INSPECTION REPORT

WILDERN SCHOOL

Hedge End, Southampton

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116414

Headteacher: Mr Jeffery Threlfall

Reporting inspector: Rose Godfrey
OIN : 2047

Dates of inspection: 15 to 17 May 2000

Inspection number: 184957

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wildern School Wildern Lane Hedge End Southampton
Postcode:	S030 4EJ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Noonan
Date of previous inspection:	13 March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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- Teaching is very good and helps raise pupils' levels of attainment.
- Methods used to gather information about and analyse pupils' progress are very good and ensure that pupils continue to do as well as they can.
- Relationships are very good, at all levels, encouraging pupils to work hard and to become confident learners.
- Management systems, including monitoring and analysis to check on the quality of the school's current work, are very effective and ensure continual improvement.

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- Pupils could achieve even higher standards in science national tests at the end of Year 9, particularly in comparison with results achieved by the same pupils in English and mathematics.
- Although parents receive information about their child's progress in a variety of ways, the comments on reports are often not sufficiently subject specific.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wildern School is a large co-educational comprehensive community school educating 1462 pupils aged 11 to 16. The school is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. The pupils come from suburban communities in Eastleigh on the outskirts of Southampton. Compared to the national picture pupils' backgrounds are relatively affluent. One hundred and forty five pupils are eligible for free school meals, this is about half of the average for all schools nationally. Two per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are seventeen pupils for whom English is an additional language, including three who receive additional support. The pupil population includes a wide range of ability and taken as a whole, is average. Four hundred and forty-six pupils have special educational needs, which is much higher than the national average. Many of these pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties but there are a few with more complex needs. Eleven pupils have statements, this is low, about one third of the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wildern is a very good school, which has established an excellent climate for learning. Levels of attainment are rising and pupils make very good progress by the time they leave the school. The very good teaching, the very positive attitudes to work and the strength of relationships at all levels are all contributory factors. Very strong and imaginative leadership, shared values and a common purpose all create a school committed to high and continually rising standards. Significant improvements have been achieved since the last inspection. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership of the headteacher, senior managers and governors is well focused and effective; this provides a clear sense of direction and ensures a staff who are committed to high standards and improvement.
- Teaching is very good and helps raise pupils' levels of attainment.
- Methods used to gather information about and analyse pupils' progress are very good and ensure that pupils continue to do as well as they can.
- Relationships are very good, at all levels, encouraging pupils to work hard and to become confident learners.
- Management systems, including monitoring and analysis to check on the quality of the school's current work, are very effective and ensure continual improvement.

What could be improved

- Pupils could achieve even higher standards in science national tests at the end of Year 9, particularly in comparison with results achieved by the same pupils in English and mathematics.
- Although parents receive information about their child's progress in a variety of ways, the comments on reports are often not sufficiently subject specific.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall the school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1995. GCSE results have increased at a faster rate than nationally. The quality of teaching is significantly better. Strong support for individual pupil development has been maintained. A significant factor in promoting improvement has been a project to encourage effective learning ['Ready to Work, Willing to Learn] involving all sections of the school. Among its consequences have been the student planner and a new system which emphasises rewards. Much more use is made of information about pupils' achievements to improve their learning and to raise standards. Teachers set challenging targets for each pupil based on this information. Teacher expectations have risen and all staff are very aware of the importance of equipping pupils with good basic skills.

Most of the areas for action identified in the last inspection have been tackled successfully. The school now has an excellent strategic plan. Governors are fully involved in policy making, educational and financial planning and the governing body is very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Research and analysis to provide information about the school's current performance is now very good and much effective action is taken in response to findings. Curriculum leaders have greater responsibility for ensuring that good practice is identified, shared and improves provision. A broader curriculum is now offered and the school also meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11. The school still does not ensure that every pupil experiences a daily act of collective worship. Very good progress has been made in improving accommodation. High quality display is provided throughout the school, which provides a very attractive learning environment.

The very high quality of the school's strategic planning means that the school is well placed to bring about further improvements in its provision and in the standards pupils achieve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in national tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 Tests	C	A	B	D
GCSE examinations	C	A	A	A

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Standards of attainment in the 1999 national tests for 14 year olds are above the average for all schools nationally when results for English, mathematics and science are combined. However, there is considerable variation in the performance of the individual subjects. The highest standards are achieved in English where attainment is

well above national averages. In mathematics, where attainment is above the national average, performance has been more consistent over the last three years. Although in science standards were close to the national average in 1999, the results were not as good as those achieved by the same pupils in English and mathematics. The trend in the school's combined results matches the national trend quite closely. The 1999 national test results are not as good as those achieved by similar schools.

GCSE results have improved significantly in the last two years and are now well above the national average. The trend in the school's average GCSE total points score per pupil was above the national trend between 1995 and 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more higher grades (A* to C) and those gaining five or more grades at all levels (A* to G) are both above national averages. These results also compare very favourably with standards in similar schools. The school was particularly successful in ensuring that all pupils achieved at least one GCSE grade (A* to G) in 1999. This compares very favourably with both national averages and achievements of similar schools.

In 1999 better GCSE results were achieved in art and design, geography, physical education and religious education than in other subjects. Pupils performed well in mathematics where results were above the national average. In science pupils also achieved results above the national average in 1999. In English results were close to the national average and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher grades of A*, A and B was higher than in 1998. Most subjects are making a significant contribution to raising pupils' achievements but standards in German could be improved. Pupils make good progress in literacy skills and satisfactory progress in number skills.

Work seen during the inspection confirms improvement in standards achieved by all pupils. In Years 7 to 9 levels of challenge were high, particularly in science, and many pupils responded well. Pupils achieve well, many demonstrating high levels of achievement, with good progress evident. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages and their achievements are good. Pupils make excellent progress in Years 10 and 11 and their achievements in GCSE are very high in comparison to similar schools.

When pupils enter the school their levels of prior attainment are broadly average. The ability profile of pupils entering the school is rising year on year. The school's targets for 2000 and 2001 include an expectation of continued improvement. The school uses its very good information on pupil performance and the regular review of pupils' individual targets to support its effective target setting processes. This is an important element in the school's rising achievement patterns, because it means that the targets which are set are higher than would be expected when compared with pupils' attainment on entry to the school. The school is consistently achieving the challenging targets it sets for itself for all age groups, for both boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are keen to learn and demonstrate their loyalty to the school by working hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are high in lessons. There is a calm, good humoured atmosphere around the school. Incidences of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils show respect for people and property.

Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good and very positive relationships at all levels are a key factor in securing the excellent learning climate.
Attendance	Attendance has remained good and is above the national average for secondary schools. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.

The school has worked hard to promote a positive work ethic amongst pupils. This has been an important contributory factor in improving results. Older pupils are aware of their responsibility to provide good role models for younger pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	n/a

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

The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is higher than the national average level. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons seen. It was very good and sometimes excellent in 41 per cent of lessons and good in a further 37 per cent. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching was insignificant. Teaching quality was slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in year 10 observation of Year 11 lessons were limited by GCSE examinations. Excellent teaching was observed in English, mathematics and science. High expectations of pupils at all levels of attainment meant that teachers used resources imaginatively to provide challenging activities for pupils. Teachers used their very good subject knowledge to question pupils carefully, probing their knowledge and helping them improve their understanding.

Pupils learn well and make very good progress, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils make good progress in lessons because of skilled teaching and effective in-class support from learning support assistants working closely with subject specialists. High levels of enthusiasm on the part of both teachers and pupils improve learning. Most pupils have good concentration spans and work with determination.

Literacy is well taught. The progress of pupils with literacy difficulties is closely scrutinised and they make very good progress. Most pupils develop and enjoy independent reading habits. There are very good opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes and at length across a number of subjects. The use of number and numeracy skills across the curriculum is sound. The school recognises that the numeracy policy needs updating.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum has good breadth and balance and meets requirements. All pupils have equal access to learning opportunities throughout their time in school. The school

	provides a wide range of out of school activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school identifies pupils with individual needs well. Very good support is provided for improving basic skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good support is provided and pupils who have been helped are using the English language well. They are able to socialise successfully and are making sound progress.

Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Individuals are valued, their beliefs respected and pupils feel that they matter. The school makes very good provision for pupils social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very good level of care and support for all its pupils. Parents and pupils appreciate the secure environment that has been created. Child protection procedures are fully met.

The school meets the legal requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. In particular the school has developed an imaginative approach towards the Key Stage 4 curriculum and extra curricular activities by providing a wide range of relevant vocational courses, AS level in drama and accreditation for key skills. Out of lessons various departments offer "clinics" for pupils of all abilities as well as cultivating pupils' individual interests.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led. The headteacher, senior managers and staff have a shared commitment to pursuing the school's clear aims and objectives. Arrangements for strategic educational and financial planning are very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well informed and have very good arrangements for financial control. With the exception of the daily act of collective worship they ensure that the school fulfils its statutory obligations.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Systems of evaluation are firmly established which include individual pupils and teachers as well as departmental and whole school performance. The headteacher, governors and staff have a very good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to address issues.

The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is very good. Resources are allocated efficiently and used well. The principles of best value are applied well.

The school is currently developing its performing arts facilities through the building of specialist accommodation and acquisition of new equipment. This will continue the improvement of school provision and enable further development of the school's strong links with the local community. The school received the national School's Curriculum Award in 2000 in recognition for its work with its local community. Given the significant improvement in standards and the very good quality of education, the school provides very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
• The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best • Pupils make good progress in school • The school helps pupils become mature and responsible. • The teaching is good • Pupils like school and mix well • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem • Student planners	• The information they receive about how their child is getting on • That the school works closely with parents • Some aspects of homework

Overall parents are positive about the school and what is provided for their children. Parents' views about homework are mixed. In particular, parents are not always sure what homework has been set. The inspection team finds that the recording of homework could be better. Inspectors agree with the parents that are not happy with the detail they receive about how their child is getting on. The comments on pupils' progress in subjects given in their reports are frequently too general and relate to organisational matters rather than their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

The inspectors do not agree with those parents who say that the school does not work closely with them. The school is keen to get parents' views. They value parents' comments on pupils' reports and the help they provide in supporting their child's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership of the headteacher, senior managers and governors is well focused and effective; this provides a clear sense of direction and ensures a staff who are committed to high standards and improvement.

1. The headteacher, governors and other key staff provide strong and imaginative leadership; this is one of the key reasons which underpin the recent improvements at the school. The headteacher brings a very clear vision of what sort of school Wildern should be and identifies very clear direction for its development. Governors, other senior managers, staff and pupils all share this vision. Imaginative initiatives raise the school above the mundane to a realm where the local community, parents, pupils and staff work hard for the benefit of all concerned. Very good relationships, care for the individual and a commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all ensure that the school values are a reality and are indicative of the excellent school ethos.

2. There is an emphasis on consultation, which engages all in working towards improving attainment levels in line with the school's recently revised aims. Groups, like the school council and 'Wildern Listeners', which include pupils and staff improvement working groups ensure that all are involved in school improvement. The headteacher's very good management, high expectations and professional relationships with staff and pupils sets standards for the whole school and secures commitment to the achievement of these high expectations. Staff and pupils are committed to learning and have high expectations. This ensures that pupils achieve their best and try to do better. Teachers' know their subjects and how to teach them well. The upward trend in the standards achieved by its pupils is just one way in which the school has been successful in fulfilling these aims.

3. The school is very successful in achieving what it sets out to do and is always looking to improve further. The school has an excellent strategic plan which is supporting the improvement strategies. The well formulated plan identifies a small but well focussed group of priorities for the school's development and improvement. The targets in the school's development plan are challenging but achievable. All areas of the school have contributed to the plan by identifying specific strategies that will enable all staff to contribute to effective implementation. A particular strength of the plan is the consistency that has been achieved from all who have contributed to it. The very clear and useful criteria for measuring success also facilitate regular monitoring of progress supporting implementation and feedback to managers at all levels. This plan, which is a model of good practice, has been a very effective response to weaknesses in school planning identified in the previous inspection.

4. Significant improvements have also been achieved in the role undertaken by the governing body since the last inspection. The governing body has reviewed the way in which it operates and it is now very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. The school now has a strong and effective governing body that shares the vision for high standards and raised achievements. Governors are involved in school matters through a range of committees; their duties are performed conscientiously and effectively. The headteacher and senior managers provide governors with full information about all aspects of the school, which they use to help them make decisions. Governors have a clear strategic view for the school's development and effectively monitor its activities. They are involved in strategic planning through their

contributions to the school's self review process. They have a monitoring role, each attached to a specific department. Staff and governors recognise the school's successes and what still needs further work.

5. Strategic management of the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection following the appointment of a new headteacher. The Headteacher and senior management team provide very effective leadership in the school, promoting a shared commitment to raising standards and to school improvement. School strategic planning, identifying targets for improvement, monitoring procedures and the use of resources, contributes very effectively to promoting pupils' learning and what they can achieve. The quality of teaching, approaches to teamwork and links with the community have all improved significantly.

6. The strategic leadership of the Headteacher, senior management team and governing body is very effective at fostering a school community where there are shared values, positive relationships and a common purpose. This has contributed significantly to improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning, levels of attainment and the overall excellent ethos evident within the school.

Teaching is very good and helps raise pupils' levels of attainment.

7. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The majority of lessons are characterised by effective planning and preparation, good classroom organisation, a brisk pace and clear learning objectives shared with pupils at the start and revisited, consolidated or reviewed at the end. Appropriate homework is set which reinforces and extends the learning. A wide variety of teaching strategies is employed. Teachers communicate their knowledge very clearly and often enthusiastically. Teacher questions are challenging, often targeted at pupils' differing needs and, where appropriate, open-ended to allow pupils to reflect or surmise.

8. In the most successful lessons pupils of all abilities are stretched and challenged. In a Year 7 science lesson about fossils, less able pupils were captivated by the teacher's enthusiasm. An interesting and diverse range of resources including large fossils and plasticine models was used to show how fossils are formed and are buried in layers. The sequence of activities planned engaged the pupils in speaking and listening, reading, writing and doing. This led to good levels of knowledge with pupils able to make judgements about the age of organisms and how fossils are formed and to use scientific language confidently. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson for able pupils good whiteboard work and the use of an overhead projected graphical calculator ensured that all pupils interacted with the investigation. There was a clear expectation that pupils used a high level of previous learning. Pupils could quickly identify ideas for extension and development and by the end of the lesson many could predict the shape of graphs while all could manage the graphical interpretation of whole numbers, decimals and algebra. The curiosity of Year 8 pupils was aroused during an introductory English lesson about "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The teacher organised the class into 'expert' and other groups depending on their previous knowledge and invited pupils to make predictions based on characters' names and a speech from the play. By sharing everyone's knowledge and individual interpretations the class came to a very good collective understanding.

9. There are a number of very good examples of teachers adapting teaching styles, strategies and groupings to meet differing needs. These include the 'clinics' for pupils with spelling and reading difficulties where pupils make very good progress

following appropriate individual programmes. In music lessons in Years 8 and 9 pupils are grouped according to instrumental ability, but all pupils combine to perform their different parts, self-evaluating and suggesting improvements. Forty six Year 10 pupils were entered for GCSE drama a year early and are now being extended in Year 11 following an AS level drama course. Some under-achieving pupils are taught in single sex GCSE English groups. Pupils' presentation and oral skills are fostered in some cases; in others a fast pace and a frequent change of activity is adopted.

10. The school provides very good literacy teaching which has been identified as a priority for development and improvement. The school has a target that 95% pupils will attain a reading age in line with their chronological age by the end of Key Stage 3. A cross-curricular working group is already established and has drawn up a Literacy Action Plan. There are opportunities for pupils to attend clinics to improve their reading, spelling, handwriting and study skills. There is strong encouragement to participate in these clinics, for example all of Year 7 pupils were invited and many attended. The progress of pupils with literacy difficulties is closely monitored and they make very good progress. In the last two years boys whose reading ages were lagging behind had caught up with the girls by the end of Year 11. Pupils' reading is strongly encouraged at Years 7, 8 and 9 through the provision of book boxes for tutor periods and opportunities for personal, silent reading are provided at the start of English lessons. Most pupils develop and enjoy independent reading habits.

11. There are very good opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes and at length across a number of subjects. The writing is generally fluent and well organised with increasing accuracy. There are good opportunities for pupils to plan and draft their writing and useful frameworks are provided to help them structure more complex tasks. The school provides a very good literacy environment. All classrooms have dictionaries and subject areas all have interactive displays that draw pupils' attention to key language and vocabulary. In a number of subjects key spellings and vocabulary are also listed in pupils books' or planners.

12. Although the teaching and learning of numeracy has not been fully developed to take on the mental calculation strategies pupils bring with them from the primary school, the overall level of expectation effectively takes into account the National Curriculum levels pupils have achieved in Year 6. In particular, the development of numeracy skills into algebraic understanding is excellent and the pace of virtually all lessons maintains the standards set in those primary schools that have adopted the national numeracy strategy. Furthermore, the understanding of percentages, powers, roots and more complex decimals and fractions is developed at an appropriate pace. Pupils are fortunate to experience the full range of investigative and problem solving activity as well as more closed activities found in textbooks. The use of number and numeracy skills across the curriculum is sound and the school recognises that the numeracy policy needs to be reviewed and already has plans for this.

Methods used to gather information about and analyse pupils' progress are very good and ensure that pupils continue to do as well as they can.

13. There are very good systems in place to collect and record information about both pupils' attitude and their progress. The school also has effective systems to collect information about pupils' prior attainment from their primary schools. When pupils enter Year 7 the school uses a series of tests to measure pupils' attainment. This provides a clear baseline for determining pupils' progress as they move through the school. A comprehensive booklet containing assessment information is produced and circulated to all staff and indicates individual targets for pupils.

14. A major strength of the school's assessment procedures is the agreed whole school approach to the cycle of interim assessments. The school uses its Wildern Assessment Database (WAD) very effectively to inform planning for teaching of future lessons and improve learning. Details of the key elements of the assessment system are clearly displayed throughout the school and the assessment system is well understood by pupils, staff, parents and governors. Key staff collate the information regularly and very efficiently. The results of these regular reviews are carefully, quickly and systematically used to identify underachieving pupils. Extra support and guidance is given to these pupils.

15. Group Tutors and year leaders are very well informed and give very good support and encouragement to pupils. These staff work together well to monitor pupils' progress and performance. They are involved in the setting of targets for individual pupils. Each term tutors also meet with pupils and agree their individual pupil action plans (PAPs). This regular gathering of assessment information helps both pupils and teachers to set challenging targets for personal improvement. This is also an excellent example of assessment information being used to plan more effectively for learning, which will take place in the future.

16. Some parents and pupils indicated there is some inconsistency in the setting of individual pupil targets. A clearer link is needed between the assessment information that is available and its use in the process of setting of pupils' individual targets. The intention that matching interim assessments to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades will help pupils and parents to develop a clearer understanding of these expectations is not yet fully realised.

17. The assessment system is central to raising standards and improving attitudes to learning in the school so that that pupils have every opportunity to do as well as they can. Pupils, parents, staff and governors all identify the assessment system as being of vital importance in the schools continued improvement. Significant improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning are already evident as a result of its introduction. Many pupils make good progress as they move through the school. In Years 10 and 11 the progress made by pupils is excellent compared with similar schools. GCSE results in the core subjects are high on the basis of what is achieved at the end of Key Stage 3. The well established procedures for assessment and target setting and well attended clinics and booster classes are significant contributory factors in raising standards and in preparing pupils for public examinations.

Relationships are very good, at all levels, encouraging pupils to work hard and to become confident learners.

18. Pupils clearly like coming to school. They are proud of the school and enthusiastic about the range of activities it provides and are very keen to take part in the full range of school activities. Pupils are very committed to the school and many attend voluntary early morning, lunch-time and after school classes. Pupils good levels of attendance, commitment to learning and enthusiastic contributions in lessons all lead to good progress and achieving high standards.

19. Pupils in all year groups have very good attitudes to their learning and are interested in their work. They have a natural curiosity and they take a lively interest in lessons. Pupils of all ages and abilities display high levels of perseverance, productivity, confidence and concentration whether they work as a class, small group or as individuals. They exhibit high levels of confidence in their own ability when they respond well to challenges set by their teachers. Pupils often give extended answers

to questions, drawing on their own personal experiences to illustrate points. They have the confidence to raise their own questions, as for example in a Year 8 science lesson when pupils asked thoughtful questions about galaxies. In a Year 10 RE lesson pupils empathised with issues about inequality which result from different access to world resources. Only in a small minority of lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 10, do pupils lack concentration, particularly when not directly supervised or when asked to work independently.

20. The very constructive relationships that exist in virtually all classrooms are characterised by pupils listening attentively and responding respectfully to the teacher and other pupils. There is often good humour in the classrooms and in many lessons there are lively discussions. Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities to work collaboratively and voluntarily share their views, methods and solutions in a focused and mature manner.

21. Behaviour is very good in class and around the school. Very little time is wasted as pupils respond quickly to their teacher's instructions. Pupils are courteous to each other and to adults and show considerable respect for each other and for adults in the school. Pupils are trustworthy and show respect for property. They participate enthusiastically in out-of-school activities. The 'enrichment group' that the school provides for more able pupils is appreciated by both pupils and parents. There is very little oppressive behaviour as pupils respond well to good role models of staff and peers. Interviews with pupils revealed that the school, through a confidential and effective procedure, deals swiftly with instances of bullying.

22. Pupils plan and organise their work well. From Year 7 they learn to use their student planners effectively. Teachers are expected to indicate any homework not completed. Planners are checked weekly by tutors so any concerns about homework are picked up immediately. Planners are also checked periodically by senior staff. Although pupils are expected to record their homework accurately and ask their parents to sign weekly some parents were concerned about the accuracy of pupils recording which meant that they were not always sure about what homework had been set.

23. Pupils are active in the life of the school and are very clear about their loyalties to it. As they mature they increasingly show qualities such as initiative and by the time they are in Year 11 they take an active part in school life. Increasing numbers are involved in assemblies, charity fund raising and activities in the local community. Pupils are involved in helping staff sustain the excellent display throughout the school which contributes to the very positive learning environment. They also make significant contributions to the production of the school's annual magazine.

Management systems, including monitoring and analysis to check on the quality of the school's current work, are very effective and ensure continual improvement.

24. There is a very clear policy for checking the work of the school. All staff are involved in its implementation. This aspect of the school's work is very well led by the deputy headteacher who has responsibility for oversight of the curriculum. A useful monitoring calendar is used to co-ordinate a good range of activity which provides the school with continuous feedback about a variety of aspects of its work.

25. The quality of teaching is rigorously assessed. The most recent investigation, which focussed on provision in Year 8, recognised clear strengths but also identified a number of areas for improvement which are currently being addressed. Curriculum leaders are also involved in regular checking of the teaching quality in their own

subject areas. Records of lesson observations and overviews of scrutiny of pupils' exercise books inform discussion about good practice and areas of weakness which have been identified. This is very effective in contributing to raising standards of both teaching and learning.

26. Monitoring of learning and pupil progress through the use of the Wildern Assessment Database is a strength of the school and enables the vast majority of pupils to make the best possible progress.

27. The school's planning emphasises the importance of improving the curriculum and raising standards. The school's strategic plan sets out clear targets for the whole school. There are clear indicators for checking the progress with accomplishment of the different improvement activities. In particular the clarity of the criteria in the departmental action plans means that curriculum leaders have very useful reference points against which to measure progress. Senior managers review the performance of every subject and curriculum area annually against the targets set. Strategies for improvement are identified and senior staff check progress through a series of useful interim review meetings. Progress is monitored well and action taken by senior managers as appropriate. Governors are fully involved and are kept well informed.

28. The school is continuing the development of its successful monitoring and evaluation strategies through development of self-review procedures. These include seeking feedback from a wider range of constituents, including pupils and parents. The school is keen to get parents' views, for example as a result of parents suggestions from their evaluation sheets about parents' evenings, these meetings have been improved. Staff value parents' comments on pupils' reports and the help they provide in supporting their child's learning. Parents are welcome to attend pupils' action planning interviews and they are involved at an early stage if the school has any concerns about their child.

29. The recent review of Year 8 provision produced a large amount of valuable information. However, not all areas for improvement identified could be taken forward at the same time. Two recent surveys conducted by the school showed that not all pupils are recording their homework satisfactorily in their planners. This feedback supported parents views that they are not always sure about what homework has been set. At present the school has not yet made sufficient changes to improve the situation so inspectors agree that the recording of homework could be better. This has resulted in some concerns about lack of response to shortcomings identified.

30. The very effective monitoring and self-review processes provide senior managers and governors with regular and continuous feedback about progress towards achievement of the strategic priorities identified in the school's plan. Senior managers, governors and staff have developed a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The very effective planning processes, whereby planning is regarded as a means of moving the school forward and ensuring everyone's involvement, mean that weaknesses identified can be addressed quickly and purposefully. This has been a major factor in the very significant progress the school has achieved since its last inspection.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils could achieve even higher standards in science national tests at the end of Year 9, particularly in comparison to results achieved by the same pupils in English and mathematics.

31 Although in 1999 Year 9 pupils achieved results in science national tests for 14 year olds which were close to the national averages, pupils do not do as well as they could in this key stage. The same pupils achieve better results in both English and mathematics. GCSE science results are also much better in comparison with other subjects. This relative underachievement has a number of causes, some related to the way the science curriculum is planned and some because teachers' expectations of pupils has not always included sufficient levels of challenge to promote the highest possible levels of performance.

32 In 1999, just over half of pupils achieve the expected level of 5, whilst in mathematics three-quarters achieved this level and in English four fifths. Less than a fifth of pupils achieved the higher level of 6 in science whilst a third reached this level in English and four fifths in mathematics. The average pupils point score for science was 3.5 points below that of both English and mathematics. This represents a shortfall in science of half a national curriculum level or sixth months progress in comparison with the same pupils' achievements in the other core subjects. Results in pupils' teacher assessments were significantly lower than the results they achieved in the tests. This is indicative of limited teacher expectations. Teacher assessments match test results more closely in English and mathematics. Too few pupils were entered for the higher tier papers, which gave better access to the higher levels of achievement. The department has already identified this shortcoming and its departmental plan contains a target of increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels by ensuring that more pupils are entered for the higher tier test paper.

33 Weaknesses were also evident in the science curriculum and the assessment procedures. Curriculum plans which set out the work pupils will cover in Years 7, 8 and 9 varied in quality and did not pay sufficient attention to pupils' prior learning. Consequently pupils spent too much time revisiting work they had already covered and made insufficient progress. Teachers paid too little attention to assessment outcomes when planning future learning in lessons for particular groups of pupils. The acting curriculum leader has already introduced a common planning format for all lessons and each of the modules. This new planning identifies opportunities for pupils to engage with work that will increase access to the higher levels of attainment as specific outlines for each year group now include more challenging targets. Lesson planning is now matched more closely to pupils' prior attainment. Opportunities for addressing literacy have also been identified in the revised schemes of work; for example key words have been identified for each topic and keyword posters produced for each laboratory. Plans also include increased opportunities for the use of information and communications technology.

34 A number of strategies have already been put in place to improve assessment and monitor the progress made by pupils in Years 7 to 9. Current planning includes the clear identification of assessment opportunities. Assessment activities are linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment and level descriptors are displayed on laboratory walls and in pupils' notebooks which helps them to identify how they can make better progress. Feedback to pupils includes the identification of how they can improve their work. Pupil record sheets have been developed to allow the monitoring of performance in the end of topic tests for each of the Key Stage 3 modules. Meetings take place to ensure greater consistency is achieved amongst staff with different levels of expertise when they are marking pupils' work.

35 Much of the teaching of science observed during the inspection was of good quality, particularly the teaching of high ability sets and pupils with special educational needs. Some excellent teaching was observed, including a very challenging lesson where Year 9 pupils were clearly expected to extend their knowledge of heat transfer and to develop their understanding of conduction,

convection and radiation. A particular strength of this lesson was the teacher's skillful adjustment of the lesson plan to ensure that pupils had sufficient time to evaluate and discuss their experimental results and to establish if pupils had understood the work. Some of the satisfactory teaching has features which can be improved. In some lessons, particularly those with pupils of average ability the pace is too slow and pupils are not challenged enough. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils who were investigating the rates of reaction of several different metals with acids spent too long carrying out a dull low level practical. Pupils' limited interest meant they worked too slowly and there was not enough time for discussion to develop their understanding. Teaching methods could be improved if teachers made sure that pupils were really clear about the purpose of practical activity.

36 The school has already identified the weaknesses in Key Stage 3 science and is implementing a range of strategies to bring about improvements. The acting curriculum leader is providing very good leadership and has already involved science staff in the formulation of a department plan with clear targets for improvement. Inspection evidence shows that improvements in curriculum planning and better quality teaching are already achieving higher standards in pupils' work in Years 7 to 9. The school needs to ensure that these improvements are sustained and that pupils' higher levels of achievement are evidenced in national test results.

Although parents receive information about their child's progress in a variety of ways, the comments on reports are often not sufficiently subject specific.

37 Parents are kept informed about their child's progress through reports which include helpful grades on pupils' attitude, homework, performance, progress, and application of the study code. They do not however give any subject specific information about the set of courses covered, although parents of pupils in Years 7 to 9 do receive a helpful outline of the topics to be covered in each subject. Although the school has good systems and records of pupils' attainment and progress, information is not being satisfactorily transformed into clear subject-specific comments and targets in pupils' reports. As a result parents are not getting sufficient information about how their child is getting on.

38 The very useful grades on pupils' reports are not always translated by subject teachers into appropriate comments about pupils' strengths and weaknesses or what they need to do to improve. Many of the comments, whilst being personal and encouraging, are too general and could apply to any subject. Comments often repeat the information provided through the various grades on the report, for example that pupils are making good progress. Similarly, many of the targets are not subject-specific, for example stating that a pupil needs to improve their participation in lessons. Comments neither clearly identify the aspects of the subject that the pupil's does well nor what areas they find difficult and need to concentrate on in order to improve. The design of the reports expects that pupils' reports will give course grades for Key Stage 3. However, the match between these course graders allocated and the National Curriculum levels is not always clear to parents. A few subject reports do not indicate clearly enough whether pupils are working above, below or in line with what is expected for their age. Although general targets are helpful they should be provided in addition to any subject-specific comments.

39 All reports need to meet statutory requirements in the reporting of information technology. At present Year 7 and 8 reports do not include comments on information technology and these are also absent from some reports for Year 10 and 11 pupils. In addition the end of Key Stage 3 reports are not giving an explanation as

to why some pupils have a different grade for the test and teacher assessment in these subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. The school should now:

1 Improve the teaching and provision in Key Stage 3 science so that pupils achieve higher standards by;

- raising pupils levels of attainment in Year 9 science national tests so that:
  - pupils' attainments in this subject are similar to those in English and mathematics;
  - more Level 5's are achieved by pupils and the number of pupils gaining the higher levels of 6 or above also increases;
- ensuring that all pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 are challenged by high expectations which develop their previous learning and ensure good progress;
- improving planning for the teaching of science in this key stage to ensure that;
  - better progress is made in working through the programme of study and science topics in years 7, 8 and 9;
  - planning ensures access to the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding for the higher levels of attainment;
  - planing clearly identifies opportunities for assessment, homework and the use of information technology;
- Improve teaching quality by:
  - sharing good practice within the science department and raising the quality of all teaching to the best;
  - using resources, including practical activity, purposefully to develop pupils learning;
- Use outcomes of assessment to plan future learning by ensuring that:
  - planning for lessons is closely matched to pupils' previous performance;
  - there is greater consistency between teachers' assessments of pupils work and their results in national tests.

See paragraphs: 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36

2 Improve the subject specific information about how their child is getting on in reports to parents by:

- Ensuring that all legal requirements for reporting pupils attainment and progress are fully met, including:
  - Including comments about information technology in reports for pupils in Years 7,8 and 9;
  - providing an explanation of why some pupils have a different level for test results and teacher assessments when reporting Key Stage 3 outcomes;

- Making information about pupils attainment in the National Curriculum clearer to parents by:
  - Identifying the match between course grades and National Curriculum levels;
  - Indicating consistently across all subjects whether pupils are working above, below or at what is expected for their age;

- Improving written comments of reports to ensure that they:
  - provide further detail in relation to grades provided;
  - are more subject specific and set subject specific targets;
  - identify aspects of the subject where pupils do well and areas where pupils need to improve.

See paragraphs: 37, 38, 39

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	33	37	19	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1462	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	145	n/a

Special educational needs	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	446	n/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	140	148	288

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	100	103	80
	Girls	129	109	77
	Total	229	212	157
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (86)	74 (71)	55(68)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (57)	42 (42)	18 (28)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	103	94
	Girls	119	115	98
	Total	211	218	192
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (73)	76 (76)	67 (74)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (31)	39 (42)	23 (36)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	143	148	291

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	69	136	143
	Girls	94	143	148
	Total	163	279	291
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (60)	96 (98)	100 (99)
	National	46.6 (46.3)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.2 (48.2)
	National	38.0 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	10
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	3
White	1441
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	76	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: 1999-2000

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: 1999-2000

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	540

Deployment of teachers: 1999-2000

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.2

Average teaching group size: 1999-2000

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	20.6

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999

	£
Total income	3242664
Total expenditure	3282816
Expenditure per pupil	2247
Balance brought forward from previous year	281273
Balance carried forward to next year	241121

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1462
Number of questionnaires returned	425

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32.0	56.0	7.0	3.0	2.0
My child is making good progress in school.	37.0	56.0	5.0	0	1.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27.0	58.0	7.0	1.0	7.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21.;0	59.0	16.0	2.0	2.0
The teaching is good.	26.0	64.0	6.0	0	4.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29.0	52.0	17.0	1.0	1.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40.0	49.0	9.0	1.0	2.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53.0	44.0	2.0	0	1.0
The school works closely with parents.	25.0	51.0	20.0	2.0	3.0
The school is well led and managed.	36.0	49.0	8.0	1.0	6.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32.0	57.0	6.0	1.0	4.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42.0	41.0	5.0	1.0	10.0

Other issues raised by parents

Written comments were included with 33 (7.8%) of the questionnaires returned. Parents expressed very strong support for the school and appreciated the enthusiasm, motivation and commitment of the staff.