu. Teaching is very good in careers.

The teaching of pupils with SEN is sound overall. The pupils who are withdrawn from lessons are taught well through a planned programme. The main weakness in withdrawal lessons is the planning - the vagueness of some of the pupils' individual education plans is leading to a lack of focus, in a minority of lessons. The reading ages of these pupils have increased significantly as a result of this programme and sound teaching. The support of pupils with SEN in class is less effective. Support teachers are generally sensitive and effective, though there is insufficient liaison between them and class teachers at the planning stage. Class teachers are not sufficiently using the pupils' individual education plans to target work. In the last inspection there was also insufficient targeting of work for pupils with SEN.

The teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is sound overall but ranges from very good to poor. In the best lessons there is joint planning between the support teacher and the class teacher. Work in these lessons is targeted on the pupils' weaknesses. Where teaching is poor, the support teacher has insufficient engagement with pupils and there is little liaison with the class teacher on planning.

A significant factor contributing to the consistently good quality of teaching is the knowledge and expertise of staff. This enables teachers to teach with authority and purpose, to probe the pupils with challenging questions, and to make a wide range of teaching points. Demonstrations in practical lessons such as art and fluent expositions in subjects such as history and geography are enhancing pupils' progress in these subjects. The teachers' knowledge and commitment to their subjects contributes to the enthusiasm shown for learning which characterises most lessons. On numerous occasions teachers successfully made lessons relevant to the pupils' lives and interests. In a mathematics lesson on bearings, for example, pupils were set a task where they had to direct a specific pupil to a shop. In the individual and society lessons, the pupils are encouraged to consider society's influences on their lives. In one of the lessons observed the pupils took a keen interest in discussing the pressures on girls to be slim.

Another significant strength of teaching is the management of pupils. Classroom routines are well-established in all classes and teachers treat pupils with respect. Good use is made of praise and on the rare occasions that pupils misbehave confrontations are avoided and they are skilfully dealt with. In nearly all lessons, teachers manage pupils calmly and authoritatively. An indication of the strength of classroom management was that inspectors found pupils with behavioural difficulties on the SEN register to be difficult to identify in lessons.

Lessons are usually well-planned, though occasionally the learning objectives are not identified. With the exception of some PE lessons, the content of lessons is linked well to the National Curriculum. Lessons are well-structured and efficiently organised. Practical work in science, art, and design and technology lessons is well-organised. Resources are always appropriate and good use is made of audio-visual resources such as overhead projectors. The mathematics department makes particularly good use of overhead projectors to explain points and show models of approaches to solving problems. Insufficient use is being made of IT across the range of subjects.

Teachers are keen to encourage initiative and the pupils' investigative skills are being well-fostered. The pupils are encouraged to explore ideas and come to their own conclusions. In art, and design and technology this active approach is contributing to the pupils' creativity, and in history it is contributing to their skills of enquiry. Small group work and paired work is common. It is productive and well-managed, and is a particular strength of English, drama and individual and society lessons.

Teachers have high expectations of the amount of work to be produced, the pupils' application to tasks and behaviour. In art, individual and society and design and technology lessons some particularly sophisticated concepts are being introduced. Homework is used well by teachers to extend and challenge pupils.

Although few lessons are unsatisfactory, in a minority work is not well-matched to the pupils' levels of attainment. This is leading to insufficient challenge to the higher attaining pupils in some English, geography, mathematics and Year 7 art lessons. It is particularly true where groups are mixed-ability. Another area of weakness which is apparent in a minority of lessons is a lack of variety in the activities set. This is having a negative impact on learning in some Key Stage 4 English lessons and in some physical education lessons.

The previous report stated that there would be benefit in developing a marking policy across the school. This has not yet been developed and the weaknesses previously noted still remain because there is no consistent pattern of marking. Practices vary within and between departments and there is some detailed marking of GCSE coursework. In many, however, particularly at Key Stage 3, there is little use of constructive and informative comment to point the way forward for the pupils. Good, informative comment was seen on pupils' work in science, history, drama and individual and society.

The curriculum and assessment

The school provides a very broad curriculum for all its pupils. At Key Stage 3, the pupils are taught in mixed-ability groups, except for mathematics and science in Year 7, and setting arrangements are progressively introduced in Year 8 and Year 9. A second modern foreign language is introduced in Year 8 and pupils have a choice between Urdu, Spanish and German. A course in Latin is also available for higher attaining pupils from Year 8. In Key Stage 4 the pupils study a core of subjects which includes English, mathematics, science, creative and performing arts, history or geography, a foreign language and a technology option. The pupils can then choose further options from a range of subjects. A course in Classical Civilisation is also available at Key Stage 4.

1. It was a criticism in the previous report that the number of GCSE subjects was excessive, and the school has successfully introduced five well-organised non-GCSE courses - individual in society and information and communication, a core skills vocational course in IT, and certificate courses in mathematics and textiles. These are easing the pressure on pupils but are also making a contribution to their academic and personal development.
2. The curriculum, overall, is balanced. However, because of the breadth of the programme on offer, the balance is achieved by a timetable which is well above the recommended limits for teaching time, and the timetabling of Key Stage 4 PE lessons outside the "school day." This was also an issue in the previous report. There are inconsistencies within the provision also. Whilst the time allocated to English and mathematics is broadly similar to national medians, it is below in science for Years 7 and 8, but above in Years 9, 10 and 11. Allocations to history, geography and physical education are below the national medians, but those for modern languages are significantly above.
3. The curriculum fails to meet the statutory requirements for IT, and does not cover the National Curriculum requirements for PE, because there is no provision for swimming or for outdoor activities. The curriculum provides good equality of access and opportunity to the pupils at Key Stage 3, and satisfactory equality of opportunity and access at Key Stage 4. It is less strong at Key Stage 4 because the arrangements for PE do not provide equality when compared with other subjects in the curriculum.
4. Pupils with SEN have equal access to the curriculum and no pupils are disapplying from the National Curriculum. Their specific needs are identified on their individual education plans, but the plans tend to concentrate on literacy and are weaker at identifying numeracy or behavioural targets. The plans are not sufficiently specific about what the pupil needs to do to improve. The curriculum provision for withdrawal groups is well-planned and is contributing to their progress in literacy. In recent years, all classes have been given an extra-reading lesson in Year 7, as well as two of the lower attaining classes in Year 8. This is beginning to make a contribution to raising standards and is helping to address the low standards in reading

of some of the school's intake. The summer literacy course organised for below average pupils who joined the school in September has helped raise standards.

5. The Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) which is taught to all classes at Key Stages 3 and 4 is also well-organised, with good schemes of work in place. Health and sex education are effectively taught through the PSHE programme, as well as through religious education and science lessons. There is good provision for the pupils to consider drugs awareness.
6. The curriculum provides well for teaching religious education and it is in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils to learn about the responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The individual and society course at Key Stage 4 is rigorously planned and is providing a valuable supplement to the curriculum. Pupils take this course seriously and it is providing a forum for raising important issues relating to the pupils' personal development.
7. The provision for careers education is comprehensive and well-organised. In Years 10 and 11 the pupils follow a well-planned programme for one lesson a week and some further careers work takes place in PSHE lessons. At Key Stage 3, careers education is a planned part of the PSHE programme. Two weeks' work experience is a compulsory part of the Year 11 curriculum. All pupils gain places on work experience and the programme is very well-organised, in liaison with the LEA. A good range of visitors are brought in to the school to talk about careers, including the local college which organises professional interviews and feedback to each student.
8. There is no scheme of work available in the English Department, though one is planned by the new head of department, and this is having an adverse effect on standards of literacy throughout the school. All other departments have schemes of work which provide satisfactory continuity across the two key stages. Some departments, such as history and religious education, have further developed their schemes of work to give details of teaching methods and organisation.
9. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities for the pupils, and this is a strength of the school. At lunchtimes and after school, the school is alive with activity, as pupils pursue their own interests or work to improve their GCSE work. The school makes good use of visitors in a range of subject areas. If it were not for the very limited range of sporting activities on offer, extra-curricular provision would be outstanding.
10. Statutory requirements for assessment and recording are being met. It was noted in the previous report that the school did not have a policy statement for assessment, recording and reporting. There is now a policy in place but many of the inconsistencies previously reported still remain. This is partly because the policy does not set sufficiently clear expectations of senior managers, heads of department and class teachers. Responsibility for the development of the procedures is devolved to departments.
11. Approaches to the tracking of progress through the National Curriculum attainment targets varies from department to department. Most departments do not have an overview of the standards and rates of progress of each year group. In general, the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory, but there is insufficient use of assessment for curriculum planning, for writing improvement strategies based on the identification of pupils' strengths and weaknesses, or for target setting.
12. The school has, however, recognised this as an area for development and departments are beginning to move forwards. Good practice is beginning to develop in some departments, such as science, modern languages and design technology, where assessment of National Curriculum levels is being used to discuss the pupils' progress with them and to set targets. For pupils with SEN, and for those for whom English is an additional language, there is no consistent use of assessment to monitor individual education plans or progress towards set targets. There is no secure base for assessment in English which leads to unsatisfactory monitoring of pupil attainment.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is good. The school has established a clear ethos which teaches its pupils how to value imagination, inspiration and contemplation. This is apparent, for example, in the excellent displays of pupils' work and other materials throughout the school which help to create an aesthetically inspiring environment. Pupils do not participate in an act of collective worship each day, therefore statutory requirements are not met. However, assemblies provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop personal belief, spiritual awareness and time for quiet reflection. Major religious festivals, including Eid and Diwali as well as Christian festivals, are celebrated. A room is set aside for Muslim girls to pray. Further opportunities to deepen pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge are provided in subjects such as religious education which makes a significant contribution in this area in that it enables pupils to study six religions and encourages them to share and discuss their own beliefs and compare them with others. Other subjects which promote spiritual development include dance, where pupils work on 'A Time For..', based on Ecclesiastes, and on the themes of Rama and Sita.

There is very good provision for the support of pupils' moral development. The school emphasises the equal value to the school community of each pupil. The difference between right and wrong, and the importance of values such as truth, justice, honesty and self-respect are promoted in assemblies and in a number of areas of the curriculum. Moral issues are discussed in many subjects, which encourage fairness, courtesy and respect. The school sets out quite clearly what it expects from pupils in terms of behaviour, respect and rules. Teachers provide pupils with good role models. They are encouraged to explore their views openly and honestly. In religious education, for example, pupils in Key Stage 3 examine the place of arranged marriages in Islam and draw up their own marriage contracts.

Pupils' social development is well supported through a range of very good provision, both curricular and extra-curricular. There is emphasis, in many lessons, on pupils working in groups and pairs where they are encouraged to share ideas in discussion and to make decisions about their own learning. There are good opportunities in dance, for example, for groups of pupils to work together to prepare presentations. Practical work in design and technology encourages pupils to develop their social skills through, for example, making toy kits or door buzzers for the elderly. There are also opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility through the prefect system and the school council. Pupils also engage in a range of fund-raising and community activities, such as the Year 8 'Extravaganza' for the elderly.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent and helps to underpin the ethos of the school. Scope exists in many curriculum areas and in extra-curricular activities for pupils to develop their aesthetic awareness and their appreciation of the many cultures represented in the school and in the wider community. Pupils are taught to take pride in their own traditions and to respect and value cultures other than their own. There are regular opportunities to develop cultural awareness through music, the ballet, visits to theatres and museums, and residential trips to Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium and France. Teachers encourage pupils to challenge prevailing stereotypes and to avoid cultural assumptions. The cultural diversity of Britain is coherently affirmed and embedded throughout and outside the taught curriculum. During the week of the inspection, for example, the school was celebrating Black History Month.

Although the provision for these areas is very good it is not supported by whole-school monitoring to ensure that they are systematically threaded through the curriculum and that these important dimensions are made explicit and reflected in all departmental planning. This point which was raised in the last inspection.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of pastoral care was found to be of a high quality in the previous inspection and it remains very good. The pupils are well known to staff and they respond positively to the support given. The form tutor groups are linked under the heads of year and there is co-operation at both levels. The form tutor is the first point of reference for parents. The annual reports are helpful and set targets for improvement for the pupils. Pupils in Year 7 receive two reports in their first year.

Personal and academic records are maintained in a variety of formats across the school. A standard system for monitoring progress is included in the school development plan for 1999. Clear policies are in place to

promote good behaviour and to combat any incidence of bullying. Although this is rare, there are accepted procedures which deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour.

The personal diaries with which all pupils are issued are an effective tool for communication both within school and with the parents. They also serve as passports in and out of the school buildings during lunchtime. Social and health education, including sex education, are taught through an extensive and thorough PSHE programme which is planned as a progressive course across all year groups. There are adequate medical facilities and the school nurse makes frequent visits. Three members of the staff are first-aiders. The school has regular contact with the educational welfare officer, the educational psychologist and the local social services.

Health and safety inspections are performed regularly by the head teacher, governors and the LEA surveyor. The surface of the art room floor is a cause for concern. The school is trying to identify where the financial responsibility for repair lies but at present it restricts the teaching of the National Curriculum and is a potential hazard to pupils.

Measures for child protection are in place and the school is able to take effective care of the pupils. All members of staff are made aware of the correct action to take if they are concerned about the welfare of the pupils.

The information on careers and the links with business have been thoughtfully developed. The careers base is well organised and pupils have access to a wide variety of materials. Guidance given to pupils in Year 9 when options are decided and in Year 11 is well-planned. All pupils in Year 11 receive a 45 minute interview in addition to careers lessons and this interview is followed up with an individual action plan. Pupils are trained in completing job applications and in interview techniques which they find very useful.

Comprehensive information and sensitive guidance is provided for pupils who join the school and links with the feeder primary schools are improving. The summer literacy school was effective in preparing pupils for secondary schooling. Pupils settle quickly into Year 7. Informed guidance is given to individual pupils in their choice of options in Year 9, for applications for work experience and for transfer to the local colleges of further education. Last year nearly all the pupils went on to further education.

Pupils with special educational needs are identified on entry, given extra tuition in reading mostly and supported in the classroom. Progress is made and entered on the individual education plans but these are not shared consistently across the school. The extra classes in reading in Years 7 and 8 are an indication of the concern shown by the school for the literacy difficulties of a significant minority of the intake.

The school measures to promote attendance are very effective. The credit scheme and certificates for good attendance are appreciated by the pupils. Attendance rates are displayed in the school and are acting as a motivator for improvement. Sanctions in the form of detentions or loss of form credits in the junior school are effective in reducing lateness to school. The education welfare officer is very effective in discouraging the incidence of extended holidays.

The school is a very caring community which continues to consider the well-being of its pupils throughout their school careers. The parents are pleased with the standards of care achieved by the school and appreciate the guidance given to the pupils.

Partnership with parents and the community

The quality of information provided by the school to parents is satisfactory. The school brochure is an attractively produced. Parts of the school newsletter are in Urdu and letters to parents are also translated. Comprehensive information is available at induction and parents with their children are invited to meet the staff and to see around the school. Annual reports are helpful and informative. An options evening is held which parents find useful and they also attend careers conventions and year group consultation evenings are well attended and monitored by the school. The governors issue the minutes of their meetings, as well as an annual report which fully complies with the requirements.

Parental involvement in the school is actively encouraged. They sign a contract when their daughters join the school and fulfil a vital role in overseeing homework via the personal diaries. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, there has been a significant increase in attendance at parents/carers consultation meetings. Some parents assist on educational outings. There is no parents' association at the moment, although a successful summer fete run by the school raised valuable funds to contribute to the school resources. Although the school states that staff are always accessible, some parents questioned the availability of a complaints procedure. The school is addressing this problem.

A minority of parents in questionnaires thought that the school did not respond well to complaints or reservations that they might have expressed. The inspection found the complaints procedure to be insufficiently clear, although it is currently being reviewed and improved.

The school encourages non-English speaking mothers to attend a weekly club which is a useful exercise in improving links with the community. The school benefits from its links with the local colleges where the head teacher attends strategic planning meetings. Four parents and some ex-pupils are to speak at the Year 10 consultation evening to prepare parents for the extra demands made on the pupils when studying for external examinations. Eight initial teaching trainees worked in the school last year and, in liaison with local businesses, teachers attended training in food technology, managing conflict and easy speaking.

Links with the community are satisfactory. Pupils entertained members of the community with the Year 8 extravaganza and sang carols in the subway of the local railway station. These community links reinforce the social education of the pupils. They also wrote and delivered fairy storybooks to some of the feeder primary schools. There are links with local business educational firms and partnerships when the pupils benefit from a work related activity, for instance work on textiles and the European Awareness Day. The school takes part in inter-school engineering, mathematics and public speaking competitions, and dance festivals.

The work experience programme relies heavily upon co-operation with local employers who appreciate the reliability of Connaught pupils. Links with local businesses increase the confidence and motivation of the pupils by this experience and they gain a further understanding of the world of employment. The M11 construction firm has contributed to the improvement of the school playground area.

The education of pupils is enriched by cultural visits to France, Spain, Italy and Greece. Theatrical groups come into school and outings to the theatre extend the school curriculum. Participation in school sports is limited by the facilities but Year 8 won the inter-school borough athletics competition.

The school has developed informal contacts with the local press which are enhancing the school's reputation in the area. Full publicity is obtained for school successes and for the many fund raising activities of the school. During this academic year it has successfully raised money for international, national and local charities. The pupils are justifiably proud of this achievement. They also gain from these activities a greater understanding of the world which adds to their personal and social development.

The commitment of the staff both within the curriculum and in other activities is a credit to the school. Links with primary schools and further education colleges have improved since the last inspection.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school is sound overall. In the past year, under the new head teacher, there have been some significant improvements and there is a good understanding of what needs to be done. There are, however, weaknesses which need to be addressed.

The educational direction for the school provided by governors and the head teacher is sound and is improving. There is a good focus on raising standards. The targets set by governors for GCSE results in 1998 were met and the school is in the process of setting new targets for the year 2000. The Governing Body has a good

knowledge of the school on which to base decisions and is provided with timely and appropriate information by the head teacher. Although the governing body has not previously played a significant part in the formulation of the school development plan, this is now planned. The curriculum committee's work has become more formalised since the last inspection and the committee now has a clear view of its priorities.

The curriculum provision has improved since the last inspection. The key issue for action to review the balance of the curriculum has been addressed effectively with the provision of four popular and well-organised non-examination courses. These are, as recommended, easing the pressure on some pupils. There has been some progress on key issues to improve the provision for PE, and IT across the curriculum but statutory requirements for these subjects are still not being met.

The focus on improving literacy for the past two years is an appropriate priority given the standards of literacy of the school's intake. The literacy action plan, however, is insufficiently rigorous. Departments are not planning with sufficient rigour to refine and improve the curriculum provided. The SEN department has not produced a rigorous plan for improving the curriculum for pupils with SEN.

Teaching staff are generally well-supported. Communication is clear and there are frequent, regular, well-organised meetings. The staff handbook and the supply/cover policies are rigorous and clear. Very good support is provided for supply teachers and trainee teachers. The formal monitoring of the curriculum provision is beginning to take place through the new line-management structure, although this is still at an early stage of development. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching has been recognised by the school as a weakness and there are plans to address this.

The school has a comprehensive range of policies. Although they are succinct, several do not set sufficiently detailed or clear expectations of staff. This is particularly true of the assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and staff development policies.

A strength of the school is its success in implementing its aims and values. This has been recognised by parents. The school is very popular and at the parents' meeting the overall judgement was that the school was excellent. The school's aims provide a reference point for governors and senior management team and care is taken to ensure that they are met.

Development planning, monitoring and evaluation are unsatisfactory overall, though there have been significant improvements in the past year. The school is poised to develop these areas. Since the previous inspection a sensible planning cycle, comprising analysis of data, review and target-setting has been set up. The school development plan is now written after full staff consultation and the past two plans include all subject development plans. The structure of the school development plan, however, is not clear and, with the exception of the improvement of literacy, key priorities are not easily identifiable. The plan does not provide a focus for the school's work. The development plans for literacy, subject areas and whole school aspects are weak. They are insufficiently specific and do not identify clear improvement strategies.

Improvement to monitoring and evaluation was identified as a key issue for action in the last inspection. There have been considerable developments in the past year including evaluation of parents' attendance at meetings, pupils' attendance at clubs and staff attendance. A range of data on pupils' attainment and progress is being collated and evaluations have begun to take place. Clear improvement strategies based on this analysis have yet to be written at whole school or departmental level. The new line-management structure, whereby members of the senior management team take responsibility for departments, will enable closer monitoring of teachers' work but there has not yet been any systematic review by senior staff of departments' progress in implementing their action plans and targets have not been set for them. The success criteria in whole school and department plans are too vague.

The ethos of the school, a focus of most of the school's aims, is a great strength and a key to its success. The staff work together well as a team and their great commitment is illustrated by the activities provided for pupils at lunchtime and after school. The pupils also have a very strong work ethic. The school is characterised by a vitality and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils and teachers from all races work together in harmony and treat each other with respect. The commitment and skill of staff contribute significantly to the school's ethos.

The leadership and management of the special educational needs provision is sound overall. The provision required on pupils' statements is being met and annual reviews are up to date. Parents are fully consulted. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has led training for the whole staff. One area of weakness is the SEN policy. A key issue for action in the last inspection was to produce and implement a policy for pupils with SEN. Although one has been produced, it is too superficial and does not conform to the national guidance in the SEN Code of Practice. The action plan for learning support is not sufficiently specific and does not provide a rigorous strategy for improving the provision for pupils with SEN.

High priority is given to equal opportunities and it forms a central part of the school's aims. The pupils are encouraged to consider gender and racial stereotypes and great care is taken to ensure that all pupils' self esteem is reinforced and developed. The promotion of equal opportunities is a thread running through all of the school's work - its policies, schemes of work, resources and extra-curricular activities. An example of this is individual and society course at Key Stage 4 where the pupils are encouraged to reflect upon the pressures that society places on them to conform to stereotypes. The school has four Urdu speaking teachers, one of whom is a senior member of staff. The attainment of specific ethnic groups is monitored and this monitoring has shown these pupils to be performing well.

The improvement the school has made since the last inspection is sound overall in terms of its performance and the implementation of the OFSTED action plan. There has been sound improvement in pupil attainment; the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make remains good; and in the past year procedures have been set in place, such as the analysis of assessment data, which will help the school to sustain its success. Important steps have been taken to improve strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation but these remain areas of weakness. There is now a more corporate approach to planning and raising standards. Although there have been improvements to the IT and PE provision, statutory requirements for these subjects are still not being met.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

The school is generously staffed with a good match between qualifications and teaching subject. Staff are deployed effectively and although contact time is below the national average, staff put in considerable additional time before school, during lunch hours, and after school to give additional assistance to pupils who want extra help. There is very good provision for non-teaching support staff and these make valuable contributions in many lessons.

There is a good induction and mentoring programme of weekly meetings for newly qualified teachers. Effort is put into ensuring that all new staff to the school are made to feel welcome and integrated.

The staff development programme is well developed and effective arrangements are in place to support the professional development of all staff. The staff development programme reflects the needs identified by departments, the priorities of the school development plan, staff appraisal requirements, and priorities arising at national level. Inset training is organised every Wednesday after school, on a regularly weekly basis, and clusters of departments sometimes provide their own training. Staff are encouraged to attend courses run by external organisations and the local authority. The staff development coordinator ensures that all training courses are evaluated and the feedback is used for future planning. Resources available for staff development are limited but used effectively.

The staff appraisal programme is now on-going with detailed plans for staff appraisal through the next two years. Individual training needs identified in the appraisal were acted on and followed up.

The procedures for a comprehensive programme of staff development are in place, with clearly defined management responsibilities for each aspect. However the details and monitoring the impact of staff development have not yet been followed through. Nor are specific proposals for staff development clearly identified, either in the school development plan, or department cluster plans.

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection report but there remains much to be done to

meet current curricular needs. Refurbishing of three science laboratories in the annexe has greatly improved the quality of learning. The two remaining mobiles are too small for the numbers of pupils in practical lessons. This has an adverse effect on pupils' progress. Replacement mobiles are due in the near future. Other improvements include - new notice boards, landscaping of garden beds and new lighting for drama productions. Three quarters of all window frames have been replaced resulting in greater efficiencies in heat and cost. Although a traditional building, the school makes very good use of accommodation. The environment is pleasant, clean and is exceptionally well maintained. There are few outstanding repairs, it is in excellent decorative order and there is little graffiti or litter in and around the school. A stimulating and aesthetically pleasing environment is enhanced by high quality displays. For example, Year 7's work on re-telling the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' from a bird's viewpoint generated considerable interest from other pupils.

There are insufficient IT rooms to enable the full National Curriculum requirements for information technology across the curriculum to be met. Departments have little access to computers. This is having a detrimental effect on skills such as word processing, data handling and computer graphics. In physical education facilities, previously described as inadequate in the last report, have deteriorated further. Although there are no school playing fields the surface of the main school playground area is now out of use because the surface is too uneven presenting a potential hazard. The M 11 road works encroaches on the annexe and, when the noise of drills and other machines drowns the teacher's voice, the gymnasium is used in preference to the hard-court area. Lack of facilities is a major factor in not meeting the National Curriculum requirements for PE depressing the range, quality and standard of provision.

In other curriculum areas accommodation is at least satisfactory. In drama, history, religious education, mathematics, art and design technology it is good. In drama it is excellent. All departments have rooms grouped together, some with carpets. Lesson time is eroded in science and physical education and other lessons in travelling to and from the annexe but this is only having a significant impact on progress in physical education. The main building is accessible to the disabled.

A substantial investment of resources has been made since the last inspection into information technology and the library. Resources in these areas are still not sufficient to support high quality learning.

The library is still inadequate to support pupils' retrieval skills, extended work, research and investigation. Plans are in place to make the necessary changes and re-furbishment has commenced. A computerised tracking system has been installed, two computers are now in use, and three CD Roms. There is an adequate range of fiction books, resource material such as magazines and newspapers but reading for leisure is limited. Books in support of the cultures represented within the school are good. For example, there are over thirty titles on the topic of 'Black British' and there are sections in the library on Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and Gujarati literature.

There are insufficient texts to support extended work at GCSE level, independent research and pupils with reading difficulties. The library is centrally located for easy access. It is well used by pupils, particularly at lunch times and by Years 7 and 9 as part of English lessons. Most pupils have a book on loan but there are insufficient texts available for those with reading difficulties. At present, the library is a little uninviting in contrast to the rest of the school but new furniture has been ordered.

The careers room is well-resourced and accessible to pupils at convenient times. The careers database is being updated. There is a good range of resource material on information on careers and further education. It is strong on supporting women in traditionally male occupations such as construction and engineering.

Deficiencies in resources in history, modern foreign language and special educational needs have been addressed since the last inspection. Although the formula for allocating resources is unchanged, staff are now both aware of and involved in the process with a view to change. Apart from the need for access to computers, most departments are adequately resourced. There is a need for more sets of equipment such as planes in design technology and microscopes in science. Updated texts are required in English, design technology and Urdu.

The school makes good use of resources beyond school. There are theatre visits in drama, field trips in science and

visits to places such as the Tate Gallery and Royal Academy in art.

The efficiency of the school

Financial planning is sound. The budget plan is based on a careful consideration of the school's needs and the head teacher provides detailed information for the governing body. An example of this is the thorough analysis made by the head teacher of the low pupil:teacher contact ratio. The Finance Committee has considerable expertise at its disposal and has updates of spending at each meeting. Informal evaluations of spending take place and governors are keen to ensure value for money. The costings of priorities in the school development plan are not sufficiently specific. The school development plan and budget plan are not phased together, which makes it more difficult for educational priorities to inform the budget plan. However, the resources provided to develop the school library this year relate directly to the school's main priority of developing literacy.

During 1998/9, it is planned to spend about half of the £89345 brought forward from the previous year. This money has been deployed well to develop the library, the administration area and the staffroom, as well as increasing the money available to departments for resources. The school is sensibly planning to retain a small surplus in case of emergencies.

The use made of teaching and support staff is sound overall and is improving. Job descriptions are in place and are comprehensive. Senior staff have recently changed their roles and are now being deployed more effectively in the management of heads of department and the monitoring of their work. Although there is a low pupil:teacher ratio, which is expensive, teachers work hard to provide lunchtime and after school activities and they take on a considerable amount of cover for absence. Heads of year use their time effectively to promote good behaviour and they are tracking pupils' progress. The school has made some projections about teacher responsibilities and allowances but has not yet established a model curriculum and staffing structure which it can work towards.

The school has a generous number of support staff compared with national averages but support staff are generally well-deployed and the proportion is similar to that of other schools in the LEA. The allocation of funds to staff development - 5 percent of total expenditure - is low compared with other schools nationally. This funding is, however, determined by the LEA.

Learning resources and accommodation are used well. Money for departments is based on a formula which ensures fairness. Teachers use resources efficiently in classrooms, and departments monitor and distribute stock with care. There is very little wastage. Although stock in the library is limited, it is used well. Nearly all pupils have a book on loan and about 60 pupils visit the library each lunchtime. The library is contributing to the high standard of pupils' independent learning skills.

Accommodation is generally used well. The care taken of the building, and the display work make it a very attractive learning environment. There is scope to develop the use of some areas, particularly the gym which is not used for about half of the week. The mobile classroom used for teaching Urdu is also only used for about half of the week. The hall and careers area are used particularly well. The area for careers is well-organised and attractive, and helps to raise the profile of the subject.

Financial control and administration are good. The most recent audit report found finances to be generally well-run and its recommendations for improvement have been implemented. Spending is closely monitored and good use is made of information technology. Two of the administration staff have been trained to use the administration software; this will enable the school to function efficiently in the case of one of them being absent. The day to day organisation of the school is very rigorous. Detailed and clear guidance is provided for staff and duty rotas are well-organised. Cover for absent staff is very efficiently organised.

The resources provided by the LEA for special educational needs pupils are supplemented by the school. Overall, during 1998/9 it is planned to spend £90,364 as a minimum on special educational needs provision. This money is being well-used to provide a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), another one full time

equivalent teacher, teacher assistants, including one for a hearing impaired pupil, a counsellor for one day a week and £1000 for capitation. Resources are efficiently deployed with support time clearly linked to the needs of pupils. The withdrawal teaching of pupils initially led by the SENCO and then taught by a teacher assistant is cost-effective.

The level of resources provided for pupils who speak English as an additional language is determined by the LEA. The staffing available is efficiently deployed. Support is spread evenly across year groups and is rotated on a regular basis to ensure fairness.

In the previous inspection the school was found to be providing good value for money. The school is still providing good value for money. Resources are efficiently used; the progress the pupils make is good; and the curriculum provided is sound.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

On entry to the school, the attainment in English of the majority of pupils is below the national average. By the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4, the pupils are attaining in line with national averages. In the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test this year, the proportion of pupils attaining the national average (Level 5) was well above the national average for 1997 and very high in comparison with the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher grade (Level 6), in these tests, rose significantly this year and was above last year's national average.

There was an improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining an A* to C grade in the GCSE English Language examination this year, which brings attainment in line with the national average for 1997. The 1998 results represent a 10 percent improvement since the last report in 1993. All pupils entered for the examination in 1997 and 1998 gained a grade at A* - G. The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade in the GCSE English Literature examinations has fallen over the past three years and is now well below the 1997 national average. All pupils who entered for this examination passed.

By the end of Key Stage 3 observations of work and lessons confirm the picture shown by examination results. The majority of pupils are achieving the national expectation in English with over a third of pupils above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils attain the national average and a quarter of the pupils attain a standard above the national average.

At Key Stage 3, attainment in speaking and listening skills is above national expectations. Listening skills are particularly good and most pupils respond confidently in regular and effective question and answer sessions. Standards throughout both key stages are significantly improved by the regular and creative use of paired work and group work. In Key Stage 4, most pupils are able to organise their ideas and speak fluently, whilst higher attaining pupils are able to adapt their talk to the demands of different contexts with increasing confidence.

At Key Stage 3, attainment in reading is in line with national expectations. The emphasis placed on reading by the school as a whole, the effective specialist support and the regular and systematic approach to the provision of opportunities for reading, all contribute to the raising of standards. There is, however, insufficient focus on the lower-attaining pupils in lessons and inadequate systems for targeting them.

At Key Stage 3, much of pupils' writing is above national expectations. A strength is pupils' extended writing within a wide variety of different forms. The quality of written work is enhanced by the regular discipline of drafting and re-drafting, accompanied by self and peer group assessment. There is an imbalance between this approach and the regular and systematic teaching of the basic skills of grammar, spelling and punctuation. The effect of this inadequacy becomes more pronounced in Key Stage 4, where the lack of these skills, particularly amongst the average and lower-attaining pupils, hinders their progress and the disparity between the progress of these pupils and the higher attaining pupils is greater. The previous report called for more consistent approaches to drafting as a strategy to improve writing and there is now more consistency. Throughout both key stages, handwriting is legible and fluent and the presentation of work is consistently good.

In both key stages, the attainment and progress of pupils with SEN and for whom English is an additional language, is largely commensurate with their ability. Although the attainment and progress of these pupils is enhanced by the quantity and quality of additional support provided, the progress of these pupils is adversely affected by teachers usually setting the same tasks for the whole class. Even when support for them is provided, these pupils sometimes find the set work too difficult, and it is inappropriate.

Most pupils make satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 3, half of the progress is good and in Key Stage 4, a third of the progress is good. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. All departments are

contributing to pupils' progress in literacy in lessons and planning.

Progress in English is enhanced by regular attendance, the attention to detail, the pride pupils take in their work and the structured approach to individual lesson preparation by teachers. Effective homework tasks are regularly set and marked and play a significant part in pupils' progress. The main reasons for unsatisfactory progress in class are related to teaching. In some classes there is a mismatch between the activities provided and the ability of groups of pupils within the class. A further significant hurdle to progress is the lack of consistent approaches to the curriculum amongst teachers. The inadequacy of the out-dated scheme of work and the uneven offer provided by teachers within the department affects the attainment and progress of pupils in both key stages. There are examples of good practice, where units of work and lessons are planned in a coherent sequence but these are not adequately co-ordinated across the department. An example is the uneven teaching of the basic skills, where there is a lack of continuity and progression in the teaching.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour play a significant part in their attainment and progress. Pupils are keen and eager to respond to their teachers. They are well-motivated and work hard. They are enthusiastic in lessons and there is much enjoyment. Pupils are polite and behaviour is very good. Pupils cooperate and support each other sensitively in group work and in whole class discussions. The development of inter-action skills and the regular raising and discussing of issues appropriate to them enhances their awareness of the needs of others, knowledge of self and their own self esteem.

Almost all the teaching is at least satisfactory, with half of the teaching of a good quality in both key stages. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in both key stages. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, have high expectations of pupils and deliver well-planned lessons in well organised classrooms. Relationships with pupils are good. A particular strength is the use of paired and group work activities. In Key Stage 3, the pace and challenge of lessons is nearly always at least satisfactory. This is not so in Key Stage 4, where teachers tend to set pupils longer tasks and concentration eventually lapses, therefore the management of time is sometimes unsatisfactory in this key stage. The most significant weakness is the failure to match the teaching activities to the capabilities of all the ability groups of pupils in the classes. It is a contributory factor, where standards have fallen, in both key stages. This weakness is exacerbated by the inflexibility of the current Year 10 timetable which does not allow the department the flexibility to determine the composition of teaching groups.

A particular strength throughout the department is the awareness of opportunities to raise and confront social, moral and cultural issues. Much of the literature chosen in Key Stage 3 in particular, lends itself to the discussion of these sorts of issues and this good practice is embedded within the teaching of the department.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad and generally well balanced. The extra reading lessons provided in Years 7 and 8 are leading to improved standards in reading. Currently there is insufficient use of IT within the curriculum at both key stages and a lack of regular and systematic teaching of the basic skills. The provision for IT has, however, improved since the last inspection. The department is in the process of change and is reviewing the inadequate scheme of work.

Similarly, the system and procedures for assessment within the department are in transition. Teachers' use of assessment to ensure pupils' understanding during lessons and for further planning is inconsistent across the department. Learning objectives accompany lesson plans but these are not always related to the knowledge, skills and understanding demanded in the National Curriculum. The current system, therefore, does not provide a secure base for making judgements about pupils' attainment levels and progress, nor is it possible for the department to set targets for individual pupils or for the department as a whole. Although there is a marking policy within the department, it is not usually followed and standards of marking are inconsistent.

A new head of department was recently appointed and the department is moving forwards well with an awareness of what needs to be done. Minutes from meetings show a good focus on raising standards.

Drama

The report on drama is based on a small sample of lessons observed from both key stages, a scrutiny of written work and discussions with teachers and pupils.

The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grades in the GCSE drama examination this year was significantly lower than in previous years. The percentage achieving A* to C grades this year is in line with the national average for 1997. The subject attracts pupils who find written work difficult and results have been adversely affected by course changes in 1997 and 1998 which require 40 percent written work. Before 1997, the course only required practical work.

Attainment in practical work, by the end of both key stages, is higher than the national expectation, while written work, by the end of Key Stage 4, matches the national expectation. Particular strengths are pupils' confidence to move in and out of role, their development of characterisation and ability to work well together. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are good and are used to good effect in the development of the critical process throughout the two key stages. Weaker, is the development of plot in both key stages and written work in Key Stage 4. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is good.

Pupils are making good progress in both key stages and very good progress in Year 9. Pupils are applying their growing knowledge and skills and developing deeper understandings of themselves and others. Particularly good progress is being made in developing a critical awareness.

The quality of teaching is always good and sometimes is very good. Lessons are carefully planned with clear learning objectives. Lessons are challenging and move at a brisk pace with a range of appropriate activities. A particular strength is the use of assessment during lessons which encourages pupils to learn from the performance of others. Attitudes to work are good. Pupils enjoy drama and class relations are positive. Pupils work hard and are prepared to try out new ideas.

The curriculum is being revised for both key stages. The current focus is on practical work with movement and oral work predominating. The department is planning to address the increased course emphasis on written work. There are curriculum links with the work of the English department but these are not sufficiently well developed. The curriculum is enhanced by opportunities for pupils to participate in the year drama clubs, visit the theatre and take part in large and small school productions. The provision for developing pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good. Opportunities are taken to raise relevant and appropriate issues.

Drama is a part of the Creative and Performing Arts Cluster and is efficiently organised. There is a clear policy statement. The department handbook provides guidance and contains units of work. There is an assessment procedure which is not sufficiently systematic to ensure that pupils' attainment and progress can be securely recorded and monitored.

Mathematics

The pupils are attaining in line with national averages at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. In 1997 national data shows the pupils to have achieved very high standards compared with those from similar backgrounds. No comparative data is yet available for 1998.

In the National Curriculum tests in 1997 the proportion of pupils gaining a level 5 and above and a level 6 and above was in line with the national average. In 1997 pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was very high compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In 1998, however, there was a significant decline in the Key Stage 3 results. In 1997 the proportion of pupils gaining levels A*-C in the GCSE examinations was below the national average but in line with it for grades A*-G and pupils made less progress overall in comparison with most of their other subjects. In 1998 there was a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining a grade at A*-C.

Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding in number, algebra, shape and space, and data-handling. Higher attaining pupils deal confidently with the abstract nature of algebra at both key stages and apply their skills well to making and testing generalisations in investigative work. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can round

off numbers to find reasonable estimates of an answer but have greater difficulty when asked to use non-calculator methods to find exact answers using long multiplication or long division. Most pupils can use computer programs efficiently to enhance their learning and are able to access and interrogate data-bases and produce simple spreadsheets.

Numeracy skills are not sound and are particularly weak with middle and lower attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils sometimes also place unnecessary reliance on their calculators. In response to the last inspection, strategies are in place for the development and assessment of mental mathematics. A commercial scheme is being trialled throughout the school and, in addition, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are given the opportunity to attend a numeracy club to improve their skills. Mathematical skills are transferred very successfully to some other areas of the curriculum. In design and technology pupils show a good understanding of units of measurement and give careful attention to accuracy when using them. Pie charts and other graphical representation of data produced in geography are of a high standard. In the coursework produced for science the number work is very good, there are clear graphs with appropriate choice of scales and accurate lines of best fit.

Progress is satisfactory at both key stages but is slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Initially at Key Stage 3, the needs of the highest and lowest attainers are not met within the mixed ability groups. The situation improves somewhat when pupils are setted and those with special educational needs benefit from being taught in smaller groups, although they do not have the in-class support that they also need. Within the other sets higher attainers are often under-challenged at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, all pupils make at least satisfactory progress and many make good or very good progress.

The positive attitude to learning of all pupils ensures that they always meet the challenges that they are presented with. They display a lively interest. They take pride in the presentation of their work. Homework is produced on time. Many take advantage of the opportunities that are available for extra tuition. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other, co-operating well together to find solutions to their problems. Most are able to communicate clearly and confidently and with good humour. If given the opportunity they are willing to help others, as for example the pupils who are assisting with the numeracy club.

About a third of the teaching is outstanding or very good. In the majority of lessons the teaching is at least satisfactory or good. Only a small proportion is unsatisfactory. The main strengths of all the teaching are the secure knowledge, the management of, and relationships with, the pupils and the very good use of homework to reinforce learning and inform teaching. Teachers display a high level of commitment to the pupils. In year 11 a group of pupils of average ability are making above average progress because the teacher provides an extra lesson of mathematics after school each week to support the pupils' desire to succeed. In one of the outstanding lessons the thorough use of questioning and the very effective use of pupils' responses moved the lesson on at a brisk pace and involved all the pupils in their own learning. In another very good lesson it was the practical approach that brought the concept to life, provided sufficient challenge for all pupils in the mixed ability group and prepared them well for their next challenge which was to develop their learning through the use of information technology. In the least satisfactory lessons methodology is poor, planning is weak and learning objectives are not clearly defined. In addition there is a lack of appropriate challenges to meet the needs of all pupils in the group.

On the whole this is an efficient department because the rooms are grouped, resources well-organised and there is easy access to information technology. The most obvious strength of the curriculum is the approach to investigative work which is well structured and provides a secure base in Year 7 on which pupils can build and which results in coursework of a very high quality at the end of Key Stage 4. The department is well-led: there is a commitment to high achievement from the team.

Science

Overall attainment by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with national expectations. National data, however, shows pupils to be performing very well, compared with those from similar backgrounds. This is because of good teaching, a rigorous curriculum and effective assessment.

Attainment in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997 was above national averages, and very high compared to levels attained in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. There was a significant decline in attainment in the tests for 1998. In GCSE the percentage of A*-C grades in 1997 were in line with national averages; there was a significant improvement in the percentage A*-C grades in 1998. The percentage of A*-G grades is consistently high, and the school has regularly entered almost all of the Year 11 cohort. This high entry rate is significantly above the national average. The entry rate in 1998 was 100 percent. GCSE Science results have steadily improved over time. Overall science GCSE results in 1997 were significantly better than those in the school's other subjects. Attainment in scientific investigation is very high at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4.

Learning and progress is good in both key stages. Key factors leading to the good progress are the pupils' strong commitment to learning, and high expectations. Pupils regularly cover considerable amounts of new knowledge each lesson. Understanding improves well, equally so for each of the required areas: living things, materials and physical processes. By the end of Year 9 pupils have reached the level expected for their age, even though at entry many start with below average attainment. Pupils' skills in scientific investigation improve steadily during Key Stage 3, and then further during Key Stage 4. Also literacy and numeracy skills are applied effectively - increasingly so as pupils progress through the school. For example, a lower attaining group in Year 11 needed help to remember all the points from earlier lessons but, even so, worked thoughtfully as they explained some complex effects of gravity and mass. A top Year 9 set maintained a high level of discussion and writing, extending beyond their earlier good work, as they grasped the reasons why some metals are more reactive than others: the accuracy and responsiveness of their thinking was very impressive. Overall, pupils of all abilities make good progress.

Pupils listen attentively, behave well and work with good concentration. They favour the general approach that hard work is set and are willing to make the effort required of them. Work is presented well, and classwork and homework are completed as required. Pupils of all abilities work independently. For example, they can follow the logic of points being made and add their own thoughts effectively. They act safely and sensibly in practical work, and the co-operation between pupils is good. Pupils respect and value the teachers' efforts.

Teaching is mostly good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers are expert in science, and they use a good range of methods such as rigorous questioning, useful practical work and well-managed group work. They judge well what pupils are capable of and plan effectively to meet these needs. Plenty of work is set, and lessons are consistently interesting. Marking is very good, even excellent at times, in that it is regular and detailed and because pupils clearly benefit. Useful homework is regularly set and completion is enforced.

Science is very well led. The staff organise the curriculum thoroughly and have good systems for assessment which are used effectively. There is a strong commitment to improve well-supported by the detailed monitoring of teaching and curriculum. Improvements since the last inspection include a greater consistency of good teaching and better schemes of work. The accommodation is still unsatisfactory: three laboratories are refurbished to a good standard but two others are so small that aspects of work are held back. Pupils still have too few chances to use computers; this is partly due to under-investment and partly to timetabling arrangements which omit to give access to the science department. Some periods each day lose up to 20 minutes of teaching time as pupils transfer to the Annexe.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

At the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. In 1997, 53 percent of pupils gained A*-C grades, compared with 57 percent of pupils gaining A*- C grades nationally. The school's results improved in 1998 with 59 percent of pupils gaining A*- C grades.

At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve satisfactory standards in the skills of drawing, painting, collage, printmaking and three-dimensional work. Pupils' ability to express or record from their imagination and to explore the qualities of materials and basic elements of art in work that is personal to them is well developed. Pupils' direct observational skills are less developed. At Key Stage 4 pupils' work is often imaginative and

exciting. A particular strength is the process of creating a booklet for each project, demonstrating realisation of the theme. Work on the Kew gardens topic in Year 11 provides opportunity for pupils to explore with a variety of media producing some highly effective work.

At Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress as they are introduced to a structured course designed to build and develop understanding and knowledge of visual and tactile elements. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are well adjusted to the environment created for them and they show growing ability in researching, organising and experimenting with resources and materials to develop their ideas. At Key Stage 4, pupils' progress is satisfactory, with higher attaining pupils making good progress. They successfully develop their skills in designing and developing imagery. Pupils evaluate their work and modify it accordingly with the support of their teachers. They learn through experimenting and use their mistakes to good advantage.

Art is a popular subject and pupils apply themselves well to the tasks. Pupils are keen to organise themselves and they generally demonstrate positive attitudes. Relations within groups and between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils take responsibility for their work and they are always keen and interested to explain it to visitors.

Overall standards of teaching are satisfactory and often better. Some very good teaching was observed. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Relationships between teachers and pupils encourage an enthusiastic and supportive atmosphere, which encourages pupils to explore ideas within a creative environment. Subject knowledge demonstrated by teachers is strong. Where teaching is particularly effective, learning intentions are clear and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers provide opportunities for a range of media in two and three dimension and they provide frequent good quality intervention to focus pupils' attention on techniques. In these lessons a range of teaching strategies is employed to encourage the development of creative response to the work. The pace of lessons is good and expectations are high. Where teaching is less effective, it is due to a lack of differentiation in the lower school, particularly in Year 7.

The department is led by an experienced and enthusiastic head of department. There are schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and outline lesson plans, which set out learning intentions, but do not give any indication of methodology. At Key Stage 4 art is taught both as a GCSE option and as part of the Creative and Performing Arts course. The department handbook is a useful document setting out the aims of the department together with a range of information. The two attainment targets are very well integrated. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are in place, but the outcomes are not used to inform future lesson planning. The teachers in the art department work very closely together and there is informal support and advice. The department provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding through visits to galleries, places of interest and through lunchtime clubs. These all contribute to the standards attained by pupils.

The accommodation is satisfactory, although the parquet flooring of the art rooms is inappropriate for batik as if wax is dropped it becomes slippery. Clay use is carefully managed. Resources are generally adequate.

Display of pupils' work, including well-mounted clusters of drawings, paintings and designs serve both to celebrate the school's artistic achievements and to enhance the appearance of the buildings.

Since the previous inspection, examination results have improved. Higher attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 continue to produce quality work that is highly original. Less emphasis is now being placed on the development of observational drawing skills, and rather more emphasis is placed on developing pupils' self confidence in art which enables them to produce bold and exciting designs.

Design and technology

Attainment is broadly in line with national expectations and averages at the ends of both key stages. GCSE examination results in design and technology for 1997 were above the national average. In 1998, results remained good in both Textiles and Resistant Materials, with over 50 percent of pupils achieving A*-C grades. (Textiles 58 percent and Resistant Materials 50 percent).

Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 is at the levels expected nationally at this stage of their studies. Pupils understand how to design, plan and make items. Drawing skills for the majority of pupils are sound although some are not at a high standard at the beginning of Year 7 when pupils enter the school. There is improvement over the key stage. All pupils research and produce interesting ideas that they are able to develop. Pupils know how to proceed and sequence their work. Pupils are confident in using equipment and materials in the different areas of design and technology. They are able to use equipment to cut, shape and finish wood, textiles and plastics safely and the work often reflects high personal standards. The designing of the Aluminium Wall Hanging for the Ecology Project in Year 7 shows pupils able to develop imaginative and creative ideas; the Year 7 Basic Skills Food Quick Biscuits shows sound making skills. Projects such as "The Alphabet Book" in Year 8, the "Door Buzzer" and "Hair Clip Project" in Year 9 enable pupils to attain a secure base of knowledge and skills of a variety of different materials and skills. Sound analytical skills are shown by Year 9 pupils in Food work, such as when "Disassembling a Fruit Pie" and comparing cake mixtures. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are relatively secure in their knowledge, skills and understanding of designing and making.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the levels expected nationally at this stage of their studies. The strengths mentioned in the last inspection report have been continued. Pupils show competence in drawing in projects. The use of graphical techniques to communicate designs as in the Textile Tie Project (and Hat Project) are good, coupled with the good use of colour and attention to detail. Projects are well presented with good research skills and thorough analysis of data. Pupils are attaining particularly well in Textiles at Key Stage 4. Many of the Projects/products are of a high standard with beautifully finished products. (for example The Sixties Hat Project; The Sea Shell Project; Beachwear Project; and Quilted Holdall Project).

Pupils know how their work will be assessed and how to improve. Pupils are articulate in making judgements about their work. Pupils' knowledge and use of specialist vocabulary is sound. In pupils' work there is evidence of research skills, gathering information independently or in co-operation with fellow pupils and using it to generate ideas and solve problems. Pupils with SEN at both key stages are able to produce ideas and develop them to a satisfactory level, albeit with help.

Progress in lessons is good at both key stages in both designing and making and in their understanding of materials and components, systems and control and products and applications. Good gains are being made in skills working with materials in all areas. Pupils strive to produce a good finished product using lunch time sessions if necessary to achieve this.

Higher attainers make sound progress overall, and at Key Stage 4 they make particularly good progress in Textiles. In all areas, pupils consolidate and refine previously learnt skills and knowledge, and acquire new skills. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory to good progress over the key stages. Research skills progress throughout the key stages. The majority of pupils are progressing in producing written work that is clear, readable, uses technical language and is well presented.

Pupils attitudes to their work are good. They respond very well in lessons. Behaviour is very good. This occurs because the pupils trust the judgement of teachers and try to attain the standards put forward. Pupils enjoy the practical work and use tools and equipment confidently and safely. Pupils are able to organise their work and take responsibility for their own personal development.

Teaching is good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of their specialist areas. Lessons are prepared carefully and planning clearly identifies what is to be learnt. The Schemes of Work are carefully followed. Tasks are challenging and structured to offer pupils opportunities to develop their own creativity. Expectations for attainment are high at both Key Stages 3 and 4. There are good discussions between the teacher and individual pupils about their work and the available time is used to best effect. Work is usually marked with supportive annotation, although a few pieces are not always marked in a way that raises aspirations. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on using the technical language of the subject. The use of homework to support learning is satisfactory. Good use is made of previous pupils' work on display to illustrate a range of relevant teaching points enabling pupils to understand what is required. While the department has developed IT usage pupils work does not show extensive use of IT. There is a consistency of approach to the teaching in the department that helps pupils understand the design process. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, fostering a good learning ethos. Special educational needs pupils are well-integrated into the

lessons by helpful teacher intervention.

Overall, the curriculum is well balanced and meets requirements. Assessment systems are efficient and useful, giving pupils a clear idea of how their work will be assessed. They relate accurately to National Curriculum requirements and the majority of pupils understand what will be looked for in their work. Recording and gathering of information that can be passed on to others is not in evidence. The information gathered through assessment is not greatly used to inform curriculum planning.

The department has many strengths; in particular, excellent leadership and an admirable sense of teamwork. The documentation is thorough although development planning needs more detail. Though resources are satisfactory, more textbooks are needed for the different material areas with extra computer hardware and software for intended developments. Accommodation for resistant materials is rather cramped and space is limited when two groups are working together.

The department has continued the good work commented on in the last Ofsted Report. Teachers are planning lessons carefully in all material areas to challenge pupils of different abilities, although there is scope to improve still further. The issue of assessment has been addressed although recording and reporting of pupil achievement still requires attention.

Overall, this is a very strong and ably led team, fostering a sense of enjoyment and purpose among the pupils in its care. It has built upon the positive report from the previous inspection and has the obvious potential to develop its undoubted success still further.

Geography

Attainment in geography, at both key stages, is well in line with national figures and there have been significant improvements in the GCSE results in 1998 on the 1997 results. The department has nearly doubled the percentage of girls achieving A* - C grades. Similarly improvements are identified in Key Stage 3 results. These achievements are in line with those of other subjects. Attainment in lessons observed and recorded in their written or project work, is judged to be always at least satisfactory, and often good.

At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have sound knowledge of their local area, and good understanding of key environment issues, with sound mapwork skills acquired in Year 7. During Year 8, pupils develop good understanding of geomorphological processes, weathering, erosion, glaciation, river formation and flooding. They can effectively interpret evidence from a range of weather maps and atlases. By the end of Year 9, building on knowledge, pupils have developed a very good understanding of global issues, geographical processes, volcanoes and earthquakes, problems associated with aid, trade and development, as well as the distribution and migration of population. Their knowledge of geographical processes, physical and human geography is well deployed in some very good field and project work.

Progress throughout Key Stage 3 is at least sound and often good in relation to ability. Pupils are able to refer to appropriate physical, human and environmental issues. Their knowledge of geographic processes is good. They can extract information and interpret evidence from a range of sources drawing appropriate conclusions. This is well exemplified in their field studies of Leytonstone and Docklands, and their project work on the River Nile and the Brazilian Rainforest. However, the more able pupils are not always offered opportunities to extend their knowledge and develop their potential for investigation and critical evaluation.

At Key Stage 4 pupils are following a new GCSE syllabus which builds on their strengths acquired in Key Stage 3, their knowledge of the urban environment and global development. The new syllabus is already enabling pupils to achieve good results in relation to their capabilities, and is having a significant impact on performance. The decision-making exercise is providing an especially welcome opportunity for pupils to demonstrate their geographic skills and knowledge. Progress throughout Key Stage 4 is always at least sound, and is often good. There is no evidence that mixed ability groups are having any detrimental impact on attainment, so long as the more able pupils are offered challenging opportunities to move ahead at a more rapid pace. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, and there is much enthusiasm for geography. They work effectively with sustained interest and concentration, always well focused on the activity. They

listen and respond well, and are able to articulate their ideas with clarity using appropriate geographic terminology. The quality of presentation, written and graphic skills, is universally good, and pupils take considerable pride in their work.

The quality of teaching has an effective impact on learning, promoting knowledge, skills and understanding. It is nearly always sound, much is good, and in some lessons teaching is very good indeed. Subject knowledge and expertise are good. Lessons are well planned, with a good range of teaching strategies and sound use of resources. Questioning is sound and promotes learning. The pace of lessons varies between classes in the same year group, and is mostly sound or good.

However, there is some evidence of over-reliance on worksheets which do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils, especially the more able, to develop research and enquiry skills. Field studies and project work are strengths of the department and provide stimulating learning opportunities. Homework is set, marked and reviewed regularly, it is an integral part of teaching the subject.

The department has developed rapidly since the last inspection: there are new detailed schemes of work assessment for Key Stage 3 and a new GCSE syllabus for Key Stage 4; and textbooks and resources are being reviewed and brought up to date. However there is still insufficient additional reference material in the department and school library.

History

This is a strong department which provides pupils with a rich diet of historical experience. The strong leadership and effective teaching found in the previous inspection remain.

At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment meet the national expectations for this age. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to investigate source materials and draw reliable conclusions. They display high standards in historical writing techniques. Although GCSE results were well below national standards in 1997, with 31 percent of pupils reaching grades A*-C, the quality of the work seen in Key Stage 4, and the GCSE results in 1998 and in the years prior to 1997, show levels of attainment by the end of Year 11 to be in line with national expectations. The department has carried out analysis of recent exam results and has prepared detailed revision packs for pupils; pupils in Year 10 have also been set into two broad ability sets so that tasks and resources can be more sharply targeted.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are making good, often very good, progress in the development of historical knowledge and skills throughout Key Stage 3. The knowledge, skills and understanding which have been carefully nurtured at Key Stage 3 are being further developed at Key Stage 4. The use of learning materials and tasks which are effectively matched to pupils' abilities enables them to make significant progress in their understanding of historical processes.

Pupils in both key stages show very positive attitudes to learning. They work carefully and diligently at their tasks. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. They come to lessons properly equipped and ready to work. They take pride in their finished work, for example in Year 7 pupils have designed Romulus and Remus cartoons which show impressive skills of presentation. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are very good. They concentrate well and above all become independent learners through work in historical enquiry on, for example, Olaudah Equiano where work is of a high standard.

Teaching is predominantly good, often very good, and is a strength of the department. All teaching demonstrates secure knowledge and understanding of the topics taught. The curriculum is delivered with skill and enthusiasm. Lessons have clear objectives, an atmosphere is established in which learning can take place, activities challenge and motivate pupils, and there is provision for the wide range of attainment in the class. Teachers use a wide range of questioning techniques to develop pupils' historical understanding and further develop their oracy skills. The department has established an effective balance between imparting historical information and prompting pupils to become active enquirers. Classroom management skills are very good. Homework is regularly set and tasks are appropriate and related to the work already done in class. Extra

help in lessons is well used when it is available, but there is not enough.

The history curriculum is well organised, with well-planned schemes of work. Resources are well managed and effectively used, and accommodation is adequate. Displays of pupils' work and other materials, for example those celebrating Black History Month, are excellent. There is a programme of educational visits such as to a play adapted from Mulk Raj Anand's novel about Indian soldiers on the Western Front. This is a well managed department with a clear sense of purpose and direction.

Information technology

Standards of attainment in IT at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 are below the levels expected nationally. Years 7, 8 and 10 pupils in the discrete IT courses are competent at accessing software; this includes the use of word processing, desk-top publishing, spreadsheets and data bases, but skills in control work are limited. Pupils understand communicating and handling information (Programme of Study 2). They select and use a range of IT equipment and software efficiently to create quality presentations. Better attaining pupils have good retention of IT knowledge and skills and much independence in lessons. The results in the GNVQ Information Technology Key Skills (Edexcel) examination in 1997 were good with all 13 candidates entered obtaining the qualification. Special needs pupils were amongst those entered. Pupils undertaking the GNVQ Foundation course can analyse the requirements of a specific task, taking into account the information required and the purpose for which it is needed, and deciding how the information will be presented and interpreted. Their use of graphical skills, spreadsheets, and word-processing is satisfactory.

Rates of progress are unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is due to restricted provision at these stages. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the Year 7 discrete course and the short course in Year 8. Progress in basic skills in text and image based communication, data processing and spreadsheeting are acquired. At Key Stage 4, Year 10 pupils make good progress in the GNVQ course. Many pupils at both key stages give of their own time to studying IT outside lessons by attending the computer club which is offered at many different times. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them by the teacher.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are well motivated to learn and show high levels of concentration. They can work confidently with software. Pupils are supportive of each other and good working relationships exist with the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs show good powers of concentration. Pupils at Year 10 are particularly happy that they obtained a place on the GNVQ IT course and are keen to progress.

Teaching is always satisfactory and is sometimes good. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and presentations are clear. Lessons are generally well structured with a suitable balance of time for instruction and for pupils to work independently. Good use is made of the overhead projector. The teaching programmes for the discrete IT course in Year 7 and short course in Year 8 are well planned and prepared with good quality worksheets available. The teacher has high expectations for all the pupils; this can be seen in the challenge present in the tasks provided. This was evident, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where the pupils were being encouraged to work out the costing of a computer room design using a spreadsheet; this was also the case in a Year 10 lesson when pupils were introduced to spreadsheet formula. The support given to individual pupils in lessons by the teacher has had some effect on helping to develop pupils confidence in IT. A brisk pace is set in the better lessons. Examples of good quality pupils' work is displayed in the specialist room.

There is a lack of consistent use of IT across the curriculum for all pupils. In Year 8 there is only a short course in IT; in Year 9 there is no discrete IT course. At Key Stage 4 pupils not taking the GNVQ course in IT at Year 10 do not receive their full entitlement through other curricular areas. Schemes of work for discrete IT are well thought out in an endeavour to offer a worthwhile IT experience in the short time available. Procedures for assessing attainment are satisfactory in Year 7 and Year 10, but inadequate overall. While cross-curricular teaching is planned for there is very limited evidence of pupils using IT to enhance work effectively in other subjects and the situation remains that many departments have yet to incorporate the use of computers into their teaching. IT is sometimes applied effectively in Geography field trip projects, Maths database unit, use of word processing in DT and English. Some of this has been carried out at home. IT is

not used at all in some subject areas. Learning skills, outside formal IT lessons, are not greatly enhanced by the use of information technology. So there is a lack of consistent use of IT across the curriculum for all pupils. Pupils use the research facilities of the CD Rom located in the Library. There is good access to the IT facilities via clubs for pupils during early morning, lunch time and after school.

While some staff training has been carried out in the past, there have been insufficient opportunities for staff to recap and extend their IT skills so that integration in curriculum areas can be carried forward with confidence.

The existing computer room is pleasant, well resourced and provide a pleasant learning environment. There is, however, insufficient room space, hardware and software for the IT National Curriculum requirements to be delivered. While the IT room is used for Information Technology or Business Studies lessons, there is not easy access to computer rooms by other subject specialisms. The school is aware that there is some ageing equipment around the school in different departments.

Since the last inspection new up-to-date hardware and software has been purchased. The department is well-coordinated: new schemes of work offering more breadth have been produced, a new network has been set up and IT is now established in the school curriculum. Many interesting developments have taken place in the school including: a study experience visit to Eurodisney in Paris planned for February 1999; a web site on the internet; and E mail contact with a school in Germany. There is a good ethos for learning. However, National Curriculum IT legal requirements are not being fully implemented. Pupils in Year 10 are not receiving adequate IT input. Pupils are not attaining all the targets set as part of the National Curriculum especially in aspects of Control and measurement. Programmes of Study are not being covered in enough detail - many because of inadequate lesson time being given to the subject.

Modern Languages

French, German and Spanish

In Year 7 all pupils study French. A second language is added in Year 8 from a choice of German, Spanish or Urdu. Pupils must choose one of these languages, but may choose two, to study for GCSE in Key Stage 4.

In all three languages standards are in line with the average at the end of Key Stage 3. There are no significant variations across the four attainment targets, but speaking and writing are slightly the stronger. By the end of Key Stage 3 the pupils can answer questions about such topics as: their families, the area where they live, holidays and travel, and school and the subjects they learn. Pupils listen attentively to the teacher talking or to audio tapes. When speaking, the pupils develop their skills from single word responses to some good conversation work involving a number of exchanges, and they make good attempts at correct pronunciation. The pupils try hard with their written work. Average and higher attaining pupils produce good examples of extended writing such as letters, accounts and descriptions of holidays which have accurate grammar including agreement of adjectives and the use of different tenses for verbs.

Attainment is above average in all three languages at the end of Key Stage 4. In the 1998 GCSE examinations the A*-C results in French were above the national averages and those in Spanish and German were well above. There is a smaller entry for Spanish and this includes a number of higher attaining dual linguists. Pupils build on the sound base established in Key Stage 3 as preparation for their examination and re-visit such topics as: booking in to hotels, shops and shopping, descriptions of people and places, and school and jobs. The pupils were preparing for their spoken presentation to the teachers during the inspection and some quite sophisticated conversations were heard. The good level of written work found at the end of Key Stage 3 is further developed in Key Stage 4 and a good range of imaginative and descriptive writing is used.

Starting from a base of general below average attainment, the pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3, and by the end of the key stage standards are in line with the average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment. Overall the pupils develop a sound base of understanding, oral and writing skills by the end of the key stage. In Key Stage 4 the pupils continue to make good progress, building on the basic skills gained previously and developing a wider range of written and spoken language.

The pupils' behaviour in class and attitudes to work are invariably very good. The relationships between pupils, and with their teachers, are excellent, and this makes a strong contribution to the climate for work in the classroom and to raising attainment. The pupils work well in pairs and groups and show respect for the efforts of others. Care for the standard of presentation of written work is a feature of the subject. The very good attitudes to work seen previously continue in this key stage and the pupils show increasing independence as learners, and very good capacity for personal study.

Teaching in Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and in over one-third of the lessons it is good or very good. It is characterised by good pupil and classroom management, and appropriate pace and challenge to the activities. In some lessons the range of teaching strategies in use is rather limited and the pupils are rather passive in the learning process restricting their opportunities to use the language. The very good teaching makes use of a range of activities to involve the pupils which include imaginative use of the overhead projector, pair and group work, music, listening tasks and written work including poetry. This was well demonstrated in a Year 8 German lesson where brisk pace, pupil involvement, appropriate challenge and a range of activities produced an enjoyable lesson with very good outcomes.

The teaching of all three languages is good overall at Key Stage 4. All of the German lessons observed were good. The lessons all show good pupil control and most have careful planning. The teachers all show a high level of commitment to the pupils and put on extra lessons and individual teaching where necessary. All of the teachers have good subject knowledge. The teachers have high expectations of pupil performance in all of the languages, which raise levels of attainment. The use of IT to enrich the curriculum further is not satisfactory, and this is acknowledged by the staff who are taking steps to develop it. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory the lessons planning is not focused on the outcomes and gains for the pupils, and the time is too dominated by the teacher's contribution to allow for gains for the pupils in their preparation for examinations.

The curriculum provides very good equality of access. There are satisfactory schemes of work in place, and that for Spanish is being revised to accommodate a new course being taught. The department has a very useful e-mail link with a school in Germany. A number of school trips abroad take place which enrich both the pupils' language and their cultural experience. There are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment which include all the attainment targets and realistic recording of levels achieved. The pupils usually know what level they are achieving and assessment is being used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to set pupil targets. The department is starting to build up portfolios of work and exemplars of national curriculum levels. The head of department has been away from school for some time and the second in department is providing very good leadership and management in her absence. There are few opportunities available for monitoring and supporting teaching in the classroom. She has been well supported by her colleagues who give generously of their time and are committed to the welfare and education of the pupils.

The modern languages has maintained the successes reported in the last inspection.

Urdu

By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are well above national standards. Pupils make significant progress in Years 8 and 9.

By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are also well above national standards. GCSE results for Urdu in 1998 were below the level achieved in 1997 but well above national averages. 94 percent of pupils entered gained grades A*-C in 1997 compared to a national average of just over 50 percent. 78 percent of pupils gained grades A*-C in Urdu in 1998, well above the average for the school.

In Speaking and Listening, skills are well developed. Pronunciation is good and pupils give extended replies when prompted. The Urdu Club develops pupils' confidence in speaking within smaller groups. Higher attaining pupils take part in conversations in the target language on topics of interest such as marriage and festivals. Pupils read fluently in class. Written work is sound.

Attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are well behaved and highly motivated. They take an interest and pride in their work. Relationships between pupils are good. Pupils listen to each others' views and respect others' opinions. Pupils collaborate in pairs and groups.

The quality of teaching is good. 75 percent of lessons observed were good and 25 percent satisfactory. Lessons were well prepared. Clear learning objectives were set. Explanations and instructions were clear. Appropriate extension activities were set for high achieving pupils and pupils with SEN. Lessons gave satisfactory coverage of all four skill areas and moved at a fast, sometimes rushed pace. Good order was maintained in all lessons observed. Pupils were kept on task throughout.

The Modern Foreign Languages Department is supportive of the development and promotion of Urdu. The teaching staff is knowledgeable and experienced although unqualified. The limited resources are used well, although there are no facilities for IT.

Music

By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is above national averages. Pupils have good knowledge, understanding and practical application of the seven musical elements. They reach good standards in composing and performing. Higher attaining pupils compose imaginative work creating variations on a theme, varying tempo and rhythm. Listening and appraising skills are well developed. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is good. GCSE was introduced as an after school class in 1996. Five pupils took GCSE in music for the first time in 1998 and all gained grades A*-B.

Pupils can also opt to study music as part of the Creative and Performing Arts syllabus. Pupils' attainment on the music discipline of the Creative and Performing Arts course at Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils work on their individual and group responses to an individual theme. They produce exciting work, using their knowledge of a range of styles. They explore ideas and compose their responses, which they perform confidently to other pupils in class.

Pupils make good progress through the programmes of study at Key Stage 3. Of particular note is the progress pupils make relating music to its social, historical and cultural context, for example the Blues project in Year 9. Overall, pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4, some pupils make very good progress. This is in part due to the work diary that pupils keep as part of the course. They evaluate their work, describing what went well and not so well and they consider how they might bring about improvements.

Teaching is never less than good and often very good. The subject knowledge and music skills demonstrated are very good. Planning is generally detailed. Higher and lower attaining pupils are identified and are given appropriate tasks. Management of lessons is usually efficient. Pace, timing and use of resources are good. Where teaching is very good, there is brisk and confident leadership, clear purpose to the lesson which is shared and understood by all, very good discipline and organisational skills. Instrumental work is well integrated into the lessons.

Music is well managed, with great attention to detail. There are comprehensive schemes of work and detailed lesson plans. The curriculum is enhanced through the provision of peripatetic instrumental teaching and this is well integrated into class music. A variety of musical clubs is held during the lunchtimes, these include choir, steel band, orchestra, brass group and wind band. At the time of the inspection, one instrumental teacher was actively involved with the wind band. Pupils have the opportunity to perform their compositions at the school concert, which is very popular with pupils and their parents.

The teaching accommodation is adequate in size, although the doors to the practice rooms do not have windows so it is not possible to observe practice or instrumental teaching without entering the rooms. Resources are adequate, although there are few opportunities for pupils to use technology. The school is aware of this and has started to purchase the appropriate hardware and software.

Since the previous inspection, much work has been undertaken to develop assessment procedures for assessing

pupils' work at the end of a unit of work. Records of pupils' attainments are often noted during lessons and it is evident from observing organisation of groups and tasks set for pupils that these are used as a basis for planning.

All pupils at Key Stage 4 take the creative and performing arts course, which incorporates art and design, drama, dance and music. Each pupil chooses to study two of the disciplines and makes a personal response to the identified theme. The course is well managed and documented by the head of department and as was identified in the previous report, the overall coherence of the programme is good.

Physical education

Pupils' attainment is below national expectations at both Key Stages 3 and 4. While a significant minority of pupils meets the standard expected in a limited range of activities, fewer than expected attain the very highest standards. However, the Year 8 athletics' team won the borough championship for the second year running. Many pupils under-achieve and especially the more able. In 1998 high-grade passes at GCSE were well below 1997 national averages. There has been a decline since the last inspection report when standards were found to be satisfactory.

At Key Stage 3, the standard of games' skills is below expectations. Most pupils acquire basic ball handling techniques but have not learnt how to apply them to a game. Their planning and evaluation skills are weak. Pupils have little knowledge or understanding of health related fitness. All pupils know and practise the rules of safety. At Key Stage 3 pupils take dance within the creative and performing arts cluster. The majority of pupils attain standards in line with expectations with a significant majority above. They move with clarity, shape and some expression. Lower attaining pupils understand the principle of movement, use basic technical language and know how to improve the quality of their work. Planning and evaluation skills are of a good standard.

In PE at Key Stage 4, pupils take leisure activities led by instructors in an extended school day. Although this is an improvement in terms of fitness since the time of the last inspection, they are not a satisfactory substitute for a coherent educational programme taught by teachers. Pupils can opt for a GCSE course in expressive arts, within which they can choose dance. Pupils' attainment in the dance module is above course requirements. Pupils skilfully choreograph dances with a variety of stimuli, including poems, pictures and music. Most move with confidence, poise, expression and an understanding of dynamics.

On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is below national expectations. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in PE lessons but, overall, progress over the key stages is unsatisfactory. Contributory factors include; time lost travelling to and from the annexe, limited teaching strategies and low teacher morale. In addition, the inadequate provision for extra-curricular activities, inter-school team sports and other activities does not encourage pupils to make good progress or attain high standards. Parental concerns in this matter are fully justified. In dance, pupils make good progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding. In Year 8, pupils are using basic technical language such as 'tension' and 'counter-tension' with understanding. They devise sequences showing the effect of free-fall and how this can be used to improve dynamic dance qualities in a variety of ways. High attaining pupils in Year 10 know how to extend, develop and improve their movements by critical evaluation, careful observation and constructive feedback.

Throughout the school, pupil response is good. Pupils' participation, attendance, motivation, concentration and behaviour enable pupils to learn quickly when sufficiently challenged. Dance is very popular. The pupils thoroughly enjoy their PE sessions at the leisure centre, where attendance in Year 11 is voluntary. Although only one third of pupils participate, attendance is up on last year when it was compulsory. Pupils are willing to practise and persevere even when conditions are unsatisfactory. The attitude of some pupils in PE is insufficiently serious, as they see lessons as a leisure break from academic studies. Pupils of all ethnic groups mix well and treat one another with the utmost respect. The quality of collaborative work in dance is high. When given the opportunity to take responsibility pupils respond well. In basketball a group of Year 10 pupils enthusiastically run a club for younger pupils.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in dance at both key stages. Teachers deal sensitively, sympathetically and respectfully with religious and cultural requirements. In PE, teaching is secure on subject knowledge, organisation and management of pupils and resources. Tasks set usually match the needs of pupils ensuring sound quality of learning. However, in two out of six lessons, where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupil progress is poor. Pupils are inactive for much of the time and teaching strategies are insufficient to overcome lack of space. The full range of National Curriculum requirements are not covered such as, planning and evaluation and teaching methods are limited to the 'command.' Consequently, too few intellectual demands are made on pupils. In dance teaching is consistently good at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in one in five lessons very good. Lesson objectives are shared and reinforced regularly giving direction and purpose. Subject knowledge is used to good effect to develop new material, to build on pupils' previous knowledge and to intervene strategically. Individuals are closely monitored and pupils know what they have to do to improve. A wide range of effective teaching methods and strategies effect good pupil progress. Emphasis on quality work is effective in setting high expectations. Occasionally, insufficient time is allowed to develop and consolidate new work.

Statutory curriculum requirements are not met at Key Stage 4. One specialist PE teacher is insufficient to deliver the requirements of the National Curriculum. This seriously limits both curricular and extra-curricular provision. No other teacher helps with PE. Accommodation, although unsatisfactory, is not used to best advantage. Until recently, deteriorating standards since the last inspection have not been sufficiently well monitored evaluated and addressed by senior management. Strategic planning is weak. Day-to-day administration is sound and assessment procedures now meet with statutory requirements.

Religious education

Pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 meet the national expectations for this age. Pupils are becoming secure in their knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the principal religions represented in Britain. They are beginning to grasp the inner meanings of religious practices and are learning to use religious vocabulary confidently. Pupils are willing to explore religious ideas and some show a mature awareness of the role of religious values in society. Attainment in the Key Stage 4 core course meets national expectations in terms of the development of knowledge, skills and understanding of aspects covered. However, the time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient and teachers lack time for in-depth coverage of the syllabus.

The majority of pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, are making distinct progress, both over time and within individual lessons. This is evidenced by the acquisition of new knowledge and a consolidation of the old. Pupils value the subject and this is helping them to develop their understanding of how religion relates to life as well as their knowledge of the distinctive features of religious traditions. Opportunities are given for pupils to question and apply religious ideas to contemporary life and they show an increasing confidence in the use of religious terms and language.

Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They willingly follow teachers' instructions and directions. Pupils in both key stages enjoy answering questions and many are willing to pose thoughtful questions of each other or of the teacher. Behaviour is excellent and pupils co-operate well with each other and with their teachers. Pupils take pride in their work and readily respond to challenge.

Teaching is almost entirely good. Teachers display confidence with their subject matter, which they approach with enthusiasm and rigour. They adopt a questioning approach to religious education and present it to pupils as something of relevance to their lives. Teachers value pupils' contributions and expect them to take the subject seriously. Lessons are well planned and resources effectively used. The department places good emphasis on accurate religious terminology, toleration and respect for others' beliefs. Extra help in lessons is effectively used. Homework is regularly set and tasks are related to the work already done in class. Classroom relationships are positive and warm.

This is a well managed department with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Since the last inspection curriculum provision has been developed and now meets statutory requirements. Time allocated to the subject in Key

Stage 4 is below the national recommendations, although all pupils follow a course in religious education which is based on the locally-agreed syllabus. Display of pupils' work is excellent. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, the curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The team comprised 12 inspectors attending for a total of 49 days. During the inspection 195 lessons, 29 registration sessions, all assemblies and a range of other activities were inspected. The team spent a total of 133.8 hours observing lessons; 80 hours were spent observing Key Stage 3 lessons and 53.8 hours those at Key Stage 4. In addition, considerable time was spent scrutinising pupils' work.

The registered inspector interviewed the governing body, and separate interviews were conducted with the four governors who chair committees, as well as the chairman of the governing body. The headteacher, all heads of department and heads of year, senior teachers and deputy headteachers were interviewed. Some non-teaching staff were also interviewed. A considerable amount of documentation was provided by the school and this was analysed both before and during the inspection.

The inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils. Discussions took place with pupils during the course of the inspection. All available written work from a representative sample of three pupils from each year was examined. Prior to the inspection, 22 parents attended an evening meeting held by the registered inspector to seek their views. There were 242 responses to a questionnaire sent to parents seeking their views on specific school issues.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y11	616	10	128	228

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

38

Number of pupils per qualified teacher

15

Education support staff (Y7 - Y11)

Total number of education support staff

9

Total aggregate hours worked each week

268

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

68

Average teaching group size:

KS3

25.7

KS4

23.6

Financial data

Financial year:

1997

	£
Total Income	1601660
Total Expenditure	1559889
Expenditure per pupil	2536.40
Balance brought forward from previous year	47573

Balance carried forward to next year	89344
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PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

616

Number of questionnaires returned:

242

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	15	62	9	11	2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	28	56	7	5	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	18	49	16	10	5
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24	57	10	6	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	34	51	6	7	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	36	49	2	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	43	44	7	3	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	36	51	6	5	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	32	49	13	4	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	42	46	9	2	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	41	42	9	3	5

Other issues raised by parents

15 parents raised extra issues on their questionnaires; two were concerned about the provision for mathematics but otherwise there was no pattern in complaints. At the parents' meeting, parents found the school to be excellent overall. Some reservations were expressed about the school's communication with parents and standards in mathematics and physical education.