

INSPECTION REPORT

Garstang High School
Garstang

LEA area : Lancashire

Unique Reference Number : 119747

Headteacher : Mr JD Falkingham

Reporting inspector : JE James
T11582

Dates of inspection : 1-5 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708173

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Comprehensive
Type of control :	County Community
Age range of pupils :	11 – 16 years
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Bowgreave Garstang Lancashire PR3 1YE
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Appropriate authority :	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Ibison
Date of previous inspection :	16 December 1994

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		Leadership and management
		The efficiency of the school
L Brock, Lay Inspector		Equal opportunities
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Community links
C Ryan, Core Inspector	Science	Teaching
A Cawthera	Music	
FB Evans	History	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
JP Langley	Religious education	Staffing & learning resources
G Leech	English & drama	Curriculum
B McCann	Physical education	Attitudes, behaviour, personal development
NR McKemey	Art	Accommodation
P Rourke	Geography	Special educational needs
		Assessment
L Walsh-Nelissen	Modern foreign languages	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and well designed to meet the needs of pupils. The personal and social education programme is well conceived, particularly the Year 10 residential experience.
- Examination and test results are above average and are improving.
- Over two thirds of the teaching is good or better. Teaching and learning are extensively monitored.
- The community values the school. Links are extensive.
- The good behaviour and response of almost all pupils help them to make good progress.
- Social and cultural development of pupils is of very good quality.
- The school provides good value for the money it receives. Leadership is strong.

Where the school has weaknesses

- Not all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship. Not all teachers use registration and tutorial time purposefully.
- The behaviour and response of a few pupils are unsatisfactory and hinder the progress of others.
- Information and communications technology is not adequately developed in subject areas.
 - Information and communications technology is not provided for a few pupils in Key Stage 4.
- Some subject resources and book-stock in the library are insufficient to support the work fully.

The school's undoubted strengths far outweigh the weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses raised during the inspection are to be tackled. This plan will be sent to all parents of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school and governors showed proper concern and have worked well to produce a systematic response to tackle the issues raised in the last report and generally good progress has been made.

The school development plan extends to three years, has clear agreed identified priorities which are reviewed and updated annually and is properly linked to the budget. Effective systems and financial management and control and agreed targets and objectives are in place. The school now evaluates the cost effectiveness of initiatives. Progress has been made in the planning and phased renewal of equipment and resources but this remains an area for further attention, in particular for the upgrading of expensive items, for example ICT equipment.

Teachers are effectively deployed and very little non-specialist subject teaching takes place. The length of the school week has been extended and the length of lessons and the use of available time are more efficient. Significant beneficial extensions and modifications to the accommodation have been made, although several areas await similar attention.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, although arrangements to monitor, develop and guide the support teaching need strengthening.

The problems associated in religious education with reference to the locally Agreed Syllabus have been resolved. Attainment has risen significantly.

Health and safety issues which were noted, have been resolved.

In addition, the school roll has increased by 60. Test and examination results at age 14 and 16 have risen and, in 1999, have improved further against national levels. Virtually all teaching is satisfactory or better. The proportion of teaching which was good or very good in the lessons seen has risen from about a half to over two thirds. In eight per cent of lessons it was deemed excellent. With the benefits

of recently appointed staff, opportunities have been taken to restructure the senior staff responsibilities, the better to respond to present day demands.

Standards in subjects

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

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

* Standards achieved by pupils improved considerably in 1999. OFSTED grade comparisons for 1999 had not been published at the time of the inspection, but are likely to reflect this improvement. The proportion of pupils who were awarded 5+ grades A*-C in the GCSE rose from 49 to 61 per cent. The proportion of pupils who achieved Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above in the Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science also increased.

GCSE results are well above the national average in English, English literature, art, design and technology, drama, history and the religious education long course.

Above average results are achieved in mathematics, information and communications technology, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and the religious education short course.

Results in dual award science are below the national average.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	There are examples of much good teaching in virtually every subject, with no difference between the key stages. Most teaching in science is only satisfactory.	
Years 10-11	Good		
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching is a strength of the school. The teaching observed was satisfactory or better in all but a handful of lessons. In over two thirds of lessons, the teaching was good or better and in a third of lessons it was very good or excellent. There are examples of good teaching in every subject. At the previous inspection the teaching in nine out of ten lessons was satisfactory or better, but teaching was good or better in only

half of the lessons.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Almost all good, both in and out of lessons. The number of exclusions is below average and reducing.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is higher than the national average.
Ethos*	Relationships are good. Adults are good role models. Pupils respond positively to the school's published aims. The school works hard to provide good opportunities to extend and broaden pupils' personal horizons.
Leadership and management	The headteacher provides sustained and strong leadership. The school is competently managed overall. The governing body is well informed and has a broad range of expertise. It is involved in monitoring progress. Most middle managers are aware of their managerial roles, although, for some, this is an area for attention and further development.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced and well designed to meet the needs of the pupils
Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make good progress. Some inconsistencies in the quality of individual education plans and levels of support.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Social and cultural development of pupils is very good and is a strength. Moral development is good. The subjects of the curriculum, particularly religious education, support spiritual development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Mainly good, except for shortages in some subjects and library stock. Information and communications technology provision in subject areas is inadequate
Value for money	Good. Pupils' attainment and the quality of education provided are good in relation to the school's income.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like coming to school • Pupils are enabled to achieve a good standard of work • Good preparation for transfer to the school • Almost all teachers are approachable • Pupils receive good help and guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all pupils' diaries are used or checked • Irregular or inappropriate homework is set • Procedures do not always work well for • Some progress reports are bland

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. Some inconsistencies in relation to homework and pupils' diaries were noted. The school has not made sure that all parents are clear about the times and expectations regarding homework and diaries. The inspection confirms that the lines for referral of complaints are clear. Almost all reports were felt to be informative.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

Against a generally positive picture of school development to raise further the standards of work and the quality of learning, the governors and senior management should consider the following:

- maintain the school's positive features and recent developments, and the consistency of teaching and learning.
- implement the school's sensible proposals for information and communications technology development, including those for each subject area and meet their replacement needs. (27, 50, 90, 98, subject paragraphs)

ensure that all middle managers appreciate their responsibilities in developing line management further to monitor, support and guide the implementation of whole-school initiatives and to evaluate their effectiveness. (42, 66, 77, 79, subject paragraphs)

improve the process for the identification and provision of staff development, and training needs. (66,84)

- attach more detailed costings to the priorities identified in the well-conceived school development plan. (93)
- ensure that registration and tutorial time is used effectively and purposefully by all teachers. (36, 58, 64, 97)

Governors should also ensure that all classes are provided with a daily act of collective worship, as required by law.

1.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

Garstang High School is a comprehensive school, broadly average in size, for pupils aged 11 to 16. It is situated on the outskirts of the market town of Garstang, from which increasing numbers of parents commute daily as a result of private housing developments. However, it draws pupils from a very wide and varied area, covering about 100 square miles. Many pupils come from the City of Lancaster as well as from scattered villages, hamlets and farming communities in the area. The school is fully subscribed. Numbers have risen by seven per cent since the previous inspection, although the school loses some pupils to the single sex Lancaster grammar schools. Pupils overall are drawn from the full range of economic and social backgrounds, broadly in the same proportions as nationally, but with fewer who experience material disadvantage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, just below five per cent is well below the national level of 17.5 per cent.

The 850 pupils on roll, contain broadly similar numbers of boys and girls overall. However, significant variations are present in most year groups. Pupils are normally drawn from about 30 primary schools, but about a third come from three schools. The intake of the school is fully comprehensive. Twenty eight pupils have statements of special educational need which, as a proportion of the school's population, is higher than the national average. A further 80 pupils have been placed on the school's register of special educational needs. Four pupils are from ethnic minority groups, although several others come from homes where English is not the first language.

Seventy per cent of pupils choose to remain in full-time education beyond the age of 16, in line with national figures.

The school occupies an extensive site. The accommodation, which is used to the full, also serves as a local adult education evening centre. It includes a nineteenth century country house and grounds. The original 1950's buildings, which have been modified and extended over the years, are sufficient to provide for the current number of pupils. English and drama, humanities, modern foreign languages, staff and administrative areas have recently moved into new or refurbished buildings.

The school's mission statement is 'to promote excellence and ensure achievement for each pupil'. It is effectively underpinned by well devised aims, and a relevant range of policies.

The three-year school development plan is updated annually. It has clearly laid out priorities in six broad areas of ethos, curriculum, staffing, finance, community, site and buildings. These are expanded into sectional action plans for the current year and include criteria for review and evaluation.

2.
Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	99	71	170

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	67 (66)	75 (74)	71 (71)
	Girls	63 (53)	52 (42)	45 (37)
	Total	130 (119)	127 (116)	116 (108)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	80 (68)	77 (68)	69 (63)
	National	- (65)	- (60)	- (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	38 (33)	52 (46)	29 (28)
	National	- (35)	- (36)	- (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	64 (N/A)	83 (86)	55 (61)
	Girls	67 (N/A)	62 (57)	39 (38)
	Total	131 (0)	145 (143)	94 (99)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (N/A)	79 (84)	55 (59)
	National	- (62)	- (64)	- (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	36 (N/A)	51 (56)	23 (36)
	National	- (31)	- (37)	- (31)

1

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	76	79	155

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils Achieving standard specified	Boys	42	74	75
	Girls	52	77	77
	Total	94	151	152
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	61 (49)	97 (98)	98 (100)
	National	- (44.6)	- (89.8)	- (92.5)

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.6
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.1
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	19
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	34
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

3. The attainment profile of the school's intake as judged by scores and test results, is in most year groups skewed slightly above the national average. This pattern is confirmed by standardised tests used over the years and by information supplied by the Local Education Authority and is mainly consistent with pupils' initial achievements in subjects. From their starting points, virtually all pupils attain levels which match their capabilities and make progress which is at least satisfactory as they move through the school.
4. Results in the 1998 end of Key Stage 3 national assessment tests in English, mathematics and science show that a greater proportion than the national average attained the expected Level 5 and above. This pattern is repeated at the higher Level 6 and above in mathematics, whilst figures in English and science equal national figures. Results in 1999 in all three subjects increased significantly at Level 5 and above, and at Level 6 and above in English and mathematics. The proportion reaching Level 6 and above in science remained the same. Teacher assessments in English and mathematics were in line with test results. Teacher assessments in science were well below test outcomes.
5. In pupils' work, past and present, which was scrutinised, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national expectation in art, geography and religious education. It is above the national expectation in English, mathematics, design and technology, information and communications technology, history and modern foreign languages. In science, physical education and in music in Year 7 it matches the national expectation. In music in Year 8 and 9 it is below.
6. The proportion of pupils entered for GCSE examinations, at 99 per cent, is above the national average. The average points score per pupil has risen since the previous inspection, significantly so in 1999. Between 1996 and 1998 the proportion of pupils awarded five or more grades at A*-C averaged 51 per cent, compared with the national figure of 43.5 per cent. In 1999, the proportion rose dramatically to 61 per cent, above the school's forecast, and included a high proportion of grades A* and A. The average points score which had been three points above national figures, rose by 4.5 per cent. At 98 per cent, the proportion gaining five or more and one or more grade A* to G are both well above national figures. The school is making increasingly extensive use of data and other information available and is linking attainment at Key Stage 2 and 3, with GCSE predictions, targets and outcomes to monitor and evaluate subject performance. It is too early to say whether it is improving provision and standards. The proportion of boys and girls varies considerably in most years. Some fluctuations occur in the relative performance of boys and girls from year to year and between subjects. The girls' performances are better than those of the boys, in some years by a greater difference than nationally. The overall figure masks some variation between subjects.
7. GCSE results are well above the national average in English, English literature, art, design and technology, drama, history and the religious education long course. Above average

results are achieved in mathematics, information and communications technology, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education and the religious education short course. Science (dual award) results are just below the national average and have worsened since the previous inspection.

8. Pupils attain at or above the national expectation for their age in over four fifths of lessons at Key Stage 3 and 4. Pupils attaining below the national expectation are largely in classes which are grouped by attainment in the subject. Work seen in class is borne out by examination results. These results indicate that attainment has accelerated by age 16 at the end of Key Stage 4.
9. In relation to their earlier attainment, the progress over time of the majority of pupils is good. Very few pupils make progress that is less than satisfactory. The ample evidence from recent test and examination results indicates that improvements take place and are sustained.
10. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in almost every lesson. Progress is good or better in two thirds of lessons at both key stages. The best progress is made at Key Stage 3, where it was very good or excellent in a third of lessons. At Key Stage 4, the proportion was half this figure. The most sustained progress is made at both key stages in mathematics, art, design and technology and religious education and at Key Stage 3 in physical education and modern foreign languages. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school.
11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. At the end of Key Stage 4 nearly all of these pupils obtain five or more GCSE passes at A*-G which is above the national average. In 1999 eight pupils on the special needs register obtained 14 passes at grade C or above. Their progress in class at both key stages is in line with that of their peers. In most of their lessons, they work effectively on the same tasks as the rest of the class, sometimes with additional support, more often only with the support of the class teacher.
19. *Literacy*
12. The school has made a priority of raising standards of achievement in language and developing literacy across the curriculum.
13. To develop speaking and listening skills, opportunities are offered for discussion in lessons. This generally takes the form of teacher-led question and answer sessions but in English, Art, religious education, personal and social education (PSE), modern foreign languages, design and technology and history there is good pair and group discussion. In drama, speaking activities are central to the programme. Generally pupils are very articulate and express their ideas without inhibition. They are expected to listen attentively – most lessons begin with some form of introductory explanation – and listening is mostly active and sustained. In music and modern foreign languages, however, specific listening activities are an integral part of the course and are undertaken formally. Oral activity develops through the key stages from short responses to quite detailed expositions, with some very capable improvisation and role-playing. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment and with special educational needs can be inhibited in their responses but are not significantly disadvantaged.
14. A significant strategy for the development of literacy is the establishment of a reading programme for pupils in Key Stage 3 during tutor time and, in English, the development of the use of “book boxes” to encourage wide reading. Outside English, opportunities for

reading in lessons tend to be limited to specific course materials. History, however, offers a range of primary and secondary source texts and, in PSE, materials from external agencies are used. Care is generally taken to ensure that lower levels of prior attainment do not prevent progress. Within subjects there is some use of reading material suited to different levels of prior attainment.

15. A variety of writing opportunities is offered across the curriculum in notes, answers to questions, projects, as well as personal and imaginative responses in English, history and religious education. Pupils are given opportunity to adapt language to different purposes, for example the creation of leaflets, posters and newspaper stories. The general standard of written expression is satisfactory in relation to levels of prior attainment and spelling generally in line with national standards. The practice of drafting is used in some subjects to improve the quality of written work. There is careful presentation of specialist vocabulary by teachers, for example in design and technology, art, science, religious education and history, and consolidation by repetition.

16. Written work is mostly legible and students take pride in presentation. Most teachers show concern in the marking of work for handwriting and presentation.

24.

Numeracy

17. Pupils' standards of numeracy are good for the higher and middle attaining pupils on entry to the school. Other pupils do not fully know multiplication tables and number bonds at this stage which hinders progress in all mathematical attainment targets for these pupils.

18. Pupils use their knowledge of mathematics successfully in several curriculum areas. These include measurement in design and technology, plotting non-linear and linear graphs of experimental results in science, plotting climatological data in geography and using fractions in music.

Information and Communications Technology

19. At Key Stage 3, basic skills in handling and communicating information are good for the majority of pupils. Management of computers is at least satisfactory and good for many pupils. Pupils know how to follow step-by-step instructions to enter a network and they understand technical language sufficiently to use a tool bar and icons appropriately. These skills are extended at Key Stage 4 as pupils become more confident in managing software applications. Levels of attainment and progress are unsatisfactory for those pupils who do not experience systematic exposure to either skills-based teaching or the application of ICT across the curriculum.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

20. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good throughout the school. The response during the inspection was at least satisfactory in almost all lessons and in four fifths of lessons pupils' response was good or very good.

21. Pupils work with particular enthusiasm and commitment in several subjects across both key stages. High levels of interest and application are consistently evident in art, history, mathematics and physical education and in a good proportion of lessons in English,

geography, ICT and religious education.

22. The majority of pupils listen attentively, apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks set and most are willing to answer questions and join in discussions when asked to do so. Pupils on the register of special educational needs also show very positive attitudes towards their studies. Most pupils work well both as individuals and also when co-operating with others in pairs or small groups. In a very small minority of lessons, the attitudes and behaviour of a few pupils is unsatisfactory. Examples of immature behaviour occur in some lessons in personal and social education. In music and modern foreign languages the poor behaviour of a few pupils disrupts the progress of others. Behaviour occasionally deteriorates in some science lessons when a lack of variety in tasks means pupils have little involvement in their own learning. These are very much the exception in a school in which the attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons is consistently good, but nevertheless such behaviour has an adverse effect on the learning opportunities of others.
23. The behaviour of almost all pupils in and around the school is good. Pupils understand what is expected of them and most behave accordingly. They are courteous, relaxed and enjoy an environment in which they feel secure and valued. The system of rewards and sanctions with its emphasis on building an 'achievement culture' is working well, and together with the pupils' self-discipline, creates an orderly and calm atmosphere. Movement around the school is generally quiet and purposeful. No incidents of bullying were observed during the inspection. Parents have reported that when bullying has occurred it has been dealt with effectively by the school. Parents also expressed concern about the behaviour of some pupils on the buses. When waiting to board the buses all pupils conduct themselves in an orderly and sensible manner. A deterioration of behaviour was noted among a very small number of pupils as one or two of the buses left the school campus.
24. The quality of relationships within the school is very good. Most pupils relate very well to each other, to most teachers and to other adults. Constructive and purposeful relationships exist in the majority lessons and in the variety of extra curricular activities that take place throughout the week. The total number of exclusions in 1998-99 was twenty including one which was permanent. This continues the downward trend that has occurred in recent years and is below figures for comparable schools. Exclusion is used only as a final sanction when other methods of discipline have been unsuccessful.
25. The personal development of pupils is good. In a number of lessons their ability to listen respectfully to others and to put forward their own ideas in a sensible and mature manner is impressive. Most respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility. The duty system involving pupils in Year 11 makes a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school. The School Council and Year Committees work well and provide useful opportunities for pupils to express their ideas in a constructive and democratic manner. The programme of personal and social education is good. However, its delivery is inconsistent and uneven and depends to a large extent on the enthusiasm and commitment of form tutors. Pupils contribute to a significant number of assemblies. During the inspection they did so particularly well in an assembly for Years 9 and 10. Individual initiatives are encouraged and pupils show generosity in their support for a number of charitable causes. The majority of parents appreciate the fact that the school encourages pupils to become involved in more than just the formal curriculum and they are pleased with the high standards achieved.

33. **Attendance**

26. Attendance at the school is good and higher than the national average. Levels of unauthorised absence are low. Registers for the term to date reveal that the school is on target to maintain the good attendance noted at the time of the previous inspection. Year 11 pupils are just maintaining the 90 per cent rate of attendance and Year 10 pupils are achieving an average 95 per cent attendance.
27. The school identifies emerging patterns of poor attendance early and takes measures to deal with them. The use of a computerised registration system is efficient now that teachers are becoming familiar with its use and the benefits to be gained. The education welfare service works well with the school in identifying pupils who need extra support to attend school regularly.
28. Registration periods are used mainly for taking registers, checking homework and giving out bulletins and are not always used effectively to monitor pupils' academic and personal progress. During the week of the inspection, almost all pupils were punctual to lessons, allowing a prompt start to the day. The majority of pupils enjoy school as confirmed by parents at the meeting and through the response to the parental questionnaire.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

29. The quality of teaching is high at both key stages and contributes significantly to the above average levels of pupils' attainment and progress. During the previous inspection teaching was found to be of a good standard at both key stages and it remains a strength of the school. In almost a third of lessons it is satisfactory, in another third it is good and in a further third it is very good or outstanding. In a very small number of lessons the teaching is less than satisfactory. Little difference is evident in the overall quality of teaching between the key stages, although teaching of the highest quality is found more often at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4
30. The quality of teaching varies slightly from subject to subject. It is outstanding in art, very good in mathematics, history, physical education, design and technology, information technology and religious education. Teaching is good overall in English, geography, modern foreign languages and music, and satisfactory in science and PSE. The very few instances of unsatisfactory teaching are found at Key Stage 3 in science and personal and social education.
31. Virtually all teachers have a secure understanding of their subjects, which enables them to teach confidently and to give accurate information. In art, history, religious education, geography and mathematics, the teachers' very good expertise and high expectations of pupils is used to good effect in extending and deepening pupils understanding.
32. Careful lesson planning in almost all lessons ensures that pupils settle quickly to their work and know what is expected of them. For example, in history teachers' expert use of primary sources of evidence enables pupils to gain a wide perspective of the First World War and significantly enhances their understanding. In a very few lessons in other subjects teachers' planning is weaker. For example in science it concentrates largely on the ground to be covered and fails to allow sufficient scope for pupils' own contributions. As a result, pupils' investigative and creative skills are not well developed.
33. High expectations and a brisk pace are particular strengths of some subjects. For example, in history Year 9 pupils made excellent progress when collating and assessing evidence about the conduct of the Battle of the Somme. The teacher's animated discussion and expert subject knowledge caught pupils' imaginations and set a fast pace for the lesson in which all pupils were enthusiastically involved. Pupils also make very good progress in religious education and geography in response to teachers' skilful questioning, challenging but achievable activities and careful summaries, which draw together all the main points from the lesson. Pupils' work is well marked and teachers routinely use the information gained from day-to-day assessment to plan future work.
34. In the small number of lessons where teaching is less successful a number of specific features characterise the teaching: teachers have low expectations and so give pupils few opportunities to work independently; the same approach is used throughout the lesson leading to slow pace; work is not well-matched to pupils' differing needs, and undemanding tasks are set which fail to challenge higher attaining pupils in particular. For example, when all pupils are required to move through activities at the same rate, as in some science lessons, the pace of learning is dictated by the progress of the slowest

learners and higher attainers lose interest. In a few subjects, for example English, the marking of work clearly provides pupils with clear information about their strengths and weaknesses. However, in most other subjects the marking of pupils' work is not so helpful and provides them with less information about their progress to date and what they need to do next in order to improve. Teachers do not always use assessment information to plan the next stage of work and so fail to build on pupils' prior attainment. For example, the school has a wealth of information about pupils' attainment on entry to the school but it is not used routinely by all staff to plan work at Key Stage 3 or to adjust teaching to meet the needs of the range of pupils within a class.

35. Teaching is usually supported by clear policies for each subject. In many cases the schemes of work are detailed. They specify learning objectives and provide effective guidance for teachers who are not specialists or who are new to the school.
36. All pupils with special education needs are taught in mainstream groups alongside their peers and experience the same generally high quality of teaching. The small amount of withdrawal teaching at Key Stage 3 is arranged sensitively on a rolling programme to minimise disruption to lessons. Supplemented by complementary sessions out of lesson time, it offers individual support to pupils through skilled specialist teaching in study skills and literacy. The recent introduction of setting arrangements has made it easier to provide work adapted to the needs of those pupils with particularly high and low levels of prior attainment. In many lessons, clear differences are evident in the strategies and materials presented to higher and lower sets. However, teachers are not always aware of the wide range of ability and skills of pupils even in sets, particularly those of lower attainers and do not provide work sufficiently well adapted to this range. A number of subjects offer extension tasks or activities to challenge the pupils of the highest levels of prior attainment in line with the recommendations of the last inspection report. Physical education and music extend pupils' skills through good provision of extra-curricular activities, English offers a lunchtime group activity for Year 11 and the extension work is good in modern foreign languages, art and history. In other subjects scope exists for greater focus on the needs of pupils of the highest levels of prior attainment.
37. In most classrooms, very good relationships motivate pupils and give them confidence to test their ideas. The best teaching is enthusiastic about the work in hand and praise is used to acknowledge real progress or achievement. Pupils are prompted to think for themselves and come to their own conclusions following clear exposition and perceptive questioning. In art, for example, pupils' successes are celebrated openly and this fosters an ethos of congenial friendliness with a sense of purposeful activity. In English, pupils make good progress when teachers communicate their interest and enjoyment.
38. Some teaching of the highest quality was seen in most subjects at both key stages and pupils made clear gains in knowledge and understanding as a result. The challenge is now for the school to replicate this excellent practice more consistently throughout the school.
46. **The curriculum and assessment**
46. *Curriculum*
39. Since the previous inspection, those aspects of the curriculum identified as requiring

attention have been revised. Teaching time is now at the national average of 25 hours per week. Time allocations have been re-organised to meet the requirements of PSE throughout the school, music in Year 9 and religious education in Key Stage 4. Separate teaching of ICT skills now takes place in Year 9. Schemes of work in all subjects meet statutory requirements. A school policy is in place for the delivery of language and literacy across the curriculum. The aims of the school specify each pupil's equal opportunity for academic, personal and social development and a variety of strategies have been used to improve the standards of achievement of boys. A senior teacher has responsibility for the management of the school's clear equal opportunities policy.

40. The curriculum at both key stages is broad and balanced and provides equality of access for all pupils. It meets statutory requirements in providing for all the subjects in the National Curriculum, religious education and sex education. Time allocated for the teaching of subjects is sufficient and in line with national allocations. Effective arrangements for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are in place. They have equality of access to the whole curriculum and are helped by specialist support and by the setting arrangements. An awareness of pupils' special needs is shown in subject schemes of work for different sets. Programmes are, however, rarely modified to cater for individual differences within a set.
41. Curriculum planning and organisation are managed by the deputy headteacher, responsible to a governors' committee. Attainment is monitored and reviewed to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs and maintains continuity and progression. Detailed schemes of work are in place in all subject areas. Day-to-day planning is thorough and its value is reflected in the proportion of lessons in which the teaching was good, observed during the inspection. Curriculum guidance provided for parents is clear and detailed.
42. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is given a broad breadth by the inclusion of drama and PSE in Years 7 and 8. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum includes the mandatory minimum of full GCSE and short courses as well as a range of other academic options, physical education and religious education. No vocational courses are offered, nor do any subject courses lead to forms of accreditation other than GCSE. Consultation during Year 9 enables pupils to select appropriate courses from the options available in Key Stage 4. The specific provision for the minority of pupils who do not opt for ICT as a subject is insufficient and is not compensated by cross-curricular provision. Pupils are able to choose two foreign languages although few do so. Pupils have to choose between history and geography but the availability of religious education enables them to enter examinations for two out of the three humanities subjects. In addition, pupils follow a programme of PSE at both key stages. This is well-structured and comprehensive, supported by visits from a range of outside specialists to enhance pupils' learning. It covers sex, health and drugs education, careers guidance and personal development, includes high quality residential activities, and equips pupils well for the world outside.
43. The curriculum is enhanced and extended through extra-curricular opportunities. A range of clubs and activities is available at lunchtime and after school, including many opportunities for sport, and music activities are developing. An exchange partnership is in place with a school in Germany. An annual visit to France is made as well as a ski trip. English and drama offer after-school activities and a summer production. Educational visits enhance pupils' learning in a number of subjects.

44. Overall the curriculum meets the needs of the range of capabilities in the school and those of boys and girls. It prepares them well for the next stage of education, training or employment. Its breadth and balance contribute effectively to the standards achieved.
45. Pupils with special educational needs receive their full curriculum entitlement and are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. The school has good procedures for the identification of pupils with special needs although most of them have been identified by their primary schools. The requirements of the Code of Practice for the movement of pupils up and down the stages are followed and the school has some success in moving pupils down the stages, in recognition of the progress made by pupils and the school. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs have the requirements of the statement met by a substantial amount of classroom support provided by the local education authority. The school's arrangements for monitoring and reviewing pupils at each stage of the Code of Practice are in accordance with requirements.
53. *Assessment*
46. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are good. Since the previous inspection, the school's policy on assessment has been extensively revised and a new system devised and implemented which enables the school to assess and track the progress of every pupil. A carefully-planned programme of target-setting focuses on each pupil's potential for success in individual subject areas. Pupils' targets are related to their potential results in assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. In setting these targets, the school makes effective use of a range of test data as well as the pupils' performance in individual subjects. Targets are set for Year 7 after the summer assessments have taken place. These results are collated and combined with the results of tests on entry to the school to produce a target at the end of Key Stage 3 for every pupil. In the following two years, these targets are regularly monitored and may be amended, particularly at the end of Year 8. Targets in Key Stage 4 are set at the beginning of the autumn term in Year 10, based upon test results on entry, teacher assessment and test results at the end of Key Stage 3, and recent performance within the subject. Progress towards these targets too, is regularly monitored and reviewed. Targets are set in both key stages that challenge pupils to achieve of their best, but not so high as to be a disincentive. Pupils take an active role in this process by adding their own targets in such areas as the effort they make in their work and their behaviour. They keep a running record of their achievement of all their targets in a student review booklet. The results of the assessments and progress towards meeting targets are reported to parents twice a year, at the end of the autumn and the summer terms. Care has been taken to ensure that the reports are easy for parents to understand. Although target setting is still in its early stages there is some evidence of its already bringing about improvements, most notably in last year's improved performance of boys in GCSE English.
47. In the previous inspection, although much good practice was found in the day-to-day marking of pupils' work, departments had no overall school policy to which they had to adhere. The school's policy now being implemented requires that all departments relate their marking policy to that of the school and that it is followed by all staff in departments. Marking policy within departments is now followed although some variations exist between the marking of one subject teacher and another in English, science and modern foreign languages. Some subjects, including English, ICT and design and technology, now

use National Curriculum levels in the assessment of coursework and mathematics uses National Curriculum levels indirectly by using levelled textbooks. Other subjects still use letter grades and sometimes numbers, which conform to their own criteria. Routine marking and assessment in science is often not focused on pupils' attainment and leaves them unclear as to how they can improve. Scope exists for further sharing and adoption of good practice of everyday marking within departments and across the school.

48. The outcomes of assessment are used successfully to inform planning and teaching in a number of ways. The teaching groups, or sets, are constructed for each subject in Years 8 and 9 by using the results of pupils' performance in each subject in Year 7. During Years 8 and 9, progress is monitored, reviews take place, and pupils are moved up or down the sets in accordance with their attainment. Many subjects have regular end of unit tests as well as the twice yearly formal assessment. The analysis and review of all these results is regular and teaching is amended accordingly. This process is to be further developed in science where assessment information is not yet used to support the effectiveness of teaching.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

49. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Its recently published policy on 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' is very helpful. The document was drawn up by a number of staff and is offered as a helpful guide. It explores what spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means in the context of the school. As yet, no audit of how departments contribute to this has been undertaken. As observed, the contribution of subjects to pupils' spiritual development is very good. It is more extensive and varied than is often met. Religious education in particular makes a rich contribution to the spiritual development of pupils. Through the dynamic approach to religious education, pupils become aware of the spiritual dimension in life. They listen to each other and reflect on the relevance of religion in their own lives and as part of the search for meaning in the lives of others. English and history support spiritual development strongly and valuable, less tangible provision is made other subjects.
50. Notwithstanding these good features the provision for spiritual development has weaknesses. The school provides an act of worship in the main assemblies and provision is made for forms to use and develop themes in the 'Thought for the Day'. In practice, however, considerable variation exists. In most form periods no consistent use is made of the 'Thought for the Day' and there is no act of collective worship. Some year assemblies have a prayer and a moment for reflection but not others. The school is failing to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
51. Provision for moral education is good. The school effectively promotes a moral code and pupils are clearly aware of what is right and what is wrong. This is evident in the conduct of the pupils themselves and in their good behaviour. In establishing the home-school agreement, the school asked all pupils to be involved through the year committees and the school council. This process of consultation resulted in a document written in language that the pupils could understand and reflected the standards they and the school thought important. Teachers act as good role models for the pupils. Teachers and pupils show respect for each other. Subjects of the curriculum offer opportunities for moral development. In religious education, pupils explore ethical issues such as abortion, wealth, poverty and discrimination. In history, teachers and pupils discuss the moral and social

issues associated with warfare. In English, pupils study texts that promote values. Physical education lessons and competitive sports promote very good standards of self discipline and ideas of fair play within rules.

52. Provision for social development is very good. The quality of relationships in the school is good and underpins social development. Pupils are encouraged to be responsible for their own learning, for example, in history. In English and drama, pupils work in groups or pairs, supporting each other and developing independent study skills. Pupils relate well to each other. They are willing to read out their own poems in English and history and they are happy to applaud each other's contribution. The Brathay Hall initiative, noted at the previous inspection, remains a great strength in the social development of pupils. This year, almost all Year 10 pupils spent three days at Brathay Hall. They develop a sensible approach and begin to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in a sharing and supportive atmosphere. The experience has a profound effect on the pupils. Staff have attended Brathay Hall as part of their own in-service training and this has helped to develop active learning experiences in some subject areas. Pupils in Year 8 visit Tower Wood Centre. Over a weekend, they take part in many activities and report that they enjoyed the experience. The very good relationships with the Lancashire Youth and Community Service help the pupils' social development. The Youth Service is very involved and provides facilities for some extra curricular activities. The school council and the year committees offer pupils opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. Pupils support the council because it gives them a voice in the school. The pupils support various charities of their choice.
53. Provision for cultural development is very good. Religious education makes an outstanding contribution. Through the study of the major world faiths, all pupils have an insight into other cultures. The programme of visits to places of worship or museums associated with other faiths is extremely valuable. Pupils visit a Cathedral, a Mosque, a Sikh Gurdwara, a Hindu temple, a Buddhist Priory and the Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Centre in Newark. In addition speakers from the major world faiths come into the school to speak to pupils. Pupils visit local groups like the Night Shelter. In history, the study of Europe in the 1930s and visits to local castles and museums extends their knowledge of their own and other heritages. Year 7 pupils spent a day at Clitheroe Castle where they played medieval games and learnt about medieval life. Visits from theatre companies enrich the curriculum, as did that of the Bluesilver Theatre Company, which provided a unique view of the industrial revolution. In English, pupils study texts from their own and other cultures. In art, pupils study the work of Mexican and European artists.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

54. Good pastoral care is provided for pupils by a team of form tutors supported by heads and assistant heads of year under the guidance of upper and lower school heads and a pastoral manager. Pupils are well known within the system and are confident that appropriate advice and support will be available to them when it is needed. Academic guidance is successfully ensured through the tutor system. Pupils' own evaluation of their academic and personal progress is having a positive effect on their attainment and progress. Some good examples of target setting were seen and these are valued by pupils, their parents and prospective employers. In the achievement culture in the school, the key educational priorities are to maximise pupils' achievement and develop personal and social skills. In

addition to target setting, initiatives have included the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) 'Raising Achievement/Enhancing Employability' project, mentoring of Year 11 pupils and strategies to raise the achievement of boys.

55. The programme of PSE is well-planned and documented for both key stages. The provision has improved since the previous inspection. The outcomes of this programme vary, depending largely on the ability and interest of individual teachers. Where teaching is good, pupils express enjoyment and recognise the merits of gaining information to help them make informed decisions which will affect their lives beyond school. The excellent residential programmes at Brathay Hall and Tower Wood are having a positive effect. They stimulate an impressive range of strategies for solving problems and a great determination to succeed. Such opportunities enhance pupils' personal development and encourage them to be good citizens.
56. The arrangements for promoting regular attendance are good. The whole school policy on behaviour is effective in practice and pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions, which has been improved since the previous inspection. Tutorial periods are used inconsistently across the school. In some of the best examples, the 'Thought for the Day' is discussed but in others, pupils are allowed to chat. Pupils confirm that any bullying is quickly and efficiently dealt with when it is reported. Pupils are well supported during any period of prolonged absence and when they return to school. External agencies offer good support to the school.
57. The school has effective and secure systems for child protection. A designated teacher has responsibility for liaising with appropriate agencies and staff understand their role in the early identification of concerns. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The school has four members of staff fully qualified to administer first aid and plans are in hand for additional members to participate in training. Regular, recorded fire drills are held. A health and safety committee is led by a nominated officer. Departments conduct risk assessments and it is planned to conduct a whole school risk assessment. The site manager and heads of department report any potential risks to the health and safety co-ordinator. During the inspection, it was noted that the surface of the new link corridor floor was slippery in inclement weather and that the wire fencing around the tennis court is unravelling. Each presents a potential risk to pupils' health and safety. The area for boarding the many school buses is small. Staff on bus duty take good care of pupils.
58. Pupils with special educational needs have added support from support teachers and assistants in class, from the learning support department and, on occasions from outside agencies. The special educational needs coordinator and her colleagues make themselves readily available to pupils. The effectiveness of this support varies considerably. It is very good in some lessons seen in mathematics, English, history and geography. In some other lessons the support assistant remains a passive participant. It is almost a hindrance, for instance, in an art lesson where the support assistant's presence serves as a reminder that the pupil is different from the rest of the group, however well they are doing. Where support is provided by part-time staff it cannot be provided on some occasions where it would be welcomed and well used. Some support is provided by the school's teaching staff who are mainly untrained in special educational needs and do not support within their own subjects, so their effectiveness is very limited. An appropriate policy for the staffing, monitoring and development of support teaching is required.

59. Individual education plans (IEPs) are in place for all pupils on the special needs register and subject teachers generally have them to hand. The IEPs vary in quality and form, however. Some contain too much information and some too little and, although invited, teachers rarely contribute subject specific targets. IEPs are not yet an effective means of guiding teachers towards ensuring that they meet pupils' individual needs well.
60. A sensitive induction programme is provided for Year 7 pupils who confirm that their transfer from primary school is smooth. All pupils have access to a good programme of careers guidance. Pupils in Year 9 are given objective guidance on option choices and routes of progression for Year 11 are fully explored with them. Work experience is well-planned and gives pupils a thorough insight into the world of work. Pupils benefit from personal interviews with a careers adviser and enjoy access to information on further education, training and employment. This has a positive effect. The school is successful in fostering a climate which encourages pupils to accept some responsibility for their own decisions about the future, thus raising their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Partnership with parents and the community

61. Most parents feel welcome when visiting the school and can readily speak to teachers when necessary. Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the school and consultation evenings for parents are well attended. Parents and pupils remark on the good relationship between staff and pupils, and on the positive benefits of the support which pupils are given. The PTA organises a variety of social and fund raising activities and this year £4,700 was donated to departments in response to bids from staff. Parents are welcomed into the school for open evenings, concerts, presentation evenings and a pastoral evening when workshops for them are held on a variety of topics like drugs education, behaviour, stress management and sex education. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors commented on the value of these workshops to parents.
62. General communication with parents is good. Activities in the school are well publicised and the newsletter, prospectus and annual report of governors are informative. The school issues interim reports in the autumn term and annual reports in the summer term. The reports on subjects summarise what a pupil can do and most of them set targets for future development. The overall comment from the form tutor shows that teachers know pupils well. The special needs coordinator keeps parents well informed of the school's work with their children who have special educational needs. They are invited to the annual reviews. Parents would like a clear homework timetable for Key Stage 4 so that they can offer maximum support to their children. The school confirms that parents are welcome to make appointments with teachers if they have a problem or concern.
63. Arrangements for pupils coming into and transferring out of the school are good. The school draws its pupils from over 40 primary schools across a wide area. Key information is gathered by the head of Year 7 who visits the main contributory schools to ensure that correct decisions for grouping pupils are made on transfer. The links are efficient and help new entrants settle in well, as was confirmed by pupils. The school is part of a cluster group with primary schools and curriculum links have been established with mutual benefits.
64. Good links with the local business community through work experience for approximately 180 pupils have been established. The school works with the Education Business

Partnership so that all Year 10 pupils have work in placements of their choice. This has helped to motivate pupils and give them targets for attendance and punctuality. Pupils' diaries show that they consider it to be a worthwhile experience. The Rotary Club holds mock interviews for older pupils and they confirm that these give them confidence for their entry into the world of work. Members of the business community, the school and the governing body act as mentors for pupils. Two pupils are currently attending the Young Engineers' Club which British Aerospace run on Saturday mornings. The partnership between the school, the Youth and Community Service and the Brathay Hall Trust has resulted in the excellent residential experience for Year 10 pupils.

65. The school effectively extends pupils' horizons and capabilities for example in supporting charities locally and nationally. The school successfully raised £700 to help a past pupil to spend time in Tanzania building a medical centre. Pupils have raised funds for charity by cycling from Lands' End to John O'Groats. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is successful, in partnership with the local Youth and Community Service.
66. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and an Amnesty International Group flourishes in the school. Exchange visits are made with the school's partner school in Kamen, Germany and a modern foreign languages pen friend club is popular. The school opens its doors to local community groups and societies. All these good links with the community enhance pupils' attainment and personal development and raise their awareness of the importance of the school to the local community.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

67. The school has a distinct, positive ethos and sound and appropriate statements of mission and aims, which are mainly accepted by parents and pupils and which it generally fulfils successfully. The governing body has developed a comprehensive range of statutory and non-statutory policies which are consistent with the aims of the school. Governors discharge their responsibilities well and have ensured compliance with statutory requirements to the school's benefit. Although not all can be fully involved, they bring a broad range of personal expertise. Since the previous inspection, they have worked closely with the school in longer-term planning, making strategic policy decisions, and in monitoring the school's progress.
68. The school is competently managed overall, and benefits from clear and effective leadership. The headteacher has demonstrated sustained, strong commitment and a shared vision. Since the previous inspection, attempts to develop greater staff awareness and collective action have been emphasised and nurtured in a variety of ways. New appointments to the recently restructured senior management team, which includes to good effect, the senior administrative officer, meet with the headteacher regularly and work well together. Together, with almost all staff at all levels in the school, they give good support. Each member of the senior team has coherent specific responsibilities, which are kept under review, as well as important corporate responsibilities. Good communication through regular briefings, bulletins and a well-coordinated programme of minuted meetings has been generally successful in bringing about a sense of common purpose.

69. The school's statutory responsibilities for special educational needs are met. Liaison with external agencies and the work of the support assistants are well organised. However, no formal arrangement is made to monitor the quality of provision, including additional support across the curriculum or to provide appropriate support and guidance.
70. The now-established culture of monitoring and review of the work in classrooms initiated by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, has successfully been maintained and profitably extended to middle managers. There are good examples of evaluating and checking the consistent implementation, impact and progress of important whole-school policies and initiatives, the impact of a number of which is becoming evident. However, inconsistent applications of a few policies and aspects, remain unchecked.
71. The school is well organised through subject and year teams. Subject departments are led by teachers who are clear about the direction their subject should take. Not all, however, are equally clear or knowledgeable about their managerial functions and this is an area for further development. Documentation reflecting their aims and purposes is sound as are most departmental plans and handbooks. Each department is reviewed by the senior management team in turn with its subject head to identify future targets and strategies for improvement. The evidence is already of positive outcomes from this process. Organisational weaknesses perceived as key issues in the previous inspection report have been rectified. Staff roles are clear. Most marking and assessment is sound. The use of assessment and other information which is available, is increasingly well used to forecast and to set targets for improved attainment. The staff handbook is well organised. It contains comprehensive, coherent, helpful information, policies and procedures.
72. Successive staff changes have been well managed individually or by regrouping some staff roles successfully. The impact of recent appointments are already positive.
73. The daily routine of the school is efficient. Parents are mainly happy with the information they receive. The timetable effectively fulfils the school's curricular intentions. Statutory requirements are met.
74. Apart from in some areas of middle management development, leadership and management have been effective in taking the school forward.
82. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**
82. *Staffing*
75. The extent of non-specialist teaching is now minimal, a criticism in the previous report. The match of the number, qualifications and experience of the staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. The proportion of the school's budget for teaching staff is above the national average. Teachers are deployed across the age and ability ranges to good effect. The majority of teachers have served the school for some years. However, in recent years, the opportunity to appoint a blend of younger recently qualified teachers has produced benefits. Over the last two years at least ten new teacher appointments have been made, including several promoted posts. These changes have been effectively managed although more males than females remain in promoted posts. Teachers with responsibilities have equitable non-teaching time to fulfil their roles. Staffing provision for pupils with special

educational needs is good. Non-teaching staff continue to work effectively to ensure the smooth running of the school to support pupils' learning.

76. The arrangements for staff professional development are mixed. They lack a clear rationale for professional development. Developments are in hand to rectify this situation. The present scheme does not relate clearly to the needs identified either in the school development plan, or with the notable exceptions of English and mathematics, in the development plans of most departments. This lack of clarity results in an unsatisfactory system for allocating and disseminating professional development. A strategy is emerging which relates priorities more directly to the planning and management of the curriculum. The strategy has yet to be extended to include clearer more effective mechanisms to develop the understanding of middle managers in monitoring and evaluation. The implementation of an effective ICT programme of staff development is in its early stages.
77. Formal staff appraisal is currently in abeyance although the regular programme to monitor and observe teaching and learning is effective. A well-designed induction scheme supports newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. The newly qualified staff in particular value this programme. Induction arrangements for more experienced staff, although informal, are satisfactory. The school plays an effective partnership in initial teacher training which itself provides a welcome source of ideas and a stimulus for development in subjects such as religious education, history, geography, English, mathematics, art, geography, history and religious education.
85. *Accommodation*
78. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation since the previous inspection. The school makes good use of its available accommodation, which is generally sufficient to meet the current demands of the curriculum and the numbers of pupils. Improvements have included very recent modern foreign languages, English and drama, humanities, staff and administration accommodation. The ethos of individual subjects is successfully promoted by clustering together of rooms, which aids communication. Almost all teachers have their own teaching base. As a result of these developments many classrooms and corridors are welcoming, pleasant, well cared for and often support learning effectively through well planned educational displays. In science, the opportunity to raise the subject profile in this way has not been grasped.
79. Pupils generally use and move between the dispersed blocks of accommodation sensibly. Lunchtime arrangements work well. Cleaning standards are satisfactory, given the intensive use of the buildings by the school and local community.
80. The school has made representations to improve the unchanged limited provision for physical education and is aware of the need for refurbishment to rectify the shortcomings in the science and design and technology areas and to upgrade facilities in mathematics. The area for boarding the many school buses is far too small. It is potentially dangerous as buses have to wait outside the school, obstructing the road awaiting their turn to enter when other buses clear a space.
88. *Resources*
81. The annual budget for resources is lower than schools nationally. It has increased slightly

this year and has been supplemented by contributions from various initiatives. Resources to support learning are uneven but satisfactory overall. In art and physical education, provision is good, elsewhere it is adequate but with shortcomings evident in some subjects. In English and science, texts are voluntarily purchased by pupils at Key Stage 4 and history does not have enough text books at Key Stage 3 and similar shortages exist in music and modern foreign languages. In science, shortages of some basic equipment exist. Pupils cannot use text books for homework in a number of subjects. Decisions on the replacement of outdated resources are the responsibility of heads of subjects, but only in mathematics is there a policy for renewal and replacement. However, resources which are available are usually deployed effectively.

82. With the exception of ICT and mathematics, pupils have insufficient access to computers. The ratio of pupils to computers is below the national average. Many of the computers in subjects are outdated and are now unsuitable for use with modern software. The development plan for ICT is good and includes outlines for replacement and for renewal of ICT in subjects.
83. The library is attractive but its book stock requires improvement given the number of pupils in the school. A significant proportion of the existing stock is ageing and needs replacing. Pupils use the library well. They benefit from the service of two part-time librarians and steps have been taken recently to develop the facility for independent learning and to expand the facilities. The range of CD-ROMs is satisfactory and a number of computers are used well by pupils. A number of subjects make good use of the library.
84. The school makes good use of resources beyond the school. Visits to studios, galleries, museums and concerts are organised and the links are many and productive with the local business and commercial community. The school is frequently visited by performers and speakers on a wide range of topics and in a variety of subject areas. Good use is made of the immediate locality and further afield for fieldwork and site visits in science, geography and history. The school regularly uses local facilities for physical education. The use of these and other opportunities is having a beneficial effect on the pupils' personal development.

The efficiency of the school

85. The school responded positively to issues raised in the previous report. An effective whole-school development planning process establishes priorities and targets over a three year period. They are clearly focused on raising attainment and the quality of education and the plan is updated and reviewed annually. The school development plan is properly linked to the budget which is set by the governing body, after full consideration of proposals prepared by the headteacher and senior administrative officer. It does not, however, include detailed costings. The school manages its financial resources efficiently, and makes good use of ICT. The few recommendations in the most recent auditors' report were duly considered and implemented. Specific grants are carefully spent, linked to current priorities.
86. The school makes effective use of its delegated funding for special educational needs by providing extra classes in some subjects in Years 8, 10 and 11 and by funding the provision of some support assistants. The provision of 12 periods of teacher time for teachers to act as support assistants is an expensive use of resources.

87. Expenditure in relation to agreed priorities is monitored carefully on a day-to-day basis by the senior administrative officer and by regular reports to the headteacher and the governors' finance committee. Figures are reconciled monthly. Progress in achieving development plan objectives is discussed within the school and at full governing body meetings. With targets and objectives in place, the school is able to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the various initiatives.
88. The school has derived considerable insights, benefits and success from being a pilot school for the Lancashire SRB initiative, under the mission statement. 'Raising Achievement/Enhancing Employability'.
89. Overall, the use of resources is greatly improved since the last inspection. Teachers are efficiently deployed and time in lessons is used well, although this is not always the case in tutor time. The non-teaching staff provide good and essential support. Although the accommodation is at times fully stretched, it is well managed and has been thoughtfully extended. Rooms for most subjects have been clustered, so promoting the efficient use of resources and exchange of techniques and ideas. Several areas have been upgraded and the school has rightly identified other areas for attention and development. The length of the school day has been extended and more effective use is made of the time available for lessons.
90. The pupil to teacher ratio of 18 : 1 is higher than average. Together with a lower than average time, 73 per cent, spent in teaching, this results in some large classes. Resources made available are well managed and used effectively, although an increasing need has been recognised for the phased introduction of the well-considered proposed whole-school ICT plan.
91. Overall, considering the general good progress and attainment of pupils, the high quality of teaching at both key stages, and the expenditure per pupil, the school provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

92. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has remained consistently in line with national expectations. In 1998 the proportion of pupils at level 5 and level 6 and above in the national tests was close to national averages but below the average for schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. In 1999, these proportions increased significantly. Results over time broadly mirror the national trend upwards. There is some variation in attainment over time according to gender; with boys attaining at the national average and girls attaining above it. Inspection findings are that attainment is in line with national expectations in all lessons observed and above in a quarter.
93. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C and at A* to G in English was above national averages up to 1998 and significantly above in 1999. GCSE results in literature follow a similar pattern to those in language, although pupils gain a greater proportion of grades A* to C, although the number of pupils entered is smaller. Girls generally attain higher than boys, but in 1999 the attainment of boys improved significantly. In GCSE drama, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C is above national averages. Inspection findings are that attainment is generally in line with national expectations and above them in nearly half of lessons. Attainment of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs is at least satisfactory and often good. Few are unable to attain in line with national expectations, as indicated by the fact that all pupils entered for GCSE language obtain a graded result.
94. At Key Stage 3, the progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory or better in relation to levels of prior attainment. Pupils generally express themselves articulately and with confidence. They read aloud fluently and perform improvisations and role-plays without inhibition. Pupils build upon their skills of listening and speaking not only in drama lessons but also in a variety of pair and group activities in the classroom, for example, in Year 9 contributing to a discussion about the use of personification. Reading skills develop well and pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of texts, for example, in Year 7 the story of Icarus and the conventions of myth, in Year 8 the descriptive techniques of “Carrie’s War”. Pupils generally write fluently and, when required, at some length. Year 8 pupils write short stories and Year 7 pupils word-process their own poems.
95. At Key Stage 4, progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good in relation to levels of prior attainment. Pupils undertake and successfully execute increasingly demanding speaking and listening tasks. They read aloud a play text in Year 10 and role-played characters in a novel in Year 11. Reading skills are quite sophisticated. For example, pupils in Year 10 scan a set text to identify character points and, in Year 11, analyse the language in a media text. Good written expression is shown in a range of extended pieces. Pupils respond sensitively to a variety of classic and modern texts. They write imaginatively and sustain a discussion effectively. The process of drafting, developed at Key Stage 3, is used well to improve the quality of their written responses.

96. The attitude of pupils to learning is good. They show interest and make enthusiastic contributions in lessons. In pair and group work they collaborate well and appreciate the efforts of others. Relationships in the classroom are good-humoured but with a proper respect for teachers.
97. Teaching at both key stages shows many features of good practice. It is at least satisfactory in all lessons and good or very good in nearly two thirds. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Lesson planning is thorough and a good range of support material is used. Pupils are appropriately challenged and high standards expected. Class control is secure but friendly. The quality of marking is high; it is very detailed, supportive and makes reference to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Lessons for classes containing pupils with special educational needs are adapted accordingly. The best teaching communicates interest in and enjoyment of the subject
98. The English scheme of work meets statutory requirements. It contains a comprehensive range of checklists and pro-formas to ensure compliance with course requirements, and to facilitate the monitoring of pupil performance. Attainment is reviewed to evaluate the achievement of targets and inform future teaching. The department sets a minimum for pupils to use ICT which can be extended as the school's resources are upgraded. In fact, many pupils do much more than the minimum by using their own resources. The previous report observed that only a small proportion of pupils read widely for pleasure. A wide-reading programme with the incentive of awards to promote reading for pleasure is now in place in Key Stage 3.
99. The management of English and drama is very capable and committed. Useful planning procedures have been created to ensure the proper delivery of the curriculum and enable good pupil progress. The sound departmental development plan reflects the priorities of the school development plan. Good records are kept and processes are in place to monitor performance. Distribution of responsibilities and regular meetings ensure that all members of the team are able to make a contribution. Departmental accommodation was judged to be inadequate in the last inspection: as a result of the building alterations and developments it is now entirely satisfactory and good use has been made of it in celebrating the achievement of pupils.
107. **Mathematics**
100. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the 1999 national tests, pupils attained well above the 1998 national average for the expected levels and well above for the higher level. These outcomes were similar to the 1998 results for similar schools and were significantly better than those for the previous year. The difference was less significant between the results for boys and girls than in the past when girls have outperformed boys. The results were better than those for science and similar to those in English.
101. At GCSE in 1999, pupils attained significantly better than the 1998 national average for grades A* to C and slightly lower for A*/A grades. This was much better than the previous year's results and were above those for similar schools. Little difference was evident in the attainment of boys and girls between the mathematics results and those pupils attained in most other subjects. The percentage of pupils attaining A* to G grades has been

fractionally below 100 per cent for the past few years and is above national average figures.

102. The results in tests and examinations are in line with the entry profile for the school, which the school assesses as a little above the national average. The results in public tests and examinations indicate that pupils make good progress in their studies across the key stages. In lessons and from the scrutiny of pupils' work, past and present, at Key Stages 3 and 4, attainment broadly reflects the test and examination results. By the end of both key stages, pupils attain slightly above average national levels and therefore make good progress.
103. Pupils' standards of numeracy are generally good for the higher and middle attaining pupils on entry to the school. The remaining pupils joining Year 7 do not know their multiplication tables and number bonds fully. These standards clearly hinder progress in all attainment targets in the subject for these pupils.
104. Pupils generally attain slightly above the national averages in all aspects of the subject at the end of both key stages. The department sensibly discourages the general use of calculators and is trying to raise standards of basic numeracy in lessons by having short oral tests and games to warm up or to end lessons. This approach is in line with national policy and is good practice. Attainment in the space and shape, and data handling attainment targets is generally above average, with some very good displays of pupils' work on plotting non-linear graphs, transformations, symmetry and surveys. Pupils enjoy working on investigations and good progress is seen in the increase in depth as pupils move up the school. Particularly good work was seen in a Year 11 investigation on permutations which successfully deduced the general algebraic formula to model the problem. Pupils use their knowledge of mathematics successfully in several curricular areas, including measurement in design and technology, plotting linear and non-linear experimental results in science, plotting climatological data in geography and using fractions in music. Pupils use calculators accurately and generally appropriately. The department has been unable to finance the purchase of any graphical calculators but plans to acquire these. Information technology is incorporated in the mathematics curriculum at both key stages and good use was seen in some of the displays. However, the skills learned in information technology lessons are not used or exercised regularly in mathematics lessons. The department has no modern stand-alone information technology. Pupils' standards of presentation are generally sound and often good in higher attaining classes. Pupils with special educational needs attain appropriately. Since the previous inspection attainment in all attainment targets has improved significantly, mainly due to the strategies adopted to improve numeracy generally and to revitalise basic teaching and learning in the subject.
105. Progress in lessons generally reflects teaching at both key stages. When teaching is good or very good pupils make good or very good progress. Often progress is the development of new skills. Progress is generally good in all attainment targets other than in aspects involving basic numeracy. This is well illustrated in the stimulating displays of work. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress. Pupils make generally good progress during their time at school which is reflected in the results at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE.
106. Pupils are invariably very well behaved in class and are well motivated. They are keen to learn and use their knowledge of the subject. They enjoy discussing real world applications of mathematics as was illustrated in a successful lesson on probability of

mutually exclusive events for a middle attaining Year 11 class and in the positive and meaningful discussion on survey design in a lower attaining Year 9 class. Pupils work well with their friends in groups and demonstrate their understanding to the whole class by writing on the board. The vast majority of pupils maintain their efforts in the hour-long lessons.

107. Teaching at both key stages is at least good and in two thirds of lessons it is very good. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection and is clearly having a major impact on attainment. Lessons are well prepared and teachers know their subject material. They know their pupils well and understand the necessary approach to get the best out of them. They vary activities well to keep pupils' interest and often start or end lessons with mental activity. Lessons are well paced. Teachers' control is good. Teaching methods are mainly traditional. ICT is not used more routinely in lessons through the lack of the upgrading of the department's own facilities. Resources outside the classroom, including the excellent mathematics trail, have the potential to be used more to help stimulate pupils' interest. Homework is used effectively to complement class work at both key stages. Teachers are very sensitive to the needs of all pupils and relationships are a strength. Praise is used very effectively in class and in marking. Assessment is used effectively to plan further learning. In some less successful lessons, teachers pursue an item too long and pupils' interest wanes.
108. The department is very well managed despite additional responsibility for several other important aspects of school management. All aspects of the subject are well monitored and reviewed by the head of department. The ethos is very positive within the self-contained area where good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are the norm. Target setting is well established and all staff give very freely of their time to help pupils to attain their highest potential. All aspects of the department have improved since the previous inspection. The department provides good value for money.

Science

109. Standards in science are just below the national average at both key stages. The 1998 GCSE results for dual award science are close to the national average for grades A to G but are below the national results at the higher grades A* to C. Results at the higher grades have worsened since the previous inspection though 1999 results show a slight improvement over those in 1998. The school's results in the 1998 national tests for 14-year-olds are close to the national average. They have held steady at just above the national average since 1996. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' performance in science, at ages 14 and 16, is below that typically found and most pupils do less well in science than in their other subjects within the school. However, the results for 1999 show some improvement over last year, although it is too early to judge whether this is the start of a trend.
110. The majority of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with a sound foundation in science. For example, Year 7 pupils already understand the concept of a fair test; they measure accurately using a range of instruments and make perceptive observations during practical work. Most pupils make steady progress throughout the key stage. For example, by the end of Year 9, they explain abstract concepts from investigations, such as the relationship between force and movement, and apply formulae to make accurate calculations of pressure. In all years, they follow instructions and perform a range of practical tasks. By

the age of 16 pupils have acquired a wider knowledge of materials and physical and biological processes. They make reasoned predictions from experiments and record their findings in both a qualitative and quantitative way. However, at both key stages pupils are less confident in predicting and interpreting their own results from investigations. Most pupils make satisfactory and occasionally good progress in the knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of science as they move through the school. They make relatively slower progress in developing the full range of investigative skills, often as a result of the over-directed nature of practical work.

111. Strengths and weaknesses in the progress of pupils at both key stages were evenly balanced. A number of successful lessons were seen. Pupils were provided with demanding activities that supported them in working independently of the teacher and as a result they made rapid progress. In contrast, groups of higher attaining pupils made slower progress than they should when the work failed to build quickly enough on their existing knowledge and understanding of science. In the majority of lessons, at both key stages, these pupils are not sufficiently stimulated or challenged by the activities set and as a result they lose interest and their concentration declines. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs, and those whose prior attainment is below the average, is satisfactory and they usually attain standards in line with other pupils of similar age.
112. In almost all lessons pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are attentive and well motivated and respond with enthusiasm when challenged appropriately. Relationships with teachers are good and pupils work well together during numerous practical activities. They share equipment and materials sensibly and listen patiently to the ideas of others. In a small minority of lessons, a few pupils, usually boys, monopolise a disproportionate amount of teacher time with their behaviour and this slows the progress of others in the class.
113. Teaching is satisfactory at both key stages in almost all lessons and good in over a quarter. The most successful lessons have some clear features: high expectations of behaviour and effective management of pupils; good subject knowledge used by teachers to enliven discussion; and an interesting blend of teacher demonstrations and pupil investigations which hold pupils' interest. For example, simple equipment was used in a Year 11 lesson successfully to demonstrate the principles of electromagnetism; and Year 7 pupils made good contributions to a practical activity on measurement in response to skilful questioning by the teacher. In addition the teaching offers specific opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through their science work. In lessons where teaching is less successful, including those that are satisfactory but not better, pupils are not challenged sufficiently. The approaches used rely too heavily on teacher exposition; and the carefully structured nature of the work, particularly practicals, leaves little scope for pupils to use their own initiative. For example, lessons for developing pupils' investigative skills in Year 7 devote too much time to repeating work covered in primary school. As a result of these approaches, some lessons proceed at too slow a pace and more able pupils especially accomplish too little.
114. Homework is set in line with whole school policy and marked, but the nature of tasks and the quality of marking vary. At its best, the assignments set develop pupils' independent learning skills and marking makes clear to pupils what progress they have made so far and what they need to do next in order improve. It is less effective when it fails to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in science. However, all staff provide helpful oral

feedback and guidance to individuals during lessons. Formal assessments are carried out in line with National Curriculum and examining board requirements. Record keeping is sound and in accordance with statutory requirements. The department is working hard to develop systems for closer monitoring of pupils' progress and effectively uses target setting for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

115. Teaching and non-teaching staff work together as a team to develop courses at both key stages. They give freely of their time to encourage and help pupils in their care. The schemes of work are detailed, and cover the National Curriculum programmes of study and GCSE requirements. At present they do not provide a clear enough picture of how pupils will acquire and consolidate their learning in the different aspects of science. The department development plan is based on the whole school development plan and provides an outline of the main educational priorities for the current year. The links between the educational priorities identified, the specific costs involved, and the implications for staff development are not always clear. Routine management and administration of the department are adequate. However, the use of monitoring and review to stimulate and raise performance across a range of criteria are underdeveloped and the department's progress over the years has not matched that of other subjects.
116. The previous report five years ago indicated that the accommodation was in need of refurbishment and this remains the case. Little has been done to create a stimulating environment. All science lessons are taught in laboratories but the existing old furniture, fixtures and fittings are difficult to keep clean and in a good state of repair. The provision of apparatus, materials and textbooks are just adequate for current needs but are insufficient to support improvements in pupils' independent learning and investigative skills. Provision for information and communications technology is inadequate. The department has very little useful hardware and software for use in science, though they do have access to the school computer room on a timetabled basis.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

117. Art is a successful subject and a strength of the school. By the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well beyond the standard expected for their age and for a third of pupils in Year 9 attainment is exceptionally high. GCSE results in art are significantly better than the national average and continue to improve. Progress is rapid but not superficial.
118. Complex contextual, cultural, technical, conceptual and expressive aspects of art are woven into the learning. Pupils of all abilities are developing knowledge, skills and understanding at a brisk pace through each lesson, project, year and across the key stages. An example of accomplished observational drawing is the set of Year 9 drawings of sea shells which are worthy of higher grade attainment at GCSE. Work in sketchbooks is extensive, detailed and thoughtful. GCSE pupils exploit project themes to develop personal ideas and forms of expression as exemplified by the 'insect' sculptures made, as homework, with recycled electrical components.
119. The teaching at both key stages is outstanding and, at times, approached 'master classes' in art teaching. Art is taught in a layered and sophisticated but direct and

accessible way. Planning is of high quality. The teaching accurately targets the needs of every pupil and all are praised, challenged and motivated. Lessons include teacher demonstrations with sustained contextual input and consolidation of prior learning. A Year 8 lesson provides a rich learning experience for pupils on the 'Picasso's Horse/Guernica' theme. Pupils assimilated productively a range of relevant cultural, moral and art history issues. Assessment, including group sessions, is effectively used to motivate, inform and raise achievement.

120. The art area is visually stimulating, well organised and has appropriate resources. The subject leadership promotes the highest standards of teaching and learning in art. The art curriculum meets the aims of the school, although an appreciation by the subject leadership of the role in the whole school context lacks clear definition.

121. This is an outstanding curriculum area, with a mature and stimulating ethos, and which has improved the quality of art education further since the previous, very good report.
129. **Design and technology**
122. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above national expectations in all material areas. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9, for example in textile technology, show precision in manufacturing techniques and are skilful in formulating design proposals. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, nearly half of all pupils attained Level 6 and above in teacher assessments for design and technology. Performance was relatively better than other foundation subjects in the school.
123. In the 1998 GCSE examinations results at the end of Key Stage 4, the achievement of pupils, A* to C was significantly above national averages for full and short courses in all areas. The 1999 GCSE examination results at grades A* to C for resistant material products, food technology, textile technology and graphic products continue to reflect high levels of attainment for the pupils involved. Results at grades A* to G are also above national averages. Girls perform better than boys. At Key Stage 4, effective assessment procedures and high expectations of pupils contribute significantly to the high standards attained. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average for the majority of pupils. Manufacturing skills are good and designing skills are well balanced against these. Skills in research, analysis and problem-solving are good in both year groups. Information and communications technology is applied appropriately within the limitations of available hardware. However access to computer aided control and computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) is limited and consequently pupils are unable to develop these skills sufficiently. Presentation of design work by higher attaining Year 11 pupils is very good and shows a clear understanding of materials and processes especially in food technology. The quality of practical work for GCSE is good. Pupils are precise in measuring, marking and cutting materials as well as in weighing and shaping. A number of lower attaining pupils have immature design skills, poor drawing techniques and incomplete portfolios. However, pupils with special educational needs are successful in designing and manufacturing in all material areas.
124. Progress is good at both key stages. Pupils extend their understanding of construction techniques and graphic skills. They consolidate skills in the use of tools and processes in food and textiles. By the end of Key Stage 3 a very solid foundation of knowledge and skill is in place. Research techniques are developing steadily at this key stage together with the presentation of ideas through portfolio work. Gains in numeracy are made through their use of drawing, weighing, measuring, cutting and shaping techniques, for example in the drafting of patterns in textile technology. Skill in devising step-by-step plans to guide practice is steadily extended, for example in food technology and construction. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make good progress and consolidate understanding of working to a design brief in a range of projects. Progress increases steadily as they move into Key Stage 4. Progress for higher attaining pupils is good. They show good levels of knowledge of manufacturing, designing and drawing as well as an ability to write about their understanding and application through extended evaluations. Rapid gains in knowledge and skill take place as pupils move

through Key Stage 4, demonstrating good quality presentation and graphic techniques in portfolios illustrating the design processes. Word processing skills develop steadily in the material area and many pupils make good use of home computers to enhance their course work. Teachers plan well to cover the programmes of study at Key Stage 3 and coursework requirements at Key Stage 4. Work booklets and guides provide pupils with a planned framework in which to develop their understanding and application of design technology. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and use assessment data well to support the good rates of progress.

125. Pupils' attitudes to learning in all aspects of design and technology are very positive. Concentration is well maintained and pupils apply themselves willingly to the tasks. Considerable care is taken in the safe handling of tools and processes. Mutual respect and trust are present and pupils respond well to the challenges presented to them. They are considerate towards one another and listen supportively when discussing work. Key Stage 4 pupils demonstrate a high level of maturity and respond positively as they move between workshops, design areas and computer points. In these situations older pupils make sound independent judgements about their own work
126. Teaching in nine out of ten lessons throughout the school is good or better. A significant proportion is excellent and very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and expertise; they have positive relationships with pupils, manage classes very well and have very high expectations of all pupils. Time is planned and used effectively, and pupils respond well to the brisk pace. Planning at Key Stage 4 is very good in all material areas and includes assessment and targeting procedures which are effective. At Key Stage 3, assessment is carried out regularly and involves a degree of self-evaluation. Well-planned activities provide a solid framework for lower attaining pupils to develop understanding and opportunities for higher attaining pupils to extend their knowledge and skills.
127. Leadership and management of the department are very effective, with a good match of experience and skill to the curriculum at both key stages. The technicians in post make a valuable contribution but the time allocated is insufficient. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met at Key Stage 3. Since the previous report progress has been made on all the concerns raised. However, information and communications technology and pupils' entitlement to CAD/CAM applications still requires extension.

Geography

128. The standardised tests in 1997 and 98 at the end of Key Stage 3 show attainment in line with national expectations with no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Attainment in lessons at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations.
129. Since the previous inspection the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to Cat GCSE has remained above the national average and in 1997 and 1999 it was well above. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades A*/A, has increased and is always at or above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to G is always above the national average. Girls' performance is always above the national average, but that of boys varies from below to well above the national average.
130. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 and they rapidly acquire an understanding of

the nature of geography. Many pupils, across the ability range, bring good prior knowledge to their lessons. Their teachers encourage them to build on this. They effectively apply their prior learning to the understanding of unfamiliar places and environments. Some Year 7 pupils' intimate knowledge of local farming practices was used skilfully by teachers to develop the concept of farming as an activity with clear inputs, processes and outputs. By the end of the key stage, as in the previous inspection, pupils use an accurate geographical vocabulary with confidence and present conclusions to geographical questions which are consistent with the evidence. They interpret data accurately and in the case of some pupils of high prior attainment in Year 9, with subtlety. They are quick to perceive that data comparing farming activity and economic output in south and north Italy could lead to false conclusions if used carelessly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with their ability. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have a good understanding of the complexity of the interaction of physical and human processes in the development of distinctive regions. Pupils make good use of a range of geographical skills to obtain information from a variety of sources and draw appropriate conclusions. Most pupils at Key Stage 4 with special educational needs progress well, particularly when their work challenges them appropriately. When work is less well matched to their ability, poorer behaviour diminishes the progress of the whole class.

131. The attitude to learning of almost all pupils is good and that of many is very good. They show a lively interest in their work, stay on task well and have good concentration. They ask relevant questions of the teacher and of each other. Many respond enthusiastically to questions put by the teacher and they often answer very thoughtfully. They have no hesitation in asking for help but are not over reliant on the teacher. Relationships with each other and with their teacher are good and pupils are able to work well in groups. The behaviour of almost all pupils is good. The few instances of less mature behaviour were in Key Stage 4.
132. The high quality of most teaching is a strength of the department. All teaching is at least satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 teaching in almost all lessons was good or better and in a quarter was very good. At Key Stage 4 teaching in over half the lessons was good or very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use geographical terminology with great accuracy. They have high expectations of the pupils who are challenged to deepen their knowledge and understanding. These expectations were met well in a Year 8 lesson when pupils were totally attentive to the introduction, through a video, of the topic of coastal erosion. The teacher's answer to clear perceptive questions demonstrated great skill in helping pupils to work out answers for themselves. Lessons are planned and organised effectively to meet the needs of pupils in different ability sets. The range of materials and tasks to meet effectively the range of abilities within sets is not so well developed. All teachers use questioning effectively to assess learning, develop thinking and encourage participation in lessons. In the few less successful lessons, the teacher did not match work sufficiently well to the needs of the pupils and class management was not strong. Homework is set in line with school policy but only 30 minutes per fortnight is lower than in many other schools and accounts for some unfinished work seen in exercise books.
133. The curriculum has been enriched by a comprehensive programme of fieldwork since the previous inspection. The use of information technology, though, is less in evidence than previously, because the geography software is not now compatible with the school's upgraded computers. Assessment at every level is used to guide the development of pupils'

learning and to amend teaching strategies.

134. The department is well managed and teachers' work is effectively monitored. However, the department's development plan does not include regular review and is not yet an effective planning tool. Accommodation has been considerably improved since the previous inspection and most teaching now takes place in two adjoining specialist rooms, enlivened by good displays of pupils' work. Resources are generally adequate, although the quality of some of the school-produced resources does not stimulate pupils. One shared video player is inadequate to take advantage of the wealth of visual materials available to enhance almost every lesson.

142. **History**

135. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above the national expectation. Pupils enter the school with generally average levels of attainment in history. Teacher assessments over recent years show an increase in the number of pupils who achieve level 5 and above. Pupils in the current Year 9 are working at levels that are above national expectations. Pupils' attainment improves throughout the key stage because very good, well-directed teaching, with interesting and stimulating tasks, engages pupils and raises standards.
136. The 1998 GCSE results at grades A* to C meet the national average. Results for 1999 are well above average. Nearly 78 per cent of pupils achieved grades A* to C, greatly exceeding the 1998 results. Girls achieve better results than boys in history, although in 1999, results of both girls and boys improved, with boys achieving better results than in previous years. Taking the 1999 results into account, results over the last three years show improvement. In the last two years more pupils chose to study history, reversing the decline in previous years.
137. Pupils make good progress in history at both key stages. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils made excellent progress in a lesson about the battle of the Somme. They showed a good understanding of the planning, conduct and result of the battle. They discussed the intentions and motives of General Haig and produced careful assessments of his judgements when viewed from the perspective of 1916. Throughout the key stage, a clear and consistent emphasis is made on understanding and interpreting sources. For example, pupils in Year 7, in a lesson on the beginnings of Rome, explored the myth of Romulus and Remus. They gave reasons for the foundation of Rome, drawing on sources as evidence. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they take part in the same carefully planned activities, and the teaching is carefully directed to their needs. Pupils produce some interesting written work, including letters, diaries and poems, as a result of their investigations.
138. The skills acquired at Key Stage 3 provide a firm foundation for GCSE work. Pupils in Year 10 made good progress in a lesson on the Home Front because they were able to select and organise information in a way that the examination demands. Year 11 pupils, studying the conflict in Vietnam, showed confidence in understanding the different sources used and demonstrated how different sources related to parts of an examination question. Pupils' written work reflects the original approach as that characterise history in this school. Pupils produce very good pamphlets, such as the pamphlet about the Vietnam conflict from the Vietcong point of view.

139. Pupils in this school really enjoy history. They are interested and become very involved in the lessons. They speak with confidence and fluency and show a good grasp of detail, whatever their level of attainment. In class, pupils listen carefully. They particularly enjoy the investigative approach used. As well as learning the basic factual content of the period studied, they use their knowledge as a background for some intensive research projects. Whether considering the death of Richard III or the experiences of individual soldiers in the First World War, pupils develop well as independent learners. The nature and structure of these activities and the way in which they are taught, encourages pupils to think deeply.
140. The quality of teaching in history at both key stages is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In six lessons in ten the teaching is very good or better. Some lessons are inspirational. Consistent teaching of this high quality, together with the investigative approach, motivates pupils and raises standards. The teachers work as a team and bring their own love of history to the lessons. They are courteous and good humoured and work successfully to involve, motivate and support pupils. Planning, organisation and approach to the subject are very good. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of sources. Carefully planned fieldwork and visits are interwoven into the history curriculum. The assessment tasks in each year are stimulating and challenging activities. For example, pupils in Year 9 study the life of a soldier in the trenches through original diary extracts. Pupils understood the soldier's plight and in the wider context of a world war. History supports the development of the pupils' written skills through a wide range of writing.
141. Leadership and management of the department are good. The curriculum is well planned and linked very clearly to the key elements. Sound assessment and monitoring procedures are in place. However, these are not used to assess and predict progress in a systematic way. National Curriculum levels are not used effectively in Years 7 and 8 to set targets for individual pupils.
142. The progress pupils make and teaching have improved since the last inspection. The accommodation is very good and the rooms are close together. Information and communications technology is not yet integrated into the curriculum because the department has no regular access to computers. History is a good and improving department. Standards are high. It makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information and communications technology (ICT)

143. In the 1998 GCSE examinations results at grades A* to C, in full course information technology were slightly below the national average. Girls attained above the average but boys were significantly below. At grades A* to G pupils attained above the national average. In the short course GCSE examination, results at grades A* to C were well above national average. The 1999 GCSE examination results at grades A* to C show a slight improvement. Pupils manage software packages successfully. In Year 10 for example, pupils consider alternative software solutions as part of developing performance criteria. Year 11 pupils are competent in the manipulation of text and graphics as well as in the handling of data through the use of spreadsheets and databases. Higher attaining pupils successfully match the style of presentation to the chosen audience and are confident in their use of a desk top publishing package. The continuous refining of course units and the effective assessment procedures now in place mean that the pupils in the present Years

10 and 11 are on course to exceed the national averages at the end of the key stage. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is above the national expectation in the mastery of ICT skills. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 successfully work between two packages with a clear understanding of the needs of the particular audience, for example as part of the hotel project. The majority of pupils skilfully use a word processing package, changing styles, fonts, layouts appropriately. Year 8 pupils import and re-size pictures accurately for posters for target audiences. Lower attaining pupils in Year 7 use computers skilfully, using the correct technical language. Pupils with special educational needs succeed in following step-by-step instructions for accessing appropriate software.

144. Pupils' attainment and progress are below national expectations in applying ICT within the subjects of the curriculum at both key stages. Pupils have few systematic, planned opportunities to use the good skills attained in the core IT lessons. Computers and software are not always appropriate or available in some subject areas. Access to the computer suites is restricted because of the demands for core IT skills teaching at both key stages. This reflects in attainment across the curriculum. However, for example in mathematics and design technology, within the limitations of resources, pupils use ICT successfully to support some aspects of coursework. Home computers are used successfully to enhance work.
145. Progress in the core skills in both key stages is good. Time is used effectively so that pupils consolidate skills in handling and communicating information through their work on data bases, spreadsheets, word processing and other applications. Higher attaining pupils make good gains over time in the expression of data through a range of applications. They are confident in using computers, for example when Year 8 successfully made comparisons using a computer and manual methods to obtain the same results. Technical language is being extended. Lower attaining pupils of both key stages make good progress although some rely on constant teacher support. Some pupils have low levels of technical knowledge when they enter Year 7 but they make good progress through the key stage in manipulating text and graphics and in preparing information satisfactorily for spreadsheets and databases. Good progress is made at both key stages by pupils who have special educational needs.
146. At Key Stage 4 clear gains are made in independent work for those involved in GCSE information technology. However, not all pupils at this key stage receive their entitlement to skills based teaching. The planned projects enable pupils to become steadily more competent and confident in skills and understanding as they move through the key stages. The careful planning within the department to match pupils' needs and good classroom management supports pupils in making good progress.
147. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are enthusiastic and enjoy working with computers. Many pupils take on responsibility for helping others, quietly and effectively. Most sustain concentration and benefit from the very good working relationships between pupils and teachers. A high degree of trust is placed on pupils in carrying out major project work at Key Stage 4 and homework activities at both key stages. Pupils are very keen to use the computers in the ICT areas outside formal lessons.
148. In over half of the lessons teaching is good or better. It is excellent or very good in almost a third of lessons and no teaching is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good and very good, classes are very well managed with a good balance of teacher and pupil activity.

The very carefully planned work effectively develops knowledge and skill in the well chosen applications by pupils. Teachers use the technical language of the subject precisely which acts as a model for pupils. Teachers are secure in their subject. They use their knowledge and skills successfully to extend pupils' understanding. They have high expectations of all pupils. Assessment of core ICT attainment skills is in place at the end of Key Stage 3 but not in pupils' application of ICT across other subjects.

149. Management and leadership is good. Pupils have open access to facilities and an environment in which they can make steady progress. There is a clear view of what needs to be done to develop ICT across the school. Since the previous inspection, progress has been mixed. Improvement has taken place in skills-based facilities; the quality of teaching has improved; a whole-school plan is in place as part of ICT development. Resources across the curriculum are now less good and inappropriate for several subjects; no technician support is available. National Curriculum requirements are met at Key Stage 3. However, a minority of pupils at Key Stage 4 do not receive their entitlement.

157. **Modern foreign languages**

150. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the national average. Since the previous inspection attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has further improved in both languages. In GCSE French grades A* to C are above the national average. In GCSE, German grades A* to C gained by girls are broadly in line with the national average but boys' attainment is well below.
151. Pupils' failure to develop oral confidence was highlighted in the previous inspection. This is not now the case. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils of all levels of attainment respond accurately and confidently. Great emphasis is placed on accuracy in both speaking and writing. Pupils in higher attaining groups use well formed and extended sentences in the target language. They pose and answer questions fluently. Good examples of conversation work in pairs took place when a high attaining Year 9 class chose an evening of 'Favourite TV Programmes' from an authentic schedule. Pupils completed speaking and listening tasks at normal speed. Lower attaining pupils provide short but accurate responses to questions. Written work is now effectively developed. Higher attaining pupils show versatile use of language in variety of situations. Lower attaining pupils respond accurately in writing when work is appropriately structured, an excellent example of this took place in a mixed ability Year 7 group which undertook a survey about personal appearance. Higher attaining pupils added additional information and lower attaining pupils completed the survey with single words. The poor writing skills in lower attaining groups, described in the previous report are no longer in evidence. The written skills of special educational needs pupils have also progressed. There is extensive written work in all lessons. At Key Stage 3 pupils improve their reading, writing, speaking and understanding considerably and confidently. Pupils in a Year 9 German class encouraged each other in the target language, and become so involved that they forgot they were not speaking their mother tongue.
152. Progress is very good at Key Stage 4, due to careful planning of lessons and consistently good standards of teaching. Teachers are now no longer prepared to receive responses in English; their explanations are in the target language and quiet but determined correction of mistakes had markedly improved the standard of spoken language.
153. At both key stages, pupils' attitudes and consideration for each other and their teachers make a major contribution to the high standard they reach, except for a small minority of older pupils. The differences between higher and lower attaining pupils are evident in pupils' capacity to show initiative and organize their learning independently. The lack of subject computers prevents individual access to the internet and CD ROM and opportunities are lost to enhance listening and pronunciation skills at their own pace. The vast majority of pupils have constructive, good-humoured and trusting relationships with their teachers: They work harmoniously and impart a brisk and businesslike rhythm to each lesson. Pupils come prepared and know what is expected of them.
154. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good overall. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least good, with over three quarters of lessons very good or better. All lessons are satisfactory or better at Key Stage 4. One third are good or better. Teaching is very well informed and uses a variety of stimuli with overhead projectors, tapes, classroom displays and teachers' expertise. Work for pupils with special educational needs is well matched to their needs. When necessary, teachers spend extra time with these

pupils at Key Stage 3, although the classes are large. No additional in-class support is provided. Work is insufficiently demanding to extend higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4.

155. Teachers and pupils consider homework as integral to the course. It serves as an extension of lessons and gives the best scope for independent learning. Many pupils have a home computer and use it to finish homework which is often used as part of displays of pupils' work. A well-established system is in place for monitoring pupils' progress and each teacher takes a role in different aspects and assessment issues. Pupils' work is marked regularly but individual targets are not set and terminology is not applied consistently across the whole department.

156. A detailed scheme of work and a comprehensive departmental handbook are in place. The departmental development plan is in line with the school development plan but lacks detailed outlines for staff development and planning for the long term replacement of equipment. The ICT development programme plans for the provision of computers. The two small option groups of pupils studying two languages at Key Stage 4 are effective but lead to larger group sizes elsewhere. The very good use of the language in both French and German, the excellent pupil teacher relationships, the well planned trips to both France and Germany, make very positive contributions to pupils' learning and their standard of work.
157. The department is well led by the newly appointed head of department. All the issues highlighted in the last inspection have been resolved apart from a long-term plan for the replacement of books, equipment and other resources.
165. **Music**
158. On entry to the school pupils have little knowledge, few skills and limited experience of music, with the exception of those who have instrumental lessons privately. Year 7 are now broadly in line with national expectations for their age, but Year 8 are behind and Year 9 well behind in all aspects. Apart from instrumentalists, who have good skills in performance and musical literacy, pupils at the end of the key stage have little experience of composition, are at an elementary stage in performance and have undeveloped listening skills. Progress in most lessons is now satisfactory, and sometimes good. The standards achieved by all except Year 7 show that progress over time has been poor until very recently, and has resulted in considerable under-achievement for the majority. Until October, only five pupils were taking instrumental lessons in school, and although the number has now increased to forty-five, the benefits are not yet apparent.
159. Pupils have been unable to study music in Key Stage 4 for some time, and the likelihood of sufficient pupils being suitably prepared to undertake work at this level in the near future is slim. Standards of achievement have deteriorated since the previous inspection, when pupils, though deemed to be underachieving, were in line with national standards. This deterioration has almost certainly contributed to the loss of music as an option in Key Stage 4.
160. Year 7 pupils come to lessons eagerly, expecting to enjoy hard work. They concentrate well, have good relationships with each other and with staff and take pride in achievement. In Years 8 and 9 the majority of pupils also have positive attitudes to work, but a significant minority behave immaturely and irresponsibly showing few signs of interest or self-discipline, and seem indignant, even resentful, when asked to work. Although there is little overt disruption, some pupils are determined to do as little as possible. They seem to believe it is the teacher's task to drive rather than to lead them and disregard both encouragement and coercion. In groups where this attitude is evident, it is difficult for pupils who intend to work hard to do so.
161. Teaching shows skills, knowledge and understanding of music and uses a good range of strategies and methodologies. Lessons are planned carefully, with a variety of activities, and are delivered with clear aims, instructions and explanations at a pace suited to the

activity in a friendly, relaxed climate for learning. Knowledge and understanding are frequently checked and consolidated. Occasionally lack of experience is evident in classroom and pupil management, in expecting too little or too much. While control is usually maintained easily, at times a firmer approach is needed. Sound working relationships are being developed with most groups. They feature patient determination and are enhanced by encouragement and praise for effort as well as achievement. Curricular opportunities and possible methods of assessment are currently limited by the cramped accommodation and lack of resources.

162. The subject is well led by a newly-appointed teacher. Much has been done to improve the work of the department in a very short time, but there is a great deal to do. Extra-curricular activities appear to have been non-existent for some time, but this term a choir has been started, and it is planned that work with small instrumental ensembles will follow. The use of music in assemblies is pleasing and well worth further development.

170. **Physical education**

163. Practical performance standards of attainment for boys and girls have been maintained since the previous inspection. Most are in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 with some above, for example in football and gymnastics. During the inspection, pupils at Key Stage 3 demonstrated their growing competence in a number of different activities. In games, pupils develop good basic ball skills and increase their knowledge and understanding of rules and tactics. In gymnastics many can produce imaginative balances maintaining good body control. They also work well with a partner and link movements to form sequences. In dance they perform energetically showing changes of level and speed and an understanding of phrases like 'action and reaction'.

164. In the 1999 GCSE examination well over half of pupils gained grades A* to C, which is a good improvement over 1998 which was the first year in which pupils had taken the examination. Based on the 1998 figures, the most recent results will be above the national average. Attainment is generally above average at Key Stage 4. The majority of pupils perform well in a variety of different games. Many pupils achieve above average standards in basketball where they are developing good tactical awareness as well as improving their ability to pass, dribble and shoot. Most pupils are confident in what they do. Some pupils under guidance from the teacher lead warm-up activities at the start of a lesson, and they do so very effectively.

165. Pupils come to the school from a large number of feeder schools. They make immediate and very good progress in Year 7 which is sustained throughout Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs, who are fully integrated in all physical education lessons, also progress well. Progress is good at Key Stage 4 where pupils consolidate and extend skills acquired earlier as well as experiencing new activities both through formal lessons and through extra curricular activities. Most pupils also make good progress in their GCSE theory lessons.

166. Pupils clearly enjoy physical education. They change promptly and almost all are fully committed to what they are doing. Levels of participation are very high throughout the school. Pupils 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. The standard of kit is excellent and behaviour in all lessons is exemplary.

167. The quality of teaching at both key stages is consistently high and makes a significant impact on standards. Teaching is very good in the majority of lessons and it is rarely less than good. Class management is excellent and relationships between teachers and pupils encourage all pupils to make progress. Lessons are always purposeful, carefully planned and well organised. Objectives are explained very clearly. Staff make good use of time and resources to ensure that pupils are actively involved throughout. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour to which pupils respond very positively. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged and valued. Teachers work extremely well as a team in a department which is managed very effectively.
168. The department has successfully implemented a more balanced curriculum to which reference was made in the previous report. Pupils are given opportunities to experience a wide range of activities at both key stages. Games include table tennis, volleyball, golf and badminton as well as the more traditional games. Pupils in Year 7 have the opportunity to improve their swimming by attending lessons at the local pool and they also undertake a well structured series of orienteering lessons. There is a strong commitment to the provision of extra-curricular activities both at lunchtime and after school for boys and girls of all attainment levels. During the inspection all the activities observed, which included gymnastics, indoor and outdoor hockey, football and basketball, were attended by large groups of enthusiastic and committed pupils.
169. The department gained the Sportsmark Award (1998) in recognition of a developing programme in physical education and sport. The school also received the Challenge Award from the English Sports Council in 1997. These awards have been achieved against a backdrop of very limited indoor accommodation. The playing fields also continue to cause problems in wet weather and often cannot be used for long periods in the winter months. The tennis courts also become very slippery after rain and are in need of resurfacing. The school has to make use of the local leisure centre but activity time is curtailed by the need to travel. The provision of an additional indoor space together with a good artificial surface, both of which are mentioned in the long-term departmental development plan, would enable the staff to raise the existing good standards still further.

177. **Religious education**

170. In all work observed, attainment at the age of 14 is above the level expected of the age group. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the distinctive features of the major religious traditions and their application to everyday life. They understand what being a member of a religious community entails through visits to religious buildings and subsequently meeting people from each religious community. Pupils learn to use appropriate terminology to describe matters of belief and practice. They encounter the richness and diversity of all the major world faiths, following the pattern of the locally agreed syllabus. Strengths are the opportunity provided to explore religious issues, to form and share their own views and listen to the views of others. They learn how to make an informed response to the values and commitments of others.
171. Pupils' attainment at the age of 16 is also above the expected levels. They acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding of the major faiths and explore values which they can to

apply to their own experience through the religious perspective on issues such as abortion, wealth and poverty. They explore their own understanding and provide clear explanations of belief, meaning and purpose. Higher attaining pupils evaluate effectively the contribution that faith communities make to personal, local and national life. The GCSE short course is raising levels of motivation and providing clear goals for attainment.

172. Pupils study the GCSE long course and the short course in religious studies. The proportion gaining grades A*-C and A*-G in the GCSE religious studies long course in 1998 was above the national average and in 1999 the results improved on these figures. The number of candidates taking this course was small but is rising rapidly. In 1998 the proportion gaining grades A*-C and A*-G in the GCSE short course was below the national average but in 1999 the results improved and are now in line with national figures. Girls outperform boys.
173. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 because the learning is related to their ages and their abilities with an effective match between the needs of the pupils and the task in each lesson. Pupils are well motivated and clear about the tasks. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the teachers' good intervention skills and support. Their progress is good and many attain higher than anticipated. No significant difference exists between the progress of boys or girls. Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 4 reflecting the value attached to the subject as an accredited course, the commitment of the teachers and the pupils' responsible approach. The teaching engages the pupils and focuses on contemporary spiritual, social and moral concerns. Pupils listen to each other and develop their own thinking and ideas. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
174. Pupils' attitudes are good and often very good. Behaviour is very good and often exemplary, with consistently polite, courteous and well behaved pupils. Work at Key Stage 3 is characterised by pupils' sensible questioning. They find the subject interesting and often personally relevant. They work well individually and collaborate in groups, expressing their own views, reflecting on and evaluating their own ideas and the comments of others. Relationships are often very good. Pupils work well with each other and with adults. At both key stages, pupils are confident and have a sense of achievement. As a result pupils at Key Stage 4 adopt a sensible approach to the GCSE course and take some responsibility for their own learning. Other cultures and people are valued without prejudice, by exploring the ideas and responses of a range of contemporary issues.
175. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, with some outstanding features in both key stages. Teachers have enthusiasm for the subject and secure levels of knowledge and understanding. Discussions in particular are led with confidence and authority. Lessons display very good planning and pace and are well managed with a good balance between learning from religion and learning about religion.
176. Much of the teaching employs lively and innovative methods and organisation that generate interest through imaginative active learning approaches. Beliefs and values, rather than the phenomena of religion, are seen to be at the heart of the subject. Lessons are interesting, have an outstanding ethos and flow well. The use of time and the creative use of a wide range of resources are exemplary. Artefacts abound; videos, role-play and other strategies to involve the whole class are the norm. A very extensive programme of visits and visitors from various faith communities provide new insights and perspectives. Ten

visits are planned for this current year, with eleven visiting speakers this term. Four regular extra-curricular activities are open to all years. In February, a party is to visit Israel, having already established an e-mail link with a partner school. The assessment of pupils' work is good. Homework is set regularly and is an extension and development of class work. All marking is regular, thorough and consistent. However, comments on work rarely set targets for individual pupils.

177. The subject is very well led. It thoroughly reflects the standards and ethos of the school and makes an unequivocal contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
178. Overall attainment and progress are much better than they were at the time of the previous inspection. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching. The range of teaching approaches and the use of resources are outstanding. The improved subject accommodation has enabled the creation of a strong subject identity. The subject has a well deserved higher status and profile in the school.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

186. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

179. The school was inspected by a team of 13 inspectors who spent 48 inspection days in the school collecting evidence and inspecting all subjects. Inspectors observed 174 lessons in full or in part. All teachers present were seen teaching, most on a number of occasions. Planned discussions were held with the majority of teachers, including members of the senior management team and faculty and subject heads, with non-teaching staff, support workers and the chairman and chairs of committees of the governing body. In addition, there were informal discussions with both teaching and non-teaching staff, and an informal lunchtime meeting was held to which governors and many professionals and visiting specialists with the school were invited.
180. All the work of a representative sample of pupils from each group was examined and planned discussions were held subsequently with these pupils. Pupils' records, past work, work during lessons and displays around the school were scrutinised. Inspectors spoke formally with many more members of the school and examined their work with a range of out-of-school activities and meetings and internal committees. Pupils were observed at lunchtimes, travelling to and from lessons, coming to and leaving the school.
181. Inspectors accompanied and observed a number of groups on external assignments and visited residential off-site activities.
182. Correspondence in support of the school in which they outlined their involvement was received from a variety of local people, firms, agencies and organisations. The school helpfully provided an extensive range of informative documentation which was analysed before and during the inspection. The inspection team carefully considered the 410 responses made by parents to questionnaires distributed before the inspection and the comments by the 27 parents at the pre-inspection meeting conducted by the registered inspector.

183.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	852	28	108	40

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	46.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18 : 1

Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week	244

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	73
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	26.1
	KS4	24.4

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/9
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	£
Total Income	1,700,604
Total Expenditure	1,740,415
Expenditure per pupil	2,087
Balance brought forward from previous year	119,970
Balance carried forward to next year	80,159

184.

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	852
Number of questionnaires returned:	410
Percentage return rate:	48

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	15	67	13	5	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	23	61	8	7	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	13	49	28	6	4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	13	59	18	8	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	15	58	17	8	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	19	67	10	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	23	62	12	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	14	66	8	9	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	18	59	16	6	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	19	60	16	5	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	27	56	10	6	1