

## Report Erratum

School:	Barclay School
Unique Reference Number:	117515

The changes listed below have been agreed with the Registered Inspector who led your school inspection.

Please circulate to all recipients of the final Report.

A copy of this slip will then be submitted to OFSTED for them to incorporate the changes.

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**Brian Martell omitted from inspection table – in bold below**  
**Information about the inspection team**

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
D. Gosling Registered Inspector		Attainment and Progress, Teaching, Leadership and Management, Efficiency, English as an additional language
M. Cunningham Lay Inspector		Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development, Attendance, Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare, Partnership with Parents and the Community
A. Jones	Mathematics	Curriculum
D. Westworth	English	Assessment
P. Leckstein	Science	Staffing

B. Wilkinson	Design and Technology	Accommodation
R. Bibby	Information Technology	
R. Bailess	Modern Foreign Languages	Learning Resources
M. Naish	Geography	Equal Opportunities
J. Waddington	History	
O. Hall	Art	
H. Housedon	Physical Education	
C. Matthews	Music	
G. Binks		Special Educational Needs
<b>Brian Martell</b>	<b>Religious education</b>	<b>Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>
D. Gutmann	Business Studies	Sixth form

# INSPECTION REPORT

**The Barclay School**  
Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 117515

Headteacher: Mr R Ball

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Reporting inspector: Mr D Gosling

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708478

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

Type of control: County

Age range of pupils: 11 to 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Walkern Road  
Stevenage  
Herts  
SG1 3RB

Telephone number: 01438 232221

Fax number: 01438 232300

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Stewart

Date of previous inspection: November 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
D Gosling Registered Inspector		Attainment and Progress, Teaching, Leadership and Management, Efficiency, English as an additional language
M Cunningham Lay Inspector		Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development, Attendance, Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare, Partnership with Parents and the Community
A Jones	Mathematics	Curriculum
D Westworth	English	Assessment
P Leckstein	Science	Staffing
B Wilkinson	Design and Technology	Accommodation
R Bibby	Information Technology	
R Bailless	Modern Foreign Languages	Learning Resources
M Naish	Geography	Equal Opportunities
J Waddington	History	
O Hall	Art	
H Housden	Physical Education	
C Matthews	Music	
G Binks		Special Educational Needs
B Martell	Religious education	Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
D Gutmann	Business Studies	Sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

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Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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

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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

### **What the school does well**

- The leadership of the school is strong, with clear vision and direction and the establishment of a committed and positive working ethos.
- Overall standards at GCSE are good, especially in relation to similar schools.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage their pupils well in lessons.
- The teaching of sixth form students and the range of subjects on offer in the sixth form are good.
- A wide range of well-attended sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities is provided.
- There is rigorous and effective co-ordination of in-service training for staff and of the monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- There is high quality care and support provided for all pupils, including those with physical disabilities and behavioural problems.
- The pupils are enthusiastic and hard-working; attendance is good.
- The school has a positive and productive partnership with parents, other schools and local businesses.
- Financial control and the school's administration are very efficient.

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I. The pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3, though satisfactory, is not as strong as at Key Stage 4
- II. Although the standards being attained by boys are higher than those nationally, girls perform significantly better
- III. Assessments are not used sufficiently to build on pupils' attainment and to target work to take them to higher levels
- IV. There is an insufficient focus on pupils' spiritual development, including a failure to comply with legal requirements for collective worship and religious education
- V. Departmental development plans are not well-structured and generally do not focus sufficiently on strategies for raising standards

**Overall, the school's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses.**

### **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has improved considerably in a number of key areas, including the quality of teaching and the standards being attained. Although some weaknesses in teaching still remain the proportion of lessons that are at least satisfactory has increased from eighty to ninety-five percent. Standards have also improved at the end of each key stage. There was a particularly significant improvement at GCSE from 1998 to 1999. In 1999 the pupils achieved GCSE results above the average for schools nationally and well above average for similar schools. The school had made good progress in addressing the higher performance of girls from 1996 to 1998. The gap increased again in 1999, but this was partly because the girls performed exceptionally well; the boys performed better at GCSE than boys nationally.

Overall, sound progress has been made with the key issues raised in the last report. Very good progress has been made with several of the key issues, especially in developing the roles of senior staff, curriculum reviews, strategies for improving attendance, the extension of the personal and social

education and careers programme, and improving provision for health and safety. The school's provision for collective worship, and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form still do not meet statutory requirements.

The school is establishing good systems to sustain success, particularly those for monitoring and improving teaching, and improving attendance and behaviour. A key development contributing to the school's improvement is the establishment recently of three key stage directors. These are playing a very effective role in monitoring pupils' academic and personal development, and they are beginning to refine and develop the curriculum.

- **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

<b>Performance in:</b>	<b>Compared with all schools</b>	<b>Compared with similar schools</b>	<b>Key</b>
			<i>Well above average</i> <b>A</b>

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Key Stage 3 tests	C	C
GCSE examinations	B	A
A/AS – levels*	D	n/a

\* 1998 figures used as 1999 comparisons not available at the time of the inspection

n/a not applicable

In 1999, overall results in English, mathematics and science Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests were broadly in line with national averages. Compared with similar schools, English results were below average, mathematics were in line and science were well above. However, in the previous year English results were the strongest. The average GCSE grade per pupil in 1999 and the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE were above the national average and well above the average for pupils in similar schools. Results at GCSE improved significantly in 1999. The average A level grade is below the national average but results are improving; observation of students' work indicated that standards are satisfactory. Results in sixth form vocational courses are above the national average.

In 1999, taking national differences between subjects into account, the best GCSE results were in art, music, PE, design and technology, sociology and geography. Pupils were least successful in English, French, and business studies; for the past two years the weakest performances at GCSE have been in mathematics, French and business studies.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	art, music, physical education, religious education	modern languages
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	art, music, geography	
Sixth form	Good	history, design and technology, mathematics, physical education and modern languages	
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

The overall quality of teaching is sound. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 95 percent of lessons. Sixth form teaching is good and there is some excellent teaching taking place at all key stages. Teaching is sound overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 but it is stronger at Key Stage 4 where there is a higher proportion of lessons which are good or better. Teaching is weakest in Year 9. The main weakness in teaching is the lack of use made of assessments to plan work to take pupils to higher levels, particularly at Key Stage 3.

*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	<b>Sound.</b> Although the school is generally calm and orderly and deals with misbehaviour very effectively, it has a small minority of pupils who have behavioural difficulties
Attendance	<b>Good.</b> The attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absences are well below.
Ethos*	<b>Very good.</b> Pupils work hard and with enthusiasm. They are co-operative and want to achieve well.
Leadership and management	<b>Good.</b> There is very good leadership and direction, with a strong emphasis on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. Planning and the monitoring of the work of heads of department are still in need of development.
Pupils with special educational needs	<b>Sound.</b> A wide range of subjects is offered and there is good extra-curricular provision. Schemes of work in some subjects at Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently rigorous.
Curriculum	<b>Sound provision.</b> The learning support department is well-managed and pupils make sound progress. Support teaching is good but work for pupils with special educational needs is not sufficiently targeted when support is not available.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for moral development is <b>very good</b> ; it is <b>good</b> for social, and <b>sound</b> for cultural development. Provision for spiritual

Staffing, resources and accommodation

development is a **weakness**.

**Satisfactory.** There is a sufficient number of staff, and accommodation is adequate. There are good arrangements for staff development and wide range of resources is available.

Value for money

**Good.** Pupils are performing very well at GCSE, compared with those in similar schools, and the school is making a significant contribution to pupils' moral and personal development.

\*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**

The role model provided by the head teacher, his accessibility and skill at dealing with people

The school encourages pupils to produce a good standard of work

The school encourages positive values and attitudes

Their children like the school

Teachers know their children and are concerned for their well-being

#### **What some parents are not happy about**

The information provided on the progress their children are making

Information provided on what is being taught

More homework could be set

The strengths of the school, as perceived by parents, are fully endorsed by this inspection. Very few significant concerns were raised by parents, and in questionnaires only a very small minority disagreed that the school was doing well in most areas. The inspection findings did not support the weaknesses identified by a small minority of parents. Detailed information is provided for parents, and adequate homework is set on a regular basis.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The school should

1. Develop systematic strategies for bringing the quality of attainment at Key Stage 3 up to that at Key Stage 4, including:

VI. using assessment data more rigorously to inform lesson planning and to help build on pupils' prior attainment, particularly in English lessons

VII. increasing the variety of tasks set in lessons

VIII. ensuring that there is a consistently good pace of learning in lessons

IX. ensuring that schemes of work are rigorous in all subjects, particularly in English, geography, mathematics and science

X. raising standards in numeracy

(see paras **18, 21, 37, 44, 45, 54, 63, 133, 136, 150, 153, 196, 205, 251**)

2. Review and strengthen the current strategies for reducing the gap in performance between boys and girls with a particular focus on:

XI. the curriculum provision

XII. teaching styles

XIII. resources

XIV. the monitoring of individual attainment

(see paras **47, 53, 131, 188, 198, 219, 230**)

3. Improve the quality of whole school and departmental planning by:

XV. restructuring the school development plan so that there is a focus on key priorities

XVI. ensuring that departmental development plans systematically address areas of weakness, identified through analysis of assessment data

(see para **94**)

4. Improve the quality of the spiritual provision by:

XVII. ensuring that legal requirements for collective worship and religious education are met

XVIII. providing guidance on how all departments can contribute to spiritual development

(see paras **65** and **66**)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for



inclusion in the action plan: the teaching provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language; and appraisal arrangements.

(see paras **48** and **105**)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. The Barclay School is a mixed comprehensive school catering for pupils from 11-18. There are 990 pupils on roll: 531 boys and 459 girls. These include 150 students in the sixth form who are taught jointly in a consortium with a neighbouring school. Admissions have steadily increased from the time of the previous inspection in 1994 and this is a reflection of the school's growing popularity. The school has eighty pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and the percentage who speak English as an additional language is higher than most schools. There are 205 pupils with special educational needs; this represents 27.4% of the school roll and the proportion is above the national average. The school has a unit for pupils with physical disabilities, including three who are visually impaired. These pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school and are taught in mainstream lessons.
2. The socio-economic background of the pupils overall is more deprived than those in schools nationally. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals was broadly in line with the national average this year but was lower in the previous three years. The attainment of the school's intake has been slightly below average for the past three years, with relatively few high attainers.
3. The school aims to create a hard-working, well ordered community which is supportive and values individuals. It aims to foster self reliance, high aspirations and an enjoyment of learning in the pupils. Another key aim is to work in partnership with the community to prepare pupils for adult life. The key priorities in the school development plan for 1999/2000 are to review and develop vocational provision at Key Stage 4, expansion of the sixth form, increased and more effective use of IT, developing literacy skills across the whole curriculum and raising the attainment of boys.

3. **Key indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage <sup>3</sup>**

**Number of registered pupils in final year of Key  
for the latest reporting year:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Tota</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>155</b>

<b>National</b>	<b>Test Results</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematic</b>	<b>Science</b>
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	34	48	44
	Girls	49	52	48
	Total	83	100	92
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	54 (68)	63 (49)	58 (46)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	11 (33)	33 (33)	30 (23)
	National	33 (35)	32 (36)	23 (27)

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Assessments</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematic</b>	<b>Science</b>
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	53	53	46
	Girls	61	52	43
	Total	114	105	89
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	74 (71)	68 (59)	58 (45)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	27 (26)	31 (26)	34 (28)
	National	N/a (31)	N/a (37)	N/a (31)

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>1</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	87	65	152

GCSE Results		5 or more	5 or more	1 or more
Number of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	41	84	85
	Girls	40	62	63
	Total	81	146	148
Percentage standard specified	School	53 (46)	96 (94)	97 (97)
	National	48 (45)	88 (90)	94 (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units, and percentage of *pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success
School	0 (0)	N/a
National		76 n/a

## Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>2</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting

Year	M	F	Total
1999	25	18	43

Average A/AS points score per	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
School	13.6	13.6	13.6	-- (4.9)	-- (0.7)	-- (3.6)
National	19.1	19.4	19.0	-- (3.2)	-- (3.4)	-- (2.8)

Number in the final year of approved qualifications, and percentage of *such students* who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success
School	21 (31)	98 (68)
National		-- (72)

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.5
	National comparative	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	.2
	National comparative	1.1

## Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	36
Permanent	2

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	15
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

### 3. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

#### 3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

##### 3. Attainment and progress

4. The overall standards being attained by pupils are in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 5 and above national averages at the end of Key Stage 4. Although standards are what would be expected at Key Stage 3, they are lower than those being attained at Key Stage 4 where the pupils perform particularly well.
5. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 in English was below the national average; in mathematics it was in line with the national average and in science it was above. English results are traditionally stronger than mathematics and science results at Key Stage 3, however, and the 1999 results run against performance in previous years. In 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C and A\*-G grades at GCSE was above the national average. The percentage gaining one or more A\*-G grades was in line with the national average. In 1999 85 percent of pupils entered for A level gained an A-E grade. The average points score for students taking two or more A levels from 1996-8 was below the national average but standards have been improving. Results in vocational courses in 1998 and 1999 were good. In the intermediate and advanced courses pupils attained above the national averages and a high proportion gain merits.
6. Comparisons with schools which have similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals show the pupils to be performing well. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, pupils performed below average in English, in line in mathematics and well above in science. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C and A\*-G grades at GCSE, and the average GCSE points score, were all well above average for similar schools. This represents a considerable achievement on the part of the school.
7. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have improved significantly. 42 percent of pupils gained five or more grades at A\*-C in 1993, compared with 46 percent in 1998 and 53 percent in 1999. National tables show the school to be in the top 100 improving schools for GCSE since 1996. The school is generally meeting or exceeding its targets. The targets set for Key Stage 3 were met for mathematics and science but fell well short for English. At GCSE all targets set were exceeded. The targets set by the school for the Year 2000 GCSE results – 43 percent gaining 5 or more grades at A\*-C - are low compared with attainment in 1999 but they are currently under review.
8. The average points score for students gaining two or more A levels was below the national average for 1998 (no national comparisons are yet available for 1999) but there is a trend of improvement, and standards from current Year 13 students are sound. The national value-added scheme (ALIS) used by the school indicates that pupils in 1999 and 1998 met their potential. There were few unclassified grades.
9. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds perform well at GCSE. The school's analysis shows 64 percent of ethnic minority pupils gaining five or more grades at A\*-C, compared with 53 percent for the school as a whole. There is no pattern of under-achievement from any ethnic minority group.

10. The last inspection found girls to be performing at a much higher level than boys. Stevenage town had also found this to be a particular issue facing its schools and Barclay School has been working with other local schools to address this disparity. From 1996-8 Key Stage 3 and GCSE data indicated that the school had had some success. Although girls outperformed boys during this time the differences in performance were not significantly different from national differences. In 1999, however, a significant gender gap has re-emerged: 46 percent of boys gained five or more A\*-C grades compared with 63 percent of girls. The data, however, points to girls performing very well and boys still attaining better than boys do nationally. The percentage of boys who gained five or more grades at A\*-C was 4.5 percent higher than the national average for boys and the percentage of boys who gained no GCSE passes was 2.8 percent below the national average.
11. In 1999, Key Stage 3 test results in English were lower than those in mathematics and science but this was a reversal of the 1998 results. Science results at Key Stage 3 were particularly good in 1999 and were well above average for similar schools. At GCSE the pupils again performed better in science when compared with similar schools. Attainment in English and mathematics was close to that of similar schools. In 1999, taking national subject differences into account, the strongest GCSE results were in art, music, design and technology (DT), geography, sociology and physical education (PE). Pupils were least successful in English, French, and business studies. For the past two years the weakest performances at GCSE have been in mathematics, French and business studies.
12. The observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that standards are in line with national averages at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in line in the sixth form. Standards at Key Stage 3 are lower than those being attained at Key Stage 4, compared with national averages for the age group. The standards being attained at Key Stage 4 are average or better in five out of ten lessons and in six out of ten lessons at Key Stage 3.
13. At the pre-inspection parents' meeting and on questionnaires, parents indicated that they were happy with the standards being attained by their children.
14. Attainment in English is close to national averages and expectations at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4, and at A level. The school partly attributes the weak results in the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 assessments to unreliable tests, but there are some weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum planning at Key Stage 3. There is limited attainment at the higher levels at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Only 11 percent of pupils achieved level 6 or above in the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests - well below the average for similar schools. Also in 1999 only 2 percent of pupils gained a grade A\* or A in English. Attainment in speaking and listening is satisfactory. Pupils speak with some confidence and clarity but discussion skills are less well-developed because of the limited opportunities for small group work provided. Reading is sound overall, though boys are much weaker than girls are; this is partly due to boys' attitudes to reading though there is evidence that boys are reading more. At Key Stage 3 standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are below national expectations, but standards improve at Key Stage 4.
15. Attainment in mathematics has been a weakness in recent years but there have been changes to staffing and there were significant improvements this year. In 1998 at Key Stage 3 pupils performed well below national averages and the average for similar schools but in 1999 attainment was in broadly in line for both. In the sixth form the trend in attainment at A level over the last three years has been broadly in line with national averages. Attainment is highest in data handling at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils can organise and chart data, using

sophisticated methods. Graphicacy drafting skills are sound but all pupils have difficulty in interpreting patterns of data presented in chart form. Attainment is weakest in algebra. Pupils' number skills have improved since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3 but they are still below expectations, partly because, throughout the school, opportunities to develop numeracy skills are not fully realised. There is no school policy for the planned development of numeracy across the curriculum.

16. Pupils' attainment in science is average overall. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection because all pupils are now entered for the double award GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4. The pupils' knowledge and their experimental work are sound overall though a minority have difficulty planning and carrying out investigations.
17. The highest standards being attained in the school are in music and PE at each key stage, art and geography at GCSE and A level, and history at A level. The standards being attained in the expressive arts - music, art and drama - are good overall. The only area where attainment is unsatisfactory is in French at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4. In all other subjects standards are in line with national expectations.
18. Progress is satisfactory overall; it is at least satisfactory in slightly more than nine out of ten lessons. It is good in four out of ten lessons. The pupils are making good progress in the sixth form and sound progress at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, however, progress is less secure. Although it is sound in Year 7, it slows down in Year 8 and is unsatisfactory in Year 9. The slower progress at Key Stage 3 is due to lack of matching of work to pupils' levels of attainment in lessons, slower pace, less variety and weaker curriculum planning.
19. Parents think that their children progress well in the school. Data on the attainment of the entry in recent years, compared with attainment at national tests and examinations supports the view that pupils make sound progress. The standards being attained by pupils when they join the school are slightly below average, with few high attainers; at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE in recent years results overall have been broadly in line with national averages, though attainment was considerably higher at GCSE in 1999.
20. The progress being made by pupils with their basic literacy skills is sound overall and the school's literacy project is beginning to make an impact through its strategies for establishing a whole school approach to improving literacy standards. There is still slow progress, however, from some pupils in developing the ability to write clearly and accurately in Standard English when required. Progress is least satisfactory in lessons where pupils with special educational needs (SEN) receive no support. In a significant minority of lessons in Years 8 and 9, lack of differentiation and variety of tasks is leading to slow progress. About 25 pupils with SEN at Key Stage 3 are, however, making good progress with their literacy skills in the additional lessons, provided through the learning support department.
21. The introduction of regular number work in lessons at Key Stage 3 is giving pupils more confidence in mental arithmetic, basic number operation and work with decimals and fractions. Calculators are used sensibly. Pupils are not reliant on the calculator for routine number work. Data handling skills are well developed across the curriculum. In geography, data on weather at Key Stage 3, fieldwork at Key Stage 4 and project work in the sixth form develop skills in tabulation and charting of data collected. Information Technology (IT) allows pupils to access a range of data from the Internet for analysis. In the sixth form, design technology project work provides further practice in number and graphicacy skills. Poor number skills impede progress in science. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on levers, pupils were unable to recall basic



multiplication facts for their calculations. Opportunities for developing skills in measuring, estimating and interpreting information in chart form are limited across the curriculum and are inhibiting progress in number work.

22. The progress made in other subjects is strongest in art and PE at all key stages, business studies, and geography at Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress is weakest in French at Key Stages 3 and 4 where it is unsatisfactory and in English at Key Stage 3. In all other subjects progress is satisfactory.
23. The large number of pupils with SEN make sound progress overall. Those who are withdrawn or who receive targeted support in lessons make good progress. In lessons where there is no support, progress is inconsistent, and often there is insufficient matching of work to the pupils' level of attainment. In English and modern languages in particular, pupils with SEN who are not supported in lessons are not making satisfactory progress. Pupils with visual impairment are making good progress. The pupils who are physically disabled and those who have behavioural difficulties are making satisfactory progress with their learning.
24. Girls are progressing at a faster pace than boys are but the school is addressing this issue. The main reason for the disparity in progress is the higher literacy skills of girls and their greater powers of application in lessons. In the minority of lessons where there is an insufficient range of activities some boys often find it hard to concentrate.
25. The most able pupils are making sound progress overall. In 1998 and 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining the above average level 6 in their end of Key Stage 3 tests was close to the average for similar schools. There is also some good attainment at the highest levels at GCSE and A level (in 1999 one pupil gained ten grade As at GCSE and two gained four grade As at A level). In a small minority of lessons at Key Stage 3, however, the higher attainers are not being sufficiently challenged.
25. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
26. Attitudes to learning are good: pupils generally show interest in their work, they concentrate and apply themselves well. They like to participate in class discussions; they acquire good skills in working on their own and take pride in work well done. Pupils are also encouraged to exchange (and change) views, and are able to challenge one another constructively. They have a well-developed sense of fairness. Those attending the parents' meeting thought unanimously that the school promoted good attitudes.
27. Behaviour is satisfactory in classrooms and in corridors, although it can sometimes fall to unsatisfactory in classes with more difficult pupils. It has improved since the last inspection. The pupils arrive at, and leave, the school in an orderly fashion and show good self-discipline at lunch and break times. Even where there is congestion in some corridors, the pupils behave well. There are isolated instances of misbehaviour in classrooms but learning is not affected as they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Parents are happy with the pupils' behaviour.
28. There have been 38 exclusions in the past year: 35 of these pupils are white; 31 are boys, and 7 are girls. The figure for permanent exclusions is low for this type of school; the number of fixed-term exclusions is slightly above average.

29. There is little disruptive behaviour by pupils with SEN. The only instances of poor behaviour observed were in one English and some modern language lessons. Teachers do report occasional outbursts of aggressive behaviour by some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) which is characteristic of their condition. The behaviour of pupils with SEN is particularly good in music and geography.
30. There are very good relationships both between pupils, and between pupils and teachers and other adults, such as people they meet on work placements. No ethnic or gender tensions were observed during the inspection. Issues of prejudice and cultural difference are dealt with in curriculum assemblies and in year groups. There is mutual respect between pupils and teachers and a genuine concern for other pupils; teachers are very supportive of students, particularly in the sixth form.
31. Other aspects of personal development are very good. Pupils show admirable respect for other people's property and for their feelings, ideas and values; they are polite to visitors. They may also accede to positions of responsibility, e.g. class representative and membership of the School Council, and take initiatives. The School Council is growing in confidence and effectiveness. There are also class representatives, although there is some uncertainty about their role. The Post-16 Committee nominates year representatives who arrange social events including a Christmas lunch, a summer barbecue and a half-term outing to Alton Towers and raise money for projects. Pupils are given further scope for acquiring and nurturing qualities of personal development through a number of well-developed outside activities, including sports matches played away from home, work shadowing and work placements, and trips to European countries and to Kenya and Belize. Opportunities for personal development enhancement are occasionally missed at registration at all levels; for example, little or no use is made of personal and social education materials or most assemblies, where there is little or no interaction.
32. All types of pupils were very confident in talking to visitors about themselves, their learning or behaviour and about the school.

32. **Attendance**

33. The attendance rate is above the national average; it is currently running at 93.4 percent, and has held steady at this rate for the last three years. Unauthorised absence stands at 0.2 percent: this is the approximate figure for unauthorised absence over several years, and is well below the national average. Non-attendance is largely confined to a small number of pupils; there is no particular pattern of absence from year or minority groups.
34. Punctuality is satisfactory overall though there are instances of lateness early in the morning as pupils have difficulty with transport. Punctuality to lessons is good.

34. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

34. **Teaching**

35. In the 1994 OFSTED inspection there were weaknesses in a significant minority of lessons. Although 25 percent of lessons were found to be good or better, 20 percent were found to be

unsatisfactory. The main weaknesses were muddled planning, the teaching of middle and low attaining pupils at Key Stage 4, classroom management in a minority of lessons, lack of variety and the challenge to the higher attainers. There have been significant improvements since that inspection. Teaching is now satisfactory or better in 95 percent of lessons. Parents are happy with the quality of teaching.

36. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory; however, significantly, almost a half of the lessons are good or better. The teaching in the sixth form is the main strength. Sixty percent of lessons are good or better in the sixth form and 31 percent are very good or excellent. Throughout the school, teachers have good expertise and they are very well prepared. They are challenging pupils, particularly in sixth form classes where 25 percent of lessons are very good or excellent.

37. Although teaching is sound overall at Key Stages 3 and 4, it is better at Key Stage 4. There is more high quality teaching taking place at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 and there are more unsatisfactory lessons in Years 8 and 9. The least effective teaching is taking place in Year 9, with only 36% of lessons good or better, but even for this year group teaching is satisfactory overall. In some mathematics, science, English and DT lessons at Key Stage 3 there is insufficient setting of tasks matched to pupils levels of attainment. In science and DT at Key Stage 3 pupils are not doing enough planning and carrying out of investigations and design tasks. This helps to explain why standards at Key Stage 3 are not as strong as at Key Stage 4.

38. With the exception of French at Key Stage 3, each subject in the school is taught to at least a satisfactory level. Teaching is very good in art and music, and good in PE. In English, drama, mathematics, science, DT, geography, history, German, IT, personal and social education (PSE), and French at Key Stage 4, teaching is satisfactory. At times, there is some real flair in teaching; an example of this was an outstanding English lesson where Year 10 pupils performed the banquet scene from Macbeth and came to a sophisticated understanding of the characters through a discussion and review of their own performances.

39. A significant factor contributing to the good quality of much of the teaching is the knowledge and expertise of staff. The teachers are well-qualified and they have good knowledge of course requirements. This is particularly true in A level lessons. Demonstrations in practical lessons, such as art and PE, enhance pupils' progress in these subjects. The expertise of teachers leads to rigorous and skilled questioning and fluent introductions to lessons. A good example of this is the sociology lessons at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where numerous illustrations and skilful linking of theory to real life situations is adding to the enthusiasm of pupils and their engagement with the subject.

40. Whereas planning was muddled in some lessons in the last inspection it is now sound overall. The learning objectives of lessons are generally clear and lessons are well-focused on these. A minority of teachers do not share these objectives with pupils and do not evaluate with classes how well they have been achieved – this is a particular feature of DT lessons.

41. The teachers' management of pupils is good in nearly all subjects. Even in French at Key Stage 3 where a few pupils display little enjoyment of the subject, teachers work hard to maintain a level of discipline. Those pupils who have behavioural difficulties are managed calmly and with authority. The support provided by senior staff, including the head teacher, in dealing with these pupils is providing a valuable platform for staff from which to teach. An example of this was the removal from lessons of one pupil with SEN who was losing control. He was supported by the head teacher in "the bungalow" which is used for pupils at risk from exclusion, and

returned to lessons after counselling. A significant strength of teaching is the way teachers treat pupils with respect and value their contributions to lessons. All teachers use praise well to establish a positive learning environment.

42. The assessment of work is generally thorough and informative. It is particularly rigorous in geography. The needs of pupils of all levels of attainment, including the more able, are being met by teachers. Expectations of pupils of all levels of attainment are sound and they are high of pupils in the sixth form. Practical work in science, art, and DT lessons is well-organised. Resources are always appropriate, though, with the exception of mathematics lessons, limited use is made of audio-visual resources such as overhead projectors. Although computers are still not fully integrated into all subjects' planning, excellent use is made of computers across the curriculum, particularly the Internet. This adds vitality to teaching. Pupils frequently visit the library and IT rooms to research projects and this is contributing not only to their IT skills, but also to their interest in their subjects.
43. The setting of homework is sound overall. Homework generally extends pupils and relates well to tasks set in lessons and the needs of pupils. The procedures and programme for homework are being followed by staff.
44. The main weakness in teaching is the lack of matching of work to attainment levels and failure to use assessments to plan work for individuals and groups. Though apparent to some extent at Key Stage 4, it is at Key Stage 3 where the lack of differentiation is most prevalent. There is an insufficient drive in many lessons to move pupils to higher levels by the targeting of work and resources, for example to bring pupils at level 4 up to level 5.
45. Another weakness in a minority of English, mathematics, science, DT and sociology lessons is lack of pace. On occasions hour long lessons comprise either the teacher conducting whole close exposition, as happened in one Year 10 sociology lesson, or pupils working through written work with virtually no opportunity to present or discuss what they were doing, as happened in one Year 9 English lesson. In contrast to this there was a good balance between teacher exposition, questioning, recording data in an A level PE lesson where the teacher fired questions at the class and elicited the support of one student in recording data while he rode on an exercise bicycle.
46. The teaching of the five teachers of pupils with SEN who give specialist teaching by withdrawal or by support is good overall. Strengths include very good preparation of materials for visually impaired students and good planning of lessons to utilise fully the 60 minutes allocated, especially in literacy support where pupils were withdrawn. Skills in literacy teaching include good use of phonics in word building games, good techniques for paired and group reading, and the use of counselling and guidance as well as praise and encouragement. An example of good counselling was when a Year 11 girl with a statement for SEN discussed her GCSE marks and was given sound advice on strategies for improvement. The teaching of pupils with SEN is always sensitive and involves good pre-planning with class teacher. Learning support assistants' skills are more varied, though some good work was seen in supporting pupils with statements for physical disabilities and behavioural difficulties in science and mathematics lessons. There is little differentiation of work to help those on lower stages of the SEN register, particularly in PE, business studies, RE and English lessons. There is some evidence of targeting work at pupils with SEN in mathematics but little indication of this elsewhere.
47. Although there is a disparity between boys' and girls' attainment, teachers are working hard to raise the standards of boys; they have developed considerable expertise in tackling gender

issues. Tasks are being structured more in lessons, boys and girls are encouraged to sit together and questioning is often targeted at boys.

48. There is no support teaching for pupils who speak English as an additional language, though valuable pastoral support is provided for a small minority of pupils who have the most severe language difficulties. Since the summer term, when the LEA ceased to co-ordinate the teaching of second language learners, there has been little or no targeting of work and resources to meet the needs of these pupils.

48.

48. **The curriculum and assessment**

49. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. Considerable attention has been given to improving the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection. The governing body plays an active part in curriculum development, monitoring and evaluating provision. Since the last inspection the school has changed the length and structure of the school day, with a longer morning and shorter afternoon session. This new structure is generally leading to productive work, with a faster move into the morning's lessons and good application shown by pupils in the last period of the day. It also conforms to guidance on the length of the school day at Key Stages 3 and 4.

50. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow courses that cover the requirements of the National Curriculum together with personal, social and health education. Drama is now taught as a separate subject. Provision for RE is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 where it is taught both discretely and within the PSE programme. Sufficient time is now available for coverage of modern foreign languages. Additional time is provided for English and mathematics. This supports the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There is provision for pupils to develop their skills in IT through subjects across the curriculum at all key stages. This is an area of growth and strength.

51. In addition to the core subjects at Key Stage 4, pupils have a good range of options. Science has just under the recommended time for studying the double award course, which is now taken by all pupils. This is not affecting standards in GSCE science. All pupils take a full course in DT. This is above the minimum statutory requirement. A small number of pupils at risk of exclusion are currently disapplied from modern foreign language. A certificated course to strengthen their skills in literacy, numeracy and IT is provided as part of the school's approach to social inclusion. The PSE programme provides good coverage of sex, health and drugs education, aspects of which are taught in science. RE does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. Insufficient time is made available to cover the 'agreed syllabus' within the PSE programme.

52. Sixth form students have a good range of options available through the consortium arrangement with a neighbouring school. This broad post-16 offer is seen by pupils, parents, staff and governors as a valuable feature. The school provides 20 GCE Advanced level subjects, 8 GNVQ courses to intermediate and advanced levels, together with additional studies, which include GCSE courses. Students do not take RE in the sixth form. This is in breach of statutory requirements.

53. Equality of access and opportunity are satisfactory overall and improvements have been made since the last inspection. The school has reduced class sizes in Years 8 and 9 and increased provision for setting. Pupils are now appropriately grouped by attainment in English, mathematics, science, humanities, DT and modern foreign language across both key stages. The

key stage 4 director monitors options choices to ensure that all groups are viable. The school is beginning to address the underachievement of boys through its literacy strategy.

54. At Key Stage 3, planning is effective in developing curriculum links with primary schools. Many subject departments are building on primary practice when pupils enter in Year 7. In other respects planning overall at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Many departmental schemes of work do not provide a sound framework to guide teachers' planning and link coursework with National Curriculum levels for assessment. They have yet to become sufficiently embedded in day to day departmental practice to have a consistently positive impact on attainment and progress. This was an issue in the last inspection. Planning is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Here it is closely linked with the requirements of examination syllabuses. Links with employers, colleges and higher education are good. They support the developing provision of vocational education.
55. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Provision in the arts is a strength. School drama productions, musical events, theatre visits and clubs make a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development. Sporting activities are thriving. The PE department organises a large number of teams for boys and girls, playing regular competitive matches. Pupils can develop their skills further through clubs offering gymnastics, dance, skiing and golf. Field studies and day trips are organised by the geography, biology and history departments. Residential visits abroad are offered in modern foreign languages and history. Pupils may now access the Internet in the school library. These activities provide further opportunities for pupils to raise their standards of work. Sixth form students benefit from school initiatives, which encourage them to take responsibility. For example, they support younger pupils in improving reading skills as part of the school's literacy scheme. Provision for enrichment activities is made by suspending the normal school timetable for three days towards the end of the summer term. Planned activities allow pupils to develop team-working and study skills. This summer, for example, Year 7 pupils explored the theme 'Discovery' organised jointly by the humanities, technology and science departments
56. Preparation for the next stage of education is good. The careers programme is well planned, and this work is an important feature of the PSE programme. Careers materials are now centralised in the school library, allowing ready access to information. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Work-related experiences, for example work shadowing in Year 9 and work placements in Year 10 and the sixth form, are an important part of the provision. They contribute to promoting positive attitudes to sixth form studies, further and higher education and employment.
57. Provision for SEN is satisfactory. Pupils with SEN follow the full curriculum except where they are withdrawn for support work. There are no disapplications or modifications from the National Curriculum except those resulting from temporary exclusion. Subject departments are not making any particular arrangements to differentiate work for Stage 1 pupils on the register. This is a weakness that remains from the last inspection. The only exception is in mathematics where there is some differentiation.
58. Pupils on the higher stages of the SEN register (3 to 5) are considered more thoughtfully. Pupils with statements are particularly well supported in the school. The support assistants know details of the statements and the individual education plans (IEPs) well and follow the plans sensitively. IEPs are in place and in most cases have appropriate targets, particularly in literacy areas. Most IEPs have had their targets revised regularly, for example a pupil with a statement has had literacy targets revised with her involvement and co-operation five times in the last ten months. This is good practice. Good use is made of prior assessment in revising plans and

targets for pupils on upper stages of the register. The school nurse helps appropriately with IEPs for physically impaired pupils. Clinical and psychiatric advice are obtained when necessary.

59. Good systems are in place for monitoring the progress of individual pupils and establishing an overview of standards and progress. There is a brief but clear policy on assessment and marking in the staff handbook, and this is supplemented with additional information given to heads of department that advises them of their role in the assessment process. The deputy head teacher also conducts a quality check of all internal examination papers.
60. In the first term of Year 7 cognitive attainment tests (CATS) are sensibly used to provide a baseline measure. Information from these tests is used to decide the ability groups in which pupils should be placed and it is also used to predict GCSE results. This also gives the school a profile of its intake and a sample of pupils in Year 8 is used for tracking. The Key Stage 3 National Curriculum results are compared with the CATS scores from Year 7 to gain a useful overview of progress. In Year 10, pupils take a national prediction test which provides further baseline data on ability in mathematics and comprehension. The information from the test is used to inform the appropriate setting of pupils. Similarly, another national scheme is sensibly used at Key Stage 5 to evaluate GCSE grades and predict how students should perform at A level.
61. The responsibility for controlling the consistency and quality of day-to-day marking is given to departments. The last OFSTED report noted that there is no “general uniformity” regarding how departments mark written work; this judgement is still true. The science department and expressive arts faculty are working on the standardisation of marking codes for effort and attainment but practice in other departments varies. In the clear majority of departments, assessment data is used effectively to inform decisions about grouping pupils and identifying pupils with SEN. The lack of consistency lies in the extent to which departments, and individual teachers, use this data to inform planning. The quality and consistency of marking across most subjects improves in Key Stage 4, and there are good examples at Key Stage 5. There are other examples of good practice, such as a portfolio of work to standardise levels in the English department and the cross moderation that takes place in geography.
62. In Year 9 and Year 11 interviews are held with students during which they are informed about their level of performance; targets are also discussed. A mentoring system is being developed involving tutors and heads of year that will target pupils who are underachieving or who have problems with attendance.
63. The school accumulates a wealth of data and uses this to gain an overview of the school’s performance and the performance of individual departments, and to inform decisions on matters such as staffing. This data is distributed to departments for the purpose of identifying the needs of individual pupils, informing decisions about grouping by ability and reviewing the performance of the department and individual teachers. Teachers have comprehensive records of the ability and needs of students but the extent to which they use this to inform their planning varies. Insufficient use is made of National Curriculum levels at departmental level at Key Stage 3 to track the progress of individual pupils.
64. The assessment of pupils with SEN is satisfactory. The reading ages and spelling ages of all pupils are checked on entry to the school. The IEP targets are reassessed regularly and there is a satisfactory process of annual statement reviews.

64.

64. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

65. The school's contribution to the moral and social development of pupils is good but there is less emphasis on their spiritual education. RE makes the most significant contribution where pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their own and other's experiences. For example, in Year 9 a module on the 'Holocaust' gives pupils the opportunity to empathise with the victims of fascism. In PSE the spiritual perspective is raised in such topics as abortion, health of people in third world countries, sexuality and death. In PE there is an emphasis on self-awareness; in geography pupils exhibit a sense of awe when working on the earth's natural features and in history at Key Stage 3 spiritual awareness is evoked in consideration of World War One. Opportunities are missed in other areas of the curriculum.
66. Limited provision is made in assemblies for pupils to reflect on their own experiences and develop a stance for living of their own. Pupils are withdrawn from assemblies for counselling and for extra teaching where weaknesses in educational performance may have been identified. The majority of assemblies are strong on moral rather than spiritual content, but one excellent assembly of the uses on 'Talents' at KS3 fully fulfilled requirements of the act of collective worship. This was, however, an exception and overall the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship. Neither year assemblies nor tutorial periods contribute to this aspect of school life and overall insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on the development of their own spiritual values.
67. The school rightly prides itself on moral and social values. These are taught through an emphasis on fair play and a commitment to the community. There is a Code of Conduct by which pupils are encouraged to respect each other. The success of this is clearly seen in class and in the general atmosphere within the school where pupil: pupil and teacher: pupil relationships are very good. Clear guidelines on conduct are given to counteract racism, bullying etc. The school's merit scheme is well organized and includes public recognition, both in an annual assembly and a separate prize giving. Parents are informed of their children's merit awards. The standards of personal development mentioned in the last report have been maintained, as has the sensitive and caring pastoral support, which characterizes every year group.
68. There is a strong ethos of caring within the school, reinforced by a broad programme of extra-curricular activities. Both year and school councils give pupils the opportunity to take on responsibilities. There are links with the local community via work experience in Year 10, and outside speakers are invited in on numerous occasions through the year. The music department runs workshops for local primary school children. Ambitious visits have been made to Kenya and Belize by small groups of pupils. The school has made a bid to become part of the 'Building Bridges Initiative', which sponsors state/public school links centred on art and music. The Young Enterprise scheme continues to be organized successfully.
69. Provision for multi-cultural education is satisfactory. The school celebrates diversity of cultures, for example in holding Asian evenings. Visits are made to other parts of the United Kingdom. There have been artists and writers in residence. The modern languages department takes pupils to other European countries. The music department makes a strong contribution to multi-cultural education. Activities include an introduction to Indian and other music from around the world. A small group of pupils perform regularly on Indian drums. There is a wide range of pictures of instruments from around the world on display.



69. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

70. The school's provision for the pupils' support, guidance and welfare to be good. This remains the case, and the procedures for promoting behaviour are now very good.
71. Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are good. The school provides an effective interlocking support system for pupils involving tutors, heads of department, heads of year and key stage directors who often intervene formally and informally. A strength of the school is the focus of support and monitoring on both academic and pastoral issues. There are carefully planned induction arrangements for pre-Key Stage 3, and a detailed and valuable 'Post-16 Handbook' which includes guidance on arrangements for academic and pastoral support, including attendance.
72. Two very helpful interviews are provided for Year 11 pupils: one early in the autumn term to discuss GCSE predictions and one in January to discuss post-16 choices. All Year 12 students are interviewed on arrival and set targets; this enables the school to make good academic predictions; subsequent tracking of their academic and personal welfare will be further improved by a proposal to use these for further pastoral guidance. There are plans to introduce target-setting in Year 10, and to use CATS scores for target setting in Year 8. Tutors keep class portfolios detailing pupils' personal achievements: this information is fed into Year 11 Records of Achievement, which are very effective at helping the school to monitor progress.
73. The weekly post-16 tutors' bulletin sets out programmed regular meetings, and the forthcoming week's activities related to academic and pastoral support. Pigeonholes and a whiteboard are effectively used to optimise communications. The part-time post-16 secretary, too, provides effective pastoral support, and is effective at improving attendance rates through periodic monitoring. The sixth form is moving successfully away from the PSE model to a system of individual tutorial and guidance sessions. Informal links and support are also provided by non-teaching staff: students are well known to all staff, and they are well looked after. There are good relations in class and outside. A linked pastoral support and guidance scheme takes care of sixth form students attending lessons at the neighbouring Thomas Alleyne's School.
74. Pupil planners at Key Stage 3 and 4 are giving the school, parents and pupils opportunities to communicate on academic and non-academic matters including homework. Matters that are not satisfactorily resolved are taken up directly with parents. Additional assistance and support are provided by the education welfare officer and educational psychologist, both of whom visit the school regularly.
75. PSE subject folders deal well with such matters as marriage, sexuality, pregnancy, health issues including heart disease and eating disorders, drugs and substance abuse, cancer, violence on television, study skills, alcohol abuse, and smoking. PSE lessons aim to give pupils a 'sense of self', and this is largely being achieved. One Year 10 project on 'what kind of job?' involves pupils using the library, computers and overseeing bodies. The folders contain useful worksheets.
76. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis by tutors, and more formally by random weekly checks, formalised half-termly

analyses of both attendance and punctuality, and termly individual audits. Punctuality could be monitored more effectively and the point beyond which pupils are late (i.e. 8.35 a.m.), for example, is not marked by the ringing of a bell. Registers are completed neatly and accurately. The sixth form has its own elaborate but effective system that combines the monitoring of attendance/punctuality with general pastoral work. As a 'concession', sixth form students may register only three times a week (the three 'morning contracts'), and they have no afternoon registration. However, absence from three consecutive lessons or registrations is effectively picked up. It automatically triggers a report to the head of post-16, who will discuss the matter with the student concerned; a single absence is also picked up at half-termly trawls.

77. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good discipline are very good. Good behaviour is promoted by clear, understandable and well-publicised policies and rules, and by a well-liked and well-understood scheme of rewards and sanctions. The school's behaviour and discipline policy is clear, detailed and easy to understand. It covers behaviour generally, and additionally focuses on discrete matters such as homework, dress and make-up, racism, physical violence, including bullying, and the misuse of substances. It sets out the rewards and sanctions scheme in detail. Pupils are taught that behaviour is punished, not the person. Rewards mainly take the form of 'merits' inserted in the planner: the emphasis is on effort or achievement by the pupil concerned. Additional certificates are awarded when pupils gain ten merits. This enables parents to see immediately how their child is doing. Commendations are awarded for exceptionally good work or behaviour. Laminated certificates are also given for improved, good and 100 percent attendance.
78. The misdemeanour grid, which indicates procedures and sanctions for misbehaviour, works well and is consistently applied by staff. In the case of serious misdemeanours, the parents are contacted speedily through heads of year and heads of department, and allowances may exceptionally be made. Those pupils who misbehave have useful individual monitoring books, which are marked each lesson, and signed by the teacher, possibly with a comment. The scheme is voluntarily supported by parents, who sometimes add their own comments. The duration of this measure depends on the seriousness of the misdemeanour, and is periodically reviewed. Effective measures to combat bullying are set out in the school's behaviour and discipline policy. At the meeting preceding the inspection, parents said that the school has a reputation for good behaviour.
79. Good procedures are in place for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being and safety. The handbooks for Key Stage 3, 4 and the sixth form provide detailed guidance for staff on support for pupils. There is a detailed and clear health and safety policy in the staff handbook and a general safety audit is undertaken termly. An appropriate child protection policy is also in the handbook, and a member of staff has designated responsibility for this area.
80. The work with withdrawn or excluded pupils with behavioural difficulties in a building in the school grounds, the "bungalow", is effective. It focuses on the link with school curriculum and the need to behave calmly in school. The teacher involved combines well the need to keep pupils moving forward, with talking about their behavioural needs. The IEPs for these "out of class" pupils sensibly focus on the simple targets of avoiding violent confrontations and loss of self-control. An autistic pupil was observed successfully working on a language and DT project with teacher and learning support assistant (LSA) in withdrawal and also working very successfully in a top maths set and achieving well without loss of temper.
81. Some of the visually impaired and physically disabled pupils improve their self esteem by meeting demanding targets set in their IEPs and by achieving creditable examination success e.g. two visually impaired (one now blind) pupils are starting A level courses after a successful

secondary education in a mainstream school context. All pupils who are physically disabled are well-integrated into the school and they speak highly of the sensitivity with which they are treated.

82. Another example of the school's concern for pupils' welfare is the excellent pastoral support provided for the bilingual pupils who have the most difficulties with English. A part-time tutor meets these pupils regularly and one of the sessions observed was very productive in building self-esteem.

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

83. The school provides parents with very good information on their children's progress and well-being through two parents' meetings a year, one with all tutors and one with form tutors, individual year meetings, such as the new intake evening and GCSE information evening. Such meetings are well attended. Written documentation includes Pupil Planners, school newsletters and year-specific news-sheets. This information is unfailingly clear and relevant, and it is provided frequently and regularly. Urgent information is posted direct to parents despite the perception amongst some that some news is not always passed on quickly enough. Information on pupils with SEN is fully satisfactory. The services of the designated English as an additional language teacher and the Hertfordshire County Council translation service are used when letters to parents need to be written in languages other than English.
84. Parents' involvement in their children's learning is good. The most notable manifestations of this link, apart from parents' admirable attendance at, and participation in, meetings with teachers, are the School-Home-Student Agreement and pupils' planners. Reports are informative and consistent. The Barclay School Association (BSA) is very active. Many of its activities, for example flea markets, quiz evenings and the bar, are well supported, and impressive sums of money are raised (approximately £5000 a year); some other events, such as the Annual General Meeting, are not well attended. In the event of a parent wishing to make a complaint, the school uses a useful model drawn up by Hertfordshire County Council.
85. Participants at the parents' meeting said they were happy with meetings, they were well informed, and that the school was approachable.
86. The school's numerous and well planned off-site activities include: links with feeder primary schools and with a school in Cambridge on art and music, work shadowing, work placements with assistance from the Hertfordshire County Council Careers Service, World Challenge visits to Kenya and Belize and other trips to France and Germany, and team sports. All activities taking place outside the school premises are subject to rigorous planning.
87. The life of the school is equally well enriched by on-site activities, including visiting theatre groups, sponsorship for display of pupils' art examination work, the 'Crucial Crew' Scheme, working with the Hertfordshire police, St John's Ambulance, the Fire Service and a locally based company, work with the Hertfordshire County Council Road Safety Unit, use of the school's IT equipment and facilities by Hertfordshire College, and lettings to scouts, guides, brownies and the community trust. The hall is also used one day a week by a local car club and for old-time dancing.
88. There are good, co-operative links with the adjacent Thomas Alleyne's School and there is close liaison between respective heads of sixth form. There is a joint prospectus, reports are issued

jointly and combined parents and carers' meetings are held.

88.

## 88. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### 88. **Leadership and management**

89. The school is very well led. The Governing Body is well informed and has a clear view of the challenges facing the school. The head teacher has created an excellent ethos. His own concern for individuals and vision for the school are fundamental to the school's success. At the parents' meeting, parents described him as strong, approachable and respected. The three key stage directors are also leading pastoral and curriculum development in their areas very effectively.

90. The staff and governors are working hard and are committed to improvement; the deputy head teacher, three key stage directors and senior teachers work are making a significant contribution to shaping school policy and systems. Governors, head teacher and senior staff work together well as a team and have the confidence of teachers. There is a clear focus on teaching and learning, improving the curriculum and raising standards in the work of senior staff and governors; the school is consequently moving forwards well in each of these areas. Two good examples of this are the school's focus on reducing the gap in performance between boys and girls and initiatives to improve literacy, numeracy and IT.

91. One reason that there is good morale amongst staff is the strong communication system. The head is easily accessible to staff and there is full consultation on key issues, such as the recent appointment of key stage directors. There are frequent and regular meetings of all senior staff, as well as whole staff meetings once a half term. A very helpful weekly bulletin is also published for staff. School policies are succinct and are published in the school handbook so that they can be easily accessed by all members of staff.

92. The support provided for teaching and curriculum development is good overall. The appointment of a senior teacher with responsibility for staff development and classroom observation has contributed to the significant improvements made since the previous inspection. Good guidance has been provided for staff on the characteristics of a good lesson and the classroom observation system conducted by senior staff and heads of department has led to a reasonably accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of teaching. There has been good curriculum leadership at Key Stages 4 and in the sixth form and departmental plans indicate a continuous process of reviewing and improving the curriculum. However, there are still some weaknesses in schemes of work at Key Stage 3.

93. The school is successfully implementing its aims, values and policies. One indication of this is the school's growing popularity. The school has been oversubscribed since 1990, and the Year 11 stay on rate is significantly higher than the average for Stevenage and Hertfordshire schools. The main aims for the school, to create a well-ordered, hardworking community where individuals are valued, are being achieved. Staff and pupils work very hard and there is excellent ethos in the school, which is characterised by mutual respect and a commitment to improvement by governors, teachers and pupils.

94. Development planning is a weakness. The school development plan, though very thorough and based on full consultation of staff and governors, contains about 200 actions and does not summarise key priorities. Departmental action plans vary in quality and are not systematically addressing areas of weakness identified through analysis of assessment data.

95. Monitoring and evaluation are sound. Good systems are being put in place for monitoring the progress of pupils and subject departments using assessment data. There is a useful system for comparing the performance of departments at GCSE; teaching is well monitored and evaluated; and policies are reviewed annually. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the school development and OFSTED action plans are not sufficiently formalised. Although an effective line management structure has been established, there are not formal meetings with heads of department where progress in implementing action plans is reviewed and targets are set.
96. The school's provision for pupils with SEN is better organised than at the time of the last inspection. The school now has an SEN policy which fully addresses the national guidance in the Code of Practice. General administration and management of SEN are done well. The SEN register is regularly updated. There are good contacts with the LEA and all agencies involved in SEN including educational psychologist and clinical contacts. Annual reviews are organised well with appropriate professionals and family members invited. The governors exercise appropriate oversight of SEN, with the designated governor meeting the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) regularly.
97. The school aims to secure equality of opportunity and guarantee each pupil's entitlement to learning. This is strongly promoted by the senior management and staff present relevant role models. The equal opportunities policy is brief, but is strongly backed up by policy statements on behaviour, discipline and anti-racism. The aims of these policies are largely achieved. There is little reference to multicultural education in policies, though the multi-cultural perspective provided through the curriculum and resources is sound. Following the cessation at the end of the summer term of LEA teaching of bilingual pupils with English language difficulties, there has been inadequate support to meet their needs.
98. Parents and pupils think the school is improving and overall there has been good progress since the last inspection. Progress in addressing the key issues raised has been sound. There has been very good progress in developing the PSE programme, monitoring attendance, tackling health and safety issues, reviewing the curriculum and developing the roles of staff. There has been progress in matching work to different attainment levels in classes but there are still some weaknesses. The statutory requirements for collective worship, and RE at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are still not being met. There has been good progress in the standards being attained by pupils and in the quality of teaching. Effective systems and structures, particularly the establishment of key stage directors and rigorous data analysis, have been put in place, which will help sustain these improvements.

98. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

99. Overall, there are sufficient qualified teaching staff to meet the curricular needs of the school. The range of qualifications of staff with degrees in relevant subjects and the proportion of teachers who have acquired further qualifications is satisfactory. There is a good balance between the numbers of male and female teachers on the staff, especially in senior posts, giving positive role models to both girls and boys.

100. The full-time equivalent of 2.2 teachers is provided for pupils with SEN, two of whom are part-time staff funded externally and focus on pupils with statements. This means that only 1.2 full time equivalent teachers are available to teach large numbers of pupils with SEN. They are coping with this work and making an impact but provision is only just adequate. There is no teaching staff provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

101. The last inspection drew attention to the imbalance in the allocation of incentive allowances across the school. Since then there has been considerable re-organisation of the school and now there is a better match between the allocation of allowances and the school's arrangements for managing the curriculum. In PE there is a good match between teachers' subject knowledge and expertise and the requirements of the curriculum. The stability of staffing in this subject enhances pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress.

102. There has been a 25 per cent turnover in teaching staff during the last two years. Although this is not excessive for schools in the Home Counties, it has affected continuity of learning and progress for some pupils, especially in subjects where there are national shortages, such as mathematics, modern foreign languages, and science. Not all staff changes have a negative effect on learning and the natural changes in staffing that occur as teachers gain promotion or move to another part of the country have brought fresh viewpoints and experiences to the school which have benefited the pupils' education.

103. Overall, the school has a satisfactory number of educational support staff. The provision of suitably qualified SEN support staff satisfactorily enhances the school's provision for these pupils. Since the last inspection there has been an increase in the number of technicians supporting DT and art. However, the decrease in the number of science technicians has affected learning because it is more difficult for staff to support practical work across the full range of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in three science subjects at Advanced Level.

104. Arrangements for the induction of staff and for their professional development are very good and meet statutory requirements but the routine and regular appraisal of teachers is unsatisfactory. Teachers new to the school, including those who have just qualified, are given very good support when they join the staff. The pairing of new teachers with an experienced 'buddy' helps to ensure that they learn about the functioning of the school as a whole, rather than being isolated in their departments. Teachers' professional development needs are catered for very well, and this is a strength of the school. The staff development and teaching quality manager works closely with staff representatives on the school's Continuing Professional Development Committee, which very effectively manages the allocation of funding for in-service training. The committee plans the allocation of resources to meet the training needs of the school as a whole, and those of subject departments and individuals. There is a comprehensive programme of staff development activities, and this has had a significant impact on the school's work, for example, by developing teachers' skills in managing pupils' behaviour. Targeted training has resulted in improvements in the teachers' skills in RE and teaching pupils with SEN, which were weaknesses identified in the last

inspection report.

105. The school's arrangements for the appraisal of teachers are unsatisfactory and do not meet statutory requirements. Only one appraisal cycle has been completed and many teachers have not been appraised recently. Currently teachers can request an appraisal but few do so. The school is well placed to introduce the government's new arrangements for performance management because it has effective procedures for identifying training needs and for monitoring the quality of teaching.
106. Accommodation, overall, is adequate with several strengths. The main building is now 50 years old and listed, with several interesting features. However, there are insufficient music rooms, the indoor accommodation for PE is poor and the quality and level of equipment of the ageing science laboratories are unsatisfactory. These concerns were identified in the last inspection. The premises committee of the governing body is fully aware that there is a need to develop these areas of the accommodation and has initiated a draft scheme with which it hopes to raise funding to improve the accommodation for PE. The refurbishment of the science laboratories has been identified as a priority in the school development plan.
107. The school occupies a large site on one campus and has good playing fields and outdoor pitches, together with a heated, deep water outdoor swimming pool. However, the indoor accommodation for PE is unsatisfactory and limited to a gymnasium and shower rooms, together with classrooms for teaching the PE examination courses.
108. Opened last Easter, there is a new purpose-built block for DT, with a suite of five excellent workshops, a graphics room and a room for IT which supplements other IT rooms elsewhere in the school.
109. The accommodation is well managed, and the premises committee has taken an imaginative approach to redeploying the rooms formerly used for DT. A modern foreign languages suite with six classrooms has been converted from the original workshops, and the new PSE centre, with its two large rooms, was formerly the graphics accommodation. The school has an on-site caretaker's bungalow, which acts as an isolation suite when there are pupils at risk of being excluded.
110. There is satisfactory provision for pupils with physical disabilities with wheel chair access throughout the building, using ramps and a lift. There is an office for the school nurse, two well-equipped medical rooms and an adjoining toilet room for handicapped pupils located centrally in the main building.
111. There is an accommodation block for post-16 students, with offices, three teaching rooms, a foyer and two large common rooms, which can be opened into one. This useful space can be used for staff development days and for evening functions for parents.
112. Nearly all departments are grouped in suited rooms facilitating communication between departmental staff and the shared use of resources. There is an attractive, well-equipped library with a "cyber café" of computers linked to the Internet. Although the heating boilers in the main school have been recently replaced, the spacious SEN base is cold in winter and in a poor state of decoration.
113. The last inspection identified a shortage of car parking space and poor external illumination at night. Since then, these issues have been addressed and there is now

adequate parking space and the external lighting has been much improved. The last inspection also identified a shortfall in the music accommodation. Afterwards, two small rooms within the music block were developed to supplement the main teaching room. Although better than before, the accommodation for music still remains unsuitable, lacking two full size rooms and adequate sound absorption. This affects the quality of music education provided.

114. The quality and amount of learning resources are good, though more full sets of books are needed. More is spent on resources than in most other similar schools and expenditure per pupil is higher. Since the last inspection improvements have been made in resources for a range of subjects including RE, history and GNVQ courses. Provision is good in PE, music and in DT where there is a range of up-to-date equipment.

115. Overall capitation available to departments, however, is modest and this results in a number of school subjects having half sets of books that have to be shared between pupils in class. In science, there is a good range of new books but limited provision of equipment and this limits the progress pupils make in investigation skills.

116. Teachers are able to produce high quality worksheets and other resources as a result of good access to new fast copiers and printers, computers and the Internet. The school's media resources centre provides them with a range of up to date recordings and other materials and is efficiently managed.

117. The provision of computers is good. The school's ratio of computers to the number of pupils is well above national guidelines. Pupils have access to the Internet through networks, and this has a positive impact on motivation and the range of resources and data available to them. There is good availability of computers and the Internet in the school library. Resources for IT are a strength of the school and reflect its priorities.

118. The library is an attractive, well-organised and spacious resource. Pupils use a range of books, tapes and CD-ROMS throughout and after the school day. Both staff and pupils have opportunities to choose books and care is taken to provide for SEN and to motivate pupils to use the library. The overall ratio of books per pupil is a little better than the national average. The range of books in art and English is particularly good, although a number are still outdated. The library's computerised records indicate a high level of investment in the library. The level of borrowing of books is good and more boys use this facility than girls do. There are regular visits to museums, theatres and a programme of visits to France and Germany. Good use is made of resources beyond the school. A range of links with local businesses and companies allows their resources to be used to enrich vocational and other courses.

119. SEN resources are adequate for the department's needs. A scanner is needed to augment the Braille creation facilities but other than that equipment is satisfactory. Computers are available for staff and small group student use. Small portable word processors are used effectively by four pupils to assist writing, for example a Year 11 pupil with SEN was observed using a lap top productively in a laboratory to record data. The pupils have full access to the machines and take them home as required.

119. **The efficiency of the school**

120. Financial planning is good. Educational priorities inform budget planning, for example investments in the key whole school initiatives in literacy and numeracy



and the setting aside of funds for IT development for departmental bids. Priorities in the school development plan are costed where it is feasible and departments are also costing their main priorities. Departmental action plans indicate resources needed and the reasons why.

121. Governors and the head teacher have considerable expertise in financial planning and have a good strategic perspective. A small surplus of £11581 is forecast for April 2000 in line with the governors' policy of spending nearly all of the budget allocated by the LEA on the current year groups. Finance committee minutes show that options are considered when decisions are made. A good example of this is the range of options for computer leasing that was considered. Although the impact of spending decisions is considered informally, as in the previous inspection, there are insufficient formal evaluations.
122. There is good deployment of teaching and support staff. Clear job descriptions are in place and the amount of time staff are expected to spend on tasks out of school hours has been helpfully broken down. The recent appointment of three key stage directors with pastoral and curriculum responsibility is working well and leading to important developments in the curriculum and pupil monitoring as well as greater cohesion. The appointment of a senior teacher with responsibility for staff development and classroom observation, and a premises manager with senior responsibilities have proved to be cost-effective. The head and deputy head teacher have a heavy teaching load but this is currently under review. Despite the consortium arrangements, some of the sixth form groups are still small, for example there are only three pupils in the upper sixth chemistry group. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form curriculum has, however, been evaluated by the Key Stage 5 director and the school is already planning to meet the new national requirements of the new sixth form curriculum which will lead to larger groups.
123. The SEN department deploys its staff and resources well to meet the needs of pupils with statements and others on the higher stages of the register of SEN. There is scope to improve provision for the pupils at Stage 1 of the register, particularly in the planning of lessons. Although support assistants are skilful and generally effective, not all teachers plan lessons in advance with them to ensure they are best deployed.
124. The deployment of learning resources and accommodation is good. Allocations to learning resources are high compared with national medians and they are used effectively. The library is open during the day, at break times and after school. It is well organised and well-used. Of particular benefit is the regular use made of computers in the library and IT rooms. This adds vitality to learning and develops valuable skills, especially in the use of the Internet.
125. Financial control and day to day administration are very good. Spending is carefully monitored by the Finance Committee and regular updates are provided for heads of department. Clear guidance is given to heads of department about how to manage their budgets, including paying in income, ordering goods and charging on school trips. The school office is well organised and staff have clear and appropriate areas of responsibility. Good use is made of IT for administration tasks such as monitoring attendance. A recent scrutiny by external auditors found good financial management and the few issues that were raised have been addressed.
126. The cost per pupil at Barclay school is relatively high. However, the pupils join the school with below average attainment; teaching is sound and often good and pupils perform very well at Key Stage 4 compared with schools of similar type. In the light of

this and the strong personal development of pupils, the school is judged to be providing good value for money.

127. The school was also judged to be providing good value for money in the previous inspection with strengths in financial control and administration. The weaknesses in financial planning have now been addressed.



127. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

127. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

127. **English**

128. Pupil attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is in line with national averages. In the sixth form standards are also in line with what would be expected of A level groups. Attainment is what would be expected, but there are some weaknesses in teaching, curriculum planning and marking which are inhibiting progress.

129. Attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests was below the national average in 1996, above in 1997 and in line in 1998. There was a dip in the 1999 percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above to 12 percent below the national average. Only 11 percent of pupils achieved level 6 or above in English compared with 35 percent in 1998. The proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in English (46.7 percent) in 1999 was lower than the national average (53 percent), but in 1998 the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C was 66 percent which was a rise from 50.3 percent in the previous year. The 1999 results fell short of the school's target of 57 percent A\*-C grades. The 1999 GCSE English literature results were close to the national average, with 62% of pupils gaining a grade at A\*-C.

130. The last OFSTED report stated that "skills in speaking and listening are generally sound". This judgement is still true. Pupils are generally confident when speaking in lessons. They listen well and show enthusiasm when answering questions. When reading aloud, pupils who volunteer to read usually do so with fluency; in the higher attaining groups a number read with good expression and varied intonation. There are, however, few opportunities for discussion, and most of the oral work observed came from question and answer sessions with the teacher. The best speaking and listening was attained by a Year 7 class reading "The Diddakoi", a Year 10 group discussing the direction of a scene from "Macbeth" and a Year 13 A Level group who gave presentations on stories from "The Dubliners".

131. Overall, attainment in reading is satisfactory though girls are attaining at higher levels than boys. Much work has been done on the issue of boys' reading, however; this is beginning to make an impact. The proportion of boys borrowing books is now greater than that of girls by approximately one quarter. The department has taken steps to discover what interests boys providing book boxes that include a range of fiction and non-fiction. In a Year 7 reading lesson the class were allowed to discuss the texts they had chosen with each other before being asked to read in silence; this enhanced their interest and comprehension. Pupils show a satisfactory level of comprehension and are able to describe the main features of a plot and its characters and express preferences. Pupils in Year 7 show confidence in reading and are able to make use of the literacy skills they have covered in Year 6. Examples of pupils reading with confidence were noted in Year 7 lessons on "The Diddakoi" and "The Lady of Shalott". Year 10 pupils reading a scene from "Macbeth" were also able to read with confidence and in a Year 13 lesson some students were able to talk knowledgeably about a range of texts related to their course.

132. The quality of writing is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 but the best examples are at Key Stage 5. This is evident in the examination results at the end of each key stage. At Key Stage 3 standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are below national expectations, but standards improve in Key Stage 4. Students on A level courses can write clearly and sustain arguments with

reference to texts studied.

133. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but progress is slow in a significant minority of lessons. Unsatisfactory progress was observed in lessons where there were several pupils with SEN with no classroom support available. The rate of progress is not as good in Years 8 and 9 where there is insufficient pace, variety and challenge in some lessons. This helps to explain why the percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels in the 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests was lower than in the other core subjects. At the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades is closer to the national averages. Pupils are making good progress in a minority of lessons, particularly where teachers set high expectations. Some of the best progress was seen in a Year 7 class that tackled pre-twentieth century poetry and a Year 10 class discussing the stage directions for “Macbeth”. At Key Stage 5 progress is good. Students make good progress in developing their oral skills by the time they reach Year 13: they are able to speak more confidently and use a wider range of vocabulary. A good example of the progress made by students was a Year 13 lesson in which the students gained knowledge of political and social issues in the text “The Dubliners”.
134. In the clear majority of lessons the pupils respond well. They show interest in their work, participating actively in question and answer sessions in class. Concentration by the majority of pupils was best-maintained in classes where activities in all the attainment targets – reading, writing, speaking and listening were undertaken. It was not as good in classes where pupils with SEN did not have support and found it difficult to remain on task and work independently. Behaviour is generally good: very few pupils misbehave, and inappropriate behaviour is usually discouraged quickly by teachers. In all cases, pupils who arrived late to lessons were dealt with promptly and effectively. Relationships are generally good and the majority of pupils are courteous towards the teachers and each other. Examples of collaborative work in all key stages showed students to be mutually supportive. Group work in Year 13 resulted in students clarifying their own thoughts and influencing the thought process of others in the group positively.
135. Teaching is satisfactory or better in nine out of ten lessons and good in four out of ten. Teaching is strongest in the sixth form where eight out of ten lessons are good. The knowledge of English teachers is good and well imparted. In the majority of lessons the teachers have high expectations of the pupils. The management of pupils and standards of discipline are generally good. Most teachers are alert to signs of inattentiveness and keeping pupils engaged and motivated, insisting on pupils listening to each other as well as the teacher. There are good examples of clearly structured worksheets that built on previous learning. Homework is generally used effectively to prepare pupils for future lessons, and use of whole school assessment is made to alert teachers to the individual needs of pupils.
136. At Key Stage 3, the lack of matching of tasks to pupils’ levels of attainment often results in the higher attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length; this is reflected in the low percentage of pupils attaining the higher test levels at the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, teachers provide tasks that challenge the higher attainers and provide sound support for lower attainers. Consequently, the quality of work in GCSE folders shows an improvement from the standard in Key Stage 3 in terms of content and style. At Key Stage 5, the teaching offers challenging material, and the content of the lessons is well matched to the ability of the students. The pace of lessons is appropriate and the organisation of activities allows students to exchange and challenge views on the texts studied. The style of teaching enables students to develop confidence and take responsibility for their own learning. The improvement in standards is reflected in the oral and written work of students in Year 13.

137. The English department is managed with efficiency and sensitivity to the needs of pupils. Departmental schemes of work are organised efficiently but at Key Stage 3 they are not sufficiently matched to the National Curriculum programmes of study; they do not contain provision for a clear line of progression in key skills. The department makes good use of data from tests but, as in the previous inspection, marking is still not sufficiently consistent. The department has adequate resources, and there is a range of texts available to meet the demands of the course at each key stage.
138. There has been a whole school commitment to improve standards in reading. A whole school approach to improving literacy is making an impact. The profile of reading has been raised, and the use of writing frames for information and discursive writing is improving the quality of the organisation of writing in a number of subjects.
139. Overall the standards being attained in English are similar to those found in the previous inspection but teaching is slightly weaker. There have not been improvements to curriculum planning at Key Stage 3, though it remains good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

139. **Drama**

140. In the 1998 GCSE examinations 57 percent of students achieved A\*-C and 100 percent A\*-G. At GCE A level Theatre Studies results were very good with all students gaining B or C grades. In 1999 the percentage of A\*-C grades rose to 67 percent with 100 percent A\*-G. In A level Theatre Studies, however, attainment was low, with neither of the two candidates entered gaining a grade at A-E.
141. The progress pupils are making is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 4 students learn how to review their own performance and that of others, create drama with conviction and concentration and grasp and use dramatic concepts effectively. They develop speaking and listening skills by analysing their work and arguing points of view. The progress of pupils with SEN is satisfactory and difficult concepts are explained with key vocabulary displayed on the walls. At Key Stage 5 students are able to read with confidence and expression, recognise staging features such as setting and the positioning of characters. They learn how to use dramatic concepts effectively, recalling and evaluating the work of others, and to use imagination to create drama with belief and feeling.
142. The behaviour of the majority of pupils in drama lessons is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good or very good at Key Stage 4 and 5. Pupils respond enthusiastically and are able to work independently when required. In group work, pupils are able to share ideas and work collaboratively to create and communicate effective drama. Some incidents of poor behaviour arise at Key Stage 3 when pupils with low levels of concentration do not have a sufficient variety of tasks to keep them focused on the activities.
143. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The clear majority of lessons are planned in detail and, at Key Stages 4 and 5, teachers use effective techniques for ensuring that pupils maintain their focus on practical work. Time and resources are used effectively, and assessment of pupils' work takes place whilst they are performing. Evaluation is helpful and sensitive and teachers take great care to ensure that pupils do not feel overwhelmed by the need to perform in front of others.
144. The management of the drama department is good. Schemes of work are good and the work of pupils is assessed regularly, following a common policy created by the

expressive arts faculty. There is a very good handbook available for members of the department that contains a clear set of aims and outlines the contribution drama makes to literacy. The standard of accommodation is satisfactory overall but varies in quality. The drama studio is well equipped, with a good lighting and sound system, and is occasionally used for small productions. The main hall is cold, very large and does not offer enough opportunities for pupils to experiment with techniques of sound and lighting. The scout hut does not provide adequate accommodation for the teaching of drama.

#### 144. **Mathematics**

145. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils is satisfactory. In 1999 the percentages of pupils reaching level 5 or above, and level 6 or above, were broadly in line with the national averages and those of schools with pupils of a similar background. This is an improvement when compared with attainment over the previous three years when results were well below the national average. Over the last three years the attainment of boys has been higher than that of girls. In 1999 attainment in mathematics was higher than that in English and in line with that in science.

146. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is satisfactory. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\* to C was broadly in line with the national average and that of schools with pupils of similar background. Results in 1999 show an improvement in attainment. Over the last three years attainment has been below the national average. The attainment of girls has improved over this period. Girls now reach higher standards than boys.

147. In the sixth form the trend in attainment over the last three years has been broadly in line with national averages.

148. Standards in lessons and the work of pupils seen during the inspection are in line with the results of national tests. Standards in lessons at Key Stage 3 are similar to those at Key Stage 4, an improvement since the last inspection. Attainment is highest in data handling work at both key stages. Pupils can organise and chart data using methods ranging from cumulative frequency graphs for the higher-attaining to pictograms and bar charts for low-attaining pupils. Graphicacy drafting skills are sound but all pupils have difficulty in interpreting patterns of data presented in chart form. Attainment is weakest in algebra. Pupils have difficulty manipulating expressions and equations. This relates to weaknesses in understanding basic number work. Standards in Advanced level lessons are satisfactory. Students are able to apply differential calculus and use statistical techniques to analyse data in lessons observed. Investigation work does not sufficiently develop higher level problem solving skills and strategies. Though provided for in schemes of work, few examples were observed of investigations in which pupils were using algebra to find general rules from their investigations and make predictions. This was an issue in the last inspection.

149. Standards in number work, referred to in the last inspection, are improving at Key Stage 3, though they are still below national expectations at both Key Stages 3 and 4 because of the lack of opportunities for practice. There are some isolated examples of numeracy work in lessons across the curriculum but planning for this is insufficiently systematic. In mathematics lessons at Key Stage 3 provision is more systematic and is leading to improved standards. Regular recall of number facts in lessons now allows pupils from Year 7 to develop skills to use basic number operations with more confidence, without relying on calculators. In a Year 7 class of higher attaining pupils, a challenging exercise was set on long multiplication looking at number patterns. Pupils used these patterns to make predictions, with calculators only then being used to check predictions.

150. Overall progress is satisfactory at both key stages and in the sixth form. Higher attaining pupils

are well served by the setting arrangements. Extension and enrichment activities prepare them for higher tier GCSE entry. In classes of average-attaining pupils lack of pace is a feature. Pupils can spend too much time on each task. Insufficient extension work is available for those who have successfully completed the work set. Higher level problem solving skills are less evident in these classes. Lower-attaining pupils work at an appropriate pace on a range of activities, which are well-matched to their needs. Sixth form students make progress in developing study skills, greater depth in understanding and greater awareness of the links between each aspect of mathematics.

151. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress overall. Teachers' records detail pupils' specific needs. In the better lessons observed teaching is adapted to meet these needs. In a Year 8 class of low attaining pupils a survey of staff cars had been taken as a practical activity to introduce them to data handling. This was followed up by the use of tally and bar charts to show ways of presenting this data, with the teacher giving regular encouragement and praise for good work and effort. In some lower sets, pupils with behavioural difficulties are not sufficiently stretched, resulting in instances of challenging behaviour. The quality of teaching support in lessons is good. Pupils then make good progress but provision is limited. This was an issue in the last inspection.

152. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are generally good. Most pupils are positive and keen to learn. Much of the work is directed by teachers, but when opportunities are given for investigation pupils respond well. In a Year 11 lesson pupils discussed ways in which height could be related to other measurements such as arm length. Each pupil made decisions about the investigation they wished to follow, took responsibility and worked co-operatively on measurements. They were able to discuss the relative merits of the different ways in which they could chart their data. Presentation of work is usually good, with higher attaining pupils showing greater quantity and completion rate of work set. Pupils concentrate well in lessons. Sometimes they need reminding of the need to listen carefully to the teacher's instructions. Instances of challenging behaviour, referred to in the last inspection report, are dealt with calmly and appropriately by teachers. Relationships are good. Pupils show respect for each other's work, listen to contributions made in lessons, and many have the confidence to ask questions to develop their understanding.

153. Teaching is satisfactory in nine out of every ten lessons. It is good to very good in one in three lessons. Staff are secure in their subject knowledge. They insist on appropriate standards of behaviour in lessons. Lesson planning is sound in content and organisation of time, but few lesson plans reference activities to National Curriculum levels. In a Year 9 class, good planning for the introduction of a topic in algebra resulted in a series of short, sequenced written exercises with regular teacher intervention to recap, check understanding and give further explanation before moving pupils on to new work. Teachers acknowledge pupils' strengths and regularly praise their efforts. The use of IT to develop pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics is a strength. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the range of teaching strategies in many lessons is narrow. This was an issue in the last inspection. Many lessons are overly teacher-directed with a combination of instruction and practice which is not sufficiently challenging for some. Frequently pace is not sustained. Sixth form teaching is characterised by strong relationships and high expectations of each student. Skilful questioning tests and develops students' understanding and encourages them to discuss their ideas.

154. At Key Stage 3 regular numeracy work and the use of IT to support pupils' data handling skills are strengths. Schemes of work are not sufficiently structured, however, and this is impeding progress. Assessment of pupils' progress is almost always through end of unit tests. These tests are not used to inform pupils of their current attainment against National Curriculum levels and what they need to do to improve. There is not a sufficiently high expectation of consistency in marking, both in assessing pupils' work and commenting on its quality. Curriculum and assessment at Key Stage 3 are key issues for the department.



155. The department now sets targets based on careful consideration of pupils' attainment. Lesson observations are in place but monitoring of pupils' progress is underdeveloped. The structures needed to monitor and evaluate the work of the department are not yet in place. These are key issues for the department. The recently appointed head of department is demonstrating energy and commitment to raising standards. In this he is ably supported by a committed team of teachers who are suitably qualified, work co-operatively and build good relationships with pupils.

155. **Science**

156. Pupils' attainment in science is average overall. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection. This is because all pupils are now entered for the double award GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 and also there have been improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.

157. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in line with the national average. In 1999 the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the end of Key Stage 3 tests and teacher assessments, level 5 and above, matched the national average, and was better than that achieved in schools of a similar type. The proportion of pupils attaining level 6 was above the national average. These results show a considerable improvement on those achieved during the previous three years, which were below the national average.

158. Pupils currently in Year 9 are not achieving as highly as those tested in 1999. Their attainment on entry was lower than that of pupils from the previous year, and in some Year 9 classes, pupils' poor behaviour and attitudes to learning affect the standards they achieve. Higher attaining pupils' knowledge and understanding of science are above average. These pupils, for example, use chemical symbols when writing equations; they can explain in clear, simple language the difference between elements, compounds and mixtures. Pupils' skills in experimental science are satisfactory. They can follow instructions to assemble equipment and perform routine tests - recording their observations in tables and reporting them in writing and as bar charts and graphs, where appropriate. However, their skills in planning, carrying out and evaluating their own investigations are unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls at Key Stage 3, and there is no evidence to indicate that pupils from minority ethnic groups and from different backgrounds perform differently from others. Inspection evidence shows that the upward trend in attainment is likely to be maintained because the school is improving its Key Stage 3 scheme of work to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with SEN, and because it targets individuals to help them improve their standards of work.

159. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3. Pupils gain an increasingly detailed knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things, materials and physical processes because the school uses a commercially published scheme to support its long term planning. Pupils' skills in performing experiments develop satisfactorily as they perform practical tasks to illustrate scientific principles and techniques. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to systematically develop skills in planning, carrying out and evaluating their own investigations, and this adversely affects their progress and attainment. This aspect of learning is given insufficient attention in curriculum plans for Key Stage 3. The practice of setting pupils in ability groups in Years 8 and 9 contributes well to progress, as it enables teachers to match work more closely to the range of ability in the class. There are a few occasions when teachers keep too rigidly to the guidelines of the published scheme and the work set does not meet pupils' needs as well as it might.

160. Attainment in the 1999 GCSE double award science examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 was above the national average and was well above the average attained by pupils in similar schools. Attainment has improved significantly since the last inspection largely due to the effective implementation of the double award science syllabus. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved broadly reflected the results of the 1999 examinations. Standards in experimental and investigative science are in line with national and course expectations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is broadly average for their age. Girls' performance in 1999 was better than that of boys but in previous years, when the standards were not as high, there was little difference between them. To a large extent the differences in attainment between boys and girls are due to differences in attitudes to learning and the key skills of literacy and numeracy, and are not dependent on the quality of teaching.
161. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4. They have greater opportunities to carry out scientific investigation than Key Stage 3 pupils because these investigations form a part of the GCSE syllabus requirements and are externally moderated. Progress is also promoted by the practice of teaching lower ability pupils in smaller sets. This enables these pupils to be given greater individual help and support. The externally marked modular tests, which form an integral part of the course, help teachers in setting targets for improvement. In both key stages pupils with SEN and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress in lessons because teachers and learning support assistants provide adequate help and encouragement.
162. Overall, a small number of candidates are entered for advanced level science examinations and it is not therefore possible to compare the pass rate with national statistics. In 1999 85 per cent of candidates entered pass the advanced level science examinations and just over half of them attain grades A and B. Candidates' performance in physics and chemistry is stronger than in biology. Students make satisfactory progress during their courses and in lessons. They develop satisfactory independent learning skills, for example, in taking notes and in writing essays. Progress is affected by the narrow range of strategies used for teaching advanced level science, which lacks flair and imagination. This is partly due to a shortage of suitable equipment, such as the number of sets of thermistors used to investigate the relationship between temperature and electrical resistance.
163. In Key Stages 3 and 4 and at advanced level pupils have satisfactory attitudes. During practical activity most pupils collaborate satisfactorily with one another and adults and show suitable respect for the materials and equipment they are using. In other lessons, pupils asked thoughtful questions and advanced level students made effective use of textbooks to find information and seek explanations. Behaviour in most lessons is satisfactory, although classes are sometimes too talkative and noisy and pupils are easily distracted from the work they have been set.
164. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages and in the advanced level courses. Teaching is satisfactory or better in nearly nine lessons out of ten. In a quarter of lessons teaching is good but rarely very good. In a few lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory and occasionally it is poor. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when there were important shortcomings in a substantial number of lessons.
165. Teachers' scientific knowledge is mostly good; the effective deployment of subject specialists to teach GCSE module and advanced level subjects helps learning. Teachers have high expectations of higher attaining pupils, and their expectations for average and lower attaining pupils are mostly satisfactory. In a few lessons teachers set work

that is much too difficult for the pupils, resulting in unsatisfactory progress. The use of homework, such as the completion of reports about practical work and revision for tests, is satisfactory. Most teachers manage pupils well, dealing with them sympathetically, and providing individual help where appropriate. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory. The use of testing to check pupils' recall of scientific facts and their understanding of concepts is good. Lesson planning during the week of the inspection was satisfactory because teachers used a well-structured planning sheet. Most teachers employ a narrow range of teaching strategies and in many lessons the teaching style is too didactic. There is a lack of sufficient opportunity for pupils to undertake investigative practical work and to solve problems, set in everyday situations, by using and applying their scientific knowledge. Some Key Stage 3 teachers rely too heavily on a published scheme and as a consequence, they fail to adapt lessons to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils. In the least effective lessons, the work set does not motivate pupils by capturing their interest and harnessing their imagination.

166. Although equipment and materials are prepared well in advance of lessons the lack of sufficient laboratory technicians affects the quality and extent of experimental and investigative science undertaken within the department. Overall, the department lacks enough resources to enable teachers to provide sufficient opportunities for imaginative and stimulating investigative practical activity, particularly at Key Stage 3. This situation has occurred because there has been insufficient funding for science during recent years.

167. The department is well managed and the school has strong sense of vision for its future. Although started, the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is not yet completed. The lack of suitable schemes of work for GCSE and advanced level courses affects the range of teaching employed because there is insufficient guidance on ways of making the subjects interesting, exciting, and relevant to the needs and abilities of all pupils. The department makes effective use of testing to check Key Stage 3 pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding. However, there is a lack of effective procedures for ensuring the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils during and at the end of Key Stage 3, in experimental and investigative science.

167. **Other subjects or courses**

## **Art**

168. Overall, attainment meets national expectations for 14 year olds and is above average at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. GCSE results in art examinations since the last inspection have been at or above national averages for similar schools. In 1998, A\*-C grades were significantly above national expectations at 76 percent, compared with the national average of 59 percent. Similar results were maintained in 1999. Girls consistently perform better than boys in art; however, attainment for boys is well above national expectations when compared with boys nationally. All pupils perform significantly better in art at GCSE compared with their performance in other subjects. The percentage of pupils attaining A and B grades at A level is well above national averages for all maintained secondary schools. Intermediate and Advanced GNVQ results have been average or above in the past 3 years. There has been an increase in the number of pupils taking A level and GNVQ courses and an improvement in standards overall with a larger proportion of pupils achieving higher grades since the last inspection.

169. In lessons and in work observed, the attainment of 14 year-olds is in line with expectations. Teacher assessment results at the end of Key Stage 3 show that three-quarters of the year group are

working broadly in line with national expectations. Most pupils make effective use of a wide range of materials in two and three dimensions. Pupils use still life and contextual studies as a starting point for drawing, painting, collage and relief sculpture. They experiment and organise resources and materials to develop ideas, for example, in building up a relief surface in paper-mache to create an expressive mask based on primitive art, or telling the story of the nativity using Egyptian figurative techniques. Both show a good level of inventiveness, imagination and artists' techniques. Most pupils mix and control paint with increasing confidence. They know about colour theory, how to mix hues from dark to light and identify artists through a knowledge of their styles, such as, using highlights on material and composing their picture space in the style of Renaissance artists. Drawing skills for most pupils are developing well through systematic good practice of looking closely at shapes and patterns. In Year 9, pupils use viewfinders to select part of a still life observation and record four different compositions. Higher and average attaining pupils display increasing confidence to sketch, annotate work and extend projects successfully. However, drawing from observation skills for lower attaining pupils are weak. In a few lessons, there is a greater dependency on drawing from magazines.

170. The attainment of 16 year-olds is above national expectations. Pupils revisit themes of drawing from direct observation with increasing fluency and accuracy. They develop their ideas and feelings through experimentation with mixed media, paint and relief construction. There are some exciting and inventive large scale sculptural letters in Year 10 which effectively combine a variety of artists' motifs with pupils' responses and show above average attainment. Most work shows an effective development in pupils' level of competence in using reference material.

171. Attainment in the sixth form is above average. Students have the freedom to express their own ideas and most build on a sound knowledge of the formal elements showing confident handling of materials. Many pupils draw from life and still life, which gives them an in depth understanding of form. There are some illuminating examples of sketchbook and personal study explorations of artists' techniques based on Rosetti and Henry Moore in Year 13, which show a confident standard of critical awareness of materials. Students on the advanced GNVQ course display an enthusiasm in working with contemporary packaging design; they make an effective multicultural contribution in their studies which enhances the standard of individual presentation overall.

172. Pupils make good progress over time throughout the key stages and in the sixth form, at all levels of attainment. They enter Year 7 with a wide range of skills and make rapid progress in drawing, painting and three-dimensional studies as they move through the key stages. They show a growing understanding of the different elements of art, such as, line, tone, texture, pattern colour and form and increasingly build on their skills of investigation and research through the use of sketchbooks as studio tools. Pupils make steady advances in awareness of art vocabulary through class discussion and self-assessment. This knowledge is extended through Key Stage 4 as techniques are consolidated and in the sixth form where students show gains in painting, researching, planning and developing an insight into the work of other artists. Pupils with SEN make good progress; they are given effective support and advice on how to improve their skills through teachers' explanation, demonstration and the choice of materials and resources made available to them. Displays of pupils' work and key art words are effectively presented with the work of related artists, extending the more able to look closely and compare techniques.

173. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good overall. They enjoy their work, show initiative in organising equipment and act safely and sensibly in a specialised area. Most pupils concentrate well, are confident in discussion and the majority are developing an effective capacity for personal study. There has been an increase in numbers taking art and graphics at GCSE and in the sixth form. Pupils make constructive relationships with each other and there are examples of collaborative projects in Key Stage 3. Behaviour is very good in most lessons due largely to the

personal commitment of teachers. Very occasionally a few pupils show poor listening skills and a lack of self-esteem.

174. The quality of teaching overall is very good across the key stages and sixth form. Teacher expertise and confidence are very good, for example, in using interesting references to pupils' and artists' work as starting points for lessons and explaining and demonstrating techniques clearly. Relationships with pupils are very good, promoting a positive ethos for learning. Lessons are well planned and inspiring because they have good links with contextual issues. Challenging tasks are progressively built up to provide an enjoyable and worthwhile experience for the pupils so that they are motivated to tackle problems and improve their skills. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to elaborate their ideas through effective questioning, which helps them feel secure; for example, in checking their understanding of the depth of a relief panel, the teacher gave pupils time to reflect by encouraging them to 'feel' the surface and look along the edges to assess whether there was sufficient form to their work. Lessons move at a good pace, and teachers set high expectations for presentation and accuracy. Where teaching was average, work is less demanding and pupils' understanding of concepts is inconsistently checked. In most lessons there is a good balance of choice and direction by the teacher to encourage independent learning. Homework is effectively linked to projects and regularly marked with supportive comments. The quality of constructive, focused, task related feedback to pupils is very good, though individual and group evaluation is inconsistent in a few lessons.

175. The art curriculum is broad and balanced. However there are constraints in the quality of provision with insufficient development of IT across the key stages and the lack of a kiln to develop ceramics and enhance three-dimensional studies at Key Stage 3. The department is effectively led, and course planning, assessment and monitoring of teaching are well focused. An effective handbook provides clear guidelines to staff. Art is enriched with visits for the older students, though visits and activity days for younger pupils are limited. However, the curriculum is enriched with effective displays of pupils' work around the school and extra-curricular clubs.

#### 175. **Business and vocational education**

176. At Key Stage 4, GCSE business studies is a well-subscribed course leading on to A-level and GNVQ courses post-16. There are currently no vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 other than business studies and work-related parts of support courses for pupils with SEN. GNVQ programmes are offered in the sixth form at intermediate level in two areas: business, health and social care. At advanced level, business and art and design are currently being offered. A popular A level business studies course is well-established. All pupils in Key Stage 4 benefit from work experience placements and impartial careers interviews linked to study in personal and social education lessons.

177. Attainment by the age of 16 in GCSE business studies, though not as strong compared with pupils' attainment in most other subjects, is in line with national averages, results showing considerable improvement from 1998 for boys and girls. In lessons seen, pupils of all abilities demonstrate a high level of knowledge and considerable practical skills, including the effective use of IT, to draw pie charts from surveys of ice cream sales. In a very good Year 10 lesson seen pupils were able to critically examine points for and against a government ban on advertising sugary drinks.

178. By the age of 17, sixth form students on GNVQ intermediate business courses attain at above the national average, with 100% of students completing the course in 1999, a third being at merit level. This result maintains the upward trend from previous years for boys and girls and

is above similar schools. During the short inspection of GNVQ, which coincided with the funeral of a former GNVQ pupil, it was not possible to see intermediate classes in health and social care, or to scrutinise coursework portfolios which are kept in another consortium school.

In a very good lesson seen, the one intermediate business student observed skilfully produced a variety of business payment forms on his computer, importing simple graphics files to show a business logo he had designed to go on his invoice.

179. By the age of 19, pupils on advanced GNVQ business courses attain at above national average rates for completing the course in two years. The percentage of pupils with merit grades was particularly high (100%), compared with similar schools and represents an improvement from 1998 for boys and girls. In 1999, 100% of pupils on the advanced level business course obtained A-E grades. Although only two out of eleven in the group obtained A and B grades, the results reflect pupils' relatively low attainment levels on entry and represent considerable achievement over time. In lessons seen advanced level GCE pupils understand investment appraisal techniques and can calculate the current value of a longer-term investment (discounted cash flow). Advanced business GNVQ pupils maturely discuss the costs of putting on an exhibition which they are planning, and use IT very effectively to produce publicity brochures. GNVQ pupils at all levels benefit from well-structured courses, good teaching, and the opportunity to research outside school on visits and work experience.
180. Progress on business courses at each level is good in all lessons seen and over time. During the course attendance is good and reflects pupils' determination to meet set deadlines which are reinforced by teachers. In Key Stage 4 the majority of business studies pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress, and more able pupils are stretched by challenging activities which require the critical evaluation of business problems.
181. On all GNVQ and GCSE courses pupils' work folders are mostly neat and well presented. Good progress in the key skills of IT, communication and number is evident on GNVQ courses. Pupils use information and communications technology (ICT) effectively in GCSE and GNVQ courses to produce accurate word processed reports, graphs and charts from local survey data. In A level business studies, computer spreadsheets are seldom used fully to develop and explore IT and number skills using extended formulae. Access to computers during lessons is difficult. Weekly lessons in information technology, communication and number help GNVQ pupils to improve their skills. Short in-class presentations are insufficiently regular to fully develop students' ability to discuss and analyse financial concepts in detail.
182. Most pupils on GNVQ courses are aware of what they need to do to progress to a higher level and attain merit grades for their coursework. They are able to improve work already submitted once it has been assessed. The majority of pupils on all business courses approach their work with enthusiasm and interest, and are well motivated to succeed. They appreciate the relevance of their studies to the world of work and their future careers. Several advanced GNVQ pupils have progressed from intermediate level. Pupils concentrate fully on their tasks at all levels. They behave courteously to each other and to teachers. Pupils offer each other constructive criticism. Advanced GNVQ and GCE pupils sometimes depend on the teacher to supply the resources they use, although their coursework folders show some research from work placements, though this is not widely used to improve the quality of work.
183. Teaching overall on all courses at both key stages is at least good. Nearly a half of all lessons observed were very good or excellent and teaching is particularly strong on the advanced GNVQ business course. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well, basing them on clear, relevant schemes of work. Lessons invariably have a practical focus linked to industry. Teachers use a good range of books and handouts. Teachers manage pupils

well and support individual pupils with a caring approach which is much appreciated. Coursework is marked regularly, graded accurately and teachers give prompt feedback, indicating clear individual targets for pupils to improve their work, although the amount of oral and written feedback given is not consistent across GCSE and GNVQ courses. Teachers generally expect high standards and give pupils realistic deadlines for completing assignments both in class and at home.

184. Business classes are well staffed with experienced qualified teachers, and at all levels are allocated sufficient time both for subject lessons and key skills development. Most teachers have some experience of business and industry, including accountancy and exhibition management. Business and vocational courses are managed well by committed teams which are well co-ordinated and meet quite frequently. Courses are monitored internally and by examination boards on a fairly regular basis. Each vocational area is building up appropriate learning materials. Access to computers is good for GNVQ and although it is satisfactory for GCE and GCSE, business at all levels lacks base rooms. GNVQ staff make satisfactory use of business and industry for visits and work placements, and this is an area for further development. Further analysis of examination results to identify aspects of GCSE coursework leading to underachievement is recognised as a focus for departmental plans. There have been considerable improvements in teaching, assessment and pupil attainment at all levels since the last inspection, and the vocational and business departments have the capacity for further development.

184. **Design and Technology**

185. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 assessments, 69 per cent of pupils attained the average level 5 or higher, which was above the national average for all schools; and 26 per cent of pupils attained level 6 or higher, which was just below the national average for all schools.

186. In the inspection, pupils in Year 9, who will reach the end of Stage 3 next summer, were attaining standards in designing and making which broadly reflect the 1999 results. Their knowledge and making skills are average and sometimes good, the pupils having experienced activities in an appropriate range of materials to produce such items as cam-operated moving pictures, electronic alarms, fabric cushions and biscuits. However, the quality of their research, theory and design presentation is mainly below average, reflecting most teachers' low expectations of this area of pupils' work at this key stage. Through Key Stage 3, the pupils' work shows appropriate use of IT, including the use of computer control in a robot project. Through oral work and writing, pupils are developing their literacy skills. The pupils' numeracy skills development, however, through mental or other calculations, is less evident.

187. Progress by pupils is mainly satisfactory and sometimes very good, affected, in part, by the teaching approaches used and the response of a minority of pupils who, in Year 9, are occasionally restless and challenging in their behaviour. Most design work is completed but there is evidence of unfinished practical work due to lack of time within the planned scheme. Pupils with physical disabilities and SEN make satisfactory progress. Boys and girls progress equally well through the key stage, helped by the lack of gender bias in the scheme of work.

188. The overall proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in the department was 54 per cent in 1999, an increase of 4 per cent on the previous year, and above the national average of 50 per cent in 1999. Five different examination courses contributed to

the department's overall result. The highest proportion of A\*-C grades in 1999 was in food technology and textiles, where attainment was 75 per cent and 67 per cent respectively. The lowest proportion of A\*-C grades was in resistant materials and systems and control where, attainment was 45 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. There was also a relatively high proportion of unclassified and D grades in these two subjects. In the main, the girls attained significantly better than boys, the difference considerably exceeding the national averages, though very unbalanced numbers of boys and girls entered for many of the courses makes direct statistical comparisons unwise.

189. The evidence from the inspection is that by the end of Key Stage 4, standards in food, textiles and graphic products are above the national average and below in resistant materials and in systems and control, with no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

190. Within each course area, pupils undertake a wide range of individual practical coursework assignments mostly in wood, plastics, textiles, food and graphics, supplemented by class design research, analytical studies and materials investigations, and are appropriately developing their knowledge of skills and processes. They use IT to augment their presentational skills and for handling data. In one lesson in Year 10, pupils used computer aided design to prepare a profile for a brass bar which was then turned to shape using one of the department's several new computer numerically controlled machines.

191. While the standard of presentation of many pupils is low at the beginning of Year 10, the majority make significant gains during the key stage, though as in Key Stage 3, not all teachers have a sufficiently demanding expectation for the quality and style of pupils' design and presentational work. Some project folders, though extensively compiled by pupils, lack a clear, logical focus on why the research information has been so organised. For a minority of pupils, progress in making is hampered by their choice of complicated design solutions and the materials they are using to realise their ideas. This suggests an insufficient degree of guidance by teachers during the early stages of their project assignments. The progress of pupils with SEN is satisfactory, helped significantly by their support assistants who work alongside them in lessons, and by the teachers who keep effective records and plan how they can support identified pupils.

192. In 1999, eight students were entered for A-level courses in DT and all attained pass grades, though the highest was grade 'C' achieved by two students. The school now has large numbers of students on AS and A level courses and the evidence from the inspection suggests that this year's results are likely to be exceeded in subsequent years. Students are producing a wide range of quality work in resistant materials, systems and control, and textiles. Progress is satisfactory through Year 12 into Year 13, helped by the shared teaching and technician support, together with regular support from a visiting professional engineer from a local international company. Male students in the current sixth form have uniformly chosen resistant materials and female students have uniformly chosen textiles. The gender split, however, is not so evident in the extra-curricular school karting team which meets weekly to maintain and repair an impressive stable of karts raced under the school's membership of the National Schools' Karting Association.

193. The new purpose built DT block contributes significantly to the range and quality of work and to the identity of the department. The pupils respect their teachers and look after the new practical rooms and equipment well. Pupils of all ages show interest in their work and a willingness to learn. They co-operate effectively with each other when working together and generally behave well in lessons when they have to listen, write and draw or



undertake practical work. They sustain effort during the hour long lessons and do not hurry to leave if the lesson ending coincides with a break time or lunchtime. Many, including pupils from each key stage, either attend after school the technology club, or continue with their coursework, encouraged by the willingness of teachers to stay and supervise them.

194. The quality of teaching varies between satisfactory, good and, occasionally, very good. Though it is very good or better in well over two fifths of lessons, overall the teaching is competent rather than inspired. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise. Their expectations of pupils are usually appropriate, apart from the quality of presentation, though more could be demanded of younger pupils. Teachers' expectations for the achievement of higher attaining pupils is not always sufficiently high in Key Stages 3 and 4 and lesson plans and schemes of work hardly ever refer to specific learning objectives and planned activities designed to cater expressly for their needs. This also was an issue in the last inspection. Expectations for the behaviour of pupils are usually appropriate and misbehaviour is dealt with. However, some teachers deal with minor problems confrontationally, rather than motivating, stimulating and persuading such pupils through more challenging and varied learning activities involving more pupil participation and discussion.

195. Lesson plans follow a standard departmental format and are conscientiously undertaken listing activities and resources, but they rarely focus sufficiently on the key concepts or learning objective for the lesson. Similarly, few teachers explicitly share learning objectives with the pupils or use discussion sessions at the end of the lesson, or provide regular formative assessment opportunities, to determine the extent of their pupils' understanding. Much recent work has been done to develop an effective scheme of work and summative assessment procedures. These have largely addressed a criticism in the last report which noted there was not a coherent and progressive approach to design processes or the development of generic skills.

196. Unlike in the previous inspection, where teachers had little information about the prior attainment of pupils, teachers' logs and mark books now carry a useful range of pupil assessment data, but there is insufficient use of this data, particularly at Key Stage 3, to provide a planning focus for pupils' learning. The department is beginning to make use of pupil targets in Key Stage 4 and for post-16 students.

197. The department is ably led, the whole team having been appointed since the last inspection. A strong feature is the consistency of procedures and organisation, the team work, and all teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to teaching DT. The team are well qualified, are well supported by two technicians working in the resistant materials and food areas, and there are good strategies in place to develop teachers' subject awareness and skills across the DT curriculum. Some departmental lesson monitoring has begun, together with shared observations and work monitoring, providing an effective basis for further development and departmental improvement.

197. **Geography**

198. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is slightly below average. They make good progress through Years 7 to 9 and, by the end of Key Stage 3, their attainment is in line with the national average. This is reflected in the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, which show that 59 percent of pupils achieved level 5 or above in 1997, 57 percent in 1998 and 70 percent in 1999. Girls achieve more highly than boys. The pupils develop sound basic map and atlas skills and knowledge of places. They have a satisfactory

grasp of key ideas and can apply these well in their enquiry work, as for example in Year 8 lessons where pupils were preparing displays on soil erosion in Nepal. One Year 8 class showed good development of IT skills in researching information on this using the Internet and CD-ROM information.

199. Most pupils produce satisfactory written work. The best is of good quality, but lower attainers have difficulty with spelling and communication of ideas. The pupils respond well to challenging writing tasks, including a role-play on deforestation and a newspaper front page on an avalanche in Austria in Year 9. Oral work is more limited, particularly in full class discussion, where, although there is some good use of technical terminology, contributions are often restricted to single words or short phrases. Where opportunities for discussion in pairs or small groups are offered, as for example in the Year 8 lesson in the IT room, their talk aids learning.
200. Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 4 and by the end of the key stage, their attainment is above the national average. This is reflected in the GCSE examinations, where the percentage gaining Grades A\*-C has improved from 38.3 percent in 1997, to 57.3 percent in 1998, above the national average, and 60.9 percent in 1999. The percentage achieving Grades A\*-G has also improved, from 91.5 percent in 1997, below the national average, to 98 percent in 1998, slightly above the national average and 98.6 percent in 1999. Girls achieved significantly better than boys in all these years. In 1999, for example, 49 percent of boys gained Grades A\*-C and 75 percent of girls.
201. Pupils show satisfactory understanding of key concepts and principles in the subject. Their research skills are well developed and put to good use particularly in the fieldwork reports they prepare or GCSE coursework. The best of these are very good and show impressive presentation skills. Good use is made of computers to research data and produce final reports. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils were able to access the Internet, use the word processor and desktop publisher and process data to produce graphs and diagrams. Most pupils are able to express their findings in well-written prose and illustrate their work appropriately with maps and diagrams. Oral work remains more limited in full class discussion. Pupils show satisfactory numeracy skills in processing the data they have collected in their enquiries.
202. In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress and by the end of their advanced level course, their attainment is in line with national averages. The percentage gaining Grades A and B was well below the national average in 1997 at 14.3 percent. This improved to 25 percent in 1998, below the national average, but fell again in 1999, to 20 percent. In 1998 and 1999 100 percent gained Grades A-E, an improvement on the 85.7 percent in 1997. Students can research topics effectively from a range of resources, including maps, diagrams, textbooks, computers and other media. They produce successful summaries of key points, illustrating these well with maps and diagrams. In Year 12 lessons on coastal landforms, they showed a satisfactory grasp of the nature and formation of the features. In Year 13 lessons they fed back their findings on fold mountains concisely and effectively. In class discussions they make pertinent contributions and show a satisfactory grasp of key ideas.
203. In most lessons, pupils consolidate their previous work well at the start of the lesson. They then practise a range of skills as they enquire into questions or issues and record their findings in maps, diagrams and text. This enables them to extend their knowledge and understanding effectively, helping them to make progress. The good response in geography lessons also helps ensure that progress is made. In most lessons, pupils show a good level of interest and concentrate well. Their behaviour ranges from satisfactory to excellent, reflecting

the good class management of the teachers. This is greatly encouraged by the constructive relationships, which are well established in geography lessons. Pupils work well together when given the opportunity, for example in lessons using computers and they take a good level of responsibility for their own independent learning in their coursework. All contributions to lessons are respected.

204. The good progress which pupils make through Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory progress in the Sixth Form are considerably assisted by the high expectations of the teachers. The teachers have good or very good expertise in the subject and share their enthusiasm for it with the pupils. The approach to learning adopted is based on involving pupils in enquiry, which helps them to develop a range of important skills and consider the values that arise from environmental issues. There is not a sufficiently clear scheme of work to ensure that continuity and progression are built into the programme of study. A clearer focus on making tasks and resources accessible to all pupils is required in this planning.
205. The teachers are well organised, and lessons are mainly clearly planned and move with pace, but in a minority of lessons the pace is too slow and timing not well managed. Assessment is used effectively to help develop teaching and encourage pupils to improve. The tracking of pupils in Key Stage 3 is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress that they make. This has just been put in place for the Sixth Form as well and there are plans to introduce it for Key Stage 4.
206. The enthusiastic and efficient management of the department has enabled improvements to be made since the last inspection. Most lessons now offer appropriate challenges and the range of experiences has been improved. A programme of fieldwork has been developed for all years except Year 9, and plans are well in hand to provide for this. Experience of relevant work in information and communication technology has been introduced to a satisfactory level. Strategies are being developed to try to deal with the continuing underachievement of boys. The schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and the GCSE and GCE courses need still further development to ensure that a progressive and enabling curriculum is in place. There are still too few text books to enable books to be issued to pupils for study at home.

## History

207. Pupil attainment is slightly below the national expectation at Key Stage 4, with 51 percent of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade in 1999. Within this, 14 percent secured A\* or A grades. The national A\*-C average for similar schools in 1999 was 60 percent. In 1998, 43 percent of pupils gained A\*-C grades, with 16 percent achieving an A\* or A grade. The national expectation of A\*-C grades in 1998 was 54 percent. Comparative school examination data indicates that in 1999, pupil attainment in history at Key Stage 4 was slightly below that for Key Stage 4 subjects overall where an A\*-C pass rate of 53 percent was achieved. Attainment for girls is slightly better than for boys, particularly at A\* and A grades. At Key Stage 5, pupil attainment is above national average, with 100 percent A-E passes, which equals the performance of pupils in 1998. History is an increasingly popular option at both Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 and pupils report positively on their subject choice.
208. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils of average attainment and above show a satisfactory grasp of the key elements within the subject. They are able to place events, people and changes within a chronological framework when dealing with, for example, religious conflict in seventeenth century England or socio-economic developments in twentieth century America. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can generally sustain more extended

historical writing, though the range and variety of such writing are occasionally limited, as in the work on the Western Front. Oral attainment is satisfactory but there are weaknesses at each key stage in the quality of written presentation and in various types of historical writing. There is close monitoring of pupil performance in Key Stage 3 and the assessments in core skills indicate value added features, particularly in the areas of deductive reasoning and the ability to consider source material critically.

209. Pupils at each key stage demonstrate a good level of interest in their work. They show initiative in tackling tasks, for example in undertaking Internet searches and overcoming technical difficulties in applied IT work on the American Plains Indians. Classroom attitudes are purposeful and contribute positively to learning.

210. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and it is often good or very good. Teaching in the sixth form is a strength. Where it is good, expectation is explicit, for example in overviewing potential research materials in Year 12 and clarifying examination requirements at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. Expectation is less explicit at Key Stage 3 and there is insufficient sharing of information regarding the purpose of lessons, as well as the tasks within them, with pupils. There is a good emphasis on both historical skills and vocabulary. Staff-pupil relationships are excellent and promote a positive ethos for learning. There is good individual support for pupils in lessons at all key stages. Teachers' knowledge is secure, and lessons are taught with authority. Peer group learning, other than at Key Stage 5, is underdeveloped. The use of differentiated materials is still at a relatively early stage with only limited progress since the last inspection, though use of such documentation was observed in Year 8 lessons on seventeenth century England. There is evidence of target setting but this is not consistent across the work examined. A minority of written work is not completed, especially at Key Stage 3, and this impacts adversely on attainment.

211. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has improved since the last inspection by clearly identifying the skills that should be taught in each study unit, for example in evaluating evidence in work on Mary and Darnley in Year 8. In response to underachievement amongst boys, the department has made content changes to the curriculum in both Key Stage 3 and 4. There is good quality pupil tracking but the application of benchmarking and work portfolios is underdeveloped.

212. The department is well managed. There is an extensive array of policy statements which are appropriately applied, and both the curriculum and schemes of work are regularly reviewed. Professional development, other than for SEN, is good. Only limited progress has been made since the last Inspection in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, particularly those with specific and moderate learning difficulties. There should be closer curriculum planning in liaison with learning support staff.

## 212. **Information Technology**

213. The attainment of 14 year-olds meets national expectations. Most pupils use IT to generate, amend, organise and present ideas. IT is delivered during the key stage through a mix of taught lessons and through individual subjects. The pupils use desktop publishing packages and develop a good range of skills in data processing. One Year 8 pupil's response to an RE homework on the crucifixion was to create a 4-page desk top published newspaper of a quality beyond expectations for that age. Pupils collect information, produce spreadsheets, create a database, enter information, search, modify and add to the database. Pupils present their ideas in a variety of forms, load a picture onto the computer and employ a number of drawing packages. They use a range of equipment and integrate several forms of information. They develop a set of instructions and detect relationships. In the teachers'

assessments of 14 year olds, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was above the national average.

214. 16 year-olds meet national expectations. At this stage IT is completely taught across the curriculum by individual subject departments; it is not a GCSE examination subject. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their skills as autonomous users and enhance their work in a variety of subject areas, broadening and consolidating their knowledge and understanding. They apply existing skills of measurement, control and modelling, particularly in project work. In the sixth form, students have a satisfactory knowledge of the use and applications of IT.
215. Pupils progress in the development of knowledge, understanding and skill at a satisfactory rate and move steadily from fairly limited attainment on entry. A satisfactory rate of progress is sustained across all key stages, with progress in Key Stage 3 good. Pupils broaden and consolidate their knowledge and understanding as they apply their competence. However, as IT is not yet fully integrated in some parts of the curriculum, nor effectively deployed in all subjects, so progress does not accelerate beyond a satisfactory rate, particularly amongst the higher-attainers. In the sixth form progress in the use of information communications technology is improving through the increased access to the Internet. Pupils with SEN make good progress in the confidence with which they engage in word-processing their work. This is also true of the pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, progress in other aspects is limited.
216. Pupils enjoy the subject, which is popular in the school. The quality of their learning experience is good particularly in DT and the library-based IT facilities. Pupils are able to design components and then manufacture them in resistant materials, using a computer-controlled lathe. Pupils listen carefully, understand and interpret instructions correctly. They are well focused, concentrate and work independently, and complete the tasks effectively. They behave well, particularly when working at machines.
217. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Lessons are planned effectively, with clear learning objectives and good subject content. Explanations are clear and well directed. Expectations are high in Key Stage 3 with the provision of sufficiently challenging activities for all but the highest levels of attainment. Expectations for attainment in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are pitched at a satisfactory level. Pupils are not as significantly challenged as they are in the other key stages. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound and expertly supported by an experienced and skilled technician. Schemes of work are detailed at Key Stage 3 but less so at Key Stage 4, and IT is taught by integration into the individual department's schemes of work for each subject. The extent of integration into departmental schemes of work differs significantly between departments. In a few, such as DT, it is very good, but in many, IT is not sufficiently integrated. The school recognises these problems and a full review of all cross-curricular IT is in progress at all key stages. Assessment procedures and the extent of their use in informing curriculum planning are satisfactory throughout the school. The present system gives rise to inconsistent practices; some departments retain detailed records, others have very few. Clear learning targets linked to programmes of study and levels of attainment across the curriculum need further development.
218. IT in the school is well managed, with strong positive leadership from the senior management team. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in all aspects of the curriculum and learning resources. There have been significant improvements in IT provision since the previous inspection, though teaching is judged to be slightly better. Starting from a

very low base, the school is now well resourced in hardware and software, which is deployed in seven networked sites. Internet access is available at four sites and a rolling programme of development has been clearly identified.

218. **Modern Languages**

219. Attainment in German is in line with national averages at Key Stage 3 and 4 but below in French. Whilst the 1998 GCSE results in German were good and above the national percentage pass rate results in French were well below. In 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining an A\*–C grade in German was close to the average. There is an improvement in the number of pupils achieving a pass grade in French although it is still below what is expected nationally and boys' results continue to be significantly below those of girls in both languages. The trend over time is towards an improvement in results, particularly when compared to 1997.

220. Teachers' assessment of the work of 14 year old pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 shows that their levels are close to those of pupils in other schools. Evidence from the inspection, however, indicates that whilst this is true for higher attaining pupils other pupils are below these levels in French.

221. In a Year 9 top set in French, higher attaining pupils have satisfactory listening and speaking skills. When following pictures on an overhead projector they can say what sports they prefer with good fluency and accuracy. When listening to tape-recordings at speed they can classify a range of personal likes and dislikes. They can describe some daily routines in the past tense and when familiar with the topic area, write short but acceptably accurate letters and other compositions.

222. Achievement of many average and lower attaining pupils is unsatisfactory in French. These pupils, for example, recognise, name and place countries and oceans on a globe and fill in some blanks in a cloze test but they speak little French and their best attainment is only in the passive recognition of key words and phrases. They have difficulty in using a range of correct verbs and phrases, and pronunciation is anglicised.

223. In German the attainment of most pupils is satisfactory. Higher attainers give information about themselves with confidence and fluency. They understand their teacher speaking to them extensively in German and most respond correctly. The attainment of some pupils with SEN is, however, below what would be expected in relation to their ability. A few have difficulty in recognising basic concepts such as numbers. The progress of most pupils is satisfactory in German. Except for lower attainers they develop the ability to use a broad range of structures and to listen to and understand more complex spoken language.

224. In French most pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. This is often due to frequent changes of staffing and classes taken by non specialist teachers in the last school year, changes to the composition of groups and wide differences in ability in each class. Average and lower attainers in particular only make very limited gains in vocabulary and language content and do not progress to becoming confident in carrying out short dialogues or other speaking tasks.

225. The attainment and progress of 16 year old pupils by the end of Key

Stage 4 is satisfactory in German. In one lesson most pupils describing an imaginary journey by car used the past tense with good accuracy and by the end of the lesson wrote a description that included a good range of structures and new language.

226. In French attainment and progress are unsatisfactory, often due to the same discontinuities of staffing as at Key Stage 3. Listening and speaking skills remain underdeveloped. From a recording about film, most pupils had difficulty in picking out a full range of correct information and were hesitant in saying what the films were about. Lower attainers can make a few short statements about hobbies but pronunciation is anglicised and they use a good deal of English. At A level, attainment in French and German is satisfactory, with most students achieving an A–E grade and progressing satisfactorily to using more abstract language.
227. Most teaching is satisfactory in German at both key stages. It is unsatisfactory in French at Key Stage 3.
228. Teachers generally use a good level of French or German with their pupils. They use a range of resources to give balanced practice of skills. For example, in a Year 7 lesson the teacher reused previously learnt vocabulary about school subjects by representing pictures on an overhead projector. Activities were then sequenced to give a range of practice through paired work, listening to a cassette and short written exercises. A strength in German lessons is the extensive use of that language in the management of lessons, and the expectation that pupils will use it in their answers. In some French lessons at Key Stage 3, however, very little opportunity is given to pupils to use French except in reading, copying or repeating single words of vocabulary. In work there is considerable passive copying, picture drawing and labelling. In these lessons teaching does not provide the opportunities to progress to short dialogues or question and answer in French. Discussions and activities with pupils are usually conducted in English and work is not adapted to the different levels of the pupils. In Key Stage 4 there are good expectations of pupils in German. In a lesson using past tenses to describe a journey in that country the teacher used a good deal of the language to establish comprehension through rigorous questions and answers supported by a map. In other German lessons, however, there is an overemphasis on the whiteboard – the main support for learning – and the language is not contextualised through illustrative material and visual support.
229. There is some good teaching in A level French. The overhead projector is used to support students' oral descriptions. A variety of types of letter is available to teach about different registers of language, and students progress to word process a formal letter.
230. Teachers have to work hard to achieve satisfactory behaviour from a number of pupils. Few pupils show enjoyment in learning languages. Most attitudes are passive. A number of boys are reluctant to speak and a few are uncooperative, although most pupils co-operate on paired work and listen with attention to cassette recordings. Sometimes behaviour is a result of unsatisfactory teaching but this is not always the case. Pupils' attitudes reflect the frequent changes in their teachers in the last year.
231. After a number of changes, the leadership and management of the department are now being consolidated. There is a clear sense of priorities and a greater consistency of approach to teaching across the department. Accommodation provides an attractive environment for pupils to learn languages. Resources are satisfactory.
232. Since the last inspection the amount of time allocated to languages at

Key Stage 3 has been improved but there are still wide variations in the quality of teaching and in the attainment and progress of pupils, particularly in French.

232. **Music**

233. Attainment in music at Key Stages 4 and 5 is above national averages and has improved since the last inspection. At Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with national expectation.

234. At Key Stage 4 large numbers of pupils opt to take music as an examination subject; results this year of 87 percent passes at A\*-C grades demonstrate the considerable success of the department. Large numbers of pupils learn musical instruments and attain well in performance. They are also able to participate in the many instrumental groups and ensembles which the department runs. Within the classroom and throughout the school, pupils often attain well, making music with voices and instruments. This very practical bias of the music curriculum is a central feature of the work. In their compositions pupils frequently produce musical pieces of some sophistication: boys however, often tend to fare less well than girls in this type of work.

235. The department is well stocked with an excellent range of good quality keyboards, together with some very good quality percussion instruments. This has a positive impact on standards attained in the subject. An example of good work was seen when Year 7 pupils produced their own musical picture of the topic "Space" having heard the opening of the orchestral piece Zarathustra by Richard Strauss (Space Odyssey 2001). Here was a good example of the linking of performing, composing and listening.

236. Pupils at all key stages make satisfactory progress. In some cases progress is excellent. Pupils respond well and enjoy the very practical nature of the work. They come to understand the basic elements of music such as rhythm, pitch, melody, harmony and timbre through their practical work. In the group work, teachers work alongside the pupils and support them well. In singing, pupils are enthusiastic but now need to develop a more focussed and gentle tone. At Key Stage 4, pupils make progress in using musical notations and in their understanding of style in music. In the sixth form, good progress is made studying the historical development of music and in the analysis of set works.

237. The response of pupils to music is invariably good, apart from the occasional instance of disruptive and challenging behaviour. Pupils, including those with SEN, enjoy working together and there is a spirit of tolerance and co-operation. This is seen for example when pupils share musical instruments and work on collaborative projects. Pupils are generally friendly and respectful to members of staff.

238. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. The teachers have a high level of subject skill and knowledge and they are challenging pupils. In one Year 7 lesson for example where teaching was very good the teacher's skill in singing and accompaniment on the piano led to a good standard from the pupils. In a Year 13 lesson the teacher's knowledge of Brahms led to pupils gaining a good understanding of the historical background of his work and of the score of the fourth symphony in particular. Occasionally, at Key Stage 3, lessons are dominated too much by the teacher. The planning of lessons is good overall and was particularly rigorous in a Year 10 lesson where Indian music was introduced. Thorough preparation led to authoritative and exposition and good quality composition from the pupils. Though a good marking scheme for the whole expressive arts department is in place, actual marking in pupils' books is not



sufficiently informative and constructive.

239. The management of the department is good. There is good departmental documentation, which is closely matched to National Curriculum targets, and objectives. Accommodation for music is satisfactory overall. Music is located in a purpose-built separate suite. However, whilst the practice rooms are good spaces, the single main teaching room does not allow for the concurrent teaching of music. This issue was noted in the last inspection report.

240. Since the last inspection there have been many improvements in the range and delivery of the music curriculum. This augurs well for the future as it is certainly a department which is on an upward trend.

240. **Physical Education**

241. Attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stages 3 is above expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4 examination results in 1998 and 1999 were well above national and similar school averages both at the higher grades A\*-C and across grades A\*-G. In both years the percentage of pupils at 25 percent obtaining A\* and A grades was outstanding - well above national averages. Pupils' results are higher than in their other subjects. Compared with the time of the last inspection, when examination results were below national averages, improvements are very significant. Numbers of students entered for A-level fell from sixteen in 1998 to three in 1999, but their results were broadly in line with national averages. Sixteen out of seventeen students entered passed a national diploma in sports' studies in 1999.

242. Although a much smaller proportion of girls than boys follow examination courses their results follow a similar pattern. The school teams have considerable success both in the locality and further afield. The Year 9 girls were district netball champions and the Year 7, 9 and 10 boys in football. The standard of girls' teams has improved in recent years owing to an expansion of extra-curricular provision but has not yet equalled that of boys across the full range of activities. However, two girls achieved national standards in athletics. In 1997 the school was awarded the prestigious 'Sportsmark'. Over the course of a year the school fields about 78 competitive teams; about 100 boys play football matches on Saturday mornings. The school's achievements are largely attributable to a stable, dedicated team of teachers with high expectations of pupils.

243. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations. At the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 it is above expectations. Students in the sixth form are meeting course requirements at the higher levels. Standards in sports such as football, netball and basketball are good, and average in hockey. In one lesson boys in a Year 7 higher football set showed good co-ordination, speed and ball control on both right and left foot. By regularly reinforcing learning with clear explanation, pupils with SEN were able to understand when to use the hook and drag back technique in a small game. Year 9 boys attained good fitness levels where the pace of lesson was brisk; the teacher kept pupils on task and expectations were high. The boys were greatly inspired by posters showing fitness levels of top athletes and records set by pupils in each age group within the school. In a Year 11 examination basketball lesson boys were able to switch between zone and man-to-man marking with skill and understanding because of good practical demonstration, in classroom management and careful explanation. Year 13 students achieved a good standard in data gathering, analysis and evaluation of the effect of exercise on the body mainly because key areas were made rigorously clear.

244. The progress of pupils, including those with SEN, is good throughout the school.

Development of games skills is particularly good, with pupils showing improvement in skills, techniques and tactics. Skills taught in lesson are reinforced, extended and further developed by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities making a significant impact on pupils' progress over time. In lessons, other than examination classes, progress in planning is good but evaluation skills develop unevenly. This is because they are not identified in schemes of work, assessment procedures and lesson planning. Pupils make steady gains in gymnastics developing good body management, planning and evaluation skills. The one lesson observed in gymnastics indicates that standards have improved since the last inspection. Development of evaluation skills independently of the teacher is a weakness. No opportunities were provided for pupils in lessons observed. Pupils' knowledge and practice of health related fitness are developing unevenly. The importance of activity related stretching is under emphasised. Examination groups both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form make good progress. Teachers set interesting activities, make good use of resources and monitor pupils' grades carefully. For example, in a vocational sixth form lesson focussing on the American philosophy of sport, the students were absorbed in a video of 'superbowl', shown a model of a head protector and discussed issues highlighted on the overhead projector. Throughout the school sensitive grouping of pupils enables both boys and girls to progress equally well.

245. Pupils' response is at least satisfactory and in over half the lessons it is at least good. In almost all classes pupils show high levels of interest in and enthusiasm for their work. This is reflected in good standards of dress, participation and respect for their teachers. Take up of extra-curricular activities, competitive sport and accredited courses has steadily increased over the years and, in the main, pupils' involvement is sustained throughout their school career. All thirteen pupils identified as 'working beyond' expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 are following examination courses in Year 10. They have high expectations of themselves aiming to enter professions such as physiotherapy, teaching or professional football. Pupils behave well, work hard and carry out teachers' instructions immediately enabling all pupils to progress.
246. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, predominantly good and occasionally very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. The teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, tasks set are interesting and work is challenging and competitive. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and communicated to pupils effectively at all levels. Good use of questioning techniques is used to revise, reinforce and extend learning. Pupils are managed firmly and with considerable attention to groupings, organisation and content. The command method of teaching is used effectively in many lessons, particularly in games and skills based activities. Insufficient use of other teaching methods limits development of pupils' independent learning. Where pupils are given responsibility, as in a Year 9 netball lesson on umpiring, pupils of modest attainment quickly learnt the need to obey both the rules of the game and the umpire. Their understanding of the rules and their footwork, ball handling and use of space improved dramatically. By managing change of activities within a lesson effectively teachers make good use of time. Pupils are clear how well they are doing in the lesson and what they need to do to improve. Feedback to individuals groups and to the whole class is good. Informal assessment is insufficiently linked to formal assessment procedures.
247. The department is led with considerable skill, expertise and sensitivity. Improvements have been managed with equanimity. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in addressing the issues raised which were to increase student demonstration and level of questioning and to set up a planned programme of monitoring and shared lesson observation. In addition opportunities in the sixth form have been extended; an A level course and national and first diploma courses have been introduced. Shortage of indoor spaces limits curriculum provision.

247. **Religious Education**

248. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, and attainment is in line with the standards expected by the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. Curriculum content is appropriate at this stage. Religious ideas, concepts and practices are explored, for example, in Year 7 through consideration of symbolism in the world's main religions and in Year 8 by consideration of the miracles recorded in the Gospels.

249. As at the time of the last inspection Key Stage 4 RE is delivered through the PSE programme which, though having a religious dimension, is not able to devote sufficient time to RE to meet the demands of the Agreed Syllabus. It is not possible therefore to make judgements about standards of work at this stage. There is no RE in the Sixth Form and therefore statutory requirements are not met. Currently there are no children studying for GCSE, but in the 1999 results 56 percent of students obtained grades at A\*-C, which is slightly above the national average. No differences in attainment were observed arising from gender or ethnicity.

250. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject. They behave well, respond to teachers' instructions and work consistently. Relationships between pupils and teachers are generally good. Pupils support each other and discuss their work in a positive way. Respect is shown for the views of fellow pupils. This is manifest in the effective working which takes place in groups. Most pupils have the confidence to talk about their own perceptions.

251. The quality of teaching is good. Staff are secure in their subject knowledge and plan lessons well. Teachers are well prepared. Expectation of pupils' work is high and there is sound class management. A variety of teaching strategies is used. Instructions are clear, transition points in lessons well handled and pupils move smoothly from discussion to question and answer to written and group work. Within PSE such topics as 'The Family' and 'Loss' are sensitively presented by teachers. Pupils are given opportunities to enter into the experiences, feelings and responses of others, for example in Year 9 in considering the Holocaust and the story of Anne Frank. The skilful presentation and effective planning of these lessons is leading pupils to develop their own beliefs and values and contrasting their experience with others. The subject is presented as relevant to modern life. Work is organized efficiently and is always purposeful. There is a need for a wider range of differentiated learning tasks. Computers are used to aid pupils' learning. Good use is made of homework to consolidate learning and to prompt pupils at the start of the next lesson.

252. RE makes a significant contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils have the opportunity to consider their own beliefs and stances for living and are encouraged to develop these. Themes within the PSE programme with a religious dimension extend this opportunity into Key Stage 4. RE uses the marking policy agreed by the humanities faculty, which encourages the use of both grades and comments designed to encourage future improvement. In practice the comments on pupils' work tend to be brief and do not always indicate how pupils can improve.

253. The head of department provides supportive and efficient leadership to her colleagues, none of whom are RE specialists. Both formal and informal consultations take place - the former being minuted. Planning and good organization of the department have continued since the last inspection. The head of department is the only teacher to have specialist qualifications and her experience is an essential element in her colleagues' successful teaching. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources have been improved since the last inspection.

Storage space is barely adequate.

254. The school must now ensure that provision for RE at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is increased in order to fulfil statutory requirements. The differentiated learning materials available to pupils should be expanded and more attention should be given when pupils work is marked so that assessment becomes a more efficient tool in extending their learning.

254.

254.

254. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

254. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

255. The team comprised 16 inspectors attending for a total of 53 days. During the inspection 195 lessons, 19 registration sessions, 6 assemblies and a range of other activities were inspected. The team spent a total of 157.5 hours observing lessons; 71.5 hours were spent observing Key Stage 3 lessons, 54.1 hours those at Key Stage 4 and 31.9 at Key Stage 5. In addition, considerable time was spent scrutinising pupils' work.

256. The registered inspector interviewed the governing body before the inspection, and an additional interview was conducted during the inspection. The headteacher, the deputy head teacher, the three key stages directors, all heads of department and senior teachers were interviewed. Some non-teaching staff, including office staff were also interviewed. A considerable amount of documentation was provided by the school and this was analysed both before and during the inspection.

257. The inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils. Discussions took place with pupils during the course of the inspection. All available written work from a representative sample of three pupils from each year was examined. Prior to the inspection, 24 parents attended an evening meeting held by the registered inspector to seek their views. There were 104 responses to a questionnaire sent to parents seeking their views on specific school issues.

257. DATA AND INDICATORS

257. 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 - Y13	990	18	205	146

257. TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	64
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.47:1

Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked each week	364

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	77.3
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Average teaching group size	KS3	24
	KS4	19

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	2462469
Total expenditure	2455108
Expenditure per pupil	2604
Balance brought forward from previous year	41887
Balance carried forward to next year	49248

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	990
Number of questionnaires returned:	104

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	22	60	15	3	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37	58	5	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	63	19	3	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	16	62	16	7	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	20	57	14	9	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25	61	12	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29	52	14	5	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	17	65	9	5	4
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	20	64	16	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	16	61	20	3	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	36	54	5	4	1

### 257. Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' meeting, there was a unanimous view that the school was good. Particular strengths identified were the promotion of values, the help and guidance provided for pupils, the accessibility of staff, and the leadership of the headteacher. Several parents thought that teachers did not sufficiently deal with pupils when they did not complete homework. Other concerns were expressed, but these were mainly by one or two parents and a pattern did not emerge.

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