

INSPECTION REPORT

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

Hucknall, Nottingham

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122897

Headteacher: Mr David A. Shannon

Reporting inspector: Bernard Burke
2722

Dates of inspection: 22nd May – 25th May 2000

Inspection number: 180739

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Annesley Road
Hucknall
Nottingham

Postcode: NG15 7DB

Telephone number: 0115 9635667

Fax number: 0115 9638955

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: The Rev. Canon F Green

Date of previous inspection: 06.10.1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Mr B Burke | Registered inspector | | What sort of school is it? |
| | | | What should the school do to improve further? |
| | | | School's results and achievements |
| | | | How well are pupils taught? |
| | | | How well is the school led and managed? |
| Mr G Humphrey | Lay inspector | | How well does the school care for its' pupils? |
| | | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| Mr A Whitehall | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| Mr F Evans | Team inspector | English | |
| Mr J N Pinkney | Team inspector | Science | Key Stage 4 |
| Mr J Hunt | Team inspector | Information technology | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| J Pickering | Team inspector | Art | |
| K Boden | Team inspector | Design and technology | |
| Mr N Bertram | Team inspector | Geography | |
| Mr D Pink | Team inspector | History | |
| | | Special educational needs | |
| Mr R Donne | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | |
| Mrs S Jones | Team inspector | Music | |
| | | Equal opportunities | |
| Mr B McCann | Team inspector | Physical education | Pupils' attitudes, values & personal development |

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The National School is a voluntary aided Church of England comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is over-subscribed. Since the previous inspection in 1997, there has been a steady increase in the number of pupils entering the school and, with 1,062 pupils on roll, including 119 in the sixth form, the school is larger than the average size of secondary schools nationally. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average, overall. The school population is predominately white and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. Nearly six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average. About 182 pupils have special educational needs, a proportion which is below the national average and nine have statements of special educational need, which is also below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school provides an effective education for its pupils, and successfully promotes their personal and academic growth within an explicit Christian ethos. Pupils are well taught and they respond with very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour. The school has improved since the last inspection and its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades is well above the national average for all schools.
- The results in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests are above the national average for all schools.
- Pupils are well taught. In 99 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better. It is good or better in 56 per cent of lessons.
- The attendance rate is well above the national average.
- Pupils are well cared for, particularly those with special educational needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and they respond well to the very good relationships throughout the school with positive attitudes to their learning.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

What could be improved

- Overall GCSE results, which although above the national average for all schools are below average in comparison with similar schools.
- GCE A-level results, which in 1999 were below the national average.
- Standards in information technology, which are adversely affected by the unsatisfactory curriculum and the low level of resources.
- Standards in art.
- The procedures for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school development plan and departmental development plans, which do not focus targets and success criteria sufficiently on raising standards.
- The leadership and management of key areas of development in the school, including monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.
- Medium-to-long term financial and development planning, including plans for improvements to the accommodation.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in 1997. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades is much higher and is well above the national average. Teaching is satisfactory or better in a higher percentage of lessons. However, A-level results are not as good as those at the last inspection and are below the national average. The governing body operates more effectively and with the senior managers of the school, they have responded appropriately to the key issue relating to the effective management of the school. A fully costed school development plan is in place and good progress has been made in working towards a more cost effective management structure. Communications at all levels are good. Financial control is very good and financial information is used effectively to inform spending decisions, but not as well for medium-to-long term development planning. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, including a satisfactory number of support staff. The school has done what could reasonably be expected in reducing class sizes. Further improvements are necessary, however, in the management of key areas of development, to the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance at all levels and in setting targets for pupils. Statutory requirements for the teaching of information technology are still not met.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | All schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| GCSE examinations | B | C | B | D |
| A-levels/AS-levels | B | B | D | |

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The school performs well in GCSE examinations when its results are compared with the national averages for all schools. In 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades was well above the national average for all schools. Only one pupil failed to achieve at least one A* to G grade. These are the school's best results for many years, though they have previously been consistently above the national average. However, only a very small number of pupils achieved good passes at A* and A grades. In terms of the average total points score per pupil, the results are above the national average, but below average in comparison with similar schools.

In 1999, GCSE results in nearly all subjects were at least in line with the national averages. The exceptions were the results in art, which were well below the national average and in history and information technology, which were below the national averages and not as good as they should be. The results in English literature, science, French, German and music were very good and well above the national averages. In mathematics and design and technology, the results were good and above the national averages. Satisfactory results were obtained in English language, geography and physical education where the results in each subject were in line with the national averages.

A-level results in 1999 were below the national average, having previously been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. The average points score per candidate was 14.4 compared with the national average of 17.9. Good A-level results were achieved in biology, economics, English literature, mathematics and French. The results in chemistry, general studies, geography, history, psychology and sociology were unsatisfactory and well below the national averages. The results in all other subjects were satisfactory.

The school achieves good results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Since the last inspection, the overall results in the tests have been consistently above the national average for all schools. The results are broadly in line with the average for similar schools.

In Key Stages 3 and 4, standards of work seen are at least average in most subjects. Standards are below average in art in both key stages and in information technology in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, standards of work are at least average in most subjects, but in art they are below average. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils in both key stages and in the sixth form achieve at least as well as expected in all subjects except in art, and in information technology in Key Stages 3 and 4.

The targets set by the school for GCSE examination results in the next two years are not significantly different from the results currently achieved. These targets are not sufficiently challenging, bearing in mind the improvements needed to the percentage of A* and A grade passes.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good: pupils have very good and positive attitudes towards their work. They work with enthusiasm and commitment. High levels of interest and application are consistently evident in nearly all lessons. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils conduct themselves in a sensible and mature manner. |
| Personal development and relationships | Relationships within the school are very good. The personal development of pupils is very good. Most pupils respond very positively to opportunities to take responsibility. |
| Attendance | Very good: the attendance rate is well above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average. |

Pupils' behaviour, their very good attitudes towards their work and consistently good levels of attendance make a significant contribution to the quality of learning in lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years | Aged over 16 years |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | Good |

In both key stages and in the sixth form, the quality of teaching is good. In 99 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better. In nearly 40 per cent of lessons teaching is good and in a further 15 per cent it is very good. Two per cent of teaching is excellent. Only one per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory. The overall quality of teaching in all subjects is at least satisfactory. Some of the best teaching is in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education.

Pupils learn effectively in nearly all lessons. Strong features of the teaching in nearly all lessons are the well planned learning activities and the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. In the best lessons, pupils learn at a good pace and are engaged in interesting and challenging activities and they are clear on what is expected of them. In art, where teaching was unsatisfactory in two lessons, pupils did not achieve as well as expected because the work was not sufficiently challenging. Teachers meet the needs of pupils reasonably well, especially those with learning, medical and physical needs, but information from assessments is not used effectively to set targets for individual pupils.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Literacy skills are well taught in English lessons and suitably reinforced in other subjects. The teaching of numeracy skills in mathematics is good and pupils are taught to apply the skills to problems in other subjects.

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.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The quality of the school's curriculum is satisfactory overall and provides a suitable range of learning opportunities for all pupils. With the exception of information technology in Key Stage 4, statutory requirements are met for all subjects. There is a good range of optional courses in Key Stage 4 and wide range of A-level courses in the sixth form. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum. The inclusion into the curriculum of pupils with learning, medical and physical needs is a strength of the school. However, there are weaknesses in the provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. The importance placed on cultivating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development reflects the school's Christian foundation and purpose. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Pupils are well cared for in a secure and effective learning environment. |

A particular strength of the curriculum is the very good provision for pupils' personal development. There are weaknesses in the curriculum for art which concentrate too much on painting and drawing and not sufficiently on other activities such as three-dimensional studies and textiles.

The pastoral provision is one of the strengths of the school and the monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. The assessment and recording of pupils' progress, however, lacks consistency and the information from tests and assessments are not used effectively to set targets for pupils.

The school has effective links with parents. Parents are well informed about the curriculum and other school activities through regular newsletters and promotional notices. However, the annual reports issued to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 do not meet statutory requirements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Satisfactory: Although further progress is required in some aspects of the school's management, satisfactory progress has been made in rectifying most of the serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school, which were reported at the last inspection. The management of information technology is unsatisfactory. The management of all other areas and subjects is generally satisfactory. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | In most respects, the governing body carries out its duties and responsibilities effectively. However, the school does not fulfil the statutory requirements to teach the National Curriculum for information technology in Key Stage 4, nor in respect of the statutory reporting requirements to parents at the end of Key Stage 3. They do not give sufficient attention to medium-to-long term development and financial planning or to formally monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's developments on its performance. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school evaluates its performance reasonably well in such areas as examination results and attendance rates. There are weaknesses, however, in the way it evaluates its performance in achieving the priorities and the targets it identifies in its development plans. |
| The strategic use of resources | In the main, all sources of funding are generally well managed and appropriately directed towards the school's priorities. |

There are sufficient and appropriately qualified teachers to teach the curriculum effectively. The exception is in information technology where there is insufficient expertise to cover A-level classes when the one specialist teacher is absent as occurred during the inspection.

Some aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory. There are just about sufficient general classrooms to teach the curriculum. However, many of these are small and some classes are overcrowded. There is adequate specialist accommodation for all subjects except science and music. The library is far too small for a school of this size and private study facilities are limited. The medical and toilet facilities for disabled pupils are unsatisfactory. Resources for most subjects are adequate. The exceptions are for information technology and music and a shortage of textbooks in history. The library is poorly stocked.

Many aspects of the school are well managed. For example, pupils learn in a secure and orderly environment, communications at all levels are good and the quality of teaching throughout the school is good. However, the headteacher and the senior management team do not give a sufficiently firm steer to achieving the school's priorities. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of development plans, gains in pupils' performance and generally the school's performance are underdeveloped.

The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. Especially good use is made of benchmarks and other financial indicators to monitor and compare the school's patterns of expenditure and its performance with that of other schools. Considering the level of income and expenditure per pupil, which is lower than in the majority of secondary schools nationally, the good quality of teaching and the school's overall performance in National Curriculum tests and examinations, the school gives good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The standards achieved by pupils at the school.• The strength of the pastoral system and the quality of care for pupils.• The attitudes and behaviour of pupils• The moral and social values promoted by the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More consistent use of homework to support learning.• The provision of information about pupils' progress and their attainment.• A closer working relationship with parents. |

Inspectors agree that pupils achieve at least satisfactory standards in most subjects and that the school achieves good GCSE results, but the A-level results in 1999 were not as good as in previous years and were unsatisfactory in some subjects. Pupils are well cared for and receive very good support from heads of year and form tutors. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are very good and the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The use of homework is satisfactory. Regular reports are sent to parents which provide information about pupils' progress and their attainment, but the school does not comply fully with the reporting requirements at the end of Key Stage 3. The school is very active in promoting a close working partnership with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 The school performs well in GCSE examinations when its results are compared with the national averages for all schools. In 1999, nearly 61 per cent of pupils obtained five or more A* to C grades and nearly 97 per cent five or more A* to G grades; only one pupil failed to achieve at least one A* to G grade. These results are well above the national average and the best achieved by the school for many years, though they have previously been consistently above the national average. In terms of the average total points score per pupil, the results are above the national average.
- 2 The results do not compare quite as well with the averages for similar schools. However, they are above average in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades. They are well above average in terms of the percentage of pupils obtaining at least one A* to G grade. In terms of the average total points score per pupil, the results are below average in comparison with similar schools. This less than favourable comparison is significantly influenced by the very low number of good passes at A* and A grades.
- 3 In 1999, girls obtained better GCSE results than boys. However, the results for boys were a significant improvement over those in previous years. The results for both boys and girls were well above the respective national averages.
- 4 In 1999, GCSE results in nearly all subjects were at least in line with the national averages. The exceptions were the results in art, which were well below the national average, and in history and information technology, which were below the national averages and not as good as they should be. The results in English literature, French, German and music were very good and well above the national averages. In design and technology the results were good and above the national averages. Satisfactory results were obtained in geography and physical education where the results in each subject were in line with the national averages.
- 5 The GCSE results in English language were satisfactory overall. In 1999, they were in line with the national average for all schools, but below average in comparison with the results for similar schools. Girls achieved better results than boys. A reasonable number of pupils achieved the higher grade A pass, but only three pupils obtained the highest A* grade. Since the last inspection, the results have fluctuated, but have never been below the national average.
- 6 Good GCSE results were achieved in mathematics in 1999. The results were above the national average for all schools, and average in comparison with the results for similar schools. The results have improved since the last inspection, but only a few pupils obtained the higher A* and A grades. There is no significant difference in the results for boys and girls.

- 7 The 1999, GCSE results for science were very good and well above the national average for all schools and well above average in comparison with similar schools. The results are much better than those at the time of the last inspection, when they were also well above the national average. There is no significant difference in the results for boys and girls. Pupils gained more of the highest A* and A grades in science than in any other subject in the school. Lower attaining pupils were entered for the single award science and nearly all gained a pass grade
- 8 To a large extent, the improvement achieved in the 1999 GCSE results is due to an improvement in the results by boys. However, the school's targets for GCSE results in the next two years are not significantly different from the current results and are not sufficiently challenging. There is no evidence from the standards of the work seen that pupils are underachieving. However, too few pupils are obtaining good GCSE passes at grades A* and A. In many subjects there is a lack of rigour in assessing pupils' progress and in using assessment information and test data to formally identify pupils who are capable of achieving the highest GCSE grades. The lack of a whole school approach to setting challenging targets for individual pupils in all subjects further suppresses this aspect of the school's performance.
- 9 The school achieves good results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Since the last inspection, the overall results in the tests have been consistently above the national average for all schools. Taken individually, the results in 1999 for English were well above average and in mathematics and science they were above average. There is no significant difference in the results for boys and girls.
- 10 However, in common with the GCSE results, the 1999 Key Stage 3 test results do not compare as well with the average for similar schools as they do with the national average for all schools. The overall results are broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Taken individually, the results in English are above average and are below average in mathematics and science.
- 11 A-level results in 1999 were below the national average, having previously been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. The average points score per candidate was 14.4 compared with the national average of 17.9. These results are the lowest for four years. The number of pupils entered for A-level examinations in 1999 was the highest ever and reflects the school's decision two years earlier to relax the qualification criteria for entry into the sixth form for one year. This course of action was taken to boost numbers in the sixth form in order to generate additional income, but resulted in a number of pupils taking A-level courses inappropriately.
- 12 Good A-level results were achieved in biology, economics, English literature, mathematics and French. The percentage of pupils achieving grades in these subjects in the range A to E was above the national average and a good proportion of pupils achieved good passes at grades A and B.

- 13 The A-level results were satisfactory in English language, design and technology and physical education. The percentage of pupils achieving grades in these subjects in the range A to E was broadly in line with the national average. From a relatively small number of entries, satisfactory results were achieved in art, computing, German, music and physics. In these subjects, with the exception of art, where one pupil failed to obtain a pass grade, all the pupils entered for the examination passed.
- 14 The A-level results in chemistry, general studies, geography, history, psychology and sociology were unsatisfactory and well below the national averages.
- 15 The full range of prior attainment is represented in the intake to the school, but pupils' attainment on entry is above average overall. In most subjects pupils achieve at least as well as expected in relation to their prior attainment and make at least satisfactory progress. The exceptions are in art in both key stages and in the sixth form, and in information technology in both key stages. There are significant weaknesses in the curriculum for art, insufficient demands are made of pupils, progress is slow and pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Although standards in information technology are average at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' are not achieving as well as they should because of the lack of resources and the limited opportunities to use information technology in other subjects. Pupils' achievements and their rate of progress are further hindered in Key Stage 4 due to the poorly organised curriculum, which does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In all subjects, in the work seen, there is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls.
- 16 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Since the last inspection the number of support staff has been increased and pupils are well cared for and suitably supported in their work. With the exception of those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the Individual Education Plans for pupils are of a suitable quality and used appropriately by teachers to meet the specific needs of pupils and to set work at a suitable level. Pupils with special educational needs develop their literacy skills well. They receive good support in English lessons and with the help of teachers and support staff they cope well with the demands of literacy in other subjects.
- 17 In the work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average in English and are above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Standards are average in information technology, music and physical education. Standards are below average in art.
- 18 In the work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average in nearly all subjects. The exceptions are in physical education where standards are average and in art and information technology where standards are below average.
- 19 In the sixth form, pupils' work is mainly of a satisfactory standard. Most pupils are achieving appropriately and meeting the requirements of the courses they are studying. Standards in English, mathematics and music are above average. Standards in all other subjects, except art, are average. In art, pupils do not reach the level expected for A-level work. They do not experience sufficient first-hand observation and their drawing skills are underdeveloped.

- 20 Standards of literacy are above average. Pupils enter the school with good literacy skills. The good teaching in English and in other subjects successfully promotes the further development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils speak clearly and confidently. In class they readily ask questions and many give detailed and coherent answers. Pupils read well. In English, pupils' writing skills are well developed by the end of Key Stage 3 and this benefits other subjects.
- 21 Standards in numeracy are good. Pupils make good progress in developing their numerical skills in lessons in mathematics and they are suitably reinforced in other subjects. Pupils carry out calculations competently. In mathematics and in other subjects they apply a suitable range of numerical skills to problems. These include the use of graphs and pie-charts in science, and the use of statistics in geography.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOUR AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- 22 Pupils have very good and positive attitudes towards their work. They work with enthusiasm and commitment in most subjects. High levels of interest and application are consistently evident in nearly all lessons. Pupils settle down quickly at the start of lessons and listen attentively. They are very willing to answer questions and contribute in a very constructive way to the lessons.
- 23 A large majority of parents expressed their satisfaction with the high standard of pupils' behaviour. Their views were confirmed during the inspection. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils conduct themselves in a sensible and mature manner in classrooms that are sometimes over-crowded. The majority of pupils concentrate extremely well and apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks they are set. Pupils work well as individuals and they also co-operate with others very effectively in pairs and in small groups. Particularly good examples of co-operative working occurred in science, design and technology and physical education. In modern foreign languages, mutual help and co-operation in paired work is also very strong. In English there are examples of effective role-play and good quality creative writing.
- 24 Behaviour around the school is also very good. Movement is generally quiet and purposeful. Pupils are helpful and courteous to adults. No incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour were observed during the inspection. The school acts very promptly if individual's behaviour is unacceptable. The number of fixed period exclusions has decreased from forty-four last year to thirty-six in the current year and is about the same as at the time of the last inspection. This figure is average when compared to schools of a similar size. Only two pupils were permanently excluded in the last school year compared with four at the time of the last inspection.
- 25 The quality of relationships within the school is very good. Pupils relate very well to each other and to teachers. They show particular consideration for those other pupils in the school who have physical disabilities. Pupils show respect for the buildings and equipment. There is no evidence of either vandalism or graffiti.
- 26 The personal development of pupils is very good. In many lessons they listen respectfully to others and put forward their own ideas in a sensible and mature manner. Examples of this were observed in several lessons in personal and social education. Most pupils respond very positively to opportunities to take responsibility. The School Council involving pupils of all ages is thriving. Pupils take an active part

in some assemblies. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme remains well supported. In music pupils are willing to take responsibility for organising lunchtime concerts. Sixth form pupils contribute to school life in a number of ways. They help with paired reading and paired mathematics activities and support teachers in some lessons in physical education and in information technology. Pupils are very generous in supporting fund raising activities, many of which they organise themselves. A recent example involved raising money for Mozambique.

- 27 The high level of attendance has been maintained since the last inspection and remains well above the national average at almost 94 per cent. Both authorised and unauthorised absence is below the national average. Pupils arrive in time for the start of the school day and for their lessons. Their very good attendance and punctuality contributes positively to the quality of learning and the standards achieved.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 28 In both key stages and in the sixth form, the quality of teaching is good. In 99 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better. In nearly 40 per cent of lessons teaching is good and in a further 15 per cent it is very good. Two per cent of teaching is excellent. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, one per cent, occurred in two lessons in art. This is an improvement on the overall four per cent of unsatisfactory teaching, which occurred at the last inspection. Because of study leave and pupils taking examinations, only a small number of lessons were seen in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The overall quality of teaching in all subjects is at least satisfactory. Some of the best teaching is in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education where the quality of teaching is good. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in art, history, information technology and music.
- 29 Teachers meet the needs of pupils reasonably well. Teachers know their pupils well and provide good support to ensure that pupils make progress and learn at satisfactory rate. However, information from assessments is not used effectively to set targets for individual pupils. Additionally, in many subjects, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use information technology. Teachers generally cope well with the overcrowding that occurs in some classrooms. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, especially for those with learning, medical and physical needs. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the pupils to plan and intervene appropriately to support and challenge pupils. Well-trained support staff contribute greatly to the learning of pupils with special educational needs. However, the Individual Education Plans for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs do not provide teachers with sufficient information about each pupil's particular requirements.
- 30 Pupils learn effectively in nearly all lessons. They achieve at least as well as expected in relation to their prior attainment and make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects except art in both key stages and in the sixth form, and in information technology in both key stages. There are examples of good teaching in all subjects. Strong features of the teaching in nearly all lessons are the good planning of learning activities and the very good relationships between teachers and pupils. These features contribute significantly to pupils' very good behaviour and positive learning environment in lessons. In the best lessons, pupils learn at a good pace and are engaged in interesting and challenging activities and are clear on what is

expected of them. These lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and the work is well matched to pupils' prior attainment. In the sixth form, pupils respond well to the tutorial approach used by teachers in some lessons. For example in English, where pupils made good progress in their understanding of the texts they were studying, and in a chemistry lesson where pupils responded well to the teacher's probing questions about atomic structure and chemical bonding.

- 31 In the unsatisfactory lessons in art, pupils do not achieve as well as expected because the work is not sufficiently challenging. In these lessons teachers have low expectations of pupils and underestimate what they are capable of. The lack of opportunities for pupils to use information technology in lessons in both key stages affects pupils' progress and their information technology skills are underdeveloped.
- 32 Well chosen tasks and the encouragement pupils are given to produce creative and imaginative writing, are some of the strengths in the teaching of English. The tutorial approach in the sixth form is used skilfully to help pupils to improve their knowledge of texts and language. The good variety of teaching approaches in mathematics, including small group work and mathematical games works well. Good question and answer sessions and shared lesson objectives with pupils, together with clear deadlines for the completion of tasks enable pupils to learn well in science. Class discussions are well led so that pupils are keen to participate.
- 33 In design and technology lesson, teachers manage a wide variety of practical activities well. A particular strength of the teaching is the skilful use of discussions with individual pupils to stimulate their ideas and help them to suggest solutions to their own questions. The use of role-play works well in geography as do the short question and answer sessions used to assess pupils' previous knowledge. Lively presentations by teachers, good use of mime and gesture together with close monitoring of pupils' progress, and exclusive use of the foreign language are feature of the best lessons in modern foreign languages. The brief, but thorough, check on pupils' progress at the end of a Year 9 lesson provided the teacher with good information about the effectiveness of the French lesson and how much pupils had learned.
- 34 The use of homework to support learning is satisfactory in most subjects; it is especially effective in mathematics, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages. However, in art there is failure to set regular challenging homework.
- 35 The teaching of literacy is good. The good teaching in English and in other subjects successfully promotes the development of pupils' literacy skills. Reading is encouraged in English by regular opportunities for pupils to read to the class. Teachers of other subjects insist on the correct use of technical vocabulary and on correct spelling and punctuation. This is particularly good in design and technology where teachers encourage pupils to refer to vocabulary books and wall charts, which display key words. In modern foreign languages, the measured and systematic teaching of grammar helps pupils understand the structure of language. Pupils with special educational needs develop their literacy skills well. They receive good support in English lessons and with the help of teachers and support staff they make good progress in the development of literacy skills. The school has recently produced a policy to reinforce the teaching of literacy across the school, but it has not yet been implemented.

- 36 The teaching of numeracy is good. Teachers ensure that pupils master a good range of numeracy skills in mathematics lessons. Pupils carry out written calculations competently, use a variety of methods for performing mental calculations and they establish a good knowledge of multiplication facts. Pupils' numeracy skills are suitably supported in other subjects, especially in science, information technology, geography and physical education.
- 37 As part of the programme to review the work of faculties and departments by the headteacher and the senior management team, a good start has been made since the last inspection to the monitoring of teaching. However, in many cases this is not supported by the necessary regular monitoring by the head of faculty or the head of department.

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

- 38 The quality of the school's curriculum is satisfactory, and overall, provides a suitable range of learning opportunities for all pupils, including very good provision for their personal development. The curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. With the exception of information technology in Key Stage 4, statutory requirements are met for all subjects. However, there are significant weaknesses in the curriculum for art. In response to the last inspection, the school now meets the statutory requirements to provide religious education for all pupils in the sixth form.
- 39 There is a good range of optional courses in Key Stage 4 that lead to GCSE examinations. Pupils in the sixth form are able to choose from an appropriate range of A-level subjects. When considered appropriate, pupils are able to transfer from full A-level courses to study AS-level courses. Although vocational courses are offered as part of the sixth form provision, so far too few pupils have chosen these courses for them to become established. However, as part of an initiative to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000 the school plans in September 2000 to offer a wider range of AS courses and vocational courses in partnership with a local school and a local college. As part of the wider provision in the sixth form, all pupils take the A-level general studies. However, this provision is not co-ordinated as well as it should be and some pupils feel that they are not sufficiently prepared for the examination.
- 40 Overall, the curriculum in both key stages and in the sixth form is well planned and suitably organised. The 24.5 hours for teaching the curriculum in each key stage is above the minimum required and all subjects except information technology in Key Stage 4 receive an appropriate amount of time for teaching the curriculum. The amount of time for the pastoral curriculum is now appropriate. However, the overall pupil to teacher ratio for the school is well above average and this leads to large class sizes for some subjects, which are sometimes taught in small classrooms. In order for the school to retain the range of subject choices in the sixth form some classes operate with very small numbers. However, some subjects combine Year 12 and Year 13 classes to make up viable teaching groups. Since the last inspection, the school has done as much as could be expected to reduce the size of teaching groups in the main school. However, the restrictions imposed by the available accommodation are hindering further progress.

- 41 Pupils' progress and their level of achievement in information technology are restricted by the shortage of resources and the lack of opportunities for pupils to use information technology in many subjects. Additionally, the curriculum in Key Stage 4 is poorly organised and fails to ensure the delivery of the National Curriculum programmes of study to all pupils. Most pupils only have timetabled information technology teaching for one hour every two weeks with the result that teaching lacks coherence and continuity. The curriculum for art in both key stages and in the sixth form concentrates far too much on drawing and painting at the expense of other creative activities and processes, such as three-dimensional studies, textiles, print and ceramics.
- 42 The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is good. Literacy skills are well developed as part of the curriculum in English. There is a strong emphasis on spelling, reading and writing. Pupils are encouraged to speak clearly and to listen carefully. The teaching of literacy in English is of a good quality and as a result most pupils are confident in using these skills in other subjects across the curriculum. The development of numeracy skills is well catered for in mathematics and is suitably reinforced in other subjects. Pupils are able to make effective use of data handling skills in a number of subjects and use charts and graphs appropriately in subjects such as science, information technology, design and technology, geography and physical education. Pupils are also able to accurately undertake calculations mentally when required to do so. Overall, pupils cope well with the demands of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- 43 There is a very effective pastoral curriculum. The well organised personal, social and health education, programme in Key Stages 3 and 4 makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Teaching is satisfactory and underpinned by detailed schemes of work, which include appropriate aspects relating to personal relationships, bullying, sex and drugs education, study skills, managing money and first aid. Pupils receive good careers education and guidance. Centrally held resources including videos, books and handouts are available to support many of these activities. Pupils are well prepared for the one week of work experience, which they undertake in Year 10. All pupils receive good support in developing their records of achievement.
- 44 Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum. The inclusion into the curriculum of pupils with learning, medical and physical needs is a strength of the school. The curriculum is enhanced by the good extra curricular activities, which are organised in the lunch period for these pupils to discuss their work or to seek support. This facility is very effective in building the social confidence of pupils. The provision for pupils who need help to improve literacy skills is good. They are well catered for in English classes and are usually supported by another teacher who is well briefed about their specific needs. For pupils with learning, medical and physical needs, curriculum provision is good. Their Individual Education Plans clearly identify their needs and provide targets against which pupils and teachers can measure progress. However, there are weaknesses in the provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their Individual Education Plans lack detail and fail to identify each pupil's provision on the school's register of special educational needs in terms of the stages identified in the Code of Practice for special educational needs.

- 45 There is a good range of extra curricular provision, especially in sport and musical activities. Several pupils at the school have represented the county in a number of sports and in the case of gymnastics pupils have competed at a national level. A wide range of educational visits takes place, including exchanges with European countries and others including America. There is also a strong and well supported Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
- 46 The school's links with the community are well developed. Links with primary schools are good. The transfer arrangements for pupils into the school are well organised and very good arrangements are in place to enable prospective pupils to visit the school. Contacts with support agencies such as the careers service and those for pupils with special educational needs are well established. There are strong links with the church and with several local companies. For example, local companies support some of the projects undertaken by pupils in design and technology and outside speakers contribute to the personal, social and health education programme. Links with two universities are well established and the school provides placements for teachers as part of their initial teacher training.
- 47 The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. The importance placed on cultivating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development reflects the school's Christian foundation and purpose.
- 48 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The daily act of collective worship offers pupils the opportunity to reflect and to pray and to understand the school's commitment to promoting Christian values. Pupils respond well to the themes chosen for assemblies. They listen intently, and respect the periods of silence during reflection and prayer. Local clergy conduct regular, voluntary Communion services.
- 49 In most subjects, teachers value pupils ideas and contributions and sometimes discussions and activities in lessons develop pupils' curiosity and they willingly expose their beliefs and sensitivities. For example, in their creative and imaginative writing in English and in the way that pupils support and help some of the pupils who have special educational needs. The teaching of religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development. However, not all subjects make the same purposeful contribution and opportunities are often missed to encourage pupils to reflect and consider other people's values and beliefs.
- 50 A strong framework of Christian values underpins the very good provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils clearly understand right and wrong. Form tutors and other pastoral staff provide strong support and moral guidance for pupils. Teachers are good role models, and this, together with the very good relationships throughout the school, creates a positive ethos in which good behaviour is the norm. A number of staff are trained bereavement counsellors and they provide good support for any pupils experiencing loss. Subjects such as English and science contribute to pupils' moral development by providing opportunities for discussion of moral issues.
- 51 Provision for pupils' social development is very good. There is a strong sense of community in the school. Pupils respond well to the expectations the school has of them. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils are considerate in their movement around the school and in their relationships with each other. Pupils with physical disabilities are well integrated into the community and often supported by other pupils. In lessons, pupils co-operate easily in group

activities and share responsibilities. In games and competitive sport, pupils show a sense of fair play. The School Council and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme provide pupils with good opportunities to exercise responsibility and to show initiative. Pupils in Year 8 visit a local primary school to read stories and to support the literacy hour. The Crusaders, a Christian youth group, meets regularly and organises various activities. Extra-curricular activities in music, drama and sport are well supported by pupils.

- 52 The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Extra-curricular activities in music, drama and sport are well supported by pupils. Exchange visits with schools in France, Germany and the United States contribute significantly to pupils' social and cultural development. Visits to theatres and visits to the school by national theatre companies are well established. Pupils are involved in a wide range of competitions, including the Science-English Speaking competition and the Millennium Short Story competition. In art, pupils look at the work of artists from the Renaissance to the present day. In geography, pupils gain a good understanding of the effect of economic development on ways of life in the shantytowns of Brazil, and in English, pupils study literature from other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 53 The school provides a very caring, secure and effective learning environment for its pupils. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well. The pastoral teams are well managed and the pastoral provision is one of the strengths of the school.
- 54 The school successfully promotes the health, safety and general well-being of its pupils. The policies and procedures for ensuring high standards of health and safety are very good. Risk assessment, regular evacuation drills, annual fire and electrical equipment checks are undertaken and the provision for first aid is good. The arrangements made to accommodate the safety needs of pupils with mobility problems are particularly good. Pupils are appropriately supervised during practical and physical activities and are taught to observe good safety procedures. The medical and toilet facilities, however, for disabled pupils are unsatisfactory. The health and safety officer is specially trained in health and safety practice and is supported by the school caretaker and a committee that includes representation from the governing body and other members of staff. Some health and safety hazards in the science laboratories were reported to the headteacher during the inspection.
- 55 Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are good. The child protection officer is known to pupils and easily accessed. All members of staff are fully aware of the reporting requirements and there are established links with the relevant external agencies. A number of teachers are trained in bereavement counselling.
- 56 There are very good, well implemented, policies and procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and discipline. These include effective strategies for dealing with all forms of unacceptable or oppressive behaviour, such as bullying. The procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance are also very good. The effectiveness of these is reflected in the very good attendance rate, which is well above the national average.

- 57 Heads of year and form tutors provide very good support for pupils' personal development. The well organised comprehensive whole school programme for personal, social and health education makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development and this prepares pupils well for adult life. The self-assessment and monitoring procedures that are organised as a regular part of the pastoral provision are good and provide considerable help to pupils with their personal development and general learning skills. Pupils are encouraged to construct their own record of achievement as they progress through the school. By the end of Key Stage 4 many pupils have substantial portfolios, which record their own achievements and endeavours.
- 58 Pupils' with special educational needs are well cared for. Since the last inspection a satisfactory increase has been achieved in the number of support staff who work very effectively as a team to support pupils with statements. They are especially effective in helping pupils to gain confidence and independence. Very good record keeping means that teachers and support staff have a very good knowledge about their pupils on which to build specific subject and social learning. Suitable procedures are in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and to assess their progress. With the exception of those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, whose Individual Education Plans lack detail, the Plans for other pupils are well constructed and are used appropriately to regularly assess pupils' progress. Good use is made of help and contacts from outside agencies to enhance the provision and support for pupils with special educational needs.
- 59 With the exception of the procedures for pupils with special educational needs, the procedures for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' academic attainment and progress in most subjects are unsatisfactory. There are inconsistencies across the school in the way that pupils' progress is assessed and recorded and how the information is used to improve standards. Very little use is made of subject based assessment information to identify what pupils are capable of or to set targets for individual pupils. There is no whole school policy for assessment and these deficiencies arise out of too much being left to individual teachers and heads of faculties and department in the way that assessments are carried out and recorded. Very few subjects base the assessment and recording of pupils' progress and their attainment on National Curriculum levels or programmes of study. This limits the information gained from assessments being used constructively to set targets for pupils and to plan lessons.
- 60 Very good arrangements are in place for assessing pupils by formal tests when they enter the school. The information from these tests as well as pupils' Key Stage 2 test results are well organised and used effectively to place pupils into appropriate teaching groups according to their attainment and also to identify pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are tested again at later stages in Key Stage 3 and teachers have good information about individual pupils. In most subjects, however, very little formal use is made of this information. Except in a very general way, it is not yet used to identify gifted or talented pupils or to set challenging targets for individual pupils, especially those that are capable of achieving the higher GCSE grades and improving this aspect of school's performance. Since the last inspection insufficient progress has been made in setting targets for individual pupils.

- 61 A good start has been made, however, in building up information about pupils' GCSE results relative to their performance in Key Stage 3. This is now beginning to be used in conjunction with the information now available from national databases to set school targets for GCSE results. This process is at a more advanced stage for predicting A-level results based on GCSE results, but in both cases this data has still to be used consistently and effectively in all subjects for setting challenging targets, including those for individual pupils.
- 62 Annual reports to parents about pupils' progress are generally of a suitable quality. However, except in the reporting of pupils' attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science they do not meet the statutory reporting requirements at the end of Key Stage 3. The reports do not include the statutory teacher assessments for other subjects against National Curriculum levels or where appropriate in relation to end of key stage descriptors.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 63 The majority of parents have very positive views about the school and support the aims and values that it promotes. They consider that their children make good progress, achieve high standards, and that discipline in the school promotes good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Some parents expressed a desire for a closer working relationship between parents and the school as well as concerns over the use of homework and the quality of information provided on pupils' progress and attainment.
- 64 Inspectors judge that in most subjects homework supports learning satisfactorily and meets the needs of pupils. The homework timetable and pupils' homework diaries are used appropriately by pupils to organise their work and most parents co-operate with the school by signing the homework diaries regularly.
- 65 In most respects, the quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The annual progress reports summarise progress, provide an indication of the individual pupil's effort and commitment and some 'broad-brush' targets to direct future learning. Parents are well informed about the curriculum and other school activities through regular newsletters and promotional notices. However, the annual reports issued to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 do not meet statutory requirements. They fail to provide National Curriculum levels, or standards achieved against appropriate end of key stage descriptors, for all subjects except English, mathematics and science.
- 66 The school is very active in promoting a close working partnership with parents. The school's links with parents are effective and the majority of parents are committed partners in pupils' learning. The home-school agreement sets out the expectations of all parties, the parent, the pupil and the school. Consultation evenings are well attended and there is an active parent teacher association that supports the school through the organisation of fundraising and social events. The partnership between the school and parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. Most parents attend the annual reviews for pupils' individual education plans. Some parents volunteer to work with pupils with special educational needs and a good number support extra curricular activities and educational visits.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 67 The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Although further progress is required in some aspects of the school's management, satisfactory progress has been made in rectifying most of the serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school, which were reported at the last inspection. The weaknesses in strategic planning procedures and financial monitoring have been tackled reasonably successfully. Good progress has been made towards achieving a cost effective management structure. The opportunities taken to implement the more economical staffing structure, which has been approved by governors and is appropriate for this size of school and its budget, has reduced staffing costs. The pupil-teacher ratio remains well above average, but within the constraints of the limited accommodation, the school has done what could reasonably be expected in reducing class sizes.
- 68 The roles and responsibilities of governors and staff at all levels are clearly documented. The senior management team have appropriate responsibilities and the amount of time they spend teaching is reasonable. The improvements to the school development plan are generally satisfactory and financial planning to meet the school's immediate priorities is very good. However, further progress is required with regard to medium-to-long term development and financial planning and to the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of development plans, gains in pupils' performance and the school's performance.
- 69 Many aspects of the school are well managed by the headteacher and the senior management team. For example, pupils learn in a secure and orderly environment, communications at all levels are good and the quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Satisfactory progress has been made in most of the key issues identified at the last inspection. However, the headteacher and the senior management team do not give a sufficiently firm steer to some important areas of the school's work or to the priorities identified in its development plan. Many of these are crucial to the school's efforts to further raise standards. For example, there are inconsistencies across the school in assessing, recording and reporting pupils' attainment and progress; there is still no clear policy to support the setting of challenging targets for individual pupils in all subjects and there is poor provision for information technology in many subjects. In some cases, too much is left to individual heads of faculty and heads of departments and this does not ensure the necessary pace of development or guarantee a consistent approach throughout the school.
- 70 Heads of year and form tutors carry out their duties effectively and pupils receive very good support, especially for their personal development. In most respects, heads of faculties and heads of department carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily. There are weaknesses, however, in the management of some aspects in art. The management and leadership of information technology are unsatisfactory. Additionally, improvements are required in most subjects to procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress and to the development plans in most faculties and departments. A good start has been made by the senior management team to systematically review the work of all faculties and departments. This includes monitoring the quality of teaching, but in many cases this is not supported as well as it should be by regular monitoring by the head of faculty or the head of department.

- 71 The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs, especially those with learning difficulties and with physical and medical needs, is generally very good. However, the agreed school criteria for placing pupils on the register of special educational needs are unclear. Insufficient distinction is made between low attaining pupils and those who require special provision. There are weaknesses in the provision made for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. There is a failure to identify clearly each pupil's provision on the school's register of special educational needs in terms of the stages identified in the Code of Practice for special educational needs. The time and amount of specific administrative support available for special educational needs is insufficient. This results in the special educational needs co-ordinator and support staff spending too much time on administration at the expense of their involvement with pupils.
- 72 In most respects, the governing body carries out its duties and responsibilities effectively. Governors' committees work efficiently within clearly defined terms of reference. Although governors rely mainly on regular reports from the headteacher and senior managers, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are well informed about its performance in examinations and evaluate this critically using the comparative national and local data on other schools. They are aware of the general nature of the progress made on key areas of development. However, arrangements for formal and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance in achieving its priorities as measured against expected outcomes and precise targets are underdeveloped.
- 73 The school does not fulfil the statutory requirements to teach the National Curriculum for information technology in Key Stage 4. Additionally, the statutory reporting requirements to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 are not met because the reports do not include the statutory teacher assessments for foundation subjects in relation to National Curriculum levels or where appropriate in relation to end of key stage descriptors.
- 74 The school's finances are carefully monitored. The weaknesses identified in the previous report have been rectified. Financial control and administration are very good. A satisfactory response has been made to the issues in the latest auditor's report. Governors monitor the budget carefully and base their spending decisions on very detailed financial information. The headteacher's form shows a healthy budget surplus for the last financial year. However, this planned underspend has been appropriately reflected in the budget allocations for this financial year and the projected levels of income and expenditure over the next few years indicate that there will be a small budget surplus. However, the detailed projections of the school's financial circumstances are not used as effectively as they should be to formally plan the school's future needs and to document these in a medium-to long-term development plan.

- 75 In the main all sources of funding are well managed and appropriately directed towards the schools priorities. However, the amount of funding allocated to faculties and departments is not sufficiently linked to their individual development plans. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately and a satisfactory increase in the number of support staff has been achieved since the last inspection. With the exception of the percentages of the budget spent on supply teachers and education support staff, which are higher than in most schools, other areas of expenditure are not significantly different from other schools and there is a close match between income and expenditure in the sixth form. Income and expenditure per pupil, however, are lower than in the majority of secondary schools nationally.
- 76 On balance, the school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. Especially good use is made of benchmarks and other financial indicators to monitor and compare the school's patterns of expenditure with those of other schools and to inform the financial decisions taken by the governing body. Competitive tenders are obtained for major items of expenditure. Governors and staff are aware that although the school's performance in terms of GCSE results compares favourably with the national average for all schools it is below average in comparison with similar schools. However, there is no indication that this information has been used to set future targets, since these are not significantly different from those currently achieved and are not sufficiently challenging. Considering the level of income and expenditure per pupil, the good quality of teaching and the school's overall performance in National Curriculum tests and examinations, the school gives good value for money.
- 77 Although the pupil to teacher ratio is well above the average for secondary schools nationally and the average amount of time teachers spend teaching is higher than in most schools, in the main there are sufficient and appropriately qualified teachers to teach all areas of the curriculum effectively. There is a good match between teachers', qualifications and the subjects they teach. Where staff contribute to teaching other than in their specialist subject, pupils are not adversely affected. The exception is in information technology where there is insufficient expertise to cover A-level classes when the one specialist teacher is absent as occurred during the inspection. Additionally, the teaching of information technology in subjects across the curriculum is adversely affected by several factors, including the general lack of information technology skills of some teachers.
- 78 Teachers of pupils with special educational needs are suitably qualified. Since the last inspection a satisfactory increase in the number of support staff has been achieved. Well trained support staff contribute greatly to the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- 79 The school has generally coped adequately with providing cover for a considerable number of long-term staff absences in recent years, but at a considerable cost. Parents, have however, expressed concern about too many untaught lessons in information technology.
- 80 There is an appropriate number of administrative staff with clearly defined responsibilities and an adequate level of technician support for all subjects.

- 81 The appraisal of teachers, which was well behind schedule at the previous inspection, is no longer taking place, although nearly all teachers have been appraised during the 1998/99 cycle of appraisals. The school is currently at an early stage in setting up new structures and procedures for performance management.
- 82 A reasonable amount of staff development takes place, but it is not sufficiently co-ordinated at a whole school level. Staff development activities are not linked sufficiently to development plans and the priorities for the school and individual departments are not clearly identified. There is urgent need to provide a staff development programme for information technology.
- 83 Some aspects of the school's accommodation are unsatisfactory. The available accommodation is well managed and there are just about sufficient general classrooms to teach the curriculum. However, many of these are small and some classes are overcrowded, despite some of the reductions in the size of teaching groups that have been made since the last inspection. Teachers and pupils generally cope satisfactorily in these situations. There are insufficient teaching spaces available to be able to generate the extra classes needed to reduce further the size of the current teaching groups.
- 84 There is adequate specialist accommodation for all subjects except science and music. Several of the science laboratories are too small to adequately and safely accommodate the pupil numbers in some classes. Most central benches are not connected to services. Services to the few that are supplied are by overhead connections to benches, which are not anchored to the floor. This constitutes a health and safety risk. The teaching accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. One of the main classrooms is too small for some of the classes and restricts the range of musical activities. There is a shortage of small spaces for group work in music so that some groups have to work in corridors, which disturbs other classes. The library is far too small for a school of this size with very limited private study facilities, especially for sixth form pupils. Although discussions are currently taking place with the diocese and the LEA about acquiring additional accommodation, the school does not have a sufficiently clear medium-to-long term development and financial plan for improvements to the accommodation.
- 85 There is good access to the school's teaching accommodation for pupils with restricted mobility, including those in wheelchairs. The medical and toilet facilities for disabled pupils, however, are unsatisfactory. They are cramped and unventilated. They restrict the movement of teachers and support staff in dealing with pupils and they do not allow sufficient privacy for pupils of different genders. Doors are too small for electric wheelchairs to access and there is insufficient space for washing and changing disabled pupils.
- 86 The school occupies a very attractive site, with extensive playing fields and grassed areas. All aspects of the grounds and the building are well maintained. As reported at the last inspection, the site manager and his staff maintain the buildings to a very good standard of cleanliness.

- 87 There are adequate resources to support teaching and learning in most subjects except information technology and music. Although some improvement has been made since the last inspection in the resources for information technology, there is still a serious shortage of up-to-date hardware and software. There are shortages of keyboards in music and many unpitched percussion instruments and keyboards are in need of repair or replacement. Most subjects have sufficient textbooks and since the last inspection, satisfactory improvements have been made to the provision in some subjects, including mathematics and science, but there are still shortages in history. The library is poorly stocked. The range and number of books for a school of this size and with a sixth form is unsatisfactory and does not adequately support research or independent learning. The headteacher's form forecasts a reasonable increase of expenditure for learning resources in this financial year.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher, the senior management and staff should now:

i) Improve further GCSE results by: (Paragraphs 2, 5, 6, 8, 59 to 61 and 69).

- setting challenging targets for the school's GCSE results;
- setting challenging targets for GCSE results in all subjects and increasing the proportion of GCSE passes at grades A* and A;
- using information from assessments effectively to set challenging targets for individual pupils in all subjects;
- regularly monitoring pupils' progress towards achieving their targets;
- regularly monitoring and evaluating the school's performance against its targets and in comparison with the performance of other schools nationally.

ii) Improve GCE A-level results by: (Paragraphs 11 to 14, 19 and 69).

- ensuring that the prior attainment of pupils who enter the sixth form is appropriate for the courses they study.
- setting challenging targets for A-level results in all subjects and increasing the proportion of passes at grades A and B;
- regularly monitoring pupils' progress towards achieving their targets.

iii) Improve standards in information technology by: (Paragraphs 15, 18, 38, 41, 69, 70, 73, 82 and 168 to 179).

- fulfilling statutory requirements to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study for information technology to all pupils in Key Stage 4;
- ensuring that there are effective arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress and attainment in all aspects of information technology;

- ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to use information technology in all subjects and that there is a detailed scheme of work that covers the National Curriculum programmes of study, which identifies specifically what is to be taught in other subjects;
 - ensuring that there is effective management and leadership of information technology;
 - devising and implementing a staff development programme so that information technology can be taught effectively and supported in the teaching of other subjects;
 - producing a detailed development and financial plan to achieve the necessary level of information technology resources to teach the National Curriculum effectively.
- iv) Improve standards in art throughout the school by ensuring that pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum and that they engage in challenging learning activities in lessons. (Paragraphs: 17 to 19, 31, 38, 41 and 127 to 136).**
- v) Ensure that there are effective procedures for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' attainment and progress in all subjects and that the information from assessments is used effectively to set targets for individual pupils. Also ensure that statutory reporting requirements at the end of Key Stage 3 are met. (Paragraphs 59 to 62, 69 and 73).**
- vi) Ensure that the management and leadership of key areas of development in the school are effective by: (Paragraphs 37, 67 to 70 and 72).**
- ensuring the headteacher and the senior management team have clearly defined responsibilities for key areas of development and that they provide a firm steer to ensure that developments are implemented effectively throughout the school within an appropriate time scale;
 - ensuring that procedures are in place for the governors and senior staff of the school to formally and systematically monitor and evaluate the school's performance in achieving its priorities and targets.
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching is monitored regularly by the senior management team and by heads of faculties and heads of department.
- vii) Improve the school development plan and the faculty and departmental development plans by: (Paragraphs 68, 70 and 75).**
- ensuring that targets and success criteria in the plans are measurable, more precise and focus on improvements to standards or other aspects of the school's performance;
 - ensuring that faculty and departmental development plans are suitably costed and appropriately linked to their allocations from the school's budget.
- viii) Produce a medium-to-long term development and financial plan that sets out the school's future needs in terms of the curriculum, staffing levels, resources and accommodation. (Paragraphs 68, 74 and 83 to 87).**

In addition to the main weaknesses identified above, there are a number of other weaknesses which governors should consider including in their action plan.

- ix) Carry out immediate improvements to the science laboratories to rectify the health and safety hazards, which are detailed in this report. (Paragraphs 84 and 126).
- x) Establish clear criteria for placing pupils on the school's register for special educational needs and ensure that the provision for those pupils with emotional and behavioural needs is clearly identified in terms of the Code of Practice for special educational needs. (Paragraphs 44 and 71)
- xi) Improve the management of staff development, especially in identifying the school's priorities in relation to its development plans. (Paragraph 82 and 179)

The main areas for improvement in (iii) and some aspects of (i), (vi) and (vii) were identified as weaknesses in the last report. Improvements to information technology and setting targets for pupils are identified as priorities in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 158 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 40 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2% | 15 | 39 | 43 | 1 | 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 | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 943 | 119 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 61 | |

| Special educational needs | Y5 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 9 | |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 182 | 1 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 0 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 4 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 10 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 6.1 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.2 |
| 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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 88 | 103 | 191 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 71 | 69 | 65 |
| | Girls | 95 | 72 | 62 |
| | Total | 166 | 141 | 127 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 87 | 74 | 66 |
| | National | 63 | 62 | 55 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 34 | 46 | 25 |
| | National | 28 | 38 | 23 |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 66 | 73 | 67 |
| | Girls | 88 | 80 | 68 |
| | Total | 154 | 153 | 135 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 81 | 80 | 71 |
| | National | 64 | 64 | 60 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 37 | 47 | 34 |
| | National | 31 | 37 | 28 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 87 | 93 | 180 |

| 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 | 46 | 82 | 86 |
| | Girls | 63 | 92 | 93 |
| | Total | 109 | 174 | 179 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 61 | 97 | 99 |
| | National | 46.6 | 90.9 | 95.8 |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 40 |
| | National | 38.0 |

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 |
| | National | N/A |

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

| Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 33 | 30 | 63 |

| Average A/AS points score per candidate | For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent | | | For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent | | |
|---|---|--------|------|--|--------|-----|
| | Male | Female | All | Male | Female | All |
| School | 13.6 | 15.3 | 14.4 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| National | 17.7 | 18.1 | 17.9 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.8 |

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

| Vocational qualifications | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | 0 |
| | National | 82.5 |

| International Baccalaureate | Number | % success rate |
|---|----------|----------------|
| Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the Percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied | School | 0 |
| | National | N/a |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 3 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 3 |
| Indian | 1 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 1054 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 1 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 46 | 2 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 54.8 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 19.4 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of education support staff | 15.0 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 364 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 79.9 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 2 | N/A |
| Key Stage 3 | 29.0 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22.4 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 2,438,486 |
| Total expenditure | 2,481,153 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,336 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 171,062 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 128,395 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1,062 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 259 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school | 30 | 57 | 11 | 2 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 42 | 48 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 27 | 56 | 10 | 1 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 20 | 56 | 19 | 2 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 28 | 61 | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 22 | 44 | 28 | 4 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 46 | 37 | 11 | 4 | 2 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 56 | 38 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 21 | 45 | 25 | 5 | 3 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 31 | 49 | 8 | 3 | 8 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 36 | 51 | 8 | 1 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 26 | 46 | 14 | 3 | 10 |

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

- 88 In 1999, the GCSE results in English language were broadly in line with the national average, but below average in comparison with the results for similar schools. In English Literature the results were well above national average. Girls achieved better results than boys in both subjects. A reasonable number of pupils in both subjects obtained the higher grade A pass, but only three pupils achieved the highest A* grade. Since the last inspection, the results in English language have fluctuated, but have never been below the national average. In English literature the GCSE results have improved from below the national average to well above average.
- 89 In the A-level examination in English language all of the pupils entered achieved a pass grade, but none obtained the higher A and B grades. All of the pupils entered for the A-level examination in English literature achieved a pass grade and the percentage achieving grades A and B was just above the national average. In each year since the last inspection, the percentage of pupils achieving pass grades has been broadly in line with the national average.
- 90 The results of the 1999 National Curriculum test are well above the national average for all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. There is no significant difference between the results for boys and girls. The results in English are better than those in mathematics and science.
- 91 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is well above average. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. In the work seen, pupils have good literary skills. The range and quality of writing throughout the key stage is good. Pupils of all levels of attainment write well. Higher attaining pupils write with flair. Pupils with special educational needs write competently. Pupils respond well to the encouragement that they receive to produce creative and imaginative writing. Pupils of all levels of attainment draft their work carefully, seeking to improve its quality. Regular reading sessions in class successfully promote pupils' reading skills. Weaker readers are helped by the paired reading schemes. Pupils speak clearly and confidently in class and are able to give detailed answers when required. Pupils in a Year 9 lesson on advertising made perceptive and accurate comments about the language used in television commercials. They analysed the purpose and intended audience of each commercial, using the proper technical vocabulary.
- 92 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. The quality of the writing noted in Key Stage 3 is evident in Key Stage 4. Higher attaining pupils continue to write with imagination and purpose, particularly in their personal writing for coursework. Lower attaining pupils write clearly, producing well structured work. Pupils in Year 10 have a detailed knowledge and understanding of their set text. All pupils continue to use drafting and redrafting skills to improve and enhance their work.

- 93 In relation to their prior attainment, pupils are achieving very well in Key Stage 3. In most lessons, learning is good and often very good. Pupils become very involved in lessons. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 enjoyed the opportunity to work in groups as they studied a speech from 'As You Like It.' Pupils respond well to the challenge and demands made of them in lessons. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 3 and this is appropriately reflected in the National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9.
- 94 Pupils' very good progress continues in Key Stage 4 in English literature, where pupils enjoy lessons and show good knowledge and understanding of the texts studied. The good GCSE results confirm this progress. In English Language, pupils make good progress and achieve well. The GCSE results were well above the national average in 1998 but dipped to be broadly in line with the national average in 1999. This is mainly because boys did not do as well as in the previous year. In an effort to improve the attainment of boys' in English language some boys and girls in Year 10 are taught in separate groups, but as yet there are no conclusive outcomes. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and develop competent literacy skills. The achievement of pupils in the sixth form is above average in English literature and average in English language. There are very good examples of high quality writing in both subjects.
- 95 Pupils' attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are very good. They listen attentively in lessons and are keen to respond to questions and to enter into discussions. They are well behaved and courteous and are enthusiastic when given the opportunity to learn independently. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils showed above average levels of information technology skills, as they used computers to write a newspaper article. In some classrooms, accommodation is cramped, but pupils cope well in these situations.
- 96 Teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In 75 per cent of lessons it is good or very good. Teachers know the subject well and plan lessons carefully. The teaching of literacy is good. The encouragement pupils are given to produce creative and imaginative writing is a strength of the teaching in many lessons and pupils respond by writing well structured accounts and interesting narratives. The good pace to many lessons and the well chosen tasks enables pupils to learn well. The dialogue between teachers and pupils is good, creating interest and enthusiasm. Teachers use questions skilfully to probe and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. The tutorial approach in the sixth form helps pupils to improve their knowledge of texts and language through the discussions and exchange of ideas with teachers and with other pupils.
- 97 Until quite recently there has been no whole school approach to the development of literacy, but a suitable policy is now in place. Standards of literacy are above average. Pupils enter the school with good literacy skills. The good teaching in English and in other subjects successfully promotes the further development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils speak clearly and confidently. In class they readily ask questions and many give detailed and coherent answers. Pupils read well. Reading is encouraged in English by regular opportunities for pupils to read to the class. Most pupils write fluently and teachers insist on correct spelling and punctuation. In English, pupils' writing skills are well developed by the end of Key Stage 3 and this benefits other subjects. For example, pupils write evaluations in design and technology that are fluent and literate. In English their creative and imaginative writing is very good. Pupils know how to use the vocabulary required in different

subjects. In modern foreign languages, the measured and systematic teaching of grammar helps pupils understand the structure of language. Pupils with special educational needs develop their literacy skills well. They receive good support in English lessons and with the help of teachers and support staff they cope well with the demands of literacy in other subjects.

- 98 The faculty is well managed. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of faculty knows the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty, but the development plan does not focus sufficiently on raising standards or setting clear targets for improvements. An adequate assessment scheme is in place and there are thorough arrangements for assessing pupils at the beginning of Year 7. However, insufficient use is made of assessment information to set targets for individual pupils. Homework is set and marked regularly. Drama techniques continue to be used effectively in lessons.
- 99 There is a good programme of extra curricular activities in English, which includes visits to the school by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The content of the schemes of work is generally good and they support lesson planning, but they do not contain precise learning objectives. The use of information technology is beginning to be very well integrated into the curriculum. National Curriculum level descriptors are not yet being used to track or predict pupils' progress. It is not yet clear how well the arrangements for single gender teaching groups in Year 10 are impacting on the attainment of boys.
- 100 There is an adequate range of learning resources. Teaching accommodation is generally satisfactory, but is often cramped because of the small classrooms and the size of some of the groups.

MATHEMATICS

- 101 In 1999, GCSE results were above the national average for all schools, and average in comparison with the results for similar schools. The results have improved since the last inspection, but only a few pupils obtained the higher A* and A grades. There is no significant difference in the results for boys and girls.
- 102 In 1999, all of the pupils entered for the A-level examination passed and the percentage achieving grades A and B was well above the national average. Similar results have been achieved each year since the last inspection.
- 103 The results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average for all schools but below average in comparison with the results for similar schools. There is no significant difference in the results for boys and girls. The results are similar to those at the last inspection. The results are similar to the results for science and lower than those for English.

- 104 Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils carry out written calculations competently, explain a variety of methods of performing mental tasks. Higher attaining pupils have a thorough knowledge of multiplication facts and a good understanding of statistics, including grouped data and cumulative frequency. Fundamental concepts of algebra are fully understood by most pupils. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs generally cope well with basic calculations. Many can find a simple fraction of a whole number and some are able to simplify their answers. They can interpret and draw statistical graphs, subtract decimals and round numbers. Pupils' investigative skills are satisfactory but not as well developed as many other mathematical skills.
- 105 Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Higher attaining pupils can solve equations involving inequalities and can sketch and interpret graphs of linear and quadratic functions. They cope well with challenging work on transformations and enlargement. Many pupils are good at choosing a particular mental strategy to solve a given problem. Lower attaining pupils satisfactorily add and subtract numbers to two decimal places, draw and interpret simple line graphs, charts and pie-charts. They have satisfactory knowledge of multiplication facts up to 10 and can add and subtract mentally, numbers with two digits.
- 106 In the sixth form, attainment is average in both pure and applied mathematics. Year 13 pupils were not in school during the inspection, but samples of their work indicate that attainment is broadly average. Pupils in Year 12 have a satisfactory understanding of the modules covered in the course so far. They have a satisfactory understanding of equations of motion and can apply these to problems. They understand the nature of forces in equilibrium and can carry out a good range of statistical calculations.
- 107 Most pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. Overall, pupils in both key stages and in the sixth form gain knowledge at a satisfactory rate across the whole curriculum and achieve as well as expected. They apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to increasingly difficult problems and steadily improve their levels of performance. For example, many who enter the school at National Curriculum Level 4 move onto to Level 8 by the end of Year 11. Pupils in the sixth form build steadily on their previous mathematical knowledge and move through the modular course at a satisfactory rate. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. On entry to the school, seven pupils were working at Level 2 or below and they have progressed to working at about Level 4 and 5 in Year 11. The provision and the support for pupils with special educational needs are good and has improved since the last inspection.
- 108 Numerical and other mathematical skills are suitably supported and developed in other subjects. The understanding of charts and pie-charts is used and reinforced well in science, information technology, geography and physical education. Graphs are used extensively in science where lines of best fit are determined. In geography, pupils cope well with statistics and they are able to analyse the data and draw conclusions, as in a study of traffic flow on a local by-pass. In physical education, basic calculations relating to scoring systems and the measurement of distance and time reinforce pupils' numerical skills.

- 109 Pupil's attitude to learning is very good. Pupils work hard in lessons and sustain concentration. Behaviour is very good and pupils have good relationships with each other and with teachers. Pupils respond well to challenging work when it is set. For example, Year 10 pupils tackled an investigation into number squares with quiet determination and pupils in a Year 7 lesson worked enthusiastically simplifying algebraic expressions. Pupils with relatively low attainment are keen to show others their understanding of new concepts such as when they successfully calculated the area of a triangle. Pupils demonstrate their keenness to learn and the pride they have in their work by the very high standard of presentation in their written work.
- 110 The quality of teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is good or very good in just over two-thirds of lessons. Because pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form were on study leave or taking examinations very few lessons were seen. In all lessons, teachers demonstrate a thorough knowledge of mathematics. They introduce new topics with clear explanations and move pupils on at a good pace when introducing or reinforcing ideas such as probability, inequalities and algebraic identities. A good variety of teaching methods is used, including small group work and mathematical games. Class management is of a very high order with obvious mutual respect between the teachers and their pupils. The teaching of pupils with special education needs is good. Pupils' Individual Education Plans are used appropriately and the pace of learning is well matched to pupils' individual needs. For example, work on fractions with pupils in Year 9 moved in simple steps from the meaning of a fraction through to showing fraction equivalence. Homework is set regularly and marking is satisfactory. Very little use is made of information technology to support teaching and learning in both key stages and in the sixth form.
- 111 The leadership and management of the faculty are good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The detailed schemes of work supports good lesson planning, which contributes to the satisfactory rate of learning. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. Ongoing assessment of pupils' progress is carried out regularly by all teachers, but there is no formal policy in place to ensure consistency in the way that assessments are carried out and recorded. Insufficient use is made of assessment information for setting targets for individual pupils. Appropriate priorities are expressed in the development plan, but the targets and success criteria are imprecise, especially those relating to improvements in test and examination results.
- 112 Since the last inspection, satisfactory improvements have been made in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. There is better organisation of teaching groups in Year 9 and in Key Stage 4. The level of support for pupils is good and their progress is appropriately monitored.
- 113 The teaching accommodation is generally satisfactory, with six designated classrooms for mathematics, but some classrooms are too small to accommodate comfortably the number of pupils in the teaching groups. Resources are satisfactory to meet the basic needs of the curriculum, but information technology resources are unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

- 114 In 1999, GCSE results were well above the national average for all schools and well above average in comparison with similar schools. The results are even better than those at the time of the last inspection, when they were also well above the national average. There is no significant difference in the results for boys and girls. Pupils gained more of the highest A* and A grades in science than in any other subject in the school. Lower attaining pupils were entered for the single award science and nearly all gained a pass grade
- 115 The 1999 A-level results in biology were good and well above the national average. The results in physics were satisfactory, with all six of the pupils entered passing. The results in chemistry were unsatisfactory with only six of the 10 pupils entered passing the examination. Since the last inspection, the results in biology have remained at a very high level and the number of pupils taking biology has doubled. The results in physics and chemistry have improved considerably since the last inspection, but the chemistry results still remain lower than the national average. Pupils taking chemistry perform well in the early modules of their course, but many do not do as well as expected in the later modules. This is currently being addressed through greater tutorial support and a review of teaching styles.
- 116 The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national average for all schools, but well below average in comparison with similar schools. The results are well below those for English and similar to those for mathematics. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Since the last inspection the results have broadly followed the national trend and remained at a level consistently above the national average.
- 117 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. They have good practical skills and observe safe working practices even in the rather cramped conditions of some of the laboratories. They are careful in taking and recording a variety of measurements and present their data in neat tables and in various well constructed graphical forms. Skills in planning and carrying out scientific investigations are good. For example, in their investigation of the effect of the slope of a ramp on how far a toy car will travel, higher attaining pupils in Year 7 carried out extensive testing of the cars to ensure the reliability of their results. Pupils have good all-round knowledge of the science topics covered and are keen to discuss their ideas and apply them. For example, pupils in Year 9 used their knowledge of photosynthesis to explain why leaves of a plant which had been in the dark for a few days, were lacking in starch. Pupils in Year 8 were able to use their knowledge of chemical reactions to arrive at a simple explanation of why small marble chips react more quickly with acid than larger ones.
- 118 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 4 is above average but not quite as high as indicated by the 1999 GCSE results. Year 11 pupils were on study leave during the inspection, but a representative sample of their written work was inspected. Pupils have good subject knowledge, are able to recall basic facts and theories, and explain their ideas using correct scientific terminology. Pupils have particularly good knowledge of plant structures and the process of photosynthesis. A group of higher attaining Year 10 pupils were able to discuss how leaves of various plants are adapted to meet different climatic conditions, such as deserts. Another group of Year 10 pupils applied their knowledge of electrostatics to explain the phenomenon of lightning and how electrostatic dust precipitators reduce

atmospheric pollution. Pupils use their numeracy skills well in carrying out various calculations, such as determining bond energies and reacting quantities in chemistry, and Ohm's Law and power calculations in physics.

- 119 Attainment by pupils in the sixth form is average. Pupils in Year 13 were absent on study leave. However, a representative sample of their files and practical coursework exercises were seen. Year 12 pupils in biology demonstrated very good recall of plant structures and osmosis to review the methods of transportation of water through plants. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson, students were able to apply their knowledge of atomic structure and chemical bonding to rationalise their understanding of the properties and reactions of the halogens. Year 12 pupils in physics displayed clear analytical skills in reviewing computer-collected data on temperature, sound and light measurements taken in the school over the previous weekend. They are very conscientious in their studies and produce written work of good quality. The development of individual study skills is rather restricted by the inadequate resources in the library. Places for individual study are limited, the range and quality of appropriate support textbooks is poor and there is no computer to give access to the Internet or CD-ROMs.
- 120 Pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They take a pride in their work, have high standards and present data and graphs accurately and neatly. For example, pupils in Year 9 demonstrated good recall of information in an end of module test on variation and introductory genetics. They proceeded to construct a number of food chains for woodland and pond habitats and develop the concept of energy transfer through the chains. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3 as a result of the careful structuring of lessons and the setting of suitable challenging written work. For example, pupils in a lower Year 8 set watched with interest a demonstration of the burning of barbecue fuel. They were able to recall previous knowledge to recognise that water and carbon dioxide were being formed as products of combustion. Pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They become efficient learners and develop a good general knowledge of science. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of genetics and of how the major organs in the human body work develop well as a result of quality handouts and challenging written exercises. Coursework investigations in all three areas of science are very thoroughly carried out. Pupils make sensible predictions based on appropriate theories, and are thorough in their analysis of their results and the accuracy of their work. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils also make good progress in Key Stage 4. They follow a modified course that presents them with challenges appropriate to their abilities and they are given good assistance and encouragement from teachers and support staff. Pupils in the sixth form are effective learners and generally make good progress in their studies. They rise to the challenge of the modular pattern of assessment of their courses and work at a good pace to meet the tight schedules. Coursework exercises in all three sciences develop observational and data collecting skills very well. Pupils apply good skills in assessing the accuracy and validity of their results

- 121 Pupils respond very well in lessons. They settle quickly to the set tasks and maintain a good rate of work. They are very ready to respond to questions and welcome opportunities to express their own ideas, which they do with confidence and making good use of correct terminology. In group activities they work well together and are very aware of the need for safety and to be aware of the needs of others, particularly when working in the rather cramped conditions in some of the laboratories. For example, a group of Year 10 girls worked very efficiently and with sustained concentration on experiments to test for starch in various leaves. They co-operated well, followed instructions accurately and achieved excellent results under testing circumstances. Sixth form pupils respond very well to the range of teaching styles and tutorial sessions used in A-level courses. They maintain a high level of concentration and participate very well in the development of the subject matter. For example, Year 12 biology pupils responded very well to a series of rapidly posed questions on the transport of water through plants, and gained much valuable revision of the topic prior to their module test.
- 122 The quality of teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In two-thirds of the lessons teaching is good or very good. Teachers display good subject knowledge, are confident in their delivery and effectively use examples from everyday life to illustrate their teaching. Lessons are generally well planned, but specific learning objectives are more often implicit than explicit. Where clear objectives are identified, shared with pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson, pupils are able to identify the progress made. For example, in the Year 7 lesson on light, objectives were clear and pupils were able to see how each step in the lesson, including the set homework, linked to the objectives. Teachers make good use of time, set clear deadlines for the completion of exercises and pupils are challenged at an appropriate level. Lessons generally proceed at good pace and pupils respond positively to this. For example, pupils in Year 8 participated well in a rapid question and answer session on combustion and the formation of oxides. They proceeded to write equations for these processes and finished by discussing a series of experiments on the conditions necessary for iron nails to go rusty. Discussions are well led and with a high degree of pupil involvement. For example Year 7 pupils enjoyed discussing the role of micro-organisms in the formation of compost. They drew on knowledge from previous lessons and readily identified biodegradable and non-biodegradable materials in a 'mock up' of a compost system. The tutorial approach sometimes used by teachers in the sixth form works well, especially with small groups. For example, in the Year 12 chemistry lesson, pupils responded well to the teacher's probing questions about atomic structure and chemical bonding. Homework is regularly set and is clearly designed to reinforce or extend the lesson content. Very occasionally, lessons lack initial impact and clear direction, or too much attention is focused on the textbook. On these occasions pupils' attention is partially lost and the rate of learning drops. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Lessons are well designed to cater for their needs and worksheets are written at an appropriate level. Homework exercises are also specifically designed to their needs and to provide them with adequate motivation to follow up the lessons outside of school time. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

- 123 The curriculum is well planned and fully meets statutory requirements. In Key Stage 3 the scheme of work has recently been reviewed and is now based on the 'Spotlight Science' course. Initial indications are that the course is proving successful and is aiding in the raising of standards in the key stage. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is planned around topics in the GCSE syllabus and timetable arrangements allow for a substantial amount of specialist teaching of topics. Coursework investigations are started early in Year 10 and completed efficiently early in Year 11. The sixth form courses are well planned around the various A-level modules and the associated coursework. The use of information technology is being developed in the teaching, but there remains much to do to fully integrate the use of computers into the curriculum. At present, development is restricted by the limited access to computers. The curriculum is enriched by visits to local science-based companies, for example, Stoke Bardolph water treatment works and Knoll Pharmaceutical, and to organised lectures. The faculty has developed valuable links with local industries and colleges to organise very successful science fairs for Year 9 pupils each year.
- 124 Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are satisfactory. Pupils are regularly assessed at the end of each unit of work in both key stages. A series of set homework exercises have been linked to National Curriculum levels and supplement the assessment procedures in Key Stage 3. Teachers keep full and detailed records of all assessments but these are not yet used to the best effect to set targets for individual pupils.
- 125 The faculty is well led and there is a clear vision of what is needed to maintain or further develop the already high standards achieved. Currently the head of faculty has responsibility for all three A-level science courses. The development of these courses would benefit greatly from the designation of staff with responsibility for each of the three sciences. Much has been done in recent years to develop the profile of science within the school and the local community through the development of links with industry and involvement in events such as the Science Speaking Competition as part of National Science Week. Teaching is regularly monitored but there is no clear mechanism for using the information gained to develop the sharing of good practice within the faculty. The faculty development plan is realistic and identifies clear priorities, but the targets relating to improvements to standards are imprecise.
- 126 Teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory. Several of the laboratories are too small to adequately and safely accommodate the pupil numbers in some classes. In most laboratories, services are only supplied to the wall benches, which restricts flexibility in practical work. In two laboratories gas and electricity are supplied via overhead leads to benches which are not anchored to the floor. This constitutes a health and safety risk. Places for individual study are limited. With the exception of the wider range of resources needed to support work in the sixth form, learning resources are adequate, and are extremely well maintained. The technical support staff operate a highly efficient system to ensure that all classes receive the equipment they require.

ART

- 127 GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average. These results are an improvement on the previous year, but are below those at the last inspection when they were broadly in line with national average. Girls are performing better than the boys, but their results are significantly below the national average for girls. No pupils obtained the higher grades A* and A, but more than a fifth of the candidates gained a grade D pass, illustrating how close the department is to improving the overall results.
- 128 Of the five pupils entered for the A-level examination in 1999, four achieved a pass grade, but none obtained a higher grade A or B. These results are generally satisfactory, but not as good as those achieved at the time of the last inspection when all four candidates achieved good passes at A and B grades. There were no entries for art in 1998.
- 129 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is below average due mainly to their under-developed observational drawing skills and insufficient personal research. Teacher assessments at the end of the key stage indicate that over eighty per cent of pupils meet or exceed national expectations but this is not reflected in the work seen during the inspection. Too much of their work is based on photographs or illustrations taken from books or magazines. Their design skills are somewhat better and some interesting work was done by a Year 7 class on paintings of their fingerprints. A Year 9 class, working on family portraits, showed good knowledge of the work of artists as diverse as Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci. The great majority of the work being produced is two-dimensional, while drawing is almost exclusively small scale and in pencil.
- 130 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average and reflects the weak drawing skills and insufficient personal research of the earlier years. Year 10 pupils working on a still-life, lacked the skill or technique needed to transfer their observations to paper. Few pupils use their sketchbooks for personal research or investigation, increasingly important for GCSE work. Pupils, who use pastels, charcoal and chalk to draw with a more adventurous approach make good gains in knowledge and develop confidence in expressing their ideas. Good examples of such approaches are the well-conceived set of work based on drawings of a green pepper, which has been re-worked into a collage and, the work produced by another pupil in water-colours that show the benefit of looking closely at the region's landscape.
- 131 Attainment at the end of the sixth form is also below average. Pupils fail to reach the level expected for A-level work due to insufficient first-hand observation, under-developed drawing skills and a general reluctance to experiment with process or technique. As in Key Stages 3 and 4, the bulk of the work is painting and drawing, although photography does feature in some of the work of the sixth form. Too often, however, pupils' finished work relies heavily on images taken from photographs or other illustrations. These older pupils, while being familiar with artists as diverse as Holbein, Hockney, Matisse, and members of the Dada movement have done insufficient reading and research to have developed the personal view so necessary at A-level.

- 132 Pupils enter the school with a wide range of prior attainment. They do not achieve as well as they should in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Their progress is slow. This is mainly because too much of the work concentrates on painting and drawing and in some lessons in Key Stage 3 teachers do not make enough demands of pupils and the work is not sufficiently challenging. Consequently, pupils fail to develop the basic skills of observation and drawing at a satisfactory rate. In the sixth form, pupils' are encouraged to make more individual statements in their work and some use a greater range of media and processes, but many pupils still prefer to work with painting and drawing in preference to developing their skills in sculpture, print or ceramics. Teachers respond to pupils who have special educational needs with great sensitivity. These pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. For example, a set of GCSE work produced by a pupil who suffers severe physical difficulties, is a credit to his endeavour and his teachers' care.
- 133 The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. They have good relationships with each other and with their teachers. However, as at the last inspection, there are a few occasions when a small number of boys in Year 8 and Year 9 resist the best efforts of their teachers and are too noisy. Most pupils enjoy art and are genuinely interested in their lessons, especially when observing the work of other artists, such as the drawings of M.C. Escher. They also enjoy the opportunities to reflect on their own work and the work of other pupils. Pupils in the sixth form hold the subject and their teachers in high regard but some fail to accept responsibility for their own studies, often arriving in lessons without sketchbooks or with a clear direction for their work.
- 134 Teaching is satisfactory overall. In most lessons pupils achieve what is expected of them, but their achievement overall in both key stages and in the sixth form is adversely affected by the quality and range of the curriculum. Just over half the lessons in Key Stage 3 are good, but two out of the seven lessons observed were unsatisfactory because the work was not sufficiently challenging and the teacher under-estimated pupils' prior attainment and what they were capable of achieving. In these lessons, teachers' low expectations of pupils' investigative abilities, led to disappointing learning, slow progress, and underachievement. Year 11 pupils were on study leave during the inspection and only one lesson was seen, which was good. Although teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory, and in one lesson it was good, the level and variety of work does not always represent a sufficient challenge for all pupils. Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and classroom management is very good. In the best lessons, teachers make their expectations and lesson objectives clear to pupils. In a Year 8 lesson, a demonstration of the manufacture and use of a stencil to produce a design on fabric led to significant gains in knowledge of the technique by the whole class, as well as giving clear insight into the versatility of the process. This lesson generated considerable creative activity. Another teacher's patient approach in a sixth form lesson clearly illustrated the benefits to be gained from approaching drawing with different scale and media. Pupils respond well to their teachers' obvious enjoyment for the subject. The failure to set regular, challenging homework, however, represents missed opportunities to reinforce essential skills.

- 135 Day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in key areas. Development planning does not focus sufficiently on raising standards or developing the curriculum. Day-to-day assessment, as teachers move around their classes, is good, but there is a lack of any system for formally assessing pupils' work at Key Stage 3. There is no systematic approach to setting targets for pupils or rigorously monitoring their progress. Non-specialist teachers in the department require further training to increase their knowledge of critical studies. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly, but the outcomes from this have not been used effectively to ensure a consistent good quality of teaching throughout the department.
- 136 The curriculum in art has significant weaknesses. It provides opportunities for pupils to work with a variety of processes, including photography, but much of the work concentrates too much on painting and drawing, and the teaching of three-dimensional studies and creative textiles does not receive sufficient attention. Very little work is done on sculpture, print or ceramics. There is very limited use of information technology for the creation and modification of computer generated imagery. Although pupils are introduced to artists' work from Japan, Africa and Australia, the multi-cultural content of the curriculum remains relatively small. Reference facilities, criticised in the previous report, have improved dramatically with Internet access, but pupils require improved study skills if they are to gain maximum benefit from this facility. The accommodation is generally satisfactory and is well cared for, but is too small to allow large-scale work to be completed comfortably.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 137 In 1999, GCSE results in technology examinations were above the national average. Graphics, textiles technology and food technology achieved particularly good results. Whilst resistant materials and systems and control results were lower, they still remained above the national average. A reasonable number of pupils obtained a grade A pass, but only two achieved the highest A* grade. Results have improved considerably since the last inspection when they were unusually poor. Girls performed significantly better than boys in 1999.
- 138 A-level results in 1999 were good and similar to those at the last inspection. Four out of the five pupils entered passed and three obtained good passes at grades A and B. The results in 1998 were also good with all three of the pupils entered achieving a grade B.
- 139 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Year 9 pupils demonstrate good making skills and can use both hand and machine tools competently. Pupils in a Year 9 resistant materials group, for example, used try-squares and templates to mark out dovetail joints accurately. Most were able to cut and fit the joints to a good degree of accuracy. Similarly, in a Year 8 textiles group, boys and girls were equally competent in their use of the sewing machines. Projects are carefully structured to guide pupils through the process of designing, making and evaluating. When pupils are given the opportunity to extend their work beyond the confines of the project structure, some produce detailed folders with good research and presentation skills. Lower attaining pupils limit their research to books and magazines and employ basic techniques for the presentation of their work. Where information is gathered from the Internet and CD-ROMs, it is sometimes used uncritically. The use of computers and computer-aided manufacture is gradually being used more frequently in project work and pupils are able to use simple

drawing techniques, generate repeat patterns and create flow charts. However, pupils have limited access to information technology, which restricts their opportunities to incorporate the use of computers more readily into their work. Many pupils demonstrate good levels of literacy by writing detailed evaluative accounts of their work. For example, the interest and enthusiasm of a Year 9 pupil for his electronics project was evident from his well-written evaluation, which described his feelings for the subject as well as what he had done. Pupils use written descriptions more readily than graphical methods when expressing their ideas and recording their work. In many cases this limits their ability to generate a range of alternative ideas from which to develop a design solution.

- 140 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Pupils successfully undertake ambitious GCSE projects in resistant materials and in systems and control. The projects are supported by detailed research, which is well organised in folders, and generally, pupils have sufficient practical skills to complete the projects to a good standard. Some GCSE folders in food technology contain high quality work and good examples of information being drawn from a variety of sources. Many pupils in all areas of technology make good use of the limited access to computers to enhance their work, but weaknesses in hand drawn graphics are still evident in some project folders. For example, in one well presented systems and control folder, the level of three-dimensional drawing was no higher than that seen in some Year 9 work. In general, pupils have a good understanding of the design process. Pupils in a Year 10 food technology lesson, for example, successfully demonstrated their ability to modify an existing recipe, prepare an individual plan of action and produce a trifle for a specified target group. All pupils were able to produce a quality product with good technical skill and imagination.
- 141 Attainment in the sixth form is above average. Most pupils can use good quality graphic work to express their ideas, carry out thorough research and have the technical skills to convert their ideas into successful products. They discuss the development of their work in a mature way with teachers and with each other.
- 142 In relation to their prior attainment pupils are achieving well. Progress is mainly good and pupils make clear gains in both the knowledge and understanding required for successful design work. Their overall ability to apply designing and making skills increases as they experience the whole range of material areas available to them. Pupils made greater progress where the task engaged their interest. For example, all pupils in a Year 8 lesson on textiles gained a greater understanding of working procedures and technical skills as they completed tasks for their 'bag' project. A pupil with special educational needs showed great perseverance in completing some hand stitching. Progress is less evident where task presents insufficient challenge for pupils. The worksheets in a Year 9 textiles lesson, for example, did not sufficiently involve higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs, in the same group, however, made good progress with the help of a classroom support assistant. In Key Stage 4, better progress is made by those pupils who make the transition from the more tightly controlled design briefs in Key Stage 3 to the greater independence of managing the design situation for themselves. Pupils in the sixth form make good progress. They receive good guidance from teachers and they exercise appropriate responsibility for the development of their own work.

- 143 Pupils' attitudes to work are very good. Pupils are attentive and usually keen to participate in lessons. They enjoy practical work and can conduct themselves safely and sensibly when using hand and machine tools. Pupils co-operate well with each other and with teachers. For example, a pupil in a Year 7 lesson on structures patiently helped a lower achieving pupil with measuring tasks for his bridge construction project. Pupils take care with their work and have a pride in the outcome and the finished product.
- 144 Teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In 75 per cent of lessons teaching is good. Teachers are particularly effective in managing a wide range of activities in a practical area. Combined with good planning and clear lesson objectives this enables good standards of discipline to be maintained and encourages pupils to work purposefully and independently. Discussions with individual pupils are skilfully used to promote thinking by requiring pupils to suggest solutions to their own questions. Teachers encourage pupils to use correct technical vocabulary by frequent reference to wall displays of key words and the use of vocabulary books. Teachers provide good role models for pupils by demonstrating a willingness and flexibility to teach in more than one material area, and gender stereotypes are challenged when pupils see female teachers working in traditionally male areas. Homework is used effectively to support work in class. For example, in support of a lesson dealing with the food industry, Year 9 pupils were required to draw a table to show the primary and secondary processing of five raw commodities. Teachers, however, sometimes miss opportunities to exploit the context of a design project to promote pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- 145 The leadership and management of the department are good. Pupils receive a broad technological experience. The departmental documentation is detailed and schemes of work are closely matched to National Curriculum programmes of study. Computer aided design and pneumatics are being integrated into work at appropriate stages. The development plan contains appropriate priorities, but the success criteria are imprecise in terms of measurable outcomes relating to expected improvements in standards and in external examinations.
- 146 Teachers generally make a useful contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, but this good practice could be strengthened by articulating it more explicitly in policies and schemes of work. Assessment procedures are thorough but National Curriculum levels are only referred to at the conclusion of a project and it is not clear to pupils what they represent. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work at all stages and, in food technology, parents are invited to evaluate the food products taken home. The head of department monitors the quality of both teaching and homework and the results are evaluated at departmental meetings. Suitable strategies are in place to improve the performance of boys. These include greater emphasis on practical work and the wider use of information technology. Contacts with business and industry and the lunchtime technology club are a valuable enrichment to the curriculum. Since the last inspection, GCSE results and standards in textiles have improved, and a better system for assessing pupils' performance has been established.

- 147 Teaching accommodation is adequate and there are enough specialist areas to meet the needs of the technology curriculum. With the exception of computer equipment, pupils have access to a wide range of suitable resources, which are deployed effectively to support learning. The department benefits from the services of an experienced technician.

GEOGRAPHY

- 148 In 1999, GCSE results were in line with the national average. These results are lower than those at the last inspection, when they were above the national average. However, since the last inspection the results have never been below the national average. In 1999, girls obtained far better results than boys. Very few pupils achieved the higher A* and A grades.
- 149 Of the eight pupils entered for the A-level examination in 1999, only half obtained a pass grade. Two pupils achieved a good pass at grade B. The results are unsatisfactory and well below the national average. They are also much lower than those in 1998 and at the time of the last inspection when all pupils passed and half obtained good passes at grades A and B.
- 150 Attainment by pupils near at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. The vast majority of pupils are skilled at using maps at all scales. In work on National Parks they used Ordnance Survey maps to evaluate the effects of quarrying on the landscape, and then went on to present arguments representing local interests in favour or opposing extractive development. Pupils present work in well-formed sentences both orally and in their exercise books and listen attentively and appreciatively to all points of view. Numeracy and literacy skills are used well by pupils, with the speaking and listening skills being of a high standard.
- 151 During the inspection no lessons for pupils in Years 11 or 13 were seen. Pupils' work, however, indicates that attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. GCSE course work shows pupils have a firm grasp of research techniques and well developed information technology skills. Pupils' work based on a survey of a local by-pass and the differing modes of public transport shows they have a good understanding of the economic factors involved in making planning decisions. A project on the Haute Savoie showed a high degree of maturity and a meticulous standard of presentation. Recent changes in the stability of staffing in the department and a reorganisations in the teaching time for geography have made a substantial contribution to the current higher levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 than those previously recorded.
- 152 Attainment by pupils currently in the sixth form is average. Pupils produce work of a satisfactory standard in their case studies based on the local area and in the modules that lead to A-level examination grades. Pupils in Year 12 are beginning to build up their knowledge and understanding of interactions between physical and human processes, as when they discussed the effects of man on the environment.
- 153 Pupils in both key stages and in the sixth form achieve as well as expected. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress. Teachers make good use pupils' Individual Education Plans to match work to their individual needs.

- 154 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils listen well to the teacher and to each other and show respect for everyone's contributions during discussions. During role-play sensible positions are taken up, for instance when considering planning decisions in quarry development in a National Park. Different pupils became quarry owners, local farmers and unemployed people. They played their roles enthusiastically and argued their cases logically and clearly. Pupils clearly know what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and standards of work and they respond well.
- 155 Teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and in just over 60 per cent of lessons it is good or very good. The strengths are in the good subject knowledge of the teachers conveyed in well-organised lessons, which are well adapted to both the topic and the class being taught. Good question and answer techniques are used well to assess the current knowledge and understanding of the class and to extend learning by open and penetrating questions. A good range of teaching approaches is used. For example, in some lessons, well organised role-play, skilfully guided by the teacher, ensured pupils' deeper understanding of the pros and cons of arguments. In a Year 8, lesson pupils studied sources given to them, and then entered into role to give emphasis to their arguments about the economic exploitation of primary producers. In a successful Year 9 lesson, role-play effectively developed pupils' understanding of the decisions involved when considering the validity of giving aid to less economically developed countries. Writing tasks are well structured and pupils respond by concentrating hard on their work and by completing the tasks on time. Some of the long lessons are well managed and the change of activities with interesting tasks sustains pupils' interest and the pace at which they learn. In these lessons teachers are careful to provide opportunities for the more able pupils and those with special education needs to achieve their potential. All teachers have access to the Individual Education Plans of pupils with special educational needs and they use them well. The virtual absence of the use of information technology as a part of the normal taught curriculum is a weakness, with computers being difficult to access and few relevant CD-ROMs available. There is insufficient relevant software and access to the Internet is almost exclusively on pupils' own initiative.
- 156 The newly appointed head of geography has made a satisfactory start in undertaking an analysis of the curriculum and in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the department. In many respects the department is now led and managed satisfactorily. Teaching is monitored regularly as part of the programme of monitoring within the humanities faculty. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The teaching policy includes strategies on meeting the needs of pupils with special education needs. Marking of pupils' work is generally satisfactory, with some being very detailed, helpful and evaluative. However, arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress, is currently underdeveloped and not linked sufficiently to National Curriculum levels. Very little is done to identify higher attaining pupils and insufficient attention is given to setting targets for individual pupils. The development plan has unrealistic costing, incomplete and imprecise evaluation criteria and it also does not focus sufficiently on raising standards. It is unclear how development costs would be met, for example, for promoting information technology.

- 157 Since the last inspection there have been only a few improvements to the accommodation. The combination of small classrooms, some relatively large teaching groups and classrooms without blackout facilities, continue to be a problem for visual presentation and flexible approaches to teaching such as the use of overhead projected material. Information technology resources are poor. Textbooks and other learning resources have improved and are now adequate to support the teaching of the National Curriculum, but the wider range of textbooks and reference materials needed to support research and private study are not sufficient, especially for pupils in the sixth form.

HISTORY

- 158 In 1999, GCSE results were below the national average. These results were lower than those at the time of the last inspection, but above those achieved in 1998. In 1999, girls obtained far better results than boys. Only a few pupils achieved the higher A* and A grades.
- 159 A-level results in 1999 were well below the national average and unsatisfactory. Only seven of the 11 pupils entered for the examination, achieved a pass grade and only one pupil obtained a good pass at grade B. These results are much lower than those in 1998 and those at the last inspection.
- 160 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils successfully examine, and are beginning to analyse critically, the reasons for and results of historical events drawn from their programmes of study. They use this knowledge well to make links between features within and across periods. They select and deploy relevant information to produce structured work, making appropriate use of dates. As pupils move through Key Stage 3 they make satisfactory progress. In Year 7 they investigate the differences between the Protestant and Catholic churches in the Tudor Period. They chart these differences and collect information in notes to write longer, considered pieces of writing. Pupils in Year 8 know the sequence of events that made the French Revolution a significant turning point in European history. They analyse the reasons for the capture of the French king during the revolution. In Year 9, they explore the issues of dictatorship and democracy in Germany between the first and second world wars and draw out wider issues relating to those ideas. Pupils use their literacy skills effectively. They produce drafts before extending their writing and use notebooks sensibly to collect ideas. Their written work is well presented. Pupils use dates to order events over long and short periods and this contributes to the development of their numeracy skills.

- 161 Attainment by pupils currently near the end of Key Stage 4 is average and better than that indicated in the 1999 examination results. Year 11 Pupils were on study leave during the inspection, but based on examples of their work they have a satisfactory knowledge of 20th Century World history. They recognise reasons for the actions and policies of the time and understand that different people, at the time, reacted in different ways. Attainment by pupils in Year 10 is above average. They have well developed analytical skills and they use their knowledge to produce carefully structured written responses, making appropriate use of dates and terms. Pupils know the reasons why evacuation was used during World War 2. They understand that this policy grew from the need to protect the civilian population of Britain during the early days of the war. They map the industrial centres from which children were evacuated.
- 162 Attainment by pupils in the sixth form is average and is better than that reflected by the recent examination results. Pupils know about the political and legislative changes that took place after the first French Revolution and they can give reasons as to why these were made. The more able pupils can compare and contrast different revolutionary governments. Because of study leave no Year 13 pupils were in school during the inspection.
- 163 In relation to their prior attainment, pupils in both key stages and in the sixth form achieve as well as expected. Most make at least satisfactory progress. As pupils they move through the key stages they learn at a satisfactory rate and build up their knowledge of historical events. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They play a full part in the lessons and they achieve satisfactorily in both key stages. Those with statements of special educational needs make good progress due to the effective support they receive.
- 164 Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Pupils are quiet and attentive in lessons. They respond well to their teachers. They are confident speakers and are willing to discuss issues with the teachers. The higher attaining pupils in Year 9 spoke with confidence when they extended the principles of dictatorship and democracy in 1930's Germany with issues in present day Britain. In Year 10, pupils interacted well with each other and the teacher and showed an emotional response to evidence on the evacuation of children from the cities in 1940. In the sixth form, pupils share ideas and discuss issues confidently. For example in building information and ideas about the changes in the French governments during the Revolution. Many pupils in both key stages as well as in the sixth form can work independently and use homework to develop ideas and written work stemming from lessons.
- 165 Teaching is satisfactory. In 50 per cent of lessons teaching is good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and this is reflected in their confident delivery and in the good management of interesting and stimulating learning activities in most lessons. In the best lessons learning objectives are shared with pupils and this helps them to learn at a good pace and to understand clearly what is expected of them. Teachers challenge pupils with both the quality of their ideas and with the pace of learning expected. Marking encourages pupils in their work and this contributes to pupils becoming confident about their learning and on how to improve. Teachers' good relationships with pupils encourage them to speak confidently about their ideas and discuss them openly in class.

- 166 The management and leadership of the department are generally satisfactory and teachers are well supported. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is suitably organised in all key stages. The headteacher and head of faculty monitor the quality of teaching regularly. This has enabled staff to work closer together and is beginning to impact effectively on raising standards. However, the procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are not used consistently to provide targets with which to challenge all pupils, especially those at the higher and lower levels of attainment. The departmental development plan contains appropriate priorities, but does not focus sufficiently on raising standards considering that few pupils achieve the higher GCSE and A-level grades and in both examinations the results are not as good as those at the last inspection. There is also insufficient emphasis in the plan on the development of information technology, which is currently hardly used to support the teaching of history.
- 167 Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching accommodation is adequate and the support of pupils with special educational needs has been satisfactorily increased. However, the shortage of textbooks still remains.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 168 In 1999, GCSE results were below the national average and have remained below since the last inspection. Although these results are a small improvement on those being achieved at the time of the last inspection they are still poor compared with most other subjects in the school. Only one pupil obtained a higher grade A pass. In 1999, girls achieved much better results than boys.
- 169 A-level results in 1999 were satisfactory. In each of the last three years, the very small number of pupils entered for the A-level examination in computing have all obtained pass grades.
- 170 Attainment by the majority of pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is average. All pupils are able to use a variety of software applications, including word processing, databases and spreadsheets. Most pupils are also able to design simple documents which combine and represent information from a range of sources and are able to use the detailed instructions for a wide range of software to work independently. Many lower attaining pupils, however, require considerable support with relatively simple tasks. For example, in a Year 9 class, pupils struggled with the basic task of designing a questionnaire. Based on the sample of Year 11 work inspected, attainment overall by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Many pupils, including those in Year 10, are able to follow detailed instructions enabling them to complete a range of tasks associated with the communication and handling of information. However, their knowledge and understanding of control and measurement, of exploring computer models and of the wider impact of information technology on society, is below average.
- 171 Attainment overall by pupils in the sixth form is average. The two pupils taking the A-level examination this year took study leave at the time of the inspection. Based on the sample of work inspected and the observation of Year 12 classes, pupils are generally coping satisfactorily with the demands of A-level work and achieving as well as expected. Most pupils are well organised and are prepared to carry out independent research to complete assignments and projects, and they work confidently with a good range of software applications.

- 172 Pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are not achieving as well as expected. Due mainly to the limited resources, pupils in all classes have to share computers when undertaking practical work. Some pupils, including those working towards the GCSE examination only have access to out-of-date hardware and software. The opportunities for pupils to use and develop their IT skills within other subjects is also restricted by the lack of resources. Pupils' learning is generally satisfactory during the discrete IT lessons, but the limited opportunities for pupils to further develop and consolidate their IT skills in other subjects and in their own time leads to unsatisfactory progress over time for pupils in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons and receive good support from class teachers as well as additional support in some lessons. However, in common with other pupils they do not make sufficient progress overall.
- 173 Pupils' progress and their level of achievement is further restricted in Key Stage 4 by the unsatisfactory organisation of the curriculum, which fails to ensure the delivery of the National Curriculum programmes of study to all pupils. Most pupils only have timetabled information technology provision for one hour every two weeks with the result that teaching lacks coherence and continuity. Although some subjects, especially science and design and technology make use of information technology, the expectation that the formal teaching of the subject will be complemented effectively by information technology activities in other subjects is not realised. This is because the overall activity lacks coordination and pupils' experiences in using computers and software applications depend too much on individual teachers. In some lessons each week, pupils working towards the GCSE examination attend classes with other pupils. In one lesson, the pupils taking GCSE undertook extra work that had been set for them, but did not receive sufficient support from the teacher.
- 174 Assessment of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils are regularly assessed with a practical test at the end of each module and a document designed to track the development of pupils' individual skills is in place. However, these forms of assessment do not take sufficiently account IT activities undertaken in other subjects, especially in Key Stage 4, where the curriculum is poorly organised.
- 175 Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good. Pupils are particularly well motivated when undertaking practical work although the need for sharing computers reduces the impact of this. Most pupils show an interest in their work, especially when they can relate this to their experiences outside of school. For example, a group of Year 7 pupils contributed well during a lesson when they were asked to identify the questions for a shopping survey. Pupils in the sixth form have a mature attitude towards their studies and can work when necessary without supervision as demonstrated by a class of Year 12 pupils when planning their A-level projects.
- 176 In the discrete IT lessons teaching is satisfactory. In almost one-third of lessons it is good. No sixth form teaching was seen; Year 13 pupils took study leave during the inspection and the Year 12 teacher was absent due to illness. Most lessons are well planned and contain a good range of activities. The pace of lessons is good and there is usually an appropriate balance between theory and practical activities. Pupils usually learn at a satisfactory pace, but the sharing of equipment occasionally limits the progress of some pupils and their individual approach to solving problems. A particularly successful lesson involved two teachers in a team teaching approach with a Year 8 class using IT to develop their French language

skills. In some classes in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, teachers and pupils appreciated the effective support provided by a Year 12 pupil. This worked well and enabled pupils to make good progress with their practical work.

- 177 Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory and have to some extent been affected by the absence of the head of the department. The second in department has made a start on plans to rectify some of the weaknesses in the provision. However, insufficient progress has been made in tackling the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. In particular, pupils continue to have insufficient opportunities for using IT in most subjects, especially in Key Stage 4. Although the work of the department including the quality of teaching is reviewed on a regular basis, the reviews lack rigour and have failed to provoke the action necessary to achieve improvements in the provision for information technology.
- 178 The school development plan and the departmental plan identify the further improvement of information technology resources as a priority. Although a start has been made in replacing out-of-date equipment, the school is still significantly under-resourced. There are only forty computers capable of supporting up-to-date hardware and software, which is well below the number required to support the teaching of IT in a school of this size.
- 179 The limited availability of specialist teachers for IT, particularly to teach A-level courses is currently causing problems for pupils in the sixth form where classes are not covered satisfactorily when teachers are absent as in a Year 12 class during the inspection. So far there has been little progress in formulating and implementing a systematic programme of staff development for information technology even though this is an objective in the development plans. The departmental development plan also fails to identify any precise success criteria that relate to improvements in standards or in pupils' performance in examinations.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 180 In 1999, GCSE results in French were well above the national average and have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were just above the national average. Results in German were also well above the national average as they were at the time of the previous inspection. In both languages girls and boys contributed equally to these improvements. However, girls still outperform boys but the difference is less than is found nationally. In both languages, however, no pupils achieved the highest A* grade.
- 181 Since the last inspection, the number of entries for A-level French has risen from five to eleven. In 1999, the results were good. All pupils entered obtained a pass grade and the percentage achieving grades A and B was close to the national average. Results in German were satisfactory. The two pupils entered for the examination obtained pass grades, one being a good pass at grade A. Since the last inspection, the results in French have been well above the national average. With the exception of 1998, only a very small number of pupils have been entered for A-level German, but in each year all pupils have achieved a pass grade.

- 182 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils have become accustomed to French or German being the main vehicle of communication in the classroom. Pupils have become increasingly used to the sounds of the two languages. Most are thus able to understand the meaning of longer passages on familiar topics spoken at native speed. They cope well with a variety of listening tasks during lessons. Speaking skills are well developed. Sometimes pupils spontaneously use the foreign language to ask questions of the teacher or of partners in pair work. This was not so evident during the previous inspection. One pupil in a Year 8 lower attaining group showed confidence and ability when he raised his hand to ask his teacher an unrehearsed question in clear French. The majority of pupils can answer questions on well practised topics in great detail. Speaking is good because pupils learn, from the very beginning to use the vocabulary and the structure of questions as the basis for their answers. Their answers become increasingly detailed and informative as they progress towards the end of the key stage. Written work is predominantly accurate as elements of basic grammar receive close attention. All Year 9 pupils produce a considerable amount and variety of written work including extended pieces of descriptive writing on everyday topics. The difference between higher and lower attaining pupils lies mainly in the frequency of errors made and in the range of expression. However, in classes seen there was little evidence of private reading or reading aloud in the foreign language.
- 183 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. This judgement is based on pupils' files in French and German and on GCSE written coursework as Year 11 pupils were on study leave. Several pieces of course work in both languages are of the highest quality and thoroughly deserve the top marks, which they have been awarded. They show very good use of tense, ambition in expression and excellent grammatical accuracy. Most of the course work is of the standard required to obtain a GCSE grade in the range A* to C. Pupils' work files provide a sound basis for the good standard of coursework. They contain considerable amounts of notes, worksheets, and exercises on key points of grammar and a complete range of pupils' own work. These files are an excellent resource for revision.
- 184 In a top set Year 10 class in French, levels of attainment are well above average. Pupils take the complexities of the perfect tense in their stride; they make few errors in the control exercises. They have no problems following the lesson taught in French even when it includes technical grammatical terminology. Similarly, pupils in a parallel class in German are able to use a variety of grammatical structures to describe a wide range of daily routines.
- 185 Attainment by pupils in the sixth form is satisfactory. Year 12 pupils taking French, speak with fair, fluency and accuracy at some length without making too many errors. Written work also shows good standards of accuracy. In German, pupils are reasonably fluent but tend to be overcautious at times. They are sometimes careless about getting their endings correct. Written work is satisfactory. Year 13 pupils were on study leave during the inspection.
- 186 In relation to their prior attainment, pupils in both key stages achieve as well as expected and make satisfactory progress. Knowledge acquired through hearing as much French and German as possible in the classroom is practised and reinforced by linked speaking, writing and reading tasks. This provides a solid base for new knowledge, which is introduced and then practised following the same pattern.

Homework plays a vital part in sustaining progress. It is used skilfully to consolidate the rapid learning in lessons so as to build a bridge to the next lesson. This ability to remember well and thus apply recent learning marks one of the main differences between higher and lower attaining pupils. Some groups of pupils require far more repetition than others. This naturally slows their progress. Careful attention to detail in grammar enables pupils to gain a clearer understanding of foreign language structures. This makes a valuable contribution to raising standards of literacy across the school.

- 187 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They make good progress, especially when learning support staff are available in a lesson and when oral rather than written work is the main activity. Teachers know their pupils well and are conversant with the specific needs of pupils and their Individual Education Plans. This was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers also provide additional or different learning materials where applicable and monitor pupils' progress carefully.
- 188 Pupils behave very well in class. They are well motivated and concentration levels are high even when teaching takes place in small overcrowded classrooms. Pupils listen carefully and are keen volunteers to respond in French or German when questioned. Pupils respond well to the demanding time limits set in most lessons for the completion of tasks. They work hard and participate actively in the various learning activities. They enjoy competitive learning games, songs and going to the front of the class to play the teacher role. Cooperation in pair work is a strong feature and pupils practise diligently to help and encourage each other. Many pupils make their exercise books look attractive by customising the covers with glossy photographs of well known French or German tourist features.
- 189 Teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and it is good or very good in nearly 70 per cent of lessons. One lesson was excellent. The teacher inspired a Year 9 class of lower attaining pupils to perform to the very best. The brief but thorough learning check at the end of the lesson illustrated the very good gains pupils had made in building longer, more complex sentences in French. Features of the good teaching in many lessons include a lively, very active presentation of learning materials, which stimulates interest and increases motivation. Teachers move constantly around the classroom monitoring progress and prompting and guiding pupils and ensuring they make progress. They teach extensively in the foreign language of which they have good knowledge. Teachers make excellent use of mime and gesture to avoid unnecessary use of English. Teachers organise a wide range of activities in lessons with care and skill to ensure ample practice for pupils, especially in listening, speaking and writing. They do not tolerate minimal answers in French and German from the pupils but insist on as lengthy and detailed an answer as possible. Good time management focuses pupils' attention sharply and ensures lesson time is used efficiently and effectively. Homework is used well to reinforce pupils' progress in lessons. It is regularly set and generally marked conscientiously. However, written work does occasionally escape the monitoring system when continuity is disrupted by staff illness. Several books in the sample of work inspected had not been marked for over a month. However, there is still scope for improvement in a few lessons where pace and drive is not as good as in the best lessons. Overall, the high standards of teaching evident during the previous inspection have been maintained.

- 190 The curriculum is suitably organised. All pupils enjoy equal access to French and in Year 8 some higher attaining pupils also take German. In Key Stage 4, pupils can take either or both languages to GCSE level. The department broadens the European dimension by organising trips to France. An inaugural trip to Germany is taking place this year. Sixth form pupils benefit from a programme of continental films and the ensuing workshops at a cinema nearby. Assessment is thorough and detailed. Teachers have an exact record of pupils' attainment in the four attainment targets but pupils do not always have a clear picture of their own position in terms of National Curriculum levels. Teachers do, however, set a range of specific targets so pupils know what they must do to improve their language skills and thus obtain better results. In the last few years teachers have successfully improved GCSE results by providing support for pupils on the borderline of obtaining grades C and D.
- 191 Leadership and management of the department are good. Sensible preparations are well under way to meet the forthcoming challenges of national changes to the curriculum. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching are in place but have not been carried out recently. Although the development plan sets out a realistic programme for improvements, many of the targets and success criteria are imprecise do not focus sufficiently on improving standards and examination results, for example, in relation to obtaining the higher grades in GCSE examinations.
- 192 The department hosts trainee teachers who are often native French or German speakers and who make a valued contribution to its work, but there are no foreign language assistants. Language software, French and German teletext via satellite television, e-mail exchanges and planned Internet usage do not feature in the teaching programme.
- 193 Since the last inspection, Satisfactory improvements have been made to assessment procedures. Class sizes have been slightly reduced, but there is still overcrowding in some lessons, which take place in small classrooms. Book resources are now adequate and there is a good supply of classroom dictionaries, but access to information technology is still unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

- 194 In 1999, GCSE results were well above the national average. The results have improved significantly since the last inspection, including an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving A* and A grades. There are no significant differences in the results for boys and girls.
- 195 A-level results in 1999 were satisfactory. All three pupils entered achieved passes and one obtained a good pass at grade B. The results in 1998 were satisfactory with five out of the six pupils entered achieving a pass grade. At the time of the last inspection no pupils took the examination.
- 196 By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in music is average. In Year 9, pupils perform individually with confidence and control and when performing in a group they combine successfully. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 compose well structured pop songs with contrasting verse and chorus sections in which melody and harmony are combined successfully. In Year 7, pupils can compose short rhythmic and melodic patterns to represent events in a story. In Year 8, pupils show good knowledge and understanding of chords but their keyboard skills required for playing chords are underdeveloped.

- 197 Year 11 pupils and Year 13 pupils were on study leave during the time of the inspection. Judgements about their attainment are based on work seen in their files and recordings of their performances and compositions on cassette tape. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average. Pupils in Year 11 perform to a high standard individually and with others. They create compositions that are well structured, imaginative and harmonically sound. There are some good examples of pupils using computer software to create effective compositions and scores. Attainment in composing and performing by the end of the sixth form is above average.
- 198 Pupils achieve as well as expected in Key Stage 3 and learn at a satisfactory rate. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils consolidated their understanding of programme music and worked productively with sustained concentration in groups to create and perform their own versions of the story of 'Danse Macabre'. Through sustained concentration and practice on instruments, Year 8 pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of the relationship between chords and melodies. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They respond well to questions and make good contributions to group work. In Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils in Year 11 achieve very well in composing and performing. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils worked at a good pace and made good progress with their individual compositions because they were able to follow their own interests and ideas for their pieces of music. Pupils in the sixth form make good progress especially in composing and performing.
- 199 Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. They work co-operatively and collaborate well in groups on performing and composing tasks, especially when sharing keyboards. They use instruments with care and listen attentively to performances by other pupils.
- 200 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and it is good or very good in 36 per cent of lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their own instrumental expertise effectively to help pupils' learning and to provide good role models. Teachers manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour, with the result that pupils concentrate throughout the lesson and make progress. Teachers move around the class assessing pupils' instrumental playing and their compositions very effectively with the result that pupils learn how to improve what they are doing or move on to the next step. In the best lessons, teaching is lively and at a good pace and pupils respond enthusiastically to questions and in turn produce lively performances on their instruments. Most lessons are well planned with a good variety of activities and effective use of resources. However, some lessons in Key Stage 3 are not as good as others because some of the tasks for pupils are not sufficiently matched to the full range of attainment in the class, particularly those who are learning to play an instrument. Consequently, these pupils do not always make sufficient gains in their learning by the end of the lesson.

- 201 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is suitably organised. Schemes of work are in place to support teaching, but do not show the required development and progression of composing and performing skills across Key Stage 3 in sufficient detail. Additionally, the learning objectives of some modules of work are insufficiently challenging for some pupils. Extra-curricular provision is very good and has a positive effect on developing pupils' performing skills. Instrumental tuition is well organised and provides satisfactory tuition on brass, guitar, cello, violin, percussion and woodwind instruments. Many pupils successfully develop their performing skills by participating in activities on offer during lunchtime, including several bands, choirs and a recorder group. A number of pupils also participate in the County orchestra and bands. There are many opportunities for pupils to perform both in and out of school, such as the school Christmas concert, lunchtime concerts, music festivals and the Millennium concert.
- 202 The department is satisfactorily managed by an acting head of music who has good ideas for moving the department forward, but there are several areas where immediate improvements are needed. Pupils taking GCSE music are suitably assessed against criteria in the examination syllabus and Year 11 pupils are given individual support and advice on how to improve their attainment in each of the three course components. Records of achievement are used effectively to record pupils' achievements. However, there are no clear documented procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in Key Stage 3. Modules of work do not include specific criteria for assessing performing and composing skills. There is a lack of target setting to enable individual pupils to make progress towards achievable goals in their performing, composing and listening skills. The assessments of pupils' composing and performing skills in Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently well moderated to ensure standardisation of assessment by different teachers.
- 203 The departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities but these do not focus sufficiently on improving standards, teaching and learning or on implementing the new National Curriculum programmes of study. Teaching in the department, however, is regularly monitored by senior members of staff, including the headteacher, and by the acting head of department.
- 204 Accommodation is unsatisfactory. One of the main classrooms is too small for some of the classes and restricts the range of musical activities. There is a shortage of small spaces for group work so that some groups have to work in corridors, which disturbs other classes as well as instrumental tuition because soundproofing in the practice rooms is inadequate. The school has made no improvements to the limitations of space mentioned in the previous inspection reports.
- 205 Learning resources are unsatisfactory overall. There is a good range of percussion instruments, but many unpitched percussion instruments and keyboards are in need of repair or replacement. There are only sufficient keyboards with full-size keys for one class of pupils, even when pupils share. The number of keyboards with sequencing capabilities and computers with sequencing software is also inadequate to enable teachers to meet National Curriculum requirements for the use of information technology in music. The department has sufficient good quality recording and playback equipment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 206 In the 1999 GCSE examinations, which included both physical education and the physical education (games) option, the results were in line with the national averages. Although the results were slightly lower than those obtained at the time of the last inspection they represent a significant improvement over the results in 1998, but only two pupils obtained a pass at the higher grades of A* and A.
- 207 Pupils were entered for the A-level examination for the first time in 1999. The results are satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average.
- 208 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average and remains similar to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils show a satisfactory level of competence in athletics, rounders and cricket. The majority are confident and versatile in what they do. In some classes, pupils are able to organise their own warm-up activities at the start of a lesson and they do so very effectively. Pupils' ability to evaluate the work of others is developed at an early stage. This is well done, with good guidance from the teacher and pupils are able to comment and award marks against specific criteria. Pupils following the A-level course achieve at least average standards. The range of activities observed during the inspection was limited. Heavy rain on two days resulted in the cancellation of some planned outdoor lessons. The sports hall was not available for lessons as it was being used for the external examinations.
- 209 It was not possible to make a judgement on overall standards at the end of Key Stage 4 as Year 11 pupils were taking their examinations during the inspection. However secondary evidence indicates that in the GCSE group in Year 11, pupils' attainment is above average. Attainment by most pupils in Year 10 is average. Written coursework shows a sound understanding of theoretical aspects of the work at GCSE level.
- 210 Some individual pupils in both key stages reach above average standards particularly in gymnastics, football, cricket, netball and athletics. The mixed-age girls' gymnastic team, for example, recently reached the finals of the National Championship.
- 211 In relation to their prior attainment pupils throughout the school achieve better than expected overall. Pupils come to the school from a large number of primary schools where their experiences in physical education and their level of prior attainment varies widely from below average to above average. Pupils make good progress in Year 7 and this is sustained throughout Key Stage 3. For example, a group of Year 7 girls progressed particularly well in an athletics lesson where they were introduced to the long jump for the first time. In a boys cricket lesson, most pupils made clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of basic batting skills. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all physical education lessons and they make good progress. Progress is good in Key Stage 4 where pupils consolidate and extend skills acquired earlier as well as experiencing new activities. Most pupils who are following the GCSE course are progressing well in both the practical and theoretical elements of the work. Sixth form pupils taking the A-level course generally make good progress.

- 212 Though heavily biased towards games, extra curricular provision is good and offers additional learning opportunities for pupils of all ages. The boys' cricket team in Key Stage 3 reached the semi-final of the County Cup. In Key Stage 4, the girl's netball team was runners up in the District Championship. Opportunities for boys to represent the school at football are particularly good in Key Stage 3 where the school runs several teams to encourage maximum involvement. Several pupils represent the County in athletic events during the summer term.
- 213 Pupils' attitude towards physical education is extremely positive. Levels of participation are very high throughout the school. Pupils listen carefully to instructions and co-operate with others very willingly in practices aimed at improving their level of performance. They are aware of safety aspects and they handle equipment with care. Behaviour in all lessons is consistently good and the standard of kit is excellent. Pupils participate enthusiastically and with a clear sense of enjoyment.
- 214 Teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and in nearly 60 per cent of lessons it is good or very good. Teachers coped extremely well during the inspection when several of their original lessons had to be replaced by theoretical work in classrooms. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils encourage all pupils to make progress. Class management is always very efficient and effective. Lessons are always purposeful and well organised. Lesson objectives are explained very clearly and pupils know what is expected of them. The encouragement pupils are given to evaluate their own performance as well as that of other pupils works well and impacts positively on their learning. Coaching points are relevant and useful and demonstrations are used effectively to establish basic skills and new techniques. Good use is made of time and resources, to ensure that pupils are actively involved throughout the lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and their behaviour, to which the pupils respond very positively.
- 215 The department is well led. Day-to-day organisation is effective. Relevant policies are clear and informative. Teachers work extremely well as a team. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements in both key stages, but the timetable arrangements in Key Stage 4, that were mentioned in the previous report, remain unchanged and still cause some problems in the continuity of teaching. Appropriate priorities for the department are set out in the development plan, including target setting for pupils, but it does not contain any targets or success criteria for improvements in examination results. Accommodation and resources for physical education are good, although there is no permanent base for A-level or GCSE theory work.
- 216 A number of significant improvements have taken place since the last inspection. The A- level course has been introduced successfully. The practical element of the GCSE course has been redesigned and resources have been increased. The assessment system for Key Stage 3 is more relevant and effective. Schemes of work are being up-dated to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000 and to link the schemes of work more closely with the assessment and reporting requirements. Regular departmental briefings now take place on a weekly basis. Community links have been developed with several local sports clubs including the local cricket club, Paviers Rugby Club and Phoenix Badminton Club. In recognition of its developing provision in physical education and sport the school was awarded Sportsmark status in 1998.