

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PETER'S CofE HIGH SCHOOL

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113553

Headteacher : Mr M Perry

Reporting inspector: W J Powell
3174

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 April 2000

Inspection number: 183949

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

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including Vocational A-levels, or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances; the judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 12 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Quarry Lane
Exeter

Postcode: EX2 5AP

Telephone number: 01392 204764

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chairman of governors: Mrs H Morgan

Date of previous inspection: 17 – 21 October 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
W J Powell	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
L Barclay	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
C Griffin	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language	Learning resources
R Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics	Accommodation
R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	
L Small	Team inspector	Design and technology; information technology	
M Lafford	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
B Barnes	Team inspector	History; special educational needs; equality of opportunity	
I Stuart	Team inspector	Geography; personal & social education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
D Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art; music	
R Castle	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
W Stoneham	Team inspector	Other provisions at Key Stage 4	Assessment; staffing

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Peter's is an average sized comprehensive school with 987 boys and girls aged 12 to 16. A key feature is that pupils have only two years before taking tests at the end of Key Stage 3; most schools have their pupils for three years. As a voluntary aided school, there are close links with the Diocese of Exeter. Most pupils at the school are white; only nine pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Three come from homes where the first languages spoken are not English. There are 110 pupils on the school's special educational needs register, a below average figure, of whom 11 have a Statement of Special Education Need, which is also below average. The socio-economic profile of the area served by the school is somewhat less disadvantaged than average. The pupils come from some 18 middle schools in the Exeter area; the school is over-subscribed. The attainments of the pupils when they enter the school vary significantly from year to year but overall, are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is an effective one, adding educational value over time. By the time pupils leave the school at 16, they do so with results that are, overall, above the levels that would be expected from their attainments at entry when they were 12. Just as important is the growth in their personal development as a result of the school's very good provisions; most are enthusiastic learners. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, although that in science is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management provided by the governors and headteacher are very good; they have increased the rigour with which the school's affairs are planned and evaluated. Middle management is satisfactory overall, with good work in some subjects, although in others, management is less than satisfactory. The school provides good value for money at present, and has the potential and capacity to become even more effective.

What the school does well

- Overall, the pupils' attainments when they leave the school are higher than would be expected from their attainments at entry.
- Mathematics is particularly effective in adding value because it uses assessment information very well to match teaching to the pupils' needs.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- Extra-curricular provisions are very good.
- The pupils' personal development is very good, as are arrangements for child protection and their welfare.
- The leadership and management provided by the governors and the headteacher are very good, and reflect the school's distinctive Christian ethos.

What could be improved

- The school's provision of well above average curriculum time for three sciences at Key Stage 4 is not repaid in terms of higher standards, and causes substantial problems of curriculum balance and timetabling in a range of subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching at both key stages in science is unsatisfactory.
- Standards in art at both key stages, and in music at Key Stage 3 are below expectations because of inappropriate schemes of work and teaching that does not challenge pupils.
- The inadequate number, quality and reliability of computers limits learning opportunities in most subjects.
- Not enough use is being made of valuable information on the pupils' attainments to ensure that teaching is matched sufficiently well to the pupils' needs.
- Not all teachers are able to manage the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1994, the school has made satisfactory progress. Results have improved, remaining ahead of national patterns. The school is on course to meet its targets for further improvement. The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better has improved, especially at Key Stage 3. The strengths identified at the time of the last inspection have, in almost all areas, been maintained; in many cases, they have been improved further. The management of the school no longer contains the overlaps

in function noted in 1994. Governors and senior managers now oversee the work of departments and monitor the pupils' performances effectively; monitoring is still capable of further development in most subjects. The provisions for personal and social education have been strengthened, as have arrangements for the basic programme in information technology. However, information technology is still not firmly established in work across the curriculum. Work could still be better matched to the needs of pupils across the ability range, but improvements have been made. The school still does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship, although improvements have been made.

STANDARDS

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

	compared with				Key	
Performance in:	all schools			similar schools	well above average	A
	1997	1998	1999	1999	above average	B C
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A	below average well below average	D E

Over the last four years, including 1999, the overall points scores attained in the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above the national average, and rising at a similar rate to the national trend, although the 1999 points score was well below that for similar schools. In 1999, the pupils' mean points scores are in line with the national averages for English and science, and well above that for mathematics. On the basis of the limited data available on achievements, the pupils gained results overall, and in all three subjects, that are somewhat below what would be expected from their Key Stage 2 test scores in 1996. However, unlike most other schools, the pupils were in the school for only two, rather than three, years before they took the Key Stage 3 tests. At the end of Key Stage 4, the mean GCSE points scores obtained by both boys and girls over the last three years, including 1999, have been well above the national average, but rising at a slower rate to that seen nationally. The 1999 results are also well above those for similar schools, and above those expected from the Key Stage 3 test results in 1997. The school's targets are realistically demanding, and reflect the variations in intake attainments that are seen from year to year. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above expected levels in mathematics and history at both key stages, in design and technology at Key Stage 3 and in music at Key Stage 4. They are below expectations for both key stages in art, and at Key Stage 3 in music. Elsewhere, attainments are in line with expected levels.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall; satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall, and improving as pupils move through the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The level of involvement in extra-curricular activities is especially high.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance rates are well above average and punctuality is good. Truancy is rare.

Most pupils show good attitudes to work. Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour amongst a minority of pupils are usually linked to weaker teaching, most often in Year 9. They are best in English, drama, design and technology and in modern languages.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
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Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	N/A
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Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons; it is very good or better in 16 per cent of cases, but less than satisfactory in nine per cent of lessons. Teaching is good at all levels in design and technology, history, modern languages and physical education, and in English at Key Stage 4. In spite of many examples of good teaching in science, the one-fifth of lessons that are less than satisfactory make teaching unsatisfactory overall at both key stages. In all other cases, including mathematics, teaching is satisfactory. Mathematics makes effective use of assessment information to match work to the pupils' needs; they make above average progress as a result. Elsewhere, subjects make insufficient use of assessment data, especially at Key Stage 3, and this can lead to insufficient challenge. It also means that at Key Stage 3, most pupils have inadequate knowledge of their own learning. In most cases, teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects taught, although some non-specialist teaching in science and information technology limits learning. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, although the lack of a clear literacy policy means that good practice is not being promoted widely. Information technology is not used enough to promote learning in most subjects because there are too few computers. Learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils show good effort and concentration in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs, and with English as an additional language, are effective learners.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The breadth of the curriculum at both key stages is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Balance at both key stages is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Additional work in literacy and numeracy is effective.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory for the very small number of pupils involved.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, and in spiritual, moral and social development. Cultural development is good. Provisions reflect the school's excellent commitment to this area of its work.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Child protection and welfare provisions are very good, as is pastoral support. Assessment is not used enough to set clear targets for pupils.

The school has very good links with parents, who are positive about its work. The information provided for parents is satisfactory overall; the school is aware of the need to make improvements. Reports on pupils are good. The school's wish to provide three sciences for a significant minority at Key Stage 4, together with weaknesses in the structure of the timetable, distort the whole curriculum. At Key Stage 3, learning suffers because some subjects have inadequate time, some classes have more than one teacher, and in some cases, lessons are not well spread through the week.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and management by governors and the headteacher; good in many subjects, but unsatisfactory in science, art, music and in some aspects of physical education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. More effective amongst governors and senior managers than middle managers, most of whom do not monitor subjects well enough.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing is satisfactory, accommodation is good but learning resources are unsatisfactory because there are too few computers. The school applies principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall progress that pupils make. • The school's expectations of work and behaviour. • The school's approachability when problems arise. • The school's work in the personal development of pupils. • The leadership and management of the school. • The overall quality of the teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework arrangements. • The quality of information provided by the school.

Inspectors agree with the parents' assessments of the school's strengths, although unsatisfactory behaviour is somewhat more widespread than many parents suggest. Inspectors note that the school is seeking to provide more information to parents, although the general quality is satisfactory. Homework arrangements are felt to be satisfactory overall, although sometimes, inappropriate work is being set.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The school differs from most others in the country in that its pupils spend Year 7 as the final year in the many middle schools that feed St Peter's. The pupils have therefore already received one year's education, to varying standards, in the secondary National Curriculum before joining St Peter's. The school therefore has only two years in which to ensure that pupils reach the standards expected for the end of Key Stage 3, rather than the more usual three. Whilst details of the pupils' Key Stage 2 test scores in Year 6 are available, they do not provide the baseline from which the school works. The Key Stage 2 mean point scores of recent intakes show significant variations from year to year, broadly centred on the national average, and this is also reflected in the results of other tests that the school conducts at entry. The school sets targets for attainments that are suitably demanding, but realistic in that they reflect variations in the strengths and weaknesses of intakes from year to year.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3, the overall mean points scores of boys and girls in the national tests have been above average over the period 1996 to 1999, and improving in line with the national trend. Over this period, standards have been well above average in mathematics, above average in English and average in science. In 1999, the mean test scores obtained by pupils in mathematics are well above the average for all schools, and in line with those for similar schools. In English and science, results are in line with the national averages, but well below those for similar schools. In relation to the pupils' 1996 Key Stage 2 tests, the 1999 results at Key Stage 3 show achievements that are below average in terms of the educational value being added in English and science; that added in mathematics is only marginally below the level expected.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, the overall GCSE points score obtained by pupils has been well above the average for all schools over the past three years, including 1999, for boys and girls alike. The 1999 figure is well above that for similar schools. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at grade C or better has also been well above average; that gaining five or more passes at grade G or better is very high – in the top five per cent of schools nationally. At Key Stage 4, the pupils' overall achievements have been above average in terms of the value added between their 1997 Key Stage 3 tests and the 1999 GCSE results. The value added in mathematics has been above average, whilst that in English and science is average, in spite of substantially more teaching time for those taking three separate sciences than usual in the latter. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, results are significantly above average in design and technology, English language and literature, history, and mathematics. They are significantly below average in art, double science, geography and German. Results are broadly average in all other subjects. At both key stages, the relatively better achievements of pupils in mathematics over time reflect the effective analysis and use of data on attainments to match work closely to their needs, but especially so at Key Stage 3.
4. In work seen during the inspection, standards in English are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3, and above expected levels for the end of Key Stage 4. Speaking and listening skills are above expectations for both key stages, with most pupils showing confidence when working in a variety of contexts. Reading skills are in line with expectations at Key Stage 3, and above at Key Stage 4, particularly amongst

higher attainers, who display considerable insight when working with literary texts. Lower attainers read with reasonable fluency, but their responses to texts are more superficial. The school's policy of silent reading and enhanced library use is paying dividends. Writing also improves from average levels at Key Stage 3 to above average at Key Stage 4, with higher and middle attainers having a proper appreciation of style and audience. Whilst spelling improves amongst lower attainers as they move through the school, their writing continues to be marred by weaknesses of expression and grammatical accuracy. The contribution of other subjects to the pupils' literacy skills is variable, reflecting the lack of a clear whole-school policy for this important area. Drama and history provide good examples of effective work. Literacy is also developed well in design and technology as part of the research process, and through carefully planned opportunities to develop writing in geography, although the impact of these is reduced by variations in the quality of marking. The good links between English and information technology allow pupils to use the power of computers to improve writing for specific readerships; the low number of computers limits the opportunities to do similar work in a wider range of subjects.

5. Standards in work seen in mathematics are above expectations for the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, reflecting careful teaching that build basic skills of numeracy well from the often low levels seen when pupils arrive in the school. A key feature of the subject is that pupils are made to think carefully about what they are doing rather than merely carrying out routines; carefully structured teaching enables pupils to progress well. Numeracy is also being developed through work in many other subjects, guided by an effective numeracy policy.
6. In science, standards in work seen are broadly in line with expectations for the ends of both key stages. However, pupils lack competence in some aspects of investigational work because this important area receives insufficient time. Given the well above average time allocated to the three separate sciences at Key Stage 4, standards should be higher. That they are not reflects shortcomings in teaching in many lessons which fail to develop genuine understanding of principles, and do not match work sufficiently well to the pupils' needs at both ends of the attainment range. This is made worse by the relatively large number of GCSE option groups, which restrict opportunities for setting pupils by ability. Limited curriculum time, mixed ability teaching and classes shared by more than one teacher contribute to the lower than expected progress being made by most pupils at Key Stage 3. As a result, they do not develop effective working habits at this important stage in their learning.
7. The standards seen in specialist information technology lessons at both key stages are in line with expectations. Pupils develop a suitably broad portfolio of skills, although higher attainers, particularly those with computers at home, are not always provided with sufficient challenge. Unfortunately, these good basic skills cannot be used to best effect across the curriculum as a whole because of the low number of computers in the school, the mix of systems in use and their unreliability. Teachers in other subjects identify opportunities to use information technology to enhance learning, but cannot gain access to computers sufficiently often to put them into effect.
8. In other subjects, standards are above expected levels in design and technology at Key Stage 3, music at Key Stage 4 and history at both key stages. Standards are below expectations in music at Key Stage 3 and art at all levels. Elsewhere, standards match expectations. Good standards in history and in design and technology reflect good teaching that has high, yet realistic, expectations of what can be done. Those at Key Stage 4 in music arise because of the generally high standard of instrumental skills of

the pupils opting for the subject. The unsatisfactory work in music at Key Stage 3 stems from inadequate schemes of work, poor accommodation and the use of part-time or temporary staff. As a result, pupils lack the basic knowledge of musical conventions that are required if they are to make appropriate progress; only strong instrumentalists tend to continue with the subject after Year 9. Standards in art at Key Stage 3 reflect the low starting point of many pupils, but also the modest expectations of what should be achieved. Standards at Key Stage 4 are limited by superficiality, which means that much work is predictable rather than creative.

9. Overall, boys and girls achieve at similar levels in subjects; this is reflected in the overall patterns of their test and examination results at the end of both key stages. In a few lessons, achievement is less than it should be because of poor behaviour by a small number of pupils, which goes unchecked by the teacher. The progress made in geography and history in Year 9 is not always sufficiently high because of limited curriculum time and timetabling problems, leading to discontinuity in learning. Pupils with special educational needs show good achievement at all levels. They make good progress during their time at the school, obtaining appropriate GCSE pass rates in recent years; many pupils obtain five or more GCSE passes. Results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show that the proportion of pupils attaining below level 4, which is approximately one level below expectations, is about half that found nationally. This means that pupils with the lowest prior attainments, within a broadly average ability intake, make particularly good progress. Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs make mostly good progress, helped by the skilled work of learning support assistants. However, some pupils do not learn as effectively as they could. This is because teachers do not take their learning difficulties fully into account when planning lessons, such as devising ways to enable dyslexic pupils to record work effectively, especially where the pupil has no additional help in the lesson. The school does not know with sufficient accuracy the extent or rate of progress in reading for individual pupils with literacy difficulties. In part, this is because the targets in the individual educational plans are not sufficiently specific or measurable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. There has been a decline in the pupils' responses to school since the last inspection. Attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory in 88 per cent of lessons, and good or better in 62 per cent of cases. Overall, attitudes and behaviour in lessons are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Of the 21 lessons where attitudes and behaviour were less than satisfactory, almost half were in Year 9. Attitudes and behaviour are never less than satisfactory, and often good, in English, drama, design and technology and in modern languages. These are the subjects where learning is at its best, often because teachers plan work that stimulates the pupils and meets their needs. In contrast, the highest levels of unsatisfactory attitudes occur in science, where teaching is, overall, unsatisfactory because pupils are not sufficiently involved in the work, which is not matched closely enough to their needs. This was also the case in most, but not all, other cases of unsatisfactory attitudes to learning in other subjects. In a small minority of cases, inadequate behaviour persisted in spite of effective teaching.
11. Such incidents are in the minority; most pupils display good attitudes towards their work. They are enthusiastic about what they do and come to school ready to work well. For the most part, the pupils' interest and involvement in activities are very good. An excellent drama lesson in Year 9 on *Romeo and Juliet* showed how very positive attitudes towards work were bound up with excellent teaching. This lesson maintained a high pace of

learning with many switches of style. The pupils' interests were captured at an early stage and they showed high levels of involvement in the work; they could identify with what was happening in the play. In a bottom set Year 8 French lesson, the teacher demanded, and got, the pupils' full attention; the pupils rose to the challenges set, working at a high rate in individual and group work, and using the language consistently in their responses. Pupils in a Year 9 history lesson were keen to please the teacher. They were enthusiastic when answering questions, and really thought hard about more challenging issues; many pupils took careful notes of what was being said without being told to do so.

12. Behaviour overall is broadly satisfactory across the school, both in lessons and around the site; it improves as pupils move through the school, becoming good at Key Stage 4. Most pupils are thoughtful and courteous to each other, their teachers and to visitors. Where the overall quality of teaching and teacher-pupil relationships are very good, the pupils' behaviour in class is also very good. Where there is toleration of minor misbehaviour, there are low expectations, a slow pace to lessons, and the pupils are not challenged, behaviour deteriorates and can sometimes be unacceptable, having a negative effect on standards. The school has identified the need to train teachers in positive behaviour management. It is involved with other schools in the area in a promising project designed to identify the causes of poor behaviour, and to share strategies of good practice. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils report that bullying is rare, and that cases are dealt with swiftly when reported to staff. Overall, there is a very good climate in which oppressive behaviour, including sexism and racism, is not acceptable to the pupils. There are very few permanent exclusions. The rate of short term exclusion is above average, but most cases are of very short duration. Records show that such action is effective; very few pupils cause further problems.
13. The quality of personal development and relationships is good. Attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs are positive and constructive across the curriculum. The level of involvement in extra-curricular activities is very high. Many boys and girls take advantage of varied opportunities to test themselves, often in physically and mentally demanding ways such as adventure training, or as members of the Combined Cadet Force. For the most part, pupils work together co-operatively. The relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good and, in some cases, excellent. Only rarely are they lacking in mutual respect. Pupils in all years enjoy the responsibility of membership of the school council and, by the end of Key Stage 4, they are taking personal responsibility for their substantial course-work files.
14. Attendance is very good. Pupils arrive punctually for school and classes, and truancy is very rare. The recorded rate of attendance is well above the national average; unauthorised absence is below average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is better than that seen at the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. The overall quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons; the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is similar at both key stages, but whereas half of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good or better, the figure is two-thirds at Key Stage 4. Several of the cases of unsatisfactory teaching occurred when lessons were not taught by the usual class teacher. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in English, drama, design and

technology, information technology, modern languages, music, personal and social education and in vocational subjects. Teaching is good at both key stages in design and technology, drama, history, modern languages and in physical education. It is also good at Key Stage 4 in English. In other subjects, teaching at all levels is satisfactory, except in science, where it is unsatisfactory overall at both key stages. There is a close linkage between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning, which is also satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.

16. The pupils join the school from a wide range of middle schools, and have only two years at St Peter's before taking national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Therefore, assessment should be an important ingredient in ensuring effective learning from as early as possible in Year 8. The school now has good centralised systems for gathering and analysing a wide range of data about Year 8 pupils. Teachers in different subjects are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils with special educational needs. However, the use made of all this information by most subjects is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. As a result, teaching at this level too often fails to ensure that the work set provides appropriate challenges for pupils across the ability range. Teachers' expectations are, as a result, unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 3, but sound at Key Stage 4. The problem is made worse because many classes at Key Stage 3 are taught by more than one teacher. A notable exception to this general picture is mathematics. Here, early assessment is aimed at finding out what pupils in Year 8 already know, understand and can do. The information is used to group pupils in a flexible manner, and to set clear targets for them. Work is then carefully matched to the pupils' different abilities, and progress monitored regularly and carefully. As a result, the pupils make greater progress over time in Years 8 and 9 than in English and science, where mixed ability teaching and inadequate assessment result in work that too often fails to provide appropriate challenge. By Year 9, pupils in mathematics have a clear knowledge of their own learning; in contrast, this is unsatisfactory in most other subjects at this level. At Key Stage 4, the use made of assessment information by all subjects is satisfactory, in part because of the clearer demands of examination work. Work provides a more satisfactory challenge across the ability range. Again, however, the strengths of target setting and monitoring in mathematics stand out, and result in learning that shows better value being added than in most other subjects in Years 10 and 11. Marking shows considerable variation within and between subjects. At its best, it is done regularly, gives appropriate praise and tells clearly what the pupils need to do in order to improve their work. However, although most books are marked regularly, pupils are given insufficient guidance on how they could do better. In a few cases, marking is cursory or non-existent.
17. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subjects that they teach is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In a few areas, such as science and information technology, the need to use non-specialists at Key Stage 3 results in a slower pace of learning, particularly where there are insecure systems to promote the most effective classroom practice. More often, however, the teacher's good subject knowledge results in learning that promotes secure understanding of concepts by pupils. Overall, this aspect of learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. An example of this was seen in an excellent dance lesson in Year 10, where the teacher's detailed knowledge of dance led to the pupils developing a clear love of the subject. Detailed question and answer work demanded thorough self-evaluation from the pupils. As a result, they constantly added to, and refined, their skills. Most of the group looked like, and held themselves as, dancers. Excellent learning in a Year 11 English group also stemmed from the teacher's detailed knowledge of the subject matter. Very effective closed questioning of those making a presentation on a poem,

and open questions to the rest of the class, resulted in a deeper appreciation of the ideas being expressed, and promoted the use of high-quality language.

18. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, although the lack of a clear literacy policy means that the best practices are not being promoted as widely as could be the case. A good example occurred when Year 9 information technology lesson on spreadsheets went beyond the mechanics of entering formulae because well targeted questions ensured that pupils understood the underlying mathematical principles. An insistence on the accurate use of technical vocabulary is a feature of most subjects, but especially so in mathematics, where key words are displayed in all classrooms. An understanding that reading is a key part of the research process is a strength of work in design and technology, and at Key Stage 4 in history. However, the promotion of literacy skills amongst pupils with special educational needs is a relative weakness in many mainstream classes. For example, relatively few teachers employ literacy strategies such as highlighting key words and adopting a visual approach to the teaching of spelling. There is no guidance in the staff handbook that all teachers need to do this. Consequently, while pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, it is not evenly so in all subjects. Pupils who have English as an additional language learn well and generally made good progress. Teaching of information technology across the curriculum is hampered by the low number of computers, and their unreliability. Teachers have too few opportunities to use computers as a natural learning tool, even though most subjects identify suitable opportunities for them to do so.
19. The overall quality of teachers' planning of work, including homework, is satisfactory at both key stages. Most use a suitable variety of teaching and learning approaches to ensure that the pupils maintain interest, apply themselves conscientiously and that the pace of learning is good, particularly at Key Stage 4. Teachers also make generally good use of a range of resources to support their work. For example, a good Year 8 personal and social education lesson on healthy eating showed how variety maintained a good pace of learning. An effective opening session of question and answer work set the scene, but also raised expectations through the teacher's insistence on accuracy. The pupils worked enthusiastically in the following group work, before moving on to a short videotaped extract. This was stopped at key points to reinforce learning. Throughout the lesson, there were frequent links to other subjects, and a general climate of thought-provoking ideas that challenged established attitudes. The lesson ended with a short session of recapitulation that drew out the key areas of knowledge and understanding from the various activities. The use of support staff in lessons is generally good; teachers work well with learning support staff, who provide skilled and effective support. Whilst homework arrangements are generally sound, some teachers ask pupils to finish work being done in class. This fails to give higher attainers sufficient challenge, as they have often completed the work during the lesson.
20. The management of the pupils' behaviour is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, but unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 3, which is where challenging behaviour by pupils is most often encountered. Many teachers manage such behaviour well, and reflect the school's policy of making teachers more responsible for what happens in their own classes. However, a significant minority is ineffective in this, failing to nip emerging problems in the bud. Successful management of behaviour is rooted in clear expectations, good relationships and, above all, by work that matches the needs and the interests of all pupils in the group. The impact of different approaches could be seen in mathematics, where the same Year 8 group was taught by two teachers in successive lessons. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher's exposition simply repeated what was

in the textbook; some pupils ignored this and carried on working through questions without being admonished. The pace of the work was slow, leading to more able pupils becoming bored. Calling out and other clear signs of lack of concentration were not dealt with; the teacher tried to talk over the general noise level. The lesson came to a ragged end. In the second lesson, which was good, the teacher quickly established high expectations of behaviour in spite of boisterousness on arrival; pupils were left in no doubt what was required of them. The teacher ensured that seating arrangements promoted effective work, briefed the pupils very thoroughly and engaged most pupils well in an intense period of question and answer work on their homework before moving on to the other activities. In contrast to the earlier lesson, the pupils made clear gains in knowledge and understanding through purposeful individual work, conducted in a calm atmosphere.

21. There are common threads to the lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. Most of the unsatisfactory lessons involve inadequate control of the pupils. Situations which, in more successful lessons, are dealt with quickly at an early stage tend to be ignored, so that behaviour steadily deteriorates. As a result, the unacceptable behaviour of the few tends to result in inadequate learning for the whole class. In part, however, unsatisfactory features of the teaching contribute to problems, with many of the lessons marked by too much talking at pupils by the teacher, a slow pace and work that fails to stimulate a significant minority of the pupils in the class. Ultimately, the pupils in these lessons do not learn sufficiently well because they are given too few chances to do so at levels that challenge them appropriately. Such unsatisfactory lessons coexist alongside many others where teaching is good, very good or even excellent. Overall, the monitoring of teaching is not given a sufficiently high priority in most subjects. The best practices are not being identified and promoted sufficiently strongly. Many of the weaknesses identified were also evident at the last inspection. However, apart from the management of challenging behaviour at Key Stage 3, weaknesses are less widespread than in 1994.

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

The curriculum

22. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements to the curriculum. This year, a Part One GNVQ course has been introduced at Key Stage 4, and there are plans to provide further courses of this type. The total curriculum time is still below recommended levels. Most other issues from the previous report have been satisfactorily resolved, but the curriculum at both key stages is still distorted unsatisfactorily by the school's arrangements for science at Key Stage 4.
23. The breadth of the curriculum at both Key Stages is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements, with provision for all National Curriculum subjects plus religious education. After criticism in the last report, the provisions for personal and social education are now good at both key stages, and include appropriate coverage of health and sex education, and alcohol and drug misuse. The school has forged good links with outside bodies in drawing up and delivering this course, parts of which include contributions by former pupils. All pupils at Key Stage 3 receive specialist lessons in drama and information technology and, for the past two years, have followed courses in two modern languages. Pupils at Key Stage 4 follow a basic curriculum that covers National Curriculum requirements, and includes information technology for all in Year 10 as well as religious education, physical education and personal and social education in Years 10 and 11.

24. The balance of the curriculum at both key stages is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3, the time allocated to science is markedly lower than usual, restricting course coverage. Science is taught in mixed ability groups in Years 8 and 9, with no opportunity to place pupils in setted classes. Timetabling constraints result in English, mathematics and science having classes taught by more than one teacher, which reduces the continuity of learning. Some science teaching at Key Stage 3 is done by non-specialists. Taken with higher than usual levels of unsatisfactory teaching in science, this wide range of problems leads to pupils making less progress than average in the subject at Key Stage 3. History and geography have less time than usual in Year 8. The situation is even worse in Year 9, where poor timetabling of lessons through the week, and alternating weeks of even less time for the two subjects, lead to inadequate continuity of learning.
25. A substantial number of pupils take three science subjects to GCSE level, which is very unusual in view of the school's intake profile. Moreover, the time given to the three sciences is, at 27 per cent of the total, much higher than usual, even for schools offering this option. This restricts the choice of optional subjects for those following three science courses. Moreover, the policy results in unsatisfactory grouping arrangements for those taking three sciences, resulting in only limited setting by ability at Key Stage 4. The substantial investment in staff and time for science overall at Key Stage 4 is not being returned in higher results; progress is no more than average in Years 10 and 11 in relation to the pupils' Key Stage 3 attainments.
26. The school offers a range of vocational opportunities to a small, but significant, number of pupils in Key Stage 4. These include a Part One GNVQ course in health and social care at both Intermediate and Foundation levels, and the Young Enterprise programme. Alternative accreditation such as NVQ for lower attaining pupils is slowly developing, for example through local initiatives such as the Bridging Project, supported by central government.
27. Literacy and numeracy are in the early stages of development across departments. In the absence of a whole-school literacy policy, there is a lack of a consistent approach across all subjects, although provisions are broadly satisfactory. This is a key priority in the current school development plan. In contrast, there is a now a good quality numeracy policy, and numeracy is being enhanced in a range of subjects.
28. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at both key stages, and enables pupils with difficulties in literacy and numeracy to receive effective tuition in small groups in English and mathematics. As a result, these pupils learn effectively and make good progress. The impact of the provision is reduced by timetabling, with some pupils getting three of their five English or mathematics lessons on the same day. Additional funding enables a small number of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties to have targeted support including at lunch times, when the learning support base is open as a "safe haven" and for homework support; this is working well. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs include strategies for teachers to follow, but lack sufficiently specific targets. There has been some improvement in explicit planning to match work to the needs of pupils since the last inspection, with particularly good practice in mathematics, but overall, this remains insufficient across the curriculum as a whole.
29. The school provides a very good range of extra curricular opportunities, which are valued by pupils and their parents. There is a particularly good variety of seasonal sporting activities of both recreational and competitive nature, with pupils performing at

county and national levels. There is a wide range of activities in music, drama, dance, English, history, geography and outdoor education, as well as a cadet contingent. The school has a good activities week, which includes residential experiences in both this country and abroad. During the week of the inspection, a well above average proportion of pupils participated in the extra curricular programme. All these opportunities significantly enhance the pupils' experiences. In order to achieve this programme, the school makes very effective use of its links with the community.

30. The school's provisions for work-related education are good. Good links are established with the local business community, for example, through links with the local industrial estate. These are successful in broadening the experience of pupils. The growing vocational dimension to the Key Stage 4 curriculum is also building valuable links. The majority of pupils in Year 11 participate successfully in work experience during the late autumn, most of which is undertaken within the local area. The Young Enterprise programme also promotes a good understanding of the problems that businesses face. Relationships with the career service are good, as are aspects of careers education, particularly at Key Stage 4 in providing guidance on post-16 education and career opportunities. Pupils receive informative career details from Year 9 onwards; in Years 10 and 11 there is regular advice over a full range of possible careers and option choices. The advice received by parents and pupils over Key Stage 4 option choices is helpful; documentation and information evenings greatly assist pupils in their choices.
31. There are good links with further education institutions and other providers of post-16 education. Although pastoral links with middle schools are good, curriculum links are unsatisfactory. In part, this reflects the large number of schools that send pupils to St Peter's, and the difficulty in obtaining information on the pupils' earlier attainments and course coverage in Year 7. The contribution to learning from the wider community is satisfactory. There are visits to places of educational interest, which, together with visitors to school, all help to enhance the curriculum. There is a broad range of opportunities for pupils to exercise suitable responsibility through community service.
32. The school now has a comprehensive policy on equal opportunities, with monitoring at a senior level to ensure compliance. However, pupils who follow three sciences have a restricted choice of other options at Key Stage 4, whilst GCSE music is restricted, in practice if not in principle, to strong instrumentalists. The school is increasingly well aware of pupils who are achieving below expectations. It has been successful in reducing the gap between the attainments of girls and boys. Awareness has resulted in appropriate action, drawing upon research into raising boys' achievements. Similarly, the school is aware of the need to improve the way teachers meet the needs of all pupils, but in this case, it has not yet fully developed ways of doing this. The school began to identify pupils who are gifted and talented several years ago, but there is not, currently, an up-to-date list. There is appropriate guidance for staff, some provision but mixed practice across the curriculum. In some departments, as in mathematics and history, the most able pupils are being fully stretched, but this is not typical. The school has this area as a priority in its current development plan.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

33. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was a strength at the time of the previous inspection. That is still the case, and, overall, provision is very good. At the whole-school level, the commitment is excellent, and this is reflected in the school's aims and in the statement of principles underlying the curriculum. There has been a major consideration of the meaning of spirituality and some training for all

teachers in this area. However, the school's overarching principles are not always carried through in day to day work in the classroom, and opportunities to promote spiritual and cultural development are sometimes missed. So, despite good, very good and excellent examples, there is potential for further development.

34. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Although the school does not fully comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, provisions have improved since the last inspection. The majority of assemblies offer suitable opportunities for reflection and a consideration of God's presence. One assembly, for example, included a dance presentation on the theme of time, with pupils asked to reflect on journeys through time. This included their own journeys, the development through time of the school's Millennium Show, and Christ's final journey to the Cross. During the inspection week, half of Year 8 attended a service of Holy Communion and participated with reverence and dignity. The school's attractive chapel, with its fine stained glass windows, evokes a spiritual response. The creation of a peace garden for personal, quiet reflection is a notable provision for spiritual development. Although not inspected at this time, appropriate provision for the pupils' spiritual development is built into the scheme of work for religious education. All subjects have identified occasions when they might contribute to pupils' spiritual development. However, many are mundane; if they happen, the quality is very uneven, and, often, just implicit. Nonetheless, there are instances of very good practice. In a Year 11 English lesson on Charlotte O'Neill's song about migration to New Zealand in the nineteenth century, pupils wrote their own versions, putting themselves in her position. They explored deeply and sensitively the life changing issues in the original text; they read their poems to others and then discussed with a partner, comparing the sentiments of their piece with the original. High quality reflective and sensitive responses, and work of exceptional standard were produced; one boy said with great perception : 'it's a metaphor for escaping'. In a Year 10 dance lesson, pupils had opportunities to reflect, in a period of silence and stillness, on their emotional responses to their individual dance routines.
35. Provision for the pupils' moral development is very good. The school is a moral community with a clear understanding of right and wrong. Teachers are good role models. Pupils are generally trusted and respected and have reasonable access to the building at breaks and lunchtimes. The school's values permeate its provision: sex education, for example, is taken very seriously, and put in a firm Christian context. Most subjects, including religious education, make provision in their schemes of work to cover moral issues and dilemmas, and assemblies also make important contributions. Examples from Year 8 in drama and geography illustrate the range of opportunities. In drama, pupils consider *Simon*, a Down's Syndrome boy who joins a youth club; they explore the topic and develop its characters. In geography, pupils have designed posters and written poems from the perspectives of people in developing countries, inviting people in this country to support an appropriate fund. The project concluded in a lovely assembly when a visitor, who had contributed to the work in lessons, presented to pupils, who had produced the best pieces of work, prizes consisting of articles made in some of the world's poor countries. He spoke eloquently of the value of this type of international co-operation.
36. Provision for the pupils' social development is also very good. The school is justifiably proud of the social opportunities open to pupils. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport. With the large level of participation in these by pupils, they have very good opportunities to meet informally and socially. Particularly notable is the Combined Cadet Force, which involves a large number of pupils, including some who

have left school recently. Adventure training, sailing, camps, leadership opportunities and links with the wider community are among the benefits for pupils, many of whom make a very great commitment. The Young Enterprise scheme is strong; many of Year 10 also take part in community service, either with the playgroup or at a local senior citizen's day centre; most Year 10 pupils take part in a week's residential experience. Many out of school visits, regular weekend expeditions and activities weeks are further examples of good opportunities for the pupils' social development. An excellent recent example has been the Millennium Show, whose preparation, production and performances involved hundreds of pupils, teachers and parents, along with people of all ages from the local community, in a splendid co-operative venture. The school's student council works well, and is well regarded by pupils.

37. Provision for cultural development is good. There is a good range of cultural visits and productions in the school and outside, including special events such as the Advent procession in the Cathedral. Much work in geography is put in a firm cultural context, and the pupils' cultural development is strongly promoted in many history and English lessons. Though there is a long established exchange with a French school, this is in abeyance at present; opportunities for cultural development in modern foreign languages are currently restricted to normal classroom work. Promotion of aspects of multi-cultural education, and the multi-cultural nature of Britain today, is a comparative weakness. There has not, so far, been a sufficiently strong whole school thrust in this area. However, there are notable examples of good practice, which can provide a firm foundation for future developments. One example is in drama lessons, which deal with a story of white Americans moving west in the 1840s and meeting with Native Americans. Another is the very sensitive and detailed coverage of poetry in Key Stage 4 English; pupils speak positively about texts such as *Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan*, and recognise the United Kingdom's resident's search for cultural identity.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare continue to be very good overall, reflecting the caring ethos of the school. Overall, its provisions have a positive effect on raising standards, although more could be done to use assessment data more fully. The strengths noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained, especially those that flow from the system whereby tutors and pupils move through the school together. All Year 8 pupils are given a medical check and, by Year 11, immunisation programmes are complete. The educational and personal support for pupils is good overall, but is better in pastoral terms than in promoting their academic development. Teachers know the pupils well. The pastoral support given by the tutors and year heads is very good, and is enhanced by their moving through the school with the same groups of pupils. Pupils find it easy and comfortable to turn to the school for help. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy, backed by clear procedures. The governors, working with the school's senior administrative officer, ensure that hazards are identified and addressed appropriately. However, the programme for the routine checking of electrical equipment has not been followed; checks are overdue. There are clear procedures to deal with suspected cases of child abuse, which are well known to staff. External agencies are involved appropriately when required.
39. The school has satisfactory procedures for identifying pupils who have special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with middle schools, and all pupils are tested on entry as a further aid to identification. The special educational needs co-ordinator has devised a simple but effective system for

recording information about pupils on the register of special educational needs, and this provides a quick overview of their requirements. Day-to-day monitoring of such pupils is effective, and time is given at the weekly school briefing to update other staff. Procedures for setting targets for pupils with special educational needs are too complicated; the resulting targets lack sufficient detail or quantification. On the initiative of a learning support assistant, the school has set up a good paired reading scheme. Fifteen senior pupils read in pairs with their Year 8 partners twice a week. As well as having a positive impact on the reading skills of the younger pupils, this is good personal development for all concerned.

40. The procedures for promoting attendance are very good, as are those for monitoring and eliminating bullying or other oppressive behaviour. There is systematic monitoring of unacceptable behaviour. This has recently been supplemented by the introduction of a mentoring system for pupils with more serious behavioural problems. The evidence so far is that this is having a very positive effect. Overall, the school has good systems in place to promote good behaviour, although some teachers find class control a problem. The school is largely successful in its aim of promoting good behaviour and high achievement by positive reinforcement, including merit and commendation awards and prizes.
41. The procedures for assessing the pupils' academic attainments and progress are satisfactory, though there are significant variations in practice from department to department. The overall approach is hampered by the fact that the current assessment policy was written in 1994. This is now dated and in need of a thorough review. Most departments mark and assess work regularly, and such procedures enable staff to offer help and encouragement to pupils. At Key Stage 3, processes for recording attainment lack consistency, and the use of National Curriculum levels is not firmly embedded in day to day assessment. This makes judgements about levels of attainment, and of progress, more difficult to achieve. The good work done in mathematics offers a model of what can be done. At Key Stage 4, assessment in some subjects, such as English and mathematics, is particularly effective. Work is consistently assessed against GCSE criteria, and pupils know where they stand against both national criteria and their own learning targets.
42. At a whole school level, the use of assessment information to guide teaching and curricular planning is unsatisfactory overall, although generally satisfactory by Key Stage 4. Whilst the school has effective systems for collecting information about the pupils' attainments when they enter the school, these data are not well used by subjects to ensure that pupils get off to a crisp start. In those subjects, such as mathematics, where early assessments are undertaken, pupils tend to make markedly better progress, and work is much more closely matched to their needs. At present, the school's analyses of assessment data are rudimentary, but are starting to draw more fully upon the wide range of comparative data now available. Much work needs to be done to ensure that all class teachers and form tutors understand how such data can be used to best effect with pupils in all years. This lack of analysis means that the use of data as a tool to raise standards, to set all pupils challenging targets, and to review teaching strategies, is underdeveloped.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The parents' views of the school are good overall; parents are very supportive, as they were at the previous inspection. The parents perceive the school as having high

expectations of its pupils and, through good leadership and teaching, of helping the pupils to make good progress. They value the contribution that the school makes to their children's academic and, particularly, their personal development, for example through the wide range of extra-curricular activities, and see the school as very approachable. Although inspectors feel that teaching could be based more firmly on information about pupils' attainments, they agree overall with this picture. There are only two areas where parents feel that the school could be better. Parents feel that homework arrangements could be better; some feel that there is too much homework, whilst others would like to see more. Inspectors found homework arrangements overall to be satisfactory, but feel that some of the work set is inappropriate, for example asking pupils to finish off the work being done in class. Parents also feel that the school could work more closely with them, particularly in terms of providing them with more information. The school acknowledges that this is an area which could be improved further; it is a key priority in the current development plan.

44. Overall, the school has very good links with parents. The information provided for parents by the school is satisfactory overall. The main deficiencies highlighted in the previous inspection report have been addressed. The quality of reports is good following recent improvements. Parents receive one full report in each year, and two further interim reports in the other two terms. There are satisfactory arrangements for consultation evenings. Reports contain a variety of grades covering effort, homework and, in Key Stage 4, projected GCSE grades. Good information is made available to staff to ensure clarity in the quality of reporting, and parents are provided with clear information on how to interpret the grades. On full reports, teachers make clear comments on the progress made by the pupil, the standards achieved and offer guidance for further improvement. Space is also made available for pupils to make their own comments. The recently revised policy has improved the quality and timing of the school's reporting procedures. The governing body has also been examining how to improve the quality of other information sent to parents. Its public relations committee is seeking to improve the quality of the school's newsletter, and is examining how other information might be relayed more promptly and effectively to parents, for example by using e-mail. This committee also has oversight of the school's prospectus and the annual report to parents. Many changes have been made to the school's prospectus recently, and it is now a good, informative and well-presented publication, although it still does not comply fully with the most recent statutory requirements. The governors' annual report to parents is of a less satisfactory quality, as it omits a number of statutory statements.
45. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school, and their contributions to learning, are good. The home-school agreement defines clearly the nature of the partnership between school and home. Most parents are effective in checking that homework is done, and use the pupils' planners to raise areas of concern with the school. Parent governors are very committed. Some parents provide valuable help in the library, the school office and on school trips. The St Peter's Association is very active and successful, raising substantial funds for the school and joining in school events, for example providing back-stage help and catering with enthusiasm. The school's links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Parents are properly involved in annual reviews, and attendance is good. Individual educational plans are sent home and parents are involved appropriately in discussions about new or changing provision for their child.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

46. The strengths in management noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. In particular, there have been improvements in the way that the school's work is monitored, although these have yet to be implemented fully at subject level. Inspectors agree with parents that this is a well led school, showing a good shared commitment to improvement within an ethos that encourages achievement. The leadership and management shown by key staff are good overall. The headteacher's leadership is very good; there is a clear educational vision that reflects the school's spiritual ethos. A key feature of this is that he sees care for the pupils as being more than pastoral care; it is about providing them with challenges to ensure that they make good progress at all levels of ability. Not all staff find this comfortable, for example in terms of managing behaviour within the classroom, or using data to set and monitor clear targets for pupils. Staff to whom responsibilities are delegated, including other members of the senior management and heads of year, carry them out in a generally good manner. Within subjects, leadership and management are judged to be good in promoting achievement and learning in English, mathematics, design and technology, and history. However, leadership and management in science, art and music are unsatisfactory, and contribute to shortcomings in learning in these areas. Whilst physical education is administered well, there is a lack of a vision for how the subject should move forward. Liaison between departments and the special educational needs co-ordinator is informal and on an individual basis. This results in a system that is time-consuming and piecemeal. There is no whole-school forum for the discussion, planning and evaluation of procedures, or to develop common practices, for special needs pupils. The special needs co-ordinator does not have enough clerical help, nor time himself, to keep up with paperwork, even though this is kept to a minimum
47. The school benefits from having a strong and supportive governing body. The governors are very good in fulfilling their responsibilities as critical friends, as strategic thinkers and as evaluators of the school's work. Statutory requirements are met well, except for that for a daily act of collective worship, and in terms of the precise detail of what should now appear in the prospectus and annual report. The governors' role in shaping the future direction of the school is very good. They play an active role in setting priorities for development. Most unusually, the various governors' committees draw up, and monitor frequently, their own development plans to help to deliver the school's key targets. Through regular visits to the school, careful examination of results and detailed reports from the headteacher, the governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governors show a refreshingly independent view of the school's affairs.
48. There is a very good reflection of the school's aims and values in its work, because the school's governors and senior staff hold firm to its Christian principles. These are clearly evident in the way that the school seeks to care for all of its pupils and staff. Equally importantly, they are reflected explicitly in the statement of aims for the curriculum; subjects state clearly how they should be reflected in their own provisions.
49. The school's priorities for development are very good, and are prepared after a wide ranging process of consultation that includes all staff and governors, as befits a school holding Investors in People status. At the level of governors and senior management, these priorities are converted into good and detailed action plans that state clearly what steps should be taken to deliver the targets. Within subjects, the quality of development

planning is far more variable, and unsatisfactory overall, since too few plans show sufficiently clearly how targets are to be realised, or the resource implications of doing so. In general, departmental plans still focus more on resource issues than on what outcomes should be achieved by the pupils. However, a strength is that departmental plans show clear links to each of the whole-school priorities.

50. Overall, there is a satisfactory monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, and of taking appropriate action. The governors note that there has been a considerable shift in this direction under the present headteacher who, as a statistician, has a clear understanding of the value of using quantitative approaches to identify and monitor important issues. Senior managers carry out annual reviews of all departments, with half-yearly interim reviews, whilst deeper examinations of subjects, also involving governors, are now taking place over a longer cycle. Governors and senior managers are aware of the blandness of some of the earlier reviews; there is now a greater focus on quantitative analyses of performance. Governors are now becoming more involved in the regular follow-up of targets, made easier by these being increasingly expressed in terms of measurable outcomes such as "to respond to 95 per cent of letters within the target time". At middle manager level, the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching remains unsatisfactory overall, in spite of the strengths of work in some areas such as mathematics. Too few heads of department undertake systematic observations of teachers in the classroom, in order to identify what works well, and to promote the best practices within their teams.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

51. The overall levels of staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. The match of teaching and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school is adequately staffed, with the vast majority of lessons being taught by subject specialists. The proportion of non-specialist teaching is significantly lower than at the time of the last inspection, when such deployment was criticised. There is also an adequate number of non-teaching staff helping to deliver the curriculum. The school provides appropriate opportunities for students undertaking initial teacher training; these links, and the support that students receive, are valued by their course tutors. A number of recent staffing initiatives have been undertaken. Arrangements for staff appraisal are satisfactory. Although the formal appraisal scheme has ceased to operate, pending new guidance, the school's Investors in People status offers another vehicle for enhancing staff development. All staff receive annual personal development reviews; this mechanism helps to identify individual training needs appropriately. Improvements have also been made since the last inspection for the induction of new staff, which is now satisfactory. Most staff who are new to the school participate in an induction programme, and are provided with a mentor, but some procedures need to become more secure. For example the induction arrangements for some non-teaching staff are not entirely clear. Staffing policies acknowledge the need to forge strong links between staff training and improvements in teaching and learning but, at present, there is insufficient provision for the systematic monitoring of teaching across all departments.
52. The overall quality of accommodation is good. The school occupies a pleasant site, with well-maintained buildings and impressive indoor and outdoor sporting facilities. Recent improvements to information technology and English rooms, together with the fitting of new windows throughout the school, have made a considerable difference to working conditions for staff and pupils. The scheduled refurbishment of two science laboratories in the summer will further add to this. Most rooms are suitable for their purpose although some, especially in the mathematics and modern foreign language areas, are rather cramped. Of concern, however, are the rooms for music and art which are all small and

have inadequate storage space. In particular, in one art room the inappropriate furniture and lack of natural light does not give pupils a positive view of the subject. Accommodation in these two subject areas has an adverse effect on standards. Some accommodation in design and technology is small given the size of groups in the subject.

53. The overall provision for learning resources is unsatisfactory, principally because the quality, reliability and quantity of hardware for information technology are inadequate. Consequently, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their information technology skills across the curriculum as a whole. Resources in individual subjects are satisfactory overall, but shortcomings in art and science undermine standards. There are too few textbooks for GCSE candidates in double science and history. Provision for promoting reading is good. The library is well stocked with good quality texts that are appropriate to the range of attainments and interests in the school. It is well organised and attractive. Pupils use it regularly as part of their English provision, but also on an individual basis during lessons and after school. Each English lesson starts with a session of silent reading, and pupils are always prepared for this with their books. The library also contains a good range of audio books and a small number of multi-media machines for research and word processing.

Efficiency

54. The school's strengths in financial management have been maintained since the last inspection, and careful planning has improved the flexibility that governors and senior managers have in targeting funds. Overall, the strategic use of financial resources is good. Specific grants are used for their designated purposes in a satisfactory manner. The school receives less money than average per pupil in its basic budget, but funds from lettings and special grants bring income up to broadly average levels. The governors play a proper role in ensuring that educational priorities receive proper funding. The school development plan is an important tool in drawing up the annual budget; the match between funding and educational priorities is a good one.
55. The school spends slightly less than average on teachers, but more than average on support and administrative staff to increase the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. Spending on learning resources is above average, but has been focused more on the library, books and equipment in recent years than on computers. As a result, information technology lacks sufficient modern and reliable machines to support the curriculum. Overall, therefore, the school has made unsatisfactory use of new technology to support learning. Governors are aware of this shortfall, and plan to swing the balance towards information technology equipment in future budgets.
56. The school's administration manager plays a key role in monitoring spending patterns, boosting income and in ensuring that the school's good application of the principle of best value is maintained. A good example of this approach is seen in the school's spending on cleaning, which is well below average but is not reflected in low standards of cleanliness. The depth and frequency of contract cleaning is matched to hygiene needs and intensity of use; other areas are cleaned less frequently by the school's own staff at much lower cost. Similarly, a substantial programme of spending on new windows has reduced energy use to well below average levels.
57. Overall, the school has a broadly average income per pupil. Pupils leave the school with GCSE results that are well above average overall, and markedly better than would be expected from their attainments when they arrive at the school. Pastoral care is good, as

is much of the teaching. The learning environment is a good one, both in terms of relationships and buildings. The personal development of the pupils is effective. However, there are substantial shortcomings in the provision of sufficient resources for information technology. The policy of offering three sciences at Key Stage 4 is not being reflected in improved value added for the substantial investment involved. However, in spite of these shortcomings, the school is judged to provide good value for money. However, the school has the capacity, and the potential, to improve its effectiveness still further.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. An asterisk (*) after a key issue aspect denotes that elements of this area are already contained in the current school development plan. The numbers after each issue refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report.

- (1) Reduce the adverse effects of the present policy of offering three sciences at Key Stage 4, and improve the overall quality of teaching in science, by:
 - a. reducing the proportion of curriculum time that is allocated to the three sciences at Key Stage 4;
 - b. increasing the proportion of time allocated to science at Key Stage 3 and placing greater emphasis on investigational work at this level;
 - c. improving the efficiency of timetabling to allow more experienced staff to work in all years, and to remove the need to have classes taught by more than one teacher, or by non-specialists;
 - d. monitoring more rigorously the quality of teaching and learning within the department so that the undoubted areas of good practice that already exist are promoted to the benefit of all pupils;
 - e. matching the work that is set more closely to the needs and abilities of the pupils through the use of more appropriate grouping methods, particularly at Key Stage 3, and by the more rigorous use of information on the pupils' attainments; (*) and
 - f. monitoring, regularly and in a rigorous manner, the educational value that is being added over time within the subject. (*) (24, 25, 75-82)
- (2) Increase standards in art at all levels, and in music at Key Stage 3, by:
 - a. improving the schemes of work for the subjects, and their delivery, so that pupils of all abilities are challenged at appropriate levels;
 - b. monitoring more rigorously the quality of teaching and learning in both subjects, and providing a clear direction for improvement through proper development planning, the critical evaluation of outcomes, and regular monitoring of the implementation of plans, policies and procedures; and (*)
 - c. improving the accommodation in both subjects. (*) (83-87, 117-120)
- (3) Improve the quality and quantity of computers to enable all subjects of the curriculum to benefit from the learning opportunities offered by new technology. (18, 53, 109)
- (4) Ensure that the valuable information being collected on the pupils' attainments is used by all subjects in order to:
 - a. set clear targets for pupils, which are shared with them from the start of their time in the school (*);
 - b. match work and teaching more closely to the needs of individual pupils; (*) and
 - c. allow middle managers to monitor carefully the educational value that is being added over time, and the effectiveness of teaching. (*) (16, 42)
- (5) Ensure that all teachers apply the school's policies on positive behaviour management, and have the necessary skills to do so. (*) (12, 20)

In addition, governors should consider including other areas of weakness when drawing up the action plan. These are noted in paragraphs 25, 98, 103 and 105 (curriculum time and timetabling problems in geography and history)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	169
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	96

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	12	42	34	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y8 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	987	-
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	58	-

Special educational needs	Y8 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	110	-

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	135	106	241

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	107	88
	Girls	82	78	59
	Total	167	185	147
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (73)	77 (76)	61 (66)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (23)	48 (49)	20 (25)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	104	98
	Girls	94	77	69
	Total	200	181	167
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (81)	75 (81)	69 (71)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (44)	45 (45)	38 (43)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	112	127	239

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	59	111	111
	Girls	79	127	127
	Total	138	238	238
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (63)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	46 (44)	91 (90)	96 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47 (49)
	National	38 (37)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	943
Any other minority ethnic group	38

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	38	3
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y8 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y8 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	256

Deployment of teachers: Y8 to Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81
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Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	22

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	2231223
Total expenditure	2187316
Expenditure per pupil	2235
Balance brought forward from previous year	24663
Balance carried forward to next year	68570

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	987
Number of questionnaires returned	401

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	58	11	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	32	63	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	62	6	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	55	19	4	3
The teaching is good.	21	66	4	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	54	14	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	43	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	55	14	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	36	51	4	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	56	4	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	50	6	0	7

Other issues raised by parents

Forty-eight parents sent written comments, most of which explained in more detail the reasons for their responses. However, a number expressed concern over the variability in teaching quality.

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

ENGLISH

59. Despite some variation from year to year, the pupils' standards in English on entry to the school are broadly average. Over the period 1996 to 1999, both boys and girls achieved mean points scores in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 that are above the national average, and rising in line with the national pattern. The mean points score in the 1999 tests is in line with the national average, but well below that for similar schools. Fewer pupils than usual reach the highest test levels. Attainments at Key Stage 3 are not as high as would have been anticipated by the pupils' previous results at the end of Key Stage 2.
60. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in the 1999 GCSE English language examination is significantly above the national average. The proportion passing at G or higher is in line with the national average. The mean points score of the pupils is broadly in line with that expected given their Key Stage 3 test results in 1997. The standards attained by both boys and girls are significantly higher than the respective national averages. Standards were broadly similar in the previous two years. In the 1999 GCSE English literature examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grade C or higher is significantly higher than the national average. Since the school enters a much higher proportion of its pupils than is the case nationally, this is a particularly good performance. In 1999, the pupils tended to do better in both English language and literature than in their other subjects.
61. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards seen during the inspection are in line with the expected levels, and are above the levels expected for the end of Key Stage 4. The observed standards at Key Stage 3 are higher than the previous year's test results would suggest because of better accuracy among middle attaining pupils, and a higher proportion writing with the perception, control and vocabulary range associated with the highest grades. Speaking and listening skills are above expectation at Key Stage 3. Confident and clear contributions are prominent features of the pupils' work, as seen in a Year 9 library lesson in which pupils talked fluently to the rest of the class about the qualities of their chosen books. Reading skills are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3; those of higher attaining pupils are well above expectation. For example, they showed deep insight into the changing nature of the relationship between the principal characters in *Z for Zachariah*, using the text appropriately to support their judgements. Most pupils can understand the main points of the texts they study, and the attitudes and values characters represented, although middle attaining pupils do not include sufficient detail and analysis. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, read with a competent fluency, but their responses to texts such as *Romeo and Juliet* are more superficial. The department's policy of including silent reading in every lesson, and making frequent use of the school library, leads to pupils of all standards enjoying reading. Writing skills at Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations. Higher attaining pupils have a high level of accuracy, and use an extensive range of vocabulary in a range of writing contexts, such as letters of complaint, narrative writing and analysis of texts. Most middle attaining pupils are writing at the expected level, with a generally accurate control of full stops, commas and paragraphing. However, their expression lacks the range of higher attainers. Some do not reach the expected level because of errors in punctuation, expression and spelling, and as a result of weaknesses in presentation. The work of lower attainers contains frequent weaknesses in expression, accuracy and paragraphing.

62. At the end of Key Stage 4, speaking and listening skills are above expectation overall. In many lessons, pupils respond critically but appropriately to the contributions of others. Standards of reading are also above expectation. The best pupils read at well above expected standards, and show deep insight into challenging literature, such as the Year 11 pupil who showed perceptive understanding of character in her letter from Shakespeare to an actor preparing to play the role of Ophelia. This type of open-ended assignment consistently inspires high attaining pupils. Middle attainers meet the national expectation, but lower attaining pupils lack analytical skills, tending to rely more on narrative knowledge than critical comment. Standards of writing at Key Stage 4 are above expectation because most pupils write with accuracy, and with an awareness of the written context. Middle attaining pupils write accurately and have a reliable appreciation of the difference between written and spoken language. The work of lower attainers lacks consistent accuracy; their spelling is mainly sound, but they reveal confusion with similar sounding words, and some inappropriate constructions. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. For example, they discussed with understanding difficult poems such as Elizabeth Jennings' *One Flesh*.
63. During the inspection there was no evidence of the department developing the pupil's numeracy skills, but there are satisfactory opportunities to use word processing to develop information technology skills. Opportunities for developing literacy skills across the whole curriculum are uneven, reflecting the lack of guidance that an effective whole school policy would provide. Very good provision is made in drama for speaking and listening, and this has a good impact on standards overall. Pupils also have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in information technology and in design and technology, where they analyse products in small groups. In history, pupils develop their skills through effective question and answer sessions, and they are expected to make accurate use of appropriate vocabulary. Although questions and answer sessions are used frequently in mathematics, the questions are often too closed to encourage sufficiently extensive answers. There is not enough opportunity for speaking in geography, despite one Year 11 group carrying out a successful brainstorming session.
64. Reading for research is an important feature in design and technology lessons, and the department provides a good range of appropriate resources to support independent reading. In history, pupils do not have enough opportunity to read aloud, although wider reading is encouraged at Key Stage 4 through the provision of a relevant list of fiction. Reading is limited to textbooks and work sheets in mathematics, but helpful wall cards reinforce the correct use of technical terms. There are not enough opportunities for reading for research in science and geography. Geography schemes of work plan opportunities to write in a range of formats, although there is an inconsistent approach to marking, and to developing writing skills and accuracy. In information technology, links with the English department give pupils a good opportunity to write for specific audiences. Spelling errors undermine standards in history and pupils do not check their work for accuracy; neither do the teachers correct spellings sufficiently. In mathematics, teachers try to link concepts and appropriate writing styles in course work, but there are not enough exemplars of good practice to guide the pupils. In GNVQ lessons, expectations of presentation are too low, although the range of writing contexts is good.
65. The quality of teaching and learning is sound at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. The good quality teaching at Key Stage 4 leads to a quality of learning and achievement that is better than at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, good planning, high expectations and the teachers' secure subject knowledge lead to lessons that are purposeful, and

that deepen the pupils' understanding. For example, a well-judged blend of paired, group and whole class teaching resulted in pupils of all attainments appreciating the values as well as the structure of *Charlotte O'Neill's Song*. A whole class discussion in response to pupil presentations about *The Beggar Woman* and *The World is a Beautiful Place*, supported by the teacher's subtle mix of closed and open-ended questions, resulted in a lesson of rare quality. It had the concentration and depth of learning more often seen in a successful A-level lesson. Another strength at Key Stage 4 is the clarity of understanding that the pupils have about their standards, their potential and what they need to do to improve. Several lessons in Years 10 and 11 stressed the criteria related to different grades and the importance of appropriate examination techniques. At Key Stage 3, despite some very good lessons, the overall impact on learning is not as strong as at Key Stage 4. Scrutiny of work shows that pupils in Year 8 are not producing the quantity and appropriate quality of work that the older pupils are, and that the standards of presentation and organisation of some pupils are not as good as they could be. Withdrawal from lessons provides some well-targeted teaching to lower attaining pupils, but tasks and activities do not always reflect the range of abilities in each mixed ability group. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are not producing as many sustained and extensive pieces of work as they should. There are shortcomings in continual assessment at Key Stage 3, in contrast to the position at Key Stage 4. Comments on pupils' work are not consistently specific enough about strengths and targets for improvement, so that pupils have sufficient knowledge of their own learning. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are not as clear as those at Key Stage 4 about their current levels of attainment against the national expectation, what their potential is, and how to fulfil that potential. Behaviour and attitudes are good. The literature studied engages the pupils' interest and enhances their personal development.

66. At Key Stage 3 there are more classes shared between teachers than in most schools. This dilutes the effectiveness and depth of coverage of the schemes of work, and undermines learning and standards through a loss of continuity. Assessment procedures work effectively at Key Stage 4, but there is not enough use of information about prior attainments to set targets at Key Stage 3, and too few formal assessment tasks at this level. The lack of central recording of assessment within the department means that the monitoring of progress is not as effective as it could be. A good range of resources, especially texts, and their good deployment, provide a stimulating curriculum that engages pupils' interests. Overall, the management of the department is good, with a good focus on principles and practice. Monitoring of teaching has a positive effect but is not sufficiently systematic.
67. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress in its schemes of work on including more references to methodology, and matching tasks to different ranges of pupils. Methods are now well covered, but explicit attention to matching tasks to differing abilities is not consistent enough.

Drama

68. Standards in the 1999 GCSE examinations are above the national average. Pupils tended to do better in drama than in most other subjects that they took. These above average attainments maintained the similar standards achieved in the previous two years. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above expectation at both key stages. Pupils make good progress because they have positive attitudes and the quality of teaching is very good. Pupils make good progress in developing their performance skills and in extending their knowledge of the traditions of the theatre. They also evaluate the impact of their performances with maturity and honesty. Their work shows

they understand how to use techniques such as gesture, pitch and blocking to develop convincing characterisations and performances. They benefit from the expertise of teachers who have very good specialist knowledge and a good rapport with the pupils, giving them the confidence to try and to succeed. The quality of teaching is very good and results in very good learning, with pupils showing a willingness to evaluate their work and incorporate the advice they receive from their teacher. The work of the department is well structured through detailed curriculum planning. The department's accommodation and facilities are good, and help to create the appropriate ambience for both hard work and successful performance.

MATHEMATICS

69. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the mean points score obtained is well above the national average for all schools, and in line with that for similar schools. The results are marginally below those that would have been expected from the pupils' 1996 Key Stage 2 test scores. The pattern of results at Key Stage 3 for the last three years for both boys and girls is also well above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results are significantly above the national average for all schools and above that for similar schools. Boys and girls again do equally well. Over the last three years, standards at GCSE have been well above average. The proportion of A* and A grades achieved over the last three years has shown a continuing increase. Pupils tend to do significantly better in mathematics than in the other subjects that they take. The 1999 GCSE results are higher than would be expected from the pupils' 1997 Key Stage 3 test scores.
70. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are above expected levels. In Year 8, pupils show good understanding of place value, fractions and percentages, metric equivalence and angle measure. They are encouraged to respond to teachers' questions by using the correct mathematical terminology. In Year 9, pupils are very well prepared for future GCSE coursework by carrying out extended investigations in the use and application of mathematics. They show through these a good understanding of shape, space and measure, although their skills in graphical representation are less well developed. Standards achieved in work seen are also above for the end of Key Stage 4. High attainers apply Pythagoras' Theorem well and solve complex problems involving trigonometry, standard form and circle geometry. Most pupils use algebra with good facility, formulating expressions from simple data, and solving linear and quadratic equations. Lower attainers make good progress in basic numeracy work and, in addition, develop skills in interpreting statistical information in a variety of straightforward formats, making the appropriate calculations of mean, mode and median where necessary. The attitudes of pupils to mathematics are positive; for many it is their favourite subject. The opportunity to take part in the UK junior and intermediate mathematics challenges is welcomed by a significant number from each year group and the results achieved are excellent.
71. Standards of numeracy are below average on entry to the school, but an effective numeracy policy, linked with good classroom practice, raise standards to above average levels by the end of Key Stage 4. Lessons in mathematics often routinely start with number work without the use of calculators, and further helpful contributions are made in other subjects. In particular, examples of researching and adapting information for science experiments, using climate and population graphs in geography lessons, and the analysis of calculation outcomes as part of design and technology development briefs, all contribute to the raising of standards of numeracy in the school.

72. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages, with that in Year 11 being good. A strength of much of the teaching is the consistent control of behaviour, with absolute clarity over the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in most lessons. This allowed, for example, pupils in Year 9 to make excellent progress in understanding the difference between theoretical and experimental probability, a topic that can sometimes be difficult to grasp. Effective questioning that demands lengthy responses from pupils encourages problem solving techniques, as in a Year 8 lesson, when a group of pupils was able to split complex problems on capacity into manageable tasks. All teachers circulate well in class, giving helpful oral evaluation and encouragement to individuals. The good teaching translates clear objectives into carefully sequenced activities that build up the pupils' skills systematically. There is a clear and demonstrable link between good teaching and good behaviour. In the minority of lessons that are unsatisfactory, teachers allow, without sufficient correction, indiscriminate calling out and inattentive behaviour, which has a direct impact on the achievement of all the children in the class. In addition, some slow and laboured questioning causes some pupils to mark time. Teaching in all mathematics rooms is complemented by appropriate displays of pupils' work, whilst literacy skills in mathematics are aided by key words being prominently displayed on the classroom walls.
73. The mathematics department uses appropriate assessment procedures to enable accurate grouping and movement of pupils within classes. The department's development plan focuses effectively on monitoring, evaluating and improving performance by the use of clear and agreed targets. Thus every Year 9 and Year 11 pupil questioned during the inspection knew their target grade for their forthcoming external examinations, and understood what they needed to concentrate upon to achieve it. The department is well led, with clear areas of responsibility, good monitoring of teaching through direct observations and evaluation, and an effective system for tracking the pupils' academic progress. Staff are well qualified, with the full time members of the department all making significant contributions to the responsibilities that need to be carried out. Accommodation is adequate, but the mathematics rooms are cramped. The department's access to information technology facilities is unsatisfactory, and evidence of its use by pupils is limited. However, when the department does gain access to computers, the work done is of high quality.
74. The mathematics department has made good progress since the last inspection. There is a demonstrable improvement in educational standards at GCSE since the last report. Issues raised then surrounding the ineffective use of testing on entry to the school, and the formulation of success criteria for the department development plan, have now been fully addressed. The system of annual review, combined with effective day to day monitoring of behaviour in the classroom, has had a positive impact on standards in the subject. In order to continue to improve the quality of education given to pupils, the department now needs to ensure that the rewritten scheme of work reflects both the new National Curriculum demands, and those of the National Numeracy Strategy. It also need to provide greater opportunities for pupils to use information technology in mathematics.

SCIENCE

75. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the mean points score for the whole year group is close to the national average, but well below that for similar schools. The improvement which this group of pupils has made since the end of Key Stage 2 is

less than expected. Over the past three years, boys and girls have achieved results that broadly match the national average. However, the proportions of pupils obtaining level 5 or better, and at least level 6, declined by more than the national figure in 1999. The teachers' assessments of pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently higher than test scores; there is a particularly big discrepancy in the assessments of pupils gaining level 6 or higher. Results overall are broadly in line with those which the pupils obtain in English, but well below those in mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results show a significantly below average proportion of pupils gaining grade C or better for double science; that in each of the three separate sciences is below the relevant national average, but not statistically significantly so. Boys tend to do slightly better in all science subjects than in many of the others that they take, as do girls in double science; the differences are statistically significant. Girls taking separate sciences achieve results that are not statistically significantly different from those in their other subjects. However, the relative performance of pupils is markedly better in English and mathematics than in science. The overall results achieved in GCSE sciences, taken together, in 1999 are in line with those to be expected from the pupils' Key Stage 3 test scores in 1997.

76. In work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. There is no significant difference in standards in each of the Attainment Targets for science, though pupils are less confident when discussing their work about materials and their properties. Insufficient time is devoted to the development of practical and investigational skills in both key stages. As a result, whilst pupils tackle practical exercises with enthusiasm, and their powers of observation and recording are sound, they are less adept at analysing their results. For example, in a Year 11 physics lesson, pupils set up simple circuits using logic gates and clearly enjoyed the lesson; however, many of them could not predict outcomes before completing their circuits. Better understanding was seen in a Year 10 lesson on loss of water from leaves, where pupils were asked by the teacher to predict the outcomes of their tests; this helped to inculcate a habit of thinking about their work. Standards of literacy in science are sound, but teachers do not always display key words when introducing new topics. Uses of numeracy include formulae and graphs; work in exercise books and folders indicates that pupils are adept at using simple formulae, but the presentation of graphs is inconsistent, and the concept of line of best fit is not well developed. In the limited number of opportunities provided for pupils to use information technology, they show a satisfactory range of skills; there is more systematic access to computers at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to their teachers and in general make satisfactory progress.
77. Overall, the quality of teaching at both key stages is unsatisfactory. Learning is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, but broadly satisfactory at Key Stage 4. While teaching in over half the lessons is good or better, it is the wide variation in the standard of teaching which makes it unsatisfactory overall. At both key stages, teaching in at least one-fifth of lessons is unsatisfactory. However, in all classes, teachers are safety conscious when organising practical work. In the best lessons, teachers show good subject knowledge. They set pupils clear but challenging targets for the lesson, show enthusiasm for their subject, so that a sense of enjoyment and learning together ensues. In more effective teaching, the end of the lesson is not rushed, and a summary of the work covered is used to consolidate learning and to set questions for further thought. There is a sense throughout of mutual respect between teacher and pupils. In a Year 9 lesson on the alkali metals, for instance, all pupils took part in a question and answer session after a demonstration, and the use of a short video. Pupils' responses were sensible, and they learned why the metals are grouped together in the periodic table, and how they are

different. All exercise books were well presented. However, in another class studying the same topic, there was a lack of enthusiasm and of directed questioning from the teacher; as a result, pupils made immature comments, were less involved in their work, and a significant number of exercise books lacked care.

78. Basic errors in teaching methodology occur in unsatisfactory lessons. A common weakness is that teachers talk for too long. They do not praise pupils sufficiently, do not match the work to the needs of the pupils in the class, and even though the planning of resources is good, there is a lack of thought about how to present the work in a stimulating fashion. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on human reproduction, only half the class was fully involved in the discussions. In a Year 11 lesson on velocity and acceleration, the teacher attempted to cover too much ground, with the result that it was difficult for any of the work to be consolidated. Pupils in another Year 11 class were clearly uninterested in a video about natural selection mainly because of the method of presentation. This contrasted with a similar group of Year 11 pupils who were very involved in discussions about genetic engineering. This was because of the positive impact of the teacher's introduction, the tasks they had to undertake, which were challenging yet within reach, and the set of questions for them to answer, which were specifically related to the short video they watched.
79. The marking of books and folders is variable. In the worst examples seen, folders are disorganised and the presentation of work is untidy; this is the result of a lack of regular marking by the teacher and is clearly unsatisfactory. By contrast, the books of some classes are regularly marked, and pupils are provided with clear messages about how to improve their standards. In these classes, the teacher maintains a detailed record of pupils' grades in order to monitor progress. Homework is set regularly by most teachers, but a large number of books contain comments that indicate that the effort the pupil has made with homework is unsatisfactory. This is caused in part by the fact that homework is too often routine, such as finishing off classwork, and therefore lacks challenge and interest, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
80. The distribution of time for science within the curriculum is below average at Key Stage 3, and well above average for up to a quarter of pupils in Key Stage 4 who take three science subjects. In their first year in the school, all pupils are taught in their tutor groups, but their lessons are split between more than one teacher. This makes it more difficult for them to form good working relationships, and some teachers do not yet know all pupils' names. Classes in Year 9 are still taught in their tutor groups since the timetable does not permit setting; as a result, higher and lower attaining pupils are not always provided with appropriate challenges. There is also some non-specialist teaching. These factors all contribute to pupils making less progress in Key Stage 3 than the norm. In Key Stage 4, the system of spreading science across a number of option groups means there is a wide spread of attainment in each class, calling for a greater use of differentiated work than some teachers are providing. Too much time is allocated to the separate sciences; this restricts the pupils' choice of other subjects. There are few opportunities for extracurricular activities, though there is a science club, and additional revision classes are provided as examinations approach. There are no visits or field trips to add interest and relevance. Whilst teachers are aware of the contribution that science can make to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education, they often miss opportunities. For example, there are few examples of pupils being encouraged to ponder the wonder of life and the world of science, particularly in topics such as inheritance, the working of the human body, and plant structure.
81. The overall leadership and management of the department by the head of department

and other senior staff with responsibilities is unsatisfactory. Though many policies have been formulated, their implementation is inconsistent. This is due to a lack of monitoring of standards within the department. For example, the grading of pupils' investigations in Key Stage 3 is not standardised. There is no monitoring of the pupils' work, or of marking, in exercise books and folders. There are annual observations of lessons by the head of department; these do not result in dialogue about strengths and weaknesses that is effective in moving the subject forward. For example, departmental meetings rarely contain discussions about the skills of successful teaching. The routine safety checks on portable electrical equipment are out of date. There are strengths, however. The accommodation has been improved, and further work is scheduled; laboratories are well organised. The work of the two laboratory assistants is very effective. The display of work is colourful, interesting and educational. In many classrooms, there is consistently good teaching, but this exists alongside others where it is unsatisfactory.

82. After the last inspection, attainment in national tests initially improved, but results at the ends of both key stages declined in 1999. Many of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have not been remedied. The pupils' competence remains variable in investigational work. There is still insufficient use of differentiated materials in classrooms, and marking is still inconsistent. Monitoring remains inadequate. Liaison with middle schools is ineffective, although there is a published Exeter curriculum agreement showing the work expected to be done in middle schools during Year 7. The work of the department, particularly at Key Stage 4, remains dominated by the perceived need to retain three separate science subjects. The level of resources is low, and the only pupils in Key Stage 4 to be issued with textbooks are those taking the separate sciences. The use of information technology is not sufficiently integrated into the work of all classes. However, there has been improvement in some areas. Assessment procedures are now more detailed, but without a clear rationale about how to make the most effective use of the data available. No annual measures of the work of the department compared with national benchmarks are yet carried out at either key stage. However, there is a commitment to the review of curriculum and teaching materials. In spite of some improvements, the department has made insufficient progress overall since the last inspection.

ART

83. In the teachers' own assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the national expectation was in line with the national average. In the 1999 GCSE at the end of key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C is significantly below the national average, as it was in 1998. Both boys and girls tended to do less well in art than in their other subjects by a significant margin. This compares unfavourably with the national picture, where pupils tend to obtain higher results in art than in their other subjects. Results have been below the national average in each of the last four years and there has been deterioration since the last inspection, when the results were above average. The poor results of boys are a particular concern, as they have been far below the results of boys nationally for the last two years, whilst girls' results have been well below the results of girls nationally. Whilst results nationally in art have improved year on year for each of the last 4 years, the school's results have remained static overall, but with a relative decline in boys' results.
84. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are below the expectations for 14 year olds. Pupils enter the school in Year 8 with a variety of prior

attainments, depending on which middle school they attended; most are below expected standards for their age. Whilst there are some good quality large scale three-dimensional sculptures, such as those constructed on the themes of millennium bugs, the department does not do enough to raise pupils' standards above this low starting level. In work seen in Year 8, the pupils' observational skills are unsatisfactory. Many pupils fail to create depth in their pictures, for instance of seated figures, through making effective use of tonal contrast. Most pupils do not use their knowledge about artists sufficiently well in their own work, and fail to use subject specific vocabulary with confidence. The pupils' literacy skills are not systematically developed because some marking fails to correct spelling and grammatical errors. Opportunities to develop the pupils' numeracy skills are not developed sufficiently, for instance when pupils study perspective. Insufficient use is made of information technology to research facts or to create designs because the department has only one modern computer. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainments are also below the standards expected. Although some pupils' work is well researched and completed to a high standard, many pupils do not satisfactorily integrate their understanding about well-known artists into their practical work. Some background research into practical projects is superficial, and so work often lacks subtlety or visual interest. Many ideas are predictable, with little attempt by pupils to give an original or inventive slant to themes. This is the main reason that pupils do not gain higher marks in examinations.

85. The pupils' attitudes to work have a significant impact on their learning. In most lessons pupils have sound attitudes and behave appropriately. However, in a significant minority of lessons, most often in Key Stage 3, some pupils are rude to teachers and interrupt teaching. The quality of work in these lessons is invariably unsatisfactory. Most pupils enjoy practical lessons and use equipment sensibly and safely. Boys tend to be less well behaved than girls, although this is not a problem in classes where teachers exercise good control. Whilst most complete homework satisfactorily, a significant minority rushes, and does not present work that is neat or thoughtful.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in lessons seen at both key stages, although there are some lessons where it is unsatisfactory. Teachers are specialists with skills that complement each other, and the key principles in lessons are satisfactorily communicated. The teachers' planning is thorough, and provides a systematic framework for learning. However, whilst planning is detailed, teachers do not always provide lessons that present interesting challenges. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3, where too much time is spent on observational drawing and painting. Not all pupils feel that they do this successfully and their lack of self-confidence adversely affects their learning. Management of pupils is weak in some lessons, although it was noticeable that some pupils were deliberately provocative, interrupting lessons on purpose to show off to friends. Where this happens, the pace of learning suffers and pupils hand in incomplete work that lacks attention to detail. In better lessons, there is a sense of calm and purpose, and better learning takes place, with pupils sustaining their concentration without regular reminders from the teacher. Teachers provide sufficient books to enable pupils to research and investigate background details, but do not always demand a high enough quality of written work and research to support their practical projects. The quality of marking is inconsistent; some marking is detailed and tells pupils how to improve, whilst other marking is cursory and lacking in evaluative comment. Consequently, some pupils do not develop skills of self-analysis and their learning is over dependent on teachers' verbal responses. Whilst homework is planned effectively to support work done in class, the poor quality of response by some pupils is not challenged sufficiently vigorously by teachers.

87. The issues for development in the previous inspection have not all been satisfactorily addressed. Some higher attaining pupils still underachieve because of poor behaviour and lack of sufficient challenge. There is still weak management of behaviour in some lessons. The accommodation remains poor, and there are barely sufficient resources for planned courses. Most pupils now benefit from a good balance of two- and three-dimensional activities. A recent review of the art department did not focus on examination standards and therefore failed to identify crucial factors that inhibit progress in both key stages. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. Whilst there are regular meetings and good attention to day to day aspects of administration, new developments are not well planned for and there is insufficient thought about how to raise standards. These factors, as well as the unsatisfactory quality of displayed artwork around the school, harm the status of the subject in pupils' eyes. Whilst monitoring of teaching has identified some unsuccessful management of behaviour, this remains a problem within some classrooms. There is effective use of artists from the community to broaden the appeal of lessons, and there are regular visits to places of artistic interest.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 show above average levels of attainment, with boys performing better than girls. At the end of Key Stage 4, the overall design and technology GCSE results show that attainments at grades A* to C are significantly above the national average. There has been a marked improvement in the overall design and technology grades over the last three years. In specific subjects, the A* to C grade pass rates in food, resistant materials, graphics and textiles are above average, with systems and control being just below. The 1999 results show that girls outperform boys. The proportions of A* to G grades in all the design and technology subjects are broadly average. Pupils tend to achieve significantly higher results in design and technology than in the other subjects that they take.
89. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above those expected of pupils nationally for the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils show an ability to analyse and draw conclusions using existing products. They gain a wide range of basic skills in designing and making products of good quality in food, graphics, resistant materials, and in systems and control. The systems and control course is now a well established part of Key Stage 3 work. In Year 9, pupils are able to design and make a printed circuit board using a specialist computer program to help them both design and test their circuits. In graphic design, they are taught a suitable range of two- and three-dimensional drawing skills. Some pupils are beginning to apply these skills in other areas of their technology work. In Year 8, however, the opportunities for pupils to use the design process is more limited. As a result, they are less independent in the way they work compared to other pupils at this stage. In the projects where the design process is used effectively, pupils are able to generate a range of ideas, develop, make and evaluate their work. They are encouraged to plan their ideas using drawings and notes to explain each stage of development. Lower attaining pupils are guided by the structure that teachers provide in the lessons. In food technology, pupils are well supported in planning their work using structured worksheets. They generate and use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and food calculations to produce products of good quality.
90. Standards in work seen are above expectations for the end of Key Stage 4. The pupils produce GCSE coursework projects that show increased depth in the content of their work when using the design process. All pupils use a wide range of investigation and research skills, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with

their design ideas. They develop work of very good quality, including a range of making skills that consider large-scale manufacturing processes. For example, in a Year 11 textiles lesson, pupils were designing products for young children. Their ideas included changing mats, rucksacks to activity mats and soft toys. All the work reflected a high degree of research to gain such a broad range of ideas and to include the variety of construction techniques, some using computer aided design. In a systems and control group, pupils were designing and making alarm based products using a variety of sensors. Some pupils made their own printed circuit boards with the aid of a computer program and lower attaining pupils used circuit boards in kit form to make the designs they had set out to achieve. Higher attaining pupils are able to apply accuracy and depth to the development of their designs in all material areas. Lower attaining pupils are able to design products well suited to the course and are supported by their teachers to complete work of good quality. The curriculum in design and technology is well planned and there is a fair balance of experience for pupils in all material areas with a good selection of courses at GCSE level. There is good coverage of food, graphics electronics and control technology, which is growing in strength and popularity amongst the pupils and within the department. However, there tends to be an imbalance of boys and girls in examination groups, with more girls choosing food and textiles, and more boys doing resistant materials and electronics.

91. Teaching is good at both key stages; in some lessons, it is very good. Learning is also good at both key stages. Teachers are well planned and organised for lessons, and pupils of all abilities gain from lessons that are well taught. Teachers have high expectation of all pupils. However, higher attaining pupils, who need their learning extended, and lower attaining pupils, particularly those with poor literacy skills, do not benefit fully from all lessons due to the limited range of learning resources and teaching strategies used with mixed ability groups. Teachers have recognised the need to match the tasks and the supporting work to suit the needs of individual pupils. They have also recognised the need to raise the achievement of boys, and three members of the department have become involved with a University of Oxford project to raise the achievement of boys. There is a need to develop and share effective practice across all subject teachers. Teachers generally use interesting methods, enabling pupils to understand difficult concepts. This was seen in a Year 9 food lesson, where the teacher combined a short demonstration on methods of cake making and then allowed pupils to analyse, taste and test a variety of bought cake products. This was particularly effective, giving pupils the opportunity to evaluate product development strategies, and also to identify the need for good quality control methods. There is good development of technical vocabulary when pupils record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers and the pace of lessons is appropriate, resulting in effective learning. There is a well planned revision programme for Year 11 pupils, consisting of a variety of tasks to sustain interest and to consolidate learning. This programme includes answering questions from past papers and timed tasks. Examples of timed tasks were seen in a Year 11 graphic products lesson, where pupils were being asked to show their drawing skills in developing several products within the course of the lesson. Here pupils were expected to draw on the skills they have developed over the course and show the effectiveness of their thinking and combined graphics skills. They concentrated well, and consolidated their knowledge and understanding.
92. A number of the main issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed satisfactorily. Standards overall have increased and are now good. The use of computers in technology subjects has increased significantly. The subject now delivers

aspects of computer aided design in graphic products and electronics courses. There is improved coverage of control technology using electronic sewing machines linked to computers in textiles, and of computer manufacturing through the introduction of computers in resistant materials. The food technology course shows good use of calculating nutritional value and handling and interpreting data. Since the last inspection, there have been improved records of meetings.

93. The department is well managed and benefits from a strong team approach, and has good systems to monitor and evaluate teaching. There is a suitable system in place to monitor and record the attainment of pupils, and this is beginning to have a positive effect on standards. However, the information gathered from this is still underused. Teachers are beginning to set short-term targets for each pupil, and are including pupils more in the learning process. There is a good learning environment, with displays of work to celebrate success of pupils. The accommodation and resources are of a good standard, but some rooms are becoming increasingly cramped when larger groups work in them. The school needs to bear in mind the size of rooms and the constraints this may have on the number of pupils in different groups when the timetable is written. All teachers maintain high standards of hygiene and safety within the subject and technicians contribute effectively to this. The department should now focus on continuing the good work started on differentiating work to meet the needs of all pupils and use the monitoring information to share good practice with the aim of raising standards further.

GEOGRAPHY

94. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show results well above the national average, as they also did in the previous two years. Within that picture, girls did particularly well in 1999, and boys in 1998. However, evidence from results at Key Stage 4 and in work seen indicates that the figures overestimate attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. The GCSE results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 4 are significantly below the national average for boys and girls, and pupils in geography tend to do significantly less well in geography compared with their other subjects. However, the 1999 results are abnormally low. In other recent years, they have been broadly in line with the national picture, though the gap between girls and boys in 1998 was greater than the national one, and in, 1997, boys' results were significantly below the national average, redeemed by a much better performance by girls.
95. At the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4, standards in work seen during the inspection are at the expected level for 14 and 16 year-olds respectively. In Year 8, apart from the lowest achievers, map skills are sound, and higher achievers can draw realistic maps of imaginary islands. Average and lower attainers' maps show an understanding of basic processes, such as rivers running downhill, but features such as railways and settlements are often unrealistically shown. In mapwork and other work using statistics and graphs, pupils' numeracy skills are usually sufficient to cope with the work. Literacy skills are in line with expectations, and there is high achievement from many pupils in a wide range of writing. Notable examples include some fine campaigning journalism about rain forests and some thoughtful poems and posters about the type of aid needed in developing countries. Whilst some Year 9 work shows depth of thought, such as leaflets of hints of what to do when an earthquake strikes, work in Year 9 does not show as much improvement overall as might be expected, and the gap between the highest and lowest achievers increases. In some lessons, there is lower achievement because

of the poorer attitudes of some pupils, or because some pupils tend to concentrate on the mechanics of the task or just finding out information, rather than understanding the geographical significance. Pupils with special educational needs usually make appropriate progress, especially when teachers are able to give them individual attention.

96. At Key Stage 4, higher attainers' notes are well organised, with diagrams and sketch maps a strength that helps understanding. Although there is not much extended writing in books, recent essays in Year 11 from higher attainers on energy and tourism contain mature analysis of current issues at local, national and international levels. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs make good attempts to describe holidays in Kenya, but spelling is poor and the content does not show the depth of understanding of the problems of tourism as is shown in better work. The best coursework is at the highest levels; the key points are well made, often through diagrams, annotated photographs, sketches and maps. The best are often enhanced with good or very good use of computers for presentation, with extension studies of contrasting areas in Exeter. Conclusions are firmly based on evidence gathered in fieldwork or research work. Less successful studies tend to be descriptive rather than analytical, with more tenuous or speculative conclusions. At both key stages, whole class work using computers is in line with expectations, with a wider variation in standards in individual work.
97. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages. Some at both key stages is good; however, there is some unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3. In most lessons, good teacher knowledge allows confident presentation and explanations of content and skills. Most lessons have a clear structure and timing; this breaking up of lessons into manageable units helps the pace of learning, particularly when the activities for pupils are challenging. A wide range of good resources, including video, textbooks, atlases and photographs is used in most lessons; a particular strength is the quality of information and task sheets produced in the school. The revision notes for Year 11 are very helpful for final learning and revision, and, generally, the good use of resources helps maintain interest and concentration, and makes for effective learning. Though marking is variable, the best is thorough with detailed comments, most of which encourage pupils to do better. One well organised revision lesson on coastal landscapes had brisk timing with varied activities. Brainstorming focused minds on what needed doing, and good use of the board developed a chart which also focused thinking and learning. There was a good blend of teacher input and active pupil involvement, including group work when pupils created their own structured worksheets. A good quality question and answer session based on a video clip, lively pace and an opportunity for higher achievers to complete extension tasks ensured good quality learning. However, despite good features, teaching does not always have as much impact on learning as it should. Questioning is not always progressive, or does not sufficiently challenge higher achievers; therefore learning is not taken forward rapidly, and often pupils are passive recipients of information. Sometimes, pace is laborious. When explanations lack crispness and sharpness, and group or paired work tasks lack a detailed focus, pupils are not enthused or challenged. As a result, their learning is not stimulated sufficiently. The emphasis on content rather than learning means that, sometimes, pupils of different abilities are not sufficiently catered for. When teaching is unsatisfactory, poor behaviour and attitudes are insufficiently checked, and the pupils' full attention is not gained. Hence they achieve less well, and their learning suffers.
98. The scheme of work is balanced and covers requirements, and there is a detailed breakdown of the scheme into lesson plans. Geography makes a good contribution to

the pupils' moral, social and cultural development, with the tackling of moral issues a particular strength. However, the time allocated to geography at Key Stage 3 is below that found in most schools, especially in Year 9, where it is only about half the national average. In Year 9, this lack of time, the timing of lessons mainly at the end of the day, and the arrangement of one week for geography then one week for history, mean that continuity and progress are difficult to achieve, and there is less progress in this year than in others. Progress in Year 9 is also variable between classes; in some, unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes are also impeding progress.

99. Geography has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The commitment, hard work and experience of the teachers ensure a sound experience of geography for pupils. There is good and thorough organisation and administration of resources, schemes of work and record keeping. There have been significant improvements in resources and in the use of computers; marking is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Standards of teaching and learning are generally sound, as they were at the previous inspection; pupils' results have remained in line with national averages, though there have been dips such as the 1999 GCSE results. So, despite some progress, improvement has been uneven and limited, especially in the key areas of teaching, learning and pupils' attainment. To improve further, there needs to be a clear focus on how pupils' learning can go forward. This will involve consideration of teaching methods, the close monitoring of teaching to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to share good practice, and the more systematic use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and to analyse how effective teaching has been. The problem of the low allocation of time at Key Stage 3, and, in particular, the inadequate curricular arrangements for Year 9 will also need to be tackled.

HISTORY

100. Standards are high in history. In the teachers' own assessments in 1999, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are significantly above average for all pupils. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE examination results in 1999 are well above average because of strong performances by girls; results are above average for boys. The percentages of A* and A grades are higher than nationally for all pupils in maintained schools, and for all girls, whilst that for A* is higher than for boys nationally. This suggests that pupils are being sufficiently challenged at both key stages in history. The trend over the last three years is one of dramatically rising standards, although there was a sharp dip in 1997. Results fluctuate from year to year, but they are usually above, or well above, the national average.
101. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen during the inspection are above the expected level for 14 year-olds. This represents good achievement from a broadly average intake. Pupils achieve equally well compared with expectations in both Years 8 and 9, whereas one would expect some additional progress in Year 9 from accumulated knowledge and more practised skills. However, all lessons observed in Year 9 were in the afternoon, two of them during the last lesson of the longest two school days of the week. As these are short lessons, less is achieved, and in both these lessons standards were observed to be depressed either by negative pupil attitudes or by unsatisfactory behaviour. This was not typical of other lessons. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above expected levels, and on course to be well above as pupils get into gear for their examinations. No difference between the attainments of boys and girls was observed in lessons, although the girls put in more effort and time doing work at home. This was illustrated in one lesson where most of the boys rushed to complete work set

near the end of the lesson, whereas the girls slowed their pace to preparation, not final writing, because they intended tackling the task more thoroughly at home.

102. Pupils at Key Stage 3 have a good grasp of factual information, including considerable detail, but the unusual feature of their work, which impacts well on their learning, is an early start made to the skills of analysis and interpretation. This is approached in a graduated way, starting with visual perception and interpretation. As a result, pupils can perceive and account for significant details in sources, as in a Year 8 lesson on portraits, where they could explain that the light shining on the face of Dickens is intended to suggest that he is inspired. Oral expression is mostly good, especially so for pupils of higher prior attainment. One such pupil explained the propaganda implicit in a picture of Queen Victoria as being "given to the public to promote the hierarchy of the monarchy"! The pupils develop their skills of enquiry as they progress from simple to more subtle cartoons. At Key Stage 4, GCSE candidates can assess critically what makes a good short answer, and they practise grading answers on one topic before writing on another themselves. In this way, they combine learning history with the skills of communicating their learning, a key element in history. Nevertheless, when it comes to written work, pupils of all abilities make spelling errors, even amongst well structured paragraphs and correct punctuation, some the result of not checking their work. Similarly, forgetting the capital letter on "depression" matters when referring to the pre-War economic collapse. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, although some find it difficult to record their knowledge accurately in writing. They make good progress at Key Stage 4, where there is relatively more support as fewer in each class need it. The support from learning support assistants is very effective in enabling the targeted pupils to make good progress. History contributes in a mixed way to the development of some aspects of literacy. Wide reading is encouraged, and a book-list available, but books did not feature strongly in lessons observed. Teachers provide clear guidance about how to structure essays and write about evidence, but they rely too heavily on oral dictation of tricky words. Consequently, when pupils were given a title orally containing the word "analysis", several spelled it incorrectly, and even more changed the wording of the title to avoid using it. There is satisfactory attention to the development of numeracy, in time-lines and graphs, and to the use of information technology, albeit indirectly.
103. The quality of teaching good at both key stages, but more consistently so at Key Stage 4. Learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4, reflecting problems with the timing and spread of lessons in Years 8 and 9. The key strengths are the teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and of examination requirements, high expectations of work and behaviour, and highly skilled questioning techniques. The result of this combination is that in most lessons, teachers can and do present work and demonstrate skills at a high level almost at once, but provide the support of clear delivery and explanation, memorable example, and learning which involves much active discussion and questioning by teacher and pupils. There is a lot of listening but it is two-way as there is also a lot of participation by pupils. This contributes to a high level of intellectual effort by pupils, good concentration and to an impressive accumulation of knowledge and understanding. The above combination, however, did not work in one unsatisfactory lesson where pupils were unwilling to make an effort at the end of a long day, and in this lesson, the abstract nature of the concepts being taught were not suitable. Video clips are well used. This transformed a usually unpopular topic, the make-up of parliament and voting irregularities in 1800, into a fascinating learning experience, with exaggerated but clever ridicule from Baldrick in "Blackadder" leading to a discussion of voting rights today, providing valuable insights into citizenship. The emphasis on oral learning is helpful to pupils who have difficulties recording their work,

as is the use of mind-maps and spider-graphs for organising information, but there is a need to develop further ways of helping those pupils who have difficulties translating oral ideas into writing.

104. Apart from during the lessons which take place at the end of long days, the pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour, together with skilled teaching, means they participate in a courteous and co-operative way in discussion and concentrate well; this promotes effective learning. Pupils in a Year 11 lesson worked in silence for 40 minutes, engrossed in their writing. The "History in the News" notice board is effective in showing the relevance and importance of the past to understanding of the present, and this was reinforced in lessons. All pupils have been taught to have respect for historical evidence and to question sources, with the result that most develop the lively enquiring minds referred to in the school's prospectus as part of the school's aims. The scheme of work reflects good cross curricular links, especially with art, information technology, and to citizenship. Good attention is paid to provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. However, there is insufficient time for history in Year 9, together with poor distribution of lessons through the week, so that pupils alternate between three lessons of history and three of geography each week. This has resulted in severe pruning of the scheme of work, and reduced continuity and progress for those pupils continuing the subject at Key Stage 4; it is depressing standards. While assessment procedures are good, there is, as yet, insufficient use of statistical information to guide target-setting for individual pupils. Reports do not always make it sufficiently clear what pupils do well, and what they need to do to improve, in terms of historical skills. There are insufficient textbooks, despite a good library stock, and it is unusual for GCSE candidates not to have a textbook to take home, leading to unequal opportunities as some pupils then buy them.
105. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' assessments at Key Stage 3 show fluctuations in standards over time but they remain high overall; results at GCSE have recovered from the dip three years ago and have improved steadily since then. Pupils are now being stretched at Key Stage 3, with the successful development of the study unit on portraiture promoting analytical skills. The department has addressed other points about accommodation and display as best it can. It is clear from the handbook and from the common features of lessons, that the head of department has set out to make the study of history purposeful and enjoyable for pupils, and this is largely successful. She leads a cohesive team who mirror her own high expectations of pupils. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department within this small team are informal, but ensure good consistency of approach and practice. To improve standards further, there needs to be greater focus on learning through the visual word, in reading and in writing. The subject also needs more and better-distributed time for pupils in Year 9, improved use of data for individual target-setting, and sufficient books to allow for GCSE pupils to study at home.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

106. The results of the teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show attainments well below average, with girls achieving better than the boys. Teachers' assessments over the last three years indicate a drop in attainment in 1999. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE short course examination results are significantly above average. The attainment of girls is well above that of the boys.
107. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with expectations for the

ends of both key stages. The work seen at key Stage 4 is below the standard suggested by the 1999 GCSE results because of a lack of challenge amongst higher attainers. However, pupils at Key Stage 3 cover a suitable range of skills and use a variety of software packages in their lessons. They are able to use desktop publishing packages, spreadsheets and databases in an effective manner. They search for information successfully using both CD-ROM as well as the Internet and cover aspects of control technology appropriately within their design and technology lessons. Pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactory standards. They acquire basic competence in the skills covered in specialist lessons. Pupils have opportunities to apply skills in numeracy, mainly linked to using spreadsheets. Higher attaining pupils work slightly faster on the set tasks, with some showing greater understanding. An example of this was seen in a lesson using spreadsheets to model the time taken to exit a building in case of fire. With guidance from the teacher, pupils of all levels of attainment were able to set up the basic spreadsheet model. Higher attaining pupils were able to analyse the floor plan of the building showing the rooms and fire exits which the teacher provided. They were then able to enter the relevant information into the spreadsheet. Good use of the Internet was seen in a Year 8 project involving pupils investigating volcanoes. They were able to find the information using several routes, and were then able to enter the details on a worksheet prepared by the teacher. Higher attaining pupils could find and explore a Website confidently to select accurate facts to complete their worksheet. For the majority of pupils, the work was interesting and enjoyable. In the main, pupils at all levels of attainment benefited from this investigation work and were able to talk confidently about their findings. Many pupils used the Internet frequently at home, and the work covered in the lesson was not sufficient to extend their knowledge. All were able to view information about the volcanic eruption in Japan covered in recent television news broadcasts by searching the BBC News pages.

108. At Key Stage 4, pupils are required to apply basic skills to their own GCSE coursework. Pupils do not always make sufficient gains in their learning at this level. This is mainly due to the teaching methods used and the lack of opportunities for them to use their own initiative or to adopt more independent learning skills within the constraints of the short course used. Higher attaining pupils show more depth in their understanding. They are supported in class with revision exercises in preparation for the final examination. In the lessons seen, pupils revise in various ways to good effect, using prepared questions, group problem solving tasks, along with whole class and group discussion to review the information covered over the two year GCSE course.
109. The use of computers in other subjects is inconsistent. The use of information technology across the curriculum therefore cannot be fully assured. There has been very good use of computers in music in recent years, particularly in supporting learning in composition. Good use of computers was seen in mathematics, where teachers have planned the use of information technology in their schemes of work and pupils use the computer to construct geometric shapes, use scatter graphs and spreadsheets. In science, pupils at Key Stage 3 use word processing, and research information on food and planets using databases. They also use temperature sensors and log data to measure variables in temperature. However, the extent of information technology covered in science is inconsistent. In some subjects, the use of information technology is growing, for example in geography, where pupils use census data to search for information. They also use desktop publishing for writing newspaper articles on economic activities in other countries and use the Internet to research their work on rainforests. In English, pupils use computers to present information using specialist software, and word process some of their own writing. Some projects taught in specialist

information technology lessons are linked to subjects such as the Holocaust, which is linked to work in religious education. The use of computers in modern foreign languages and physical education is underdeveloped. Teachers in other subjects find difficulty in booking the computer suites because of the high demand on the rooms.

110. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers are well organised and lesson planning is effective. This provides a clear purpose for lessons and in the main, lessons have clear objectives that support the pupils in their learning. Teachers explain the technical language associated with the subject and encourage pupils to use it correctly when they talk about their work. This is particularly important where there are pupils with lower reading skills, who benefit from this opportunity to extend their vocabulary. Teachers use a suitable range of learning resources such as worksheets, the Internet, textbooks and large screens to demonstrate the use of information technology, making the work more interesting and relevant. Teachers show good knowledge of their subject and, in the main, use questions effectively to assess how much the pupils learn and understand. Revision lessons are well structured for Year 11 pupils, with a good variety of activities to sustain interest. Pupils of varying attainment levels do not benefit fully from lessons due to the limited range of teaching methods and resources that teachers use in their lessons. As a result, some pupils lose concentration and this can result in poor levels of behaviour. Some teachers then have limited strategies to manage this. Marking is inconsistent and in some cases unsatisfactory, with comments that do not recognise good features of a pupil's work, or point out how it can be improved. Some of the folders in Year 8 contained very little work that had been marked; others were completely unmarked. There is an assessment scheme in place and information is systematically recorded and linked to the tasks that are completed in class. Teachers provide valuable opportunities at lunchtime for pupils to develop their skills in computer clubs.
111. The management of the department is satisfactory. Policies and schemes of work are well developed and are up to date. There is an overall plan that provides a clear focus for the development of the subject. The school intends to train more teachers in the use of information technology. There is good technician support and this has had a positive impact on resolving some of the network problems. The monitoring of teaching is unsatisfactory; teachers would benefit from sharing good practice in order to develop teaching methods and classroom management skills further.
112. The subject has made broadly satisfactory progress since the last inspection. This includes the development and provision of a wider range of learning opportunities. The school has introduced discrete lessons for all pupils at Key Stage 3, and offers a GCSE short course for all pupils at Key Stage 4. Pupils also have the opportunity to build on this work, leading to a full GCSE at the end of Year 11. Teachers have improved the opportunities for pupils to improve the knowledge of the subject, but some of the work is not at the right level for pupils taught in mixed ability groups. The school does not yet establish the baseline abilities of pupils on entry into the school as suggested in the last report. Although the network system has been extended, the ratio of pupils per computer is 16: 1, far below the national average. The computer system is unreliable, which affects lessons adversely; the two network systems are incompatible, leading to frustrations and inefficiencies in learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

113. At the end of Key Stage 3, the teachers' own assessments of standards are broadly

average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in French is in line with the national average, but significantly below this level in German. However, the school enters all pupils for a full GCSE course in a foreign language, compared with a national figure of about three-quarters. The 1999 results represent something of a dip from the pattern of earlier years. Pupils tend to do better in French than in their other subjects; results in German are in line with those in their other subjects.

114. In work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3. This means that most pupils achieve satisfactorily in French. However, because pupils enter the school in Year 8, they arrive with variable levels of knowledge and understanding. Pupils with higher attainment and ability are not being identified early enough, and do not achieve as well as they might by the end of the key stage. More rigorous assessment procedures are now in place, but their impact has not yet been felt. In German, pupils make good progress and achieve the expected levels in only two years. In both languages, their listening skills develop well because most teachers make maximum use of the language being taught for instructions and for simple explanations. The highest attaining pupils are able to use the past tense accurately to write about their daily routine and leisure activities. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily because teachers usually match work to their needs, and work hard to improve their confidence. These pupils are able to write briefly about themselves and their likes and dislikes. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are attaining at levels that are in line with national expectations. The most competent pupils are able to write formal and informal letters in the language they are learning. They show that they are able to use the language in a variety of situations in which they employ the past, present and future tenses with confidence. The lowest attainers acquire a wide vocabulary and they make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the language. In both languages, pupils of all ages achieve well in their acquisition of oral skills because, in most classes, teachers expect extended answers, reasonably accurate pronunciation and appropriate attention to grammar. An example of this occurred in a Year 9 German class, when pupils demonstrated good pronunciation and sound understanding of case and word order after only two terms of learning. In addition, teachers are usually tenacious in getting pupils to take part in oral work. The success of this was demonstrated in Year 9 and Year 10 lower attaining sets in German, when pupils developed the confidence to use the vocabulary and structures introduced in the lesson. In a Year 9 higher ability group in French pupils successfully gave illnesses as reasons for declining invitations. Pupils are given good opportunities to gain confidence in preparation for their GCSE oral work through rigorous practice in the weeks leading to the examinations.
115. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. Teachers have secure knowledge of the languages they are teaching. The planning of lessons is a strength. It ensures that there is usually a suitable range of activities to teach, consolidate and reinforce vocabulary and structures. Pupils acquire good listening skills in both languages because teachers routinely use French and German as much as possible for classroom communication. Pupils who have experienced this from Year 8 expect this as an integral part of a lesson. In most classes, teachers have high expectations of their pupils. For example, Year 8 and Year 9 pupils in German place appropriate emphasis on accurate grammar and structure. Since the last inspection, teachers are requiring more demanding written work from more able pupils in both languages. Many examples of this are on display in classrooms and corridors as well as in exercise books. Pupils acquire sound oral skills because most teachers conduct rigorous practice sessions, and employ a range of strategies to get them to speak. For example, class repetition is sometimes

used to good effect and pupils often work in pairs to practise dialogues. The brisk pace of most lessons ensures that productive use is made of the time available. Teachers manage their classes effectively, and set high standards of behaviour, which means that the flow of a lesson is seldom interrupted. For the most part, work is regularly marked, but there is some inconsistency in the standards required by teachers in terms of presentation. Satisfactory use is made of homework to support learning. There are sound and effective procedures for the assessment of the pupils' work. This is put to good use in the placing of pupils in appropriate teaching groups and, more recently, in the setting of targets. Pupils are kept properly informed of their National Curriculum levels, and of their attainment in the various sections of the GCSE examinations. Pupils have positive attitudes in French and German. They are generally well motivated and this contributes strongly to their learning. When required to work together in groups or pairs, they do so productively. Behaviour in lessons is good. A few instances of immature behaviour by a very small number of boys in Key Stage 4 were managed well by teachers and did not have an adverse impact on the success of the lessons. Presentation of work is satisfactory overall, although there is some inconsistency in the standards required.

116. The department has sound leadership and management. The head of department has been in post for less than two years, and there have been a number of initiatives designed to improve the quality of learning. These include the rewriting of the schemes of work and the introduction of more suitable textbooks. The present schemes of work are satisfactory, and ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. There are currently no systematic procedures for the monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice. Provision for the use of information technology to support learning in French and German is unsatisfactory. Although the subject plans appropriately for information technology in its schemes of work, there are no computers in the department, and access to the main school facilities is difficult. Overall, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

MUSIC

117. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades is well above the national average, and has been above or well above average for the last four years. Over the last three years, there has been no distinct difference between the attainment of boys or girls, although, in line with national trends, more girls than boys generally take the course. There have been insufficient candidates taking GCSE over the last three years to draw conclusive statistical conclusions about whether they perform better in music than in their other subjects. However, with an A* to C pass rate of over 90 per cent in 1999, compared to a national average of 67 per cent, pupils clearly performed very well in the examination, and with a considerably improved proportion of higher grades than in the previous three years.
118. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in work seen are below national expectations. Lack of sufficient space, poorly constructed schemes of work and extensive use of part time staff prevents pupils from making the gains that they should in performing, composing or listening. When listening to music, most pupils do not describe music using simple terms with confidence. Pupils do not retain knowledge about basic musical conventions. For instance, pupils spoken to in Year 9 did not understand what a scale was, even though they were doing an exercise based on scales. Pupils did not clearly understand the difference between different notes, even though they were required to use these in their compositions. Pupils do not use the structures of music, such as repetition, ostinato and drone, effectively. This is because there are not enough practice

rooms where pupils can rehearse their music without disturbance. The lack of space results in too many pupils trying to perform and compose in the cramped music teaching rooms. Lack of planning for the full range of attainment results in some musical pupils doing work that is too easy for them. In one Year 9 lesson, for instance, two pupils who had passed advanced grade examinations on instruments were doing the same work as all other pupils. However, pupils belonging to the school choir sing with mature control as they follow the conductor. Whilst the orchestra rehearses regularly, lack of regular performance opportunities limits the standards of playing. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well above expected levels. Pupils use the language of music with discrimination, describing heard music expressively and making correct use of technical terminology relating to instrumentation, phrasing and dynamics. This is because pupils taking the course are those who study instruments with visiting teachers. There is little encouragement for those who do not play to an advanced standard to join these GCSE groups. Some pupils have reached very advanced standards of musicianship on their instruments. Development of the pupils' literacy is not planned for systematically and so work in music fails to consolidate or extend their confident use of written English in both key stages. There is very good use of the musical applications of information technology to assist composition and score writing.

119. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages, even though, at the time of the inspection, all three staff were part time, and two were temporary. Learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, the latter reflecting the enthusiastic nature of the pupils who follow the GCSE course. The teachers communicate their good subject knowledge confidently. This aids the pupils' understanding and contributes to productive learning. However, several factors limit the effectiveness of teaching. Poorly planned schemes of work result in teachers planning lessons in isolation, that they know will appeal to pupils, but with little overall co-ordination. This adversely affects patterns of learning, with no uniformity across the different classes in the same year group, or continuity as pupils move from Year 8 to Year 9. Some pupils' learning suffers at Key Stage 3 because there is little attempt to plan for the extremes of the attainment spectrum. Where this happens, pupils fail to make the most of the time available in lessons. Despite the constraints of space, teachers use an effective range of methods when teaching; there is sound use of full class, individual and group work, and there is a good balance of practical and theoretical work. Management of the pupils' behaviour is generally secure, although in two lessons in Key Stage 3, the teacher had to be very firm to handle some rude and disruptive boys. Occasionally, teacher's frustration at individual pupils' attitudes causes them to handle pupils in an unnecessarily brusque way. This harms relationships and learning suffers. The teachers' direction of extra curricular activities is skilful. Most notably, the conducting of the school choir is excellent and leads to high performance standards. However, there is not enough formally organised extra curricular activity for the full range of pupils' musical interests. The orchestra rarely performs in public, and this limits the development of ensemble skills. Teachers provide verbal feedback that helps pupils to improve. Regular opportunities are given for pupils to assess their own work, and this helps them to evaluate the success of their own learning. There is very good use of information technology, although the space taken up by the many computers in one room limits the space needed for other activities. Visiting music staff contribute effectively to the high standards evident amongst instrumental players.
120. The management of the department is unsatisfactory overall. The head of department is on long-term sick leave. Schemes of work are out of date and the content is far too difficult for most pupils. Consequently, staff are not properly supported. The monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient development

planning to take the department forward, and so, as at the time of the previous inspection, there is still not a shared vision for where the department should be heading. The use of space is poor. In one room, for instance, a large grand piano and electronic organ take up space that is urgently needed for pupils to practice, and this severely hampers their progress. Another teaching room is untidy, with various unsorted packages, books and equipment taking up valuable space that could be used by pupils. The accommodation has not been redecorated for some years and is not an appealing place in which to teach or learn. There is insufficient storage space and the single practice room places staff under intolerable pressure, as there is nowhere for small groups of pupils to practise their compositions and performances required by the National Curriculum. The resulting congestion and noise levels in the main teaching rooms are an irritation for both pupils and teachers, and result in some poor behaviour. This also directly contributes to a lowering of the status of the subject and is a disincentive for pupils to opt for GCSE studies. Pupils spoken to say that only those who play instruments to a high standard are encouraged to take music to GCSE level, despite the course being designed for pupils of all abilities. Whilst pupils are not barred from taking music, the implicit restriction on access raises issues of equality of opportunity. Overall, the subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

121. The 1999 GCSE examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with the national average for both boys and girls. However, pupils tend to do less well in the subject than in the others that they take. Results have remained at a similar level in recent years, and have not kept pace with national improvements. The 1999 GCSE examination results achieved in dance are average, although again, pupils tend to do less well in the subject than in their others. Over the last three years, there has been a steady improvement in the dance examination results. Pupils attain very good standards in inter-school matches and competitions. Opportunities are given for both boys and girls to celebrate high quality dance work, including choreography in public displays of contemporary dance with work from lessons, dance clubs and examination courses.
122. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations for the end of the key stage and represent good achievement. Pupils have acquired some of the basic skills necessary for playing a number of games. For example, in cricket they show correct technique when fielding; when catching, most pupils use both hands effectively to cradle a high catch and they show awareness of the ready position for low catches. However, these techniques often break down when pupils come under pressure in a simple cricket competition. In tennis, pupils know the importance of the ready position prior to playing a stroke. High attaining pupils use their feet appropriately and play ground strokes using a sideways stance and may use a good loop preparation. However, low attaining pupils show poor hand/eye co-ordination, and often play the ball inappropriately with their body directly behind the ball. In athletics, they effectively demonstrate two different stances for a sprint start and know the importance of driving off a bent leg and the different leg angles needed at the start of a sprint race. In the work seen at Key Stage 4, standards are in line with expectations for the end of the key stage. Pupils effectively take responsibility for warm up and know that this enhances performance, and may reduce the chances of injury. High attaining pupils in Year 11 make good quality full twists with height and style; low attaining pupils have technical problems completing full twists. Pupils include front drops, seat drops and half turns into simple routines; low attaining pupils though do this with intermediate foot

bounces. Pupils show a good understanding of the technical words used in trampolining. Pupils studying dance choreograph simple, yet good quality, dance routines both on their own and for small groups. In a Year 10 dance lesson, pupils had opportunities to reflect, in a period of silence and stillness, on their emotional responses to their individual dance routines.

123. Overall, the quality of teaching is good at both key stages, and this has a positive impact on the pupils' learning, which is good. Teachers show good, and at times, very good knowledge, understanding and application of their subject. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, very good knowledge of trampolining, linked with good diagnosis and fault correction, challenged pupils, and consequently extended their skills. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good; this helps to foster a positive learning environment. The teachers have high expectations of the efforts and behaviour of their pupils. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are positive, and pupils respond to the impact of good teaching by producing their best efforts. They generally work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration, and persevere to produce their best results. For example, Year 10 pupils playing football were challenged successfully to evaluate different ways of outwitting a defender. However, on a minority of occasions, low expectations constrain progress. For instance, in a different Year 11 trampoline lesson, insufficient demands were made for sequences of quality because routines were not successfully linked. Teachers make effective use of question and answer work to recapitulate and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, during a Year 8 athletics lesson the teacher probed and challenged the pupils' understanding of the sprint start. Overall, units of work, short term planning and organisation are good; long term planning does not pay sufficient attention to literacy and numeracy, or to spiritual and cultural aspects. Planning just for physical education ensures progress and continuity of the subject across both key stages, and in the majority of lessons, teachers match their methods closely to the needs of the pupils. However, on a minority of occasions, examples in trampolining and cricket planning did not cater sufficiently for the different ability levels, limiting progress.
124. Good relationships, good subject knowledge and effective evaluation ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning. Teachers are sufficiently flexible in their approaches to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. This was well demonstrated when cold weather enforced changes and modification in planned athletic lessons.
125. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection; one of the most improved areas has been in the quality and teaching of dance. There has been improvement in the extra-curricular programme, where a very good and varied programme of seasonal recreational activities supports the curriculum; a suitable range of activities effectively helps to extend pupils.
126. Administration and organisation of the department are sound, and all staff work hard and effectively together. However, direction and leadership are less than satisfactory. The development of the subject is insufficiently well planned. The department development plan does not include specific targets, time constraints, budgetary links, delegated responsibilities or success criteria linked to pupils' learning outcomes. The department offers a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum, although planning a range of tasks to suit the needs of all pupils within the ability range is an area for further development. Regular monitoring of pupils' performance and comparisons with national data are underdeveloped. The monitoring of teaching is not systematically undertaken in order to share good practice. However, the department is committed in general terms to

raising pupils' standards of attainment and learning.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION

127. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The previous report criticised provision because it was fragmentary, and because the programme lacked structure. That is no longer the case. The programme that is delivered in the weekly tutorial lesson is well structured and coherent. When extensions to this work take place in subject areas or, on occasions, when special arrangements are made, these are well integrated into the overall scheme. Most pupils recognise the value of covering the major topics within the programme, and are positive in their comments. There are regular reviews and careful evaluation. The team of year heads and a deputy head, who devise and lead the programme, work closely together to plan continuity and progress in learning. Particular strengths are sex education and the work on alcohol and drug abuse. The sex education programme combines the best features of a local initiative with, by now, delivery of the course by teachers at the school. This enables the school's distinctive ethos to be reflected in the programme. A notable feature is the contribution made by former pupils, who have been trained to work with present members of the school. Work on drugs and alcohol abuse also involves others, including youth officers and the local university.
128. Whilst the structure and content of the overall programme are good, the quality of teaching in the weekly tutorial period is satisfactory. Some teaching is good, and one lesson was judged very good, but the quality is variable. In a good lesson about healthy eating, the teacher's high expectations of pupils' responses and his knowledge meant that pupils worked hard all the time during a question and answer session, and in subsequent group work. The video was stopped at various points to bring out teaching points. Pupils were well managed, and the teacher brought out thought provoking ideas, challenged attitudes and beliefs, and made links with other subjects. Many other lessons are not crisp enough and the teaching is lacklustre. Detailed preparation and planning are lacking, so that some key points are not covered. With very open-ended tasks in some lessons, learning is not optimised. Sometimes, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory. However, where there is pace, challenge, a tight structure and plenty of encouragement to pupils to become actively involved in the lessons, learning is much better.

VOCATIONAL AND OTHER COURSES AT KEY STAGE 4

129. The school's provision for vocational education at Key Stage 4 is increasing. Though the Young Enterprise scheme has been offered for many years as an extra curricular activity to Year 10 pupils, it has only been since the start of the present academic year that vocational education has been formally offered as part of the curriculum. A small group of Year 10 pupils is now following a Part One GNVQ course in health and social care at both Foundation and Intermediate levels. As the course is new, no comparative examination data exist. However, the school has consistently gained good grades in the Young Enterprise examination. In 1999, all pupils passed this examination, with one candidate gaining a distinction grade. This represents a very good performance, especially as the majority of candidates nationally sitting for this qualification are sixth form students.
130. Attainment is below expectations for Foundation pupils, but is in line with expectations

for Intermediate candidates. Though adequate provision is made for the teaching of key skills, attainment has been constrained because access to computers has been restricted. This has affected adversely the pupils' progress in numeracy, as opportunities to use spreadsheets and to employ data analysis techniques have been limited. All pupils have developed basic keyboard skills and can word process their work; they use specialist programmes appropriately to enhance the visual presentation of their assignments by using colour and graphics. Work scrutinies show that these skills have developed during the course but, for many pupils, standards are rudimentary and the pace of work is slow. Lower attaining pupils tend to use too great a variety of fonts, and there is a lack of consistency in the way that word processed work is presented. There is also an inconsistency in the use of spell and grammar checks. Higher attaining pupils make better use of information technology to enliven their work. Assignments display greater consistency in their presentation, the quality of English is better and the content of the work is enhanced by the use of relevant examples. Pupils plan their work well, but are less adept at evaluating their own learning, though some Intermediate pupils offered examples to show how their evaluation skills had improved since the course started. Higher attaining pupils also show a greater awareness of issues within the vocational area. For example, in a lesson on risk reduction, a small minority of pupils were able to identify some of the safety features that would be required in accommodation designed for both younger and older people, with a good emphasis being placed on risk assessment. Other pupils, especially those following the Foundation course, were less analytical and found it difficult to sustain concentration. This in turn constrained their learning as they quickly became restless

131. Although only one lesson could be seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching is good overall, taking into account written evidence. Staff have a good understanding of the course requirements and are undertaking relevant training to enhance their skills. Relationships with the pupils are good, and this helps the staff to assess informally the progress pupils are making and suggest how improvements might be made. Lessons are planned well and teachers have an appropriate understanding of the course requirements. Both these features make a positive contribution to learning. The pace of some lessons lacks consistency; some Foundation pupils become restless, causing some disturbance to the pace of learning. Teachers do not always provide work that is sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Teaching is hampered by the accommodation in those lessons which are timetabled in a science laboratory. Such accommodation is not suitable for GNVQ work.
132. Vocational education plays a small, but growing role, in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. In addition to the GNVQ option and Young Enterprise, two other schemes are offered to a small number of pupils. These are ASDAN and the Bridging Project. The latter is a government funded scheme run in all schools in Exeter to help disaffected youngsters gain work experience and NVQ qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Four pupils from the school are presently involved in this initiative. Vocational provision is increasing significantly the opportunities that the pupils have to progress to either the next stage of education, or to the world of work.