

INSPECTION REPORT

St. John Payne R.C. School
Chelmsford

LEA area: 915

Unique Reference Number: 115238

Headteacher: Mr. J.A. McDonald

School Inspection Number: 183959

Reporting inspector: Morton Phillips-Davies

Dates of inspection: 11th October 1999-22nd October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708108

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Voluntary Aided
Type of control:	Governors as Trustees for Brentwood Diocese
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Board of Governors
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Joiner
Date of previous inspection:	14-18 November 1994

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Glenda Spencer Lay Inspector		Equal Opportunities, Attendance, Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources
Graham Soar Jim Kidd	Science History, Support with Languages	Curriculum, Sixth Form Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development , Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development, Support Guidance and Pupils' Welfare, Key Stage 4,
Bernadette Holmes Rod Passant David Naylor John Bennett	Modern Foreign Languages English Maths Geography	Special Educational Needs Assessment Partnerships with Parents and the Community, Efficiency of the School, Community Links
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 achieve high levels of attainment and make good progress.
- A very high proportion of teaching is good or very good.
- There is a strong focus on learning and pupils' attitudes to study are excellent.
- The provision for moral development is excellent and that for both spiritual and social development is very good.
- Relationships are excellent and there is a generosity of spirit shown by both staff and pupils.
- The school is very well led and managed, and all staff have a clear focus on the pupils and their needs.
- The school provides very good value for money.
- The information provided for parents is of excellent quality.
- Relations with the community are excellent.
- There is a very strong sense of community in the school.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The present Key Stage 4 curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, as approximately half the pupils have no modern foreign language experience and about half have no technology experience. This also adversely affects the balance of the curriculum in Key Stage 4.

As can be seen from the above the school has many significant strengths and very few weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Overall the school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Progress has been made across a range of aspects of the work of the school. No area was judged to have regressed. The rate of progress made by pupils and their attainment have improved. This is due mainly to the improvement in teaching together with the very good ethos for learning established in the school.

Progress has been made on all the key issues identified in the last report. Monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice at departmental level have improved since the last inspection and are generally good. There is now a wealth of data, particularly pupil performance data, to support middle managers in their monitoring roles. The monitoring process is supported effectively by four members of the senior management team, each with responsibility for a group of departments. The quality and effectiveness of departmental planning have improved since the last inspection. Planning is now mostly good across the departments. The linking of four of the senior managers to named departments has improved the reviews of progress and the coherence of planning, an area of concern in the last inspection. Curriculum planning has improved since 1994 with a greater emphasis on the inclusion of specific learning outcomes in schemes of work but this area could be further developed. Most schemes throughout all key stages identify objectives and teaching strategies. Since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements in the assessment strategies used. The evaluation and analysis of assessment data are extensive and are now used effectively for curriculum planning. The provision of resources for learning has improved and the present level of provision is at least satisfactory. Resources in geography, modern foreign languages and the business studies and economics area are very good. Learning resources for pupils with special educational needs are appropriate and generous both in quality and quantity.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	K
Key Stage 3 Tests	A	A	<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>Average</i>	C
GCSE Examinations	A	C	<i>below average</i>	D
A/AS – levels	D	n/a	<i>well below average</i>	E

Overall levels of attainment are well above average by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. They have improved significantly since the last inspection. Attainment is higher in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 where currently some aspects are only above average. Attainment in subjects in the sixth form is now largely in line with that found nationally.

The overall National Curriculum test results in Key Stage 3 have been well above both the national averages and those for schools in similar contexts in recent years. The results for boys and for girls are both well above the national average. The better overall performance of girls reflects that found nationally.

The GCSE results have also been well above the national averages in recent years, and the 1998 results were in line with those of schools in similar contexts. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C increased to 73 percent in 1999. This is the highest percentage ever achieved by the school, both the three-year average for 1996-98 and the 1998 result being 64.9 percent. The performance of both boys and girls is well above national averages. As at Key Stage 3 the better performance of girls reflects that found nationally.

Overall attainment as measured by A level examination results in the sixth form was below the national average in 1998, with an average points score for the school of 13.8 compared to the national average of 17.6. Attainment in 1999 improved significantly and the average points score for the school was 16.7. The school operates an open access policy for A level courses and some of the pupils following the courses have relatively modest results at GCSE.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Modern Foreign Languages, Science, Art	Design and Technology
Years 10-11	Good	Modern Foreign Languages, Geography	
Sixth form	Good	Geography, Economics	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The generally high quality of teaching is a major strength of the school. More than three-quarters of the teaching is good, very good or excellent. The quality of teaching is better in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than in Key Stage 3, with more than two-fifths of teaching being very good or excellent. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. The good progress made by pupils and the high levels of attainment are a result of the cumulative effect of the consistently good and very good teaching and the very good ethos for learning established in the school. The above commentary on most and least effective should be read within this context. Most effective refers to some outstanding work and least effective is acceptable with significantly more strengths than weaknesses.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	The school is a very orderly community. Standards of behaviour are very good in lessons and around the school at breaks and at lunchtimes. Behaviour on the corridors is a real strength and pupils proceed to lessons punctually, with eagerness and enthusiasm. Pupils are polite, sensitive and courteous to their peers, their teachers, non-teaching staff and to visitors. On the rare occasions when challenging behaviour emerges, procedures for checking it are applied consistently and sensitively and are very effective.
Attendance	The overall level of attendance is a significant improvement on that at the time of the last inspection. Attendance levels are above the national average and unauthorised absence is below the national average. Attendance is particularly good in Years 7 and 8 and satisfactory in the other years.
Ethos*	There is a clear sense of purpose and of working together. The staff has established an excellent ethos, which promotes the achievement of high educational standards and good progress through providing an effective learning environment. The mission statement is very influential in guiding the work of the school and its development as a Christian faith community. Relationships between members of the school community and with parents are excellent and this contributes strongly to the positive ethos. The school successfully seeks to improve the performance and raise the self-esteem of all pupils within the school community. It is aware of individual pupils' needs and evaluates the performance of girls and boys. Pupils sustain high levels of concentration in class and display an excellent attitude to learning.
Leadership and management	The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear and effective leadership and they are well supported by other staff in positions of responsibility and the staff in general. Staff at all levels work together effectively, their morale is high and there is a clear commitment to maintaining and where possible improving on the present high standards.
Pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress.
Curriculum	The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is generally broad and balanced. The courses on offer in Key Stage 4 provide full access and entitlement to all subjects of the National Curriculum along with RE and a discrete personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Parents and pupils are made fully aware of the need to opt for a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum to meet individual pupil needs. There are opportunities for pupils to study both design and technology and a modern foreign language. Parents are pleased with the curriculum options available for their children, and the school has not received any complaints in relation to the curriculum. However, about half of all pupils in both Years 10 and 11 do not study a modern foreign language and slightly under half the pupils in these year groups do not follow a design and technology course. This has an adverse effect on both curriculum balance and on pupils' cultural development. The school is not meeting its statutory responsibility with regard to the curriculum in Key Stage 4. A levels form the basis of the present curricular provision post-16. This is being reviewed in the light of the proposed national changes to post-16 provision. The extra-curricular provision and the provision for careers and PSHE in the school are good.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The provision for pupils' moral development is excellent, that for spiritual and social development is very good and it is satisfactory for cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The provision of teaching staff is very good and that of support staff is good. The accommodation is good in many respects but aspects of the science accommodation are unsatisfactory. The quality of educational

provision in science is high despite this and pupils make good progress.
There are health and safety issues in science, which need to be addressed.
Overall the level of resources to support the curriculum is satisfactory.

Value for money

The school provides very good value for money.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- II. It enables pupils to achieve a good standard of work.
- III. The positive effect on the pupils of the values and attitudes promoted by the school.
- IV. The high standards of behaviour in the school.
- V. The information provided by the school for parents, including that on pupils' progress, which is very good.
- VI. Pupils like the school.
- VII. The parents are encouraged to play an active role in the life of the school.
- VIII. They find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems relating to their children.
- IX. They are satisfied with the work their children are required to do at home.
- X. Their clear understanding of what is taught.
- XI. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in a range of different activities.

What some parents are not happy about

- XII. The way the school handles complaints.
- XIII. The large quantity of work that the

Parents responded to the questionnaire in large numbers, almost six hundred questionnaires were returned, and the response was very positive. This can be seen in the analysis of the responses on page 55. The views expressed by parents at the parents' meeting were also generally very positive. The likes expressed above were those of many hundreds of parents, whereas the concerns represented a few tens of parents.

The inspectors' judgements support the parents' generally positive views of the school. In addition, it was judged that the school has appropriate procedures in place to deal with complaints. The standards set by the school are generally demanding, the teachers have high expectations and this makes a positive contribution to the success of many of the pupils. It was not felt that the levels of work were generally unrealistically high. In some subjects the standard expected is on occasions too demanding for the lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3. Homework is set regularly, and it is viewed as an important element of the overall programme of work for the pupils. The school accepts that the present distribution in the setting of homework for two of the year groups is uneven and is therefore reviewing it. Many pupils have high expectations of themselves in terms of the quality of their work. Whilst this can increase the time spent on homework, it also contributes significantly to their success.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The priority for governors, the headteacher and staff should be the maintenance and further development of the very high standards being achieved in many aspects of the life and work of the school. They should pay particular attention to providing a better curriculum balance in Key Stage 4 and meeting the statutory requirements for the provision of modern foreign languages and design and technology in this key stage. (Paragraphs 42, 71, 106, 110, 182, 226)

In addition to the key issue above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs 70, 119, 138, 153, 170, 189, 197, 203, 221 and 233; 72 and 108; 75 and 107; 78; 98, 115 and 165; 240, 243 and 246.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. St John Payne is an 11-18 mixed Roman Catholic (Voluntary Aided) school situated in Chelmsford. There are currently 1107 pupils on roll, including 199 in the sixth form. This is little different from the corresponding numbers at the last inspection. The pupil intake is broadly comprehensive but the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. There are 78 pupils on the school's special educational needs register, including 7 pupils with statements of special educational need. 39 pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is a lower proportion than the national average. There are 29 pupils from ethnic minority groups, and two pupils from homes where English is not the first language.

2. Pupils are drawn from more than 40 primary schools and many pupils travel significant distances to attend the school. The school states that for this reason it has, over the last ten years, become the hub of the Mid-Essex Deanery. It has forged close links with the families of pupils attending the school, the main feeder primary schools and the parishes. It describes itself as a school where the christian ideal is lived out in practice in a community based on a commitment to gospel values.

3. On the evidence of tests administered by the school and the Key Stage 2 test results, the proportion of average and above average ability pupils on entry is higher than would be anticipated in a normal distribution. In accordance with government guidelines the school has, in agreement with the Local Education Authority, set the following targets for the years 2000 and 2001.

	Targets for 2000	Indicative Targets for 2001
The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	66%	66.5%
The proportion of pupils gaining 1 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	99.5%	99.7%
The average GCSE or equivalent points score per student	44.0	44.2

Progress towards achieving these targets is presently being reviewed.

4. The school has identified the following key priorities for development.

The enhanced governor training programme will be continued, to enable the Board of Governors to play a more active role in responding to emerging national initiatives. In particular, the newly appointed

senior teacher for governor training will ensure that governors are well placed to fulfil their role in responding to the Green Paper: 'Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change'.

Self-review is seen as an integral part of the school's continuing improvement programme and will feature in future in-service training arrangements.

To continue staff training in preparation for the changes in the post-16 curriculum, which will take effect from September 2000.

To develop further the value added analysis of pupil attainment post-16 through working with external agencies.

To develop further the provision for the higher and lower attaining pupils through the adoption of the advice from the Gifted Pupils Working Group and the introduction of Success Maker a programmed learning system.

Key indicators

5.

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	93	82	175

• National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	84	78	77
	Girls	74	59	59
	Total	158	137	136
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	91(86)	79(81)	78(86)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	70(48)	55(56)	42(49)
	National	35(23)	36(37)	27(29)
• Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	54	73	78
	Girls	55	60	65
	Total	109	133	143
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	63(79)	83(80)	82(79)
	National	62(59)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	42(43)	64(48)	41(36)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	78	96	174

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	40	77	77
	Girls	73	96	96
	Total	113	173	173
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	65(68.5)	99(99)	99(100)
	National	44.6(45.1)	89.8(86.4)	95.2(92.3)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
	School	0
	National	n/a

Attainment in the Sixth Form⁴

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1998	35	45	80

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.6	13.2	13.8(13.9)	0.8	5.0	1.6(3.5)
National	n/a	n/a	17.6(17.1)	n/a	n/a	2.8(2.7)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>Such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% Success rate
	School	0
	National	79.1

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
	School	6
	National	n/a

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

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	%
	Absence	National comparative data	7.0
	Unauthorised	School	0.1
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

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Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	21
	Permanent	1

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Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	34.2
	Satisfactory or better	100
	Less than satisfactory	0

· **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

· **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

· **Attainment and progress**

· 6. On entry to the school, pupils' levels of attainment are, on average, above national norms. Overall levels of attainment are well above average by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. They have improved significantly since the last inspection. Attainment is higher in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 where some aspects are currently only above average. Attainment in subjects in the sixth form is now largely in line with that found nationally.

· 7. The overall National Curriculum test results in Key Stage 3 have been well above both the national averages and those for schools in similar contexts in recent years. The results for boys and for girls are both well above the national average. The better overall performance of girls reflects that found nationally. The GCSE results have also been well above the national averages in recent years, and the 1998 results were in line with those of schools in similar contexts. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C increased to 73 percent in 1999. This is the highest percentage ever achieved by the school, both the three-year average for 1996-98 and the 1998 result being 64.9 percent. The performance of both boys and girls is well above national averages. Their relative performance has shown some variation in recent years with boys doing relatively well in 1997, but the differences over a period of time reflect the national trend. Overall attainment as measured by A level examination results in the sixth form was below the national average in 1998, with an average points score for the school of 13.8 compared to the national average of 17.6. Attainment in 1999 improved significantly when the average points score was 16.7. The school operates an open access policy for A level courses and some of the pupils following the courses have relatively modest results at GCSE. In subjects where pupils start with high GCSE achievements, their performance in the A level subjects is above the national average. This is particularly the case in geography, chemistry and physics. The proportion of students with relatively low points scores in their best eight GCSE subjects do well in the subjects they take, most of them gaining at least two A level passes.

· 8. Pupils at the beginning of their last year in each of the key stages are working at levels which in Key Stage 3 are above and in Key Stage 4 well above the national expectation. Students are generally working at levels in line with the national expectation in most subjects in the sixth form, although this judgement is less secure in a number of subjects due to the small number of students involved. Progress is good throughout the school and some of these levels will rise by the end of the key stage if this year follows the trend previously seen in the school.

9. Standards in English by the end of Key Stage 3 are good. This is reflected in the National Curriculum tests and the standards achieved by the current cohort of Year 9 pupils. The results of the standard assessment tests in English are well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Whilst girls outperform boys, in line with the national trend, boys nevertheless achieve well above the national average by over half a level.

10. Standards in listening by the end of Key Stage 3 are very good in English and across the school. Standards in speaking and writing are good. There is an emphasis on spelling in a number of subjects and spelling is normally correct, with departments providing good support to develop accuracy. The consistent use of technical language by staff and pupils is a major factor in developing pupils' vocabulary and in raising standards across the school. Standards of reading, in English, are good by the end of the key stage. Nevertheless, the encouragement of wider reading is not as well co-ordinated as some other aspects of language development, such as the spelling initiatives, particularly in the encouragement of pupils to tackle texts that are more demanding.

11. Standards in English by the end of Key Stage 4 are very good and well above national averages. This is seen in the GCSE examination results and in the standards achieved by the current cohort of Year 11 pupils. There have been fluctuations in results due to differences in the ability of particular cohorts but the results show a rising trend. Girls outperform boys although results in 1997 showed boys getting close to the girls' A*-C pass rate. Boys achieve above, and girls, well above the national average. Standards in speaking and listening are very good. In one class, boys gave personal and sensitive talks about people who were particularly important to them. Standards in reading and in writing by the end of Key Stage 4 are very good.

12. Standards in the sixth form are generally at least sound in the GCSE course and in A-level. They reflect the broad range of ability of the students taking the courses. Students attain the full range of grades. In 1998 the average points score for English A-level was slightly above the national average, 6.3 as against the national figure of 5.7, approximately a grade C pass. The overall standards achieved by the current cohort of students are satisfactory. Standards in listening are very good. Standards in speaking are more variable and depend on the confidence of individual pupils in discussing the texts being studied. Whilst the standard in reading is appropriate to A level study there is little evidence of students reading widely to support and extend their knowledge and understanding of their chosen subject. Standards of writing are in the main at least appropriate and for some individuals are very good.

13. At Key Stage 3 pupils' achievement in mathematics was well above the national standards in 1998 and the results for 1999 were higher than those of the previous year. Although the results for boys were slightly better than for girls in 1998 the average level attained by both boys and girls was well above the national average. Over the last three years results have been well above the national averages and improving over this period in line with the national trend. Attainment of the present Year 9 is good.

14. Attainment is very good in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 4. GCSE results are well above national averages as they have been since 1996. The mean grade achieved by the Year 11 cohort in 1998 was over a grade higher than the national mean grade. In 1999 almost three-quarters of the pupils in Year 11 achieved grades A*-C at GCSE with girls achieving slightly better results than boys but not significantly so. Attainment of pupils in Year 11 is well above national expectations.

15. Attainment in the sixth form is good. Mathematics results at A level have been above the national averages. In 1998 almost two thirds of pupils achieved Grades A or B. All pupils entered for Further Mathematics in 1998 and 1999 achieved pass grades, and went on to university to study mathematics or mathematics related subjects. The attainment of students in Year 13 is above the national average.

16. Pupils have very good numerical skills and they are able to apply these skills in other contexts.

17. The attainment in science of the present Year 9 pupils is above average, particularly in scientific knowledge. In the 1998 end of key stage tests, pupils' performance was well above average at both Levels 5 and 6. Pupils ability to draw detailed conclusions and explain their ideas is not as strong as other aspects of attainment in science. Science results over time indicate that attainment in the school is improving while national and local trends show a decline. The 1999 test scores show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 and above in the school whereas nationally there has been a decline over the last three years.

18. In Key Stage 4 the move to double science has brought about a dramatic improvement in the quality of provision for all and in the overall standards in science. The attainment of pupils towards the end of Key Stage 4 is well above national averages. In general pupils achieve one grade higher at GCSE than the national average.

19. Standards in A level chemistry are good with over half the pupils in Year 13 performing above

average. Pupils' achievements in biology and physics in Year 13 are in line with national averages. In the 1998 A level examinations the mean point scores in biology, chemistry and physics were above the national averages with improving trends particularly in chemistry and biology.

20. The attainment of pupils towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average in art. In Key Stage 4 the GCSE examination results have been above the national averages in the last two years and were well above in 1998. The attainment of pupils in the present Year 11 is above the national average. At A level the results have been much less impressive with three of the four students in 1999 achieving passes at grades A-E. In the previous year the pass rate was well below national averages with only half the group of twelve students gaining grades A-E. Attainment in the sixth form is presently just in line with the national average. Pupils with special needs achieve good results in Key Stages 3 and 4, and the department provides extension or support activities for these children.

21. The most recent results in GCSE business studies are well above the national average. At A level the business studies results were good in 1999 when all students obtained grades A-E and 24 of the 25 students obtained grades A-C. In economics the results improved between 1998 and 1999 when five of the seven students obtained grades A or B. All six GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies students achieved passes in 1998, three with merit. The examination results show improvement over the past three years and the present groups are generally working at levels above the national expectation.

22. In design and technology pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory and in line with the national average, with small but significant numbers achieving at higher levels. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is mainly good and above the national average. Their results in GCSE subjects are well above the national averages. In the sixth form, standards are in line with course expectations. Attainment in the most recent A level examination was broadly in line with national averages. The attainment in Year 13 is presently in line with national averages.

23. Attainment in IT in Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory or better and broadly in line with the national expectation. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1999 and for those currently in Year 9 show that attainment for the large majority of pupils is at or above the standard expected nationally. In Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is mainly in line with or above expectations for their age. GCSE IT was taken as a public examination for the first time in 1999 and pupils achieved significantly above the national average. In the sixth form, standards are generally in line with A level course expectations with some students achieving at a high level. GCE A level results were good in 1999 although the small number of students who followed an A/S course achieved poor results.

24. Pupils come to the school with varied experience of music. By the end of Key Stage 3 the great majority of pupils reach national expectations with a minority exceeding them. At Key Stage 4 attainment is generally good, although with the small numbers involved attainment is influenced by the ability of those who opt for the subject. Recent GCSE results have ranged from just below the national average to well above. The present pupils are performing at levels, which are at least in line with the national expectation. At A level the results in 1998 and 1999 show improvement from those in 1997. The numbers taking the subject are very small and valid comparison of examination performance with national averages is not possible.

25. By the end of Key Stage 3 there has been a marked improvement in attainment in geography from that at entry; pupils' performance is very good and well above national averages. In Key Stage 4 geography is a popular optional subject and attainment is excellent with the present Year 11 group attaining at a very high level, well above national averages. GCSE examination results have been very good for a number of years. In 1999 they were outstanding, with 56 percent of candidates obtaining the top two grades A* or A and 95 percent of candidates obtaining passes within the range A*-C. This is far above the national average, which was 51.5 percent in 1998. Attainment at A level is also excellent. In 1999, 14 candidates out of a total of 21 gained grade A, and all candidates gained a pass at grade D or above. These results are well above the national average. A level results have been very good for a

number of years prior to 1999. The attainment of the present A level group is very high and well above the national average.

26. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in history is above national averages and there are examples of where it is well above. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of pupils is well above national averages. In 1998, at GCSE 62.5 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C compared with 52 per cent nationally. In 1999, 77 per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades, confirming a rising trend in examination performance. The present pupils are working at well above the national average. In recent A level examinations the percentages achieving both at grades A or B and at grades A-E have been above the national averages. In lessons and work seen the majority of sixth-form students are displaying high levels of understanding including the skills of evaluation and interpretation and present attainment is above national norms.

27. Attainment in modern foreign languages overall is good. Towards the end of each stage, it is good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in relation to their ability. The majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are working securely in line with national expectations in French and German with the more able working above national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4, those pupils who continue to study a modern foreign language attain above national expectations. Results in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE are significantly above the national average in French and German. There are no Year 13 groups in French or German in this academic year and the numbers of candidates entered for A level in recent years are too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made with national averages. The attainment of those preparing for A level in the current Year 12 is good in French and very good in German. The attainment of those studying for a vocational qualification in Spanish is also good in relation to course requirements.

28. The proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding national expectations in physical education by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with that found nationally. The GCSE results improved considerably from the 34.5 percent A*-C grades in 1997 to 51 percent in 1998, which was above the national average and better than the results reported at the last inspection. There was no GCSE entry in 1999. In Year 11 pupils' attainment in the GCSE group is above national expectations. All six students taking A level in 1998 passed. In 1999, all eight students entered passed and three obtained grades A or B. Whilst numbers are small to make valid comparisons, the latest results compare favourably with national averages. Year 13 students following the A level course are meeting course expectations. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.

29. Overall pupils make good progress in both key stages and in the sixth form, with the best progress made in Key Stage 4. Progress is good, very good or excellent in about three-quarters of lessons. The good progress and high attainment are the direct consequence of the cumulative effect of the consistently good and very good teaching and the very good ethos for learning established in the school. Pupils come to lessons expecting to learn and make progress, and the good teaching supports this through clarifying the objectives of the lesson and what the pupils need to do to improve.

30. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. They are appropriately challenged and the match of work, as indicated by the high overall quality of teaching, is good. In some subjects, such as English setting arrangements are used sensitively to provide small groups and appropriate support to individuals. Learning support assistants give effective support to identified pupils in lessons.

31. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in English. The one exception to this occurs in the work set when pupils join the school. There are some indications from the scrutiny of work in the first few weeks of Year 7 that full account is not being taken of the work in English in the primary school.

32. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 improving in all aspects of mathematics.

Pupils are taught in groups formed on the basis of prior attainment from early in their first year at the school and this enhances progress through the key stage. Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 4. The skills established during Key Stage 4 are extended in the sixth form where progress is again good. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. The grouping of pupils according to prior attainment enables the department to have small teaching groups for these pupils. Support teachers are also used to provide individual support for particular pupils

33. Progress in science through both key stages and in the sixth form is good. Some low ability groups make very good progress both in lessons and over time. Progress in Key Stage 4 is particularly good. Progress in the A level science subjects is good overall, particularly for those who start the courses with the lower GCSE points scores. Progress is very good in chemistry, good in biology and sound in physics.

34. There is very good development of numerical skills in science. Some good use of IT was observed, which contributed to pupils' progress in this area.

35. Pupils in both key stages make good progress in art. Bearing in mind the number of pupils who take GCSE in the subject very few pupils take art at A level. Their progress in the sixth form is not as good as in the earlier years and is only just satisfactory.

36. Students make good progress in business studies and economics in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, with some very good progress at sixth form level.

37. Overall, pupils in both key stages and students in the sixth form make good progress in design and technology.

38. In Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, pupils usually make sound or good progress in IT in developing their knowledge and application of skills.

39. Progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 in music is good due to the consistently good quality of teaching. Progress at A level is satisfactory given the differing aptitudes and interests of the students. All pupils including those with special needs make appropriate progress.

40. In Key Stage 3 most pupils make very good progress in geography. However, some lower attaining pupils and others with special needs find the challenge of the course very demanding. Despite making good progress, few of these pupils choose to continue with geography as an option in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form excellent progress is made.

41. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in history in both key stages and in the sixth form. Moreover, there are examples of very good progress in all key stages.

42. Progress in modern foreign languages in relation to pupils' prior attainment is very good across the age and ability range in both key stages and in the sixth form. The high standards of attainment and very good progress are a direct result of both the quality of teaching, which is consistently very good, and of the effective use of the Foreign Languages Assistant, who operates as a highly skilled classroom teacher. The very good progress made in modern foreign languages makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy skills

43. In lessons progress is mostly good or very good in physical education and never less than satisfactory. It is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Many pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities and their age, especially in the performance and health aspects of the Attainment Target. In the planning and evaluating aspects progress is less evident but satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs progress as well as others.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

44. The school is a very orderly community. Pupils sustain high levels of concentration in class and display an excellent attitude to learning. They respond positively to the teaching, are willing to ask for help when they are unsure and are confident when working independently or in groups. At both key stages, and in the sixth form, pupils persevere and complete tasks even when they find assignments difficult. They are keen to offer information for the benefit of their classmates, to take part in discussions and to debate a variety of issues. For example, within a higher ability group of boys there was no 'macho' culture and there was a climate where individuals could make personal sensitive observations about people who were important to them without fear of being even mildly teased or ridiculed. Standards of behaviour are very good in lessons and around school at breaks and at lunchtimes. Behaviour on the corridor is a real strength and pupils proceed to lessons punctually, with eagerness and enthusiasm. They look forward to their lessons and are ready to begin work as soon as they enter classrooms.

45. Pupils are polite, sensitive and courteous to their peers, their teachers, non-teaching staff and to visitors. They are trustworthy and show great respect for each other and for property. Pupils are proud of their school and what it achieves. There is no graffiti and pupils take great care of the school environment. The new rewards policy is most effective in encouraging pupils to take full advantage of what the school has to offer, and all pupils, even those in Key Stage 4, are delighted when their academic and non-academic achievements are recognised and celebrated. Teachers' expectations of the pupils in both the academic and social spheres are high. On the rare occasions when challenging behaviour emerges, procedures for checking it, outlined in the sanctions pyramid, are applied consistently and sensitively and are, therefore, very effective indeed. Moreover, teachers work hard to counsel and mentor their pupils. The pastoral system, consisting of form tutors and heads of year, is a real strength in this regard. Parents and pupils make reference to the fact that the vast majority of pupils like school and are grateful for the support of their teachers.

46. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are excellent and this makes a major contribution to the caring ethos of the school. Pupils and teachers greet each other, and visitors, pleasantly at the start of the school day, and the school provides much within the formal and informal curriculum that enhances the mutual respect evident in all aspects of its community. Display on the corridors and inside classrooms is of a high standard and encourages all those connected with the school to reflect on the successes of the pupils and also to be aware of the needs of those in society who are less fortunate. Bullying is very rare indeed, and when problems arise teachers and pupils act swiftly and effectively to eradicate them. Pupils, parents and teachers make particular reference to the strong anti-bullying procedures that operate in the school.

47. During lessons, pupils show the utmost respect for the industry, talents, feelings and beliefs of others. Pupils are generous towards their peers' success; they are delighted when their classmates succeed.

48. The attitude of pupils with special educational needs is very good. A feature of the school is that it is difficult for an observer to discern in terms of behaviour and attitude any difference between a higher and a lower set. Pupils are keen to do well and to improve.

Attendance

49. The overall level of attendance in 1997/8 is a significant improvement upon the level of attendance at the time of the last inspection. The attendance figure of 93.9 percent during 1997/8 was above the national average and the figures for authorised absence of 6 percent and unauthorised absence of 0.1 percent were below the national averages. Attendance is particularly good in Years 7 and 8 and satisfactory in the other years. In the week of inspection attendance in Years 7 and 8 was very good

with most classes achieving 100 percent attendance.

50. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits, with a small percentage due to holidays that have been appropriately authorised. Non-attendance is followed up and parents are contacted by the staff to ascertain the reasons for it. The school works in close collaboration with the education social worker to monitor attendance levels and address any concerns that may arise.

51. The punctuality of the vast majority of pupils is very good and lateness is recorded and followed up. When pupils are late it is usually because the buses that the majority of children arrive in have been delayed by traffic congestion. Sessions begin at the planned times. Registers are taken efficiently at the beginning of each session and attendance in lessons is recorded. Pupils understand the importance of being punctual and they arrive on time for lessons. The prompt, regular attendance by pupils has a positive effect on their attainment and progress.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

52. The generally high quality of teaching is a strength of the school. More than three-quarters of the teaching is good, very good or excellent. The quality of teaching is better in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than in Key Stage 3, with more than two-fifths of teaching being very good or excellent. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. The good progress made by pupils and the high levels of attainment are a result of the cumulative effect of the consistently good and very good teaching together with the very good ethos for learning established in the school.

53. The previous report noted that a narrow range of teaching strategies was being used and also that in the lessons judged at that time to be unsatisfactory, pupils were often not clear about the purpose of the activity and where it was leading. There has been significant improvement in both these areas since the last inspection. The purpose of the lesson is usually made clear to the pupils and teachers are generally using an appropriate range of teaching strategies. The last report also noted the need for greater differentiation. The school now uses a range of differentiation strategies including setting in the larger subject departments. Work is usually appropriately challenging in the majority of lessons. There are instances in geography where very demanding standards more suited to the higher attaining pupil are set at Key Stages 3 and 4, and as a result very few pupils with special educational needs opt for the subject at Key Stage 4.

54. Learning support assistants provide effective support in class. This is particularly true when they have early sight of the lesson plans.

55. The teaching in English is consistently of high quality. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is usually good or very good. The quality of teaching is at least good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Lessons are prepared well and teachers have good subject knowledge. Relationships with all pupils are good, and this supports the learning and the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Marking, particularly of course work in Key Stage 4, is often incisive and supportive. Homework is set regularly and is appropriate. The quality of teaching is consistently good and pupils are effectively challenged across all classes; the cumulative effect of this is an even more important factor than the quality of teaching in individual lessons.

56. In mathematics, in the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory; in some lessons it was very good. Where lessons were good or very good, the teachers involved the pupils effectively through using interactive questioning which moved the learning forward at a challenging pace towards achieving clear learning objectives, and the planning took account of the range of ability in the group. In lessons where teaching was satisfactory, whilst the strengths outweighed the weaknesses, the pace was more laboured with some teachers focusing too much on the average ability pupils. For example one teacher spent much of a lesson explaining a particular skill, without taking sufficient account of the range of ability in the group or allowing sufficient time for some pupils to practise using the skill. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They all manage the pupils well and are generous with their time at lunchtime and after school to support the pupils' learning. Sixth form students attend a residential mathematics course at Southampton University each year and also attend day conferences in London. Revision lessons and extra lessons to extend the learning of high achievers are arranged for Year 11 pupils. A mathematics club meets regularly. Resources are used effectively and appropriately. For example in a Year 9 lesson pupils each had the use of a graphical calculator on which they were taught to solve simultaneous equations.

57. In two thirds of the lessons seen in science, teaching was good, very good or excellent. The following typical quote from part of a lesson observation illustrates some of the good aspects of the teaching:

'The teacher has an excellent manner with the pupils and uses a brain-storming strategy of the highest standard to introduce the work, with good use of praise. The teacher has high expectations and challenges pupils through very effective questioning. The lesson is well planned and prepared and the management and organisation of pupils' learning is very good. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the pupils are excellent. The teacher moved the lesson on with skill ensuring that all pupils were prepared for the next step¼'.

58. Where teaching was not as good but was nevertheless satisfactory, it was mainly due to the roles teachers adopted in the context of practical work, particularly in their limited intervention to challenge pupils' ideas and thinking and move beyond the supervision of activities. In Year 7 teachers do not sufficiently recognise and build on the knowledge, understanding and experiences pupils bring from their primary schools.

59. The key to the successes in science throughout the school is linked closely to the department's use of on-going assessment, the provision of feedback for pupils, constant reinforcement and a clear review and reflection on the learning objectives set by teachers. Even when the learning objectives are common for all groups in schemes of work, teachers balance the activities, in the best lessons, with clearly directed instructions and good exposition; they teach science with a clear focus on pupils' learning. Both teachers and pupils have high expectations. This is seen in the quality and quantity of work covered in each year group. The rigorous use of technical language by both staff and pupils during discussions, and the feedback provided, constantly reinforce the focus on high achievement. Pupils develop a good understanding of investigation skills in the context of scientific ideas.

60. The quality of teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form in art is never less than good and on some occasions it is very good. Lessons are well prepared and are underpinned by appropriate schemes of work. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and its techniques. Introductions are explicit and help pupils to know exactly what is required of them. In the case of the older pupils who are developing individual projects, teachers operate as both teachers and consultants; open questioning is used to very good effect with the views and intentions of the pupil placed at the core of the advice wherever possible.

61. The reason why students of business studies and economics make good progress and achieve well at both Key Stage 4 and post-16 is the very good standard of teaching. Teachers have high expectations and the progress of each student is carefully monitored. Each lesson is carefully planned and begins with a clear statement of objectives. The use of a variety of listening, reading and problem-solving techniques make the learning active and attractive. Listening skills are very well developed and there is an apparent eagerness to learn. Teachers use questioning to good effect. Most lessons both at Key Stage 4 and post-16 involve students using numerical and communication key skills to solve a challenging problem.

62. The quality of teaching in more than a quarter of the lessons seen in design and technology was good or very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are mainly good and where development needs are identified they are suitably addressed. Where teaching is strongest a good balance of interaction with pupils is maintained, lessons are not over directive and pupils are encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning. Throughout all aspects of the subject, nearly all lessons are consistently well structured and organised, and pupil management is good. A range of teaching approaches is used which is largely suitable for the context of the lessons, although where the teaching is too dominant pupils become more passive in their response and the pace of work is slower. In a very small number of lessons clearer learning objectives were needed and differentiation strategies were limited.

63. The quality of teaching in the IT lessons is usually good. Lessons are efficiently planned and pupils follow a clearly defined programme of work. In Key Stage 3 pupils follow a series of planned tasks to ensure national curriculum coverage. The quality of teaching and learning could, however, be

further strengthened if the planning took more account of the need for well-defined learning objectives and linked these to strategies for meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. This is presently a weaker area in the Key Stage 3 provision. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the quality of teaching observed was mainly good and ranged from satisfactory to very good.

64. The standard of teaching in music is good, and teachers make good use of time and resources. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good as is their level of expectation of the pupils. Staff meet regularly to plan and review their teaching. There is an effective assessment policy but staff do not use it fully. The homework set is appropriate at all levels. There are good, co-operative relationships between pupils and staff. The management and organisation of pupils and their work are good leading to good standards of behaviour and discipline.

65. Teaching in geography to pupils of all ages is of a very high standard. Every lesson seen was at least good, and over half the lessons were very good or excellent. At the heart of the department's most effective teaching lies a highly structured course in which every lesson and the associated material are planned in advance. Worksheets and information sheets are extensively used and are of great assistance to all. However, some of the lower attaining pupils find it difficult to cope with the quantity of work and reading. The teaching staff is dedicated and committed to high standards. All lessons are characterised by rigorous and appropriate use of geographical terminology, a wide variety of activities and a positive and supportive attitude towards the pupils. Video film clips are used particularly effectively. The worksheet approach, coupled with individual help from teachers, ensures that all pupils learn at a level and rate appropriate to their ability. Factual and theoretical concepts are constantly reinforced resulting in high levels of understanding on the part of the pupils. Pupils' work is generally marked regularly; however, written comments on pupils' work indicating what they need to do to improve are relatively uncommon.

66. The quality of teaching in history is a major strength of the department. It was good or very good in nearly 90 percent of the lessons seen. Very good teaching was seen from every member of the department and in all key stages. Teachers place great emphasis on the acquisition of skills, but also interest and amuse their pupils by relevant historical anecdotes. They display good subject knowledge and control their classes in a calm, confident and assured manner. They have high expectations of their pupils and use challenging questioning techniques to ensure progress. Praise and humour are evident and there is good support for pupils with special educational needs.

67. The teaching of modern foreign languages is very good throughout the school. All teachers have a secure command of the target language and use it with fluency and confidence in the classroom. Lessons are carefully planned. Objectives are clear and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. There is an infectious enthusiasm for the subject, which is shared by teachers and pupils alike in most classes. Lessons are conducted at a brisk and purposeful pace, with energy and imagination. There is a very good variety of activities provided, which allows pupils to repeat, rehearse and consolidate new language. Pupils are given opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups with a range of media and resources. Lessons start with stimulating presentations and always end with a recap, so that pupils have no doubt about what has been achieved. This is a significant contributory factor to ensuring very good progress in the majority of lessons.

68. Overall the teaching is good in physical education; some is very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Occasionally, it is outstanding. A key strength lies in consistency in lesson procedures. Lack of consistency was a criticism in the last report. All lessons begin with a focus on the objectives. The teachers have good subject expertise and this is revealed in good lesson planning. Expectations of standards and good behaviour are generally high. The work is interesting and organised in a range of activities, helping to sustain the concentration and motivation of pupils. All teachers know their pupils well, good relationships are established and encouragement and help are given to those who need it. Sometimes there is too much direction leaving few opportunities for pupils to observe, analyse and plan responses. Good teaching was a feature of the last inspection and it is evident the good standards are being maintained and improved upon, especially in Key Stage 4.

The curriculum and assessment

Curriculum

69. The school's mission statement and its aims, translated through its policies and the curriculum, guide the life and work of the school. The strong emphasis on the moral development of pupils along with the mutual care and support given and the entitlement for all, is at the heart of the school's curriculum and its organisation.

70. All pupils have access to the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3. Subjects are given appropriate time allocation. There is a very effective personal, social and health education programme (PSHE), with modules on relationships and bullying, as well as sex education and drugs awareness, delivered in the context of the school's mission statement and values. The overall curriculum on offer is broad and for the most part balanced. From the start of Year 7, the school puts a particular focus on literacy and the development of learning skills. There is a structured course of taught information technology (IT) that is seen as an important subject in its own right as well as a skill area to support learning in other subjects. All pupils study French throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. German is introduced as a second modern foreign language for the more able linguists in Year 8. During this time, those pupils not studying two languages follow a course focusing on study skills and IT. An intensive IT skills course is provided in the summer term for the pupils studying German. This enables them to have access to the programmes of study in IT. However, the variation in the nature of IT subject provision particularly for those pupils studying both German and French who do not have access to computers at home is an area of concern raised by a number of pupils from both Years 8 and 9. Whilst the school can demonstrate that these pupils are not disadvantaged in developing their IT skills, opportunities for them to consolidate those skills and to have access to studying the wider implication of information technology and its impact on society are restricted. The newly appointed head of information and communication technology is aware of this, and an audit of the staff's IT skills along with an evaluation of the IT provision in Key Stage 3 is planned.

71. The courses on offer in Key Stage 4 provide full access and entitlement to all subjects of the National Curriculum along with religious education (RE). In addition to the core and foundation subjects of the national curriculum the school offers a broad range of design and technology options as well as business studies and economics. There is a discrete PSHE programme that covers the cross-curricular themes of citizenship, environment, health, careers and economic and industrial awareness. This supports the school's mission statement of care and respect for all. PSHE is taught as a modular course and each unit has a built-in self evaluation completed by pupils and teachers. Pupils also consider respect for people and the environment, parenthood and equal opportunities. Careers education forms an important part of the curriculum, building on the work in Key Stage 3. Careers conventions are provided for pupils at times when major decisions about their next stage of learning have to be made. Here, pupils get good advice and support from a range of providers including mock interviews from local business managers as well as opportunities for work experience. Considerable thought goes into supporting pupils at the time when option choices in Year 9 have to be made in preparation for Key Stage 4. Parents and pupils are made fully aware of the need to opt for a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum to meet individual pupil needs. There are clear guidelines to direct pupils in their subject choices in the core subjects on offer and on the options available to them. There are opportunities for pupils to study both design and technology and a modern foreign language. However, about half of all pupils in both Years 10 and 11 do not study a modern foreign language and slightly under half of pupils in these year groups do not study a design and technology course. This has an adverse effect on both curriculum balance and on pupils' cultural development, and is contrary to statutory requirements for the curriculum in Key Stage 4. Parents are content with the curriculum options available for their children, and the school has not received any complaints in relation to the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs choose from the full range of option subjects at Key Stage 4. However, geography in particular has a reputation for being rigorous and pupils with special educational needs

tend not to opt for this subject.

72. The school adopts an open-access policy for entry into the sixth form. Uptake is generally high and currently two-thirds of pupils stay on in the school after Key Stage 4. The curriculum is largely A level GCE orientated. Nevertheless, the proportion of students with relatively low points scores in their best eight GCSE subjects make progress in the subjects they take, most of them gaining at least two A level passes. There is a programme of GCSE mature English and mathematics and opportunities for a few vocational GNVQ courses. Provision for the wider ability intake in the sixth form is being reviewed in the light of national changes to post-16 provision described in 'Curriculum 2000'. All pupils follow a structured PSHE course that supplements a General Studies course to A level, with inputs from various subject specialists. This course, which was only recently introduced, is co-ordinated by the head of sixth form but the quality of planning for individual units is variable and for some, not as detailed as the planning for other A level courses. All pupils have access to RE through the 'Search for meaning' course. Opportunities for taught physical education (PE) are limited other than in A level PE. The senior staff in charge of the sixth form are encouraging greater integration of Years 12 and 13 through both sporting fixtures and social events. Whilst there is detailed performance analysis to determine the added value the school is giving its pupils throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 there is not the same rigour or focus on value-added analysis between Key Stage 4 and the end of Year 13. Overall the quality of curriculum provision for pupils post-16 including the planning, is good.

73. In addition to the time-tabled curriculum there is a range of extra-curricular activities, revision programmes and additional classes, all of which enhance the quality of educational provision within the school.

74. Since the last inspection, there have been considerable developments in the curriculum in terms of its management, organisation and monitoring. The changes the school has put in place have had a beneficial impact on learning. A number of issues linked to pupil groupings, subject time allocation and curriculum planning raised in the 1994 inspection report have been evaluated and addressed. The most notable change has been the introduction of balanced science for all in Key Stage 4. All pupils in the school were entered for GCSE double science in 1999 and they achieved an outstanding examination performance, all 171 pupils gained a GCSE grade F or above and 77 percent achieved grades A* to C. In English pupils are taught in separate groups of boys and girls, whilst in some other subjects the seating arrangements of pupils have changed. Both actions have had a marked positive effect on pupils' learning in closing the gap between the performances of boys and girls. Pupils expressed their approval of the changes, stating that they tended to work better in the new groups. The school uses sensitive setting arrangements to provide support for pupils with special educational needs in English, mathematics and science. Effective support is provided to named individual pupils by the learning support assistants.

75. The monitoring of curriculum planning and policy implementation has improved. There is a wealth of data, particularly pupil performance data, to support middle managers in their monitoring roles. Members of the senior management team evaluate the information and together with heads of department, suggest areas for improvement. This process is still developing as more middle managers gain in confidence in analysing performance data. To date, most of the information available to heads of department is quantitative data; there is still limited evaluation of the quality of provision based on qualitative characteristics, although more are involved in monitoring teaching, planning and marking. The governing body is regularly up-dated on curriculum matters through detailed subject and school reports. A curriculum sub-committee of the governing body has recently been set up and is now taking a more active role in monitoring the curriculum, the most recent focus being an evaluation of the literacy programme in Year 7. A formal and systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum by governors is still at an early stage of development.

76. Curriculum planning has improved since 1994 with a greater emphasis on the inclusion of specific learning outcomes in schemes of work. Most schemes throughout all key stages identify

objectives and teaching strategies. In some cases the range of outcomes set within common contexts does not indicate the expected outcomes above and below the target outcome. The link between assessment and planning is clear in most cases. However, this link could be further improved if the objectives were matched to specific National Curriculum levels or GCSE grade or course criteria. The vast majority of teachers share these learning objectives with pupils. This helps pupils to understand their strengths and weaknesses and identify where improvement is needed. The excellent sixth form self-evaluation and target setting programme, 'Assessment and Action Plan', has been extended into Key Stage 4 in the form of a monitoring and target setting process. Information gained from these target-setting sessions along with pupil performance data is used to identify and support pupils through an individual mentoring programme. Early indications of this analysis of pupil progress show that the high levels achieved in 1999 will be maintained in the year 2000.

77 The schools still tries to keep low ability groups as small as possible and with the increased focus on planning and a wider range of teaching strategies, there are clear gains in the progress of pupils of all abilities. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when teaching and learning were adversely affected in some of the larger groups. The overall improvements in the planning, organisation and monitoring of the curriculum are having a positive effect on the quality of provision and the standards achieved. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' intellectual physical and personal development and there is very good preparation for the next stage of education, training or employment. The school has 29 pupils from ethnic minority groups two of whom come from homes where English is an additional language. All these pupils, as well as those on the special educational needs register, have equality of access to the curriculum and they make good progress.

• **Assessment**

78. Assessment practices within the school are good overall. The diligent marking and the way assessment data, provided through tests and teacher assessments, is used to support and monitor pupils' progress and achievement are strengths within the school. However, assessment practice across departments is not consistent and the link between assessment, learning objectives and the National Curriculum requirements is not yet secure in all areas.

79. There is a school assessment policy, which provides a framework of assessment strategies for each department, and within each department arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work are in place. Pupils' work in all subjects is assiduously marked, and the criteria for marking are made clear to the pupils. In some subjects, such as English, the marking of written work often includes a helpful diagnostic commentary, in other subjects helpful verbal feedback is given to individuals and groups within the lessons.

80. In some subjects pupils' work is awarded a mark out of ten. In mathematics and science for example the criteria for awarding such marks relate to standards, quality and completion of work; they are therefore marks which indicate how well the pupil has performed and do not necessarily indicate what the pupil has learnt. However, the mathematics department, for example, has begun to identify learning objectives relating to particular units of work and pupils are able to assess their achievements against these objectives. At the present time, in mathematics, the link between assessment, learning objectives and progress in terms of the National Curriculum levels is not yet clear. The opportunities for guiding pupils' progress and providing targets for pupils in terms of specific learning objectives relating to the National Curriculum or GCSE are underdeveloped.

81. Departmental records are comprehensive, providing appropriate information to assess the progress of pupils. This information also provides a sound evidence base for the assessment data used by senior management to provide an overview of pupils' achievements.

82. In some subjects self-assessment is well established. In Art, for example, all pupils are required to evaluate their own work. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are required to assess themselves against a range of

study skills three times during the two years and to set targets where appropriate in discussion with their form tutor. In the sixth form there is a process of regular review and targeting in relation to end of course grades.

83. Communications with parents are frequent and very effective. In addition to the pupils' journal, that provides a daily contact between the school and home, there are reports, which are well presented in a standard format. These meet statutory requirements. The reports are produced by the use of a school based report program and include, for each subject, a course outline subdivided where appropriate into attainment targets. Comments include a positive statement and, where appropriate, indicate strategies for improvement. Some of the comments are related directly to the information given within the course outline. All pupils in Year 11 receive a well-produced Record of Achievement that includes for example a personal statement, a curriculum vitae and a range of certificates of achievement. This is updated as pupils progress through the sixth form.

84. The school maintains an impressive amount of assessment data on all pupils in the school. In Key Stage 4 for example this data is used very effectively to monitor the progress and attainment of pupils through the key stage. Senior staff make use of this information to identify pupils who would benefit from further support and they ensure that action is taken. Assessment data is also used very effectively to monitor the progress of groups of pupils, thus alerting senior staff and heads of department to aspects of performance within the departments. The analysis of this data is particularly strong and it provides the school with a detailed picture of the performance of pupils in the school in relation to prior attainment, potential achievement and local and national results.

85. Since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements in assessment strategies. For example departments respond to areas highlighted by the assessment data. Both the mathematics and English departments have adopted strategies designed to enable both boys and girls to achieve their full potential. Reporting remains thorough and is now more closely related to course outlines. In many departments there has been some development which better relates assessment to course criteria. In large departments such as mathematics coursework relating to investigations is marked and moderated within the department. The evaluation and analysis of assessment data are extensive and are used effectively for curriculum planning. The learning support department has received training and is aware of the need to make pupil targets sharper and more focussed and to review progress towards achieving them within a given timeframe. These 'smart' targets will be of assistance to other teaching colleagues through informing their planning.

· **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

86. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school successfully highlights different aspects of its approach in its prospectus. The mission statement emphasises care for all and forgiveness of transgressions and is very much in evidence in all areas of school life. This emphasis on care and respect for others promotes excellent attitudes amongst pupils and excellent relationships between all members of the school community. In the majority of lessons, in the variety of assemblies and during extra-curricular events including retreats, pupils are actively encouraged to reflect on fundamental issues, their feelings and emotions, a wide range of values and their relationships with each other.

87. Assemblies observed during the inspection were conducted with sensitivity, actively involved pupils from all key stages and explored social, moral and religious issues. Time for reflection during form periods and opportunities for pupils to discuss wider issues during the personal, social and health education programme have an important and beneficial influence on the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils.

88. Spiritual development is very good and the majority of departments provide pupils with knowledge and insight into values and beliefs. Some departments do this when the opportunity arises

although it is not planned as a formal part of the teaching programme. There are four assemblies each week and pupils recognise them as spiritual occasions. Love, respect and understanding are fostered during the many retreats, organised by the school chaplain, and in which all years take part. The range of liturgical experience is varied and pupils organise their own voluntary mass each Friday. Moreover, the Spiritual Support Group plans, develops and implements the whole-school liturgy including Advent and Lent services. In addition, there is a school chapel, which is always open for pupils for private prayer. The private confessions for Year 9 and the “Search for Meaning” programme in the sixth form are examples of other initiatives which encourage reflection, spiritual awareness and self-knowledge.

89. Moral development is excellent. Teachers act as very good role models, encourage high standards of behaviour and promote the values of honesty, fairness, respect and consideration for others.

The school ethos, the rewards system and the many other opportunities taken to celebrate success are effective in motivating pupils to high levels of industry and effort. Major moral issues are brought into the open at both key stages and in the sixth form, and pupils are given a plethora of opportunities to consider the principles that distinguish right from wrong. The displays on the corridors and in classrooms teach pupils about issues relating to care for the wider community, which is the major thrust of the Justice and Peace Group. The school’s emphasis on support for those less fortunate and the impressive range of charity appeals are a very strong feature of pupils’ moral development.

90. The school’s provision for social development has improved greatly since the last inspection and is now very good. Pupils’ relationships with each other are excellent and the school provides them with many opportunities to display initiative and to work collaboratively. The School Council is just one example of this provision. Pupils learn to work together within their community during the many retreats, during field trips and also during educational visits abroad. Pupils thus have many opportunities to enjoy the company of their classmates, of their teachers and of members of both the local and the wider community outside the formal curriculum.

91. Cultural provision is overall sound and is strong in some areas. There is a school orchestra, a school choir and annual drama productions. Pupils take an active part in assemblies when their musical and mime contributions are of a very high order. In addition, pupils are given opportunities to learn about, to learn from and to celebrate the successes of other cultures during the Deanery Day and through assemblies. There are displays about life in other countries and also about the many charity appeals in foreign countries, in which the school takes part. The Kosovo shoebox appeal and the education support initiative in Africa are good examples of this. However, there is no coherent whole-school multi-cultural policy in evidence. About half the pupils do not study a modern foreign language beyond Key Stage 3 and this adversely affects pupils’ cultural development.

Support, guidance and pupils’ welfare

92. The school’s arrangements for pupils’ welfare, guidance and support are very good, and are much appreciated by parents and by the pupils themselves. The school’s mission statement places great emphasis on respect and care for all and the procedures in place do much to foster the self-esteem of all members of the school community. The new rewards policy, administered by the strong year system and also by the impressive house system, celebrates pupils’ achievements in all areas of school life and is intrinsic to the ethos of the school. Pupils feel both valuable and valued and they respect the industry, talents and support of their teachers. In addition, pupils are encouraged to assess their own progress through the self-management and self-assessment processes operating in Years 10 to 13.

93. The induction of new pupils is a major strength. The head of Year 7, assisted by members of the senior management team, heads of department, the school chaplain and pupils themselves, organises taster days for primary school youngsters. The school also attempts to elicit a full profile of new entrants before they join the school. The Welcome Booklet helps Year 7 pupils settle down quickly in their new environment.

94. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline, regular attendance and mature behaviour are applied with rigour, but also with sensitivity and consistency. These work very well. The sanctions pyramid is known and understood by both pupils and teachers, and is posted around school and also in every classroom. The school has very effective links with outside agencies. The pastoral structure of the school is a key feature and comprises a very strong team approach with form tutors and heads of year playing a seminal role in celebrating both the academic and social successes of their pupils and also in mentoring those pupils who require extra assistance. Pastoral staff keep full records of their pupils and the pupil journal is very effective in ensuring that parents are kept fully informed of the progress of their offspring. Further support is provided by the house system, which not only organises the many charity appeals but also encourages pupils to adopt a team approach in everything they do. The year and house systems operate well together. Relevant staff liaise well with each other to ensure that teachers know pupils individually and also to celebrate the achievements of each pupil irrespective of academic ability. Parents pay tribute to both systems, which certainly motivate all pupils to the highest standards of effort and achievement.

95. Procedures for monitoring the progress and personal development of pupils with special educational needs are in line with the Code of Practice. Good information on these pupils is provided to all staff, but not all staff presently use it effectively in for example planning the teaching programmes.

96. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) course is a cohesive and well-planned programme. It provides pupils with useful opportunities to discuss wider issues, encourages them to make wise and informed decisions and to explore attitudes, values and beliefs. The course emphasises relationships and the Catholic ethos. There is a careers education programme which begins in Year 9. This is managed by the school chaplain and operates as part of the PSHE course. Each group receives fourteen careers lessons each year and there are regular visits from careers advisers. In addition, there are careers conventions and also mock interviews in Years 11 and 12. The careers programme is most effective in assisting pupils to prepare letters of application and curricula vitae. The careers library is well stocked and is open three days per week.

97. Child protection procedures are very good and fully meet legal requirements. The school chaplain is the nominated child protection officer and she is assisted by two deputy headteachers who have also received training in child protection issues. The school chaplain is available for pupil counselling and informal discussion; pupils take full advantage of this facility.

98. The procedures for monitoring health and safety are very good. A member of staff is responsible for health and safety and he meets teachers, caretaking staff and governors formally in order to discuss relevant issues. All risk assessments are in place, they are updated on a regular basis and outstanding issues are resolved promptly. The school has responded to the safety issue raised in the last inspection report regarding the movement of cars through the school grounds to the car parks. A new traffic management system has been introduced that includes speed limits of five miles per hour. Some of the science laboratories give cause for concern because of their age and layout. Some mains gas and water taps are out of reach and one room contains a drain running the length of the teaching area, which sometimes becomes blocked. These rooms constitute a threat to pupils' health and safety and the situation should be remedied without delay.

· **Partnership with parents and the community and community links**

99. The school benefits from an excellent partnership with parents and the community, which effectively involves parents with their children's work and which enriches the quality of the curriculum.

100. From the moment when parents first apply for their children to join the school they are kept well informed of the intake process. This is particularly important, as the school is heavily over-subscribed. The school brochure contains full information, including the very detailed school Admissions Criteria, and parents and their children also learn about the school through open evenings. A particularly helpful

booklet entitled “New beginnings: an introduction to Year 7” describes the workings of the school and gives subject-by-subject detail of the Year 7 curriculum.

101. The overall quality of the information provided for parents, at all stages of their childrens’ education, is excellent. Throughout Years 7-13 very effective systems for communication between parents and the school exist. All pupils keep a journal, or a diary in the sixth form, in which they record homework. The journal is signed daily by parents and is frequently used to convey messages between parents and staff. Parents’ evenings are held regularly and reports are detailed and informative. The school sends a weekly newsletter home which is short and succinct in style and which contains information on a wide variety of matters. The annual governors’ report to parents is full and informative. In the sixth form, the “Assessment and Action Plan” keeps both pupils and parents regularly informed of academic progress. The school provides clear and helpful information on the selection of optional subjects by pupils in Year 9 and the selection of post-16 subjects in Year 11. A pre-Christmas careers convention assists pupils in Years 9 and 11 with their subject choices. Pupils’ overall progress is monitored carefully by the school and parents are contacted if appropriate. Parents appreciate the open, caring and concerned attitude of the school to their enquiries and feel they are welcome to make contact at any time if they need to do so. The review process for statemented pupils is full and thorough. All the above processes empower parents to be effective partners in their children’s learning. Parents’ involvement in their childrens’ learning is very good.

102. The school has generated an impressive number of very successful community links as a direct result of its spiritual and liturgical life. This enrichment to the quality of provision through community links is exemplary. The Vision 2000 Initiative, started in 1991, has taken pupils out of school into their parishes and the feeder schools to evangelise and to carry out community work. Also, parish priests from within the Diocese visit the school frequently resulting in a spiritual partnership which is very powerful in its effect on the school ethos. Additionally, the Vision 2000 Initiative has led to a very high level of community use of the school. This includes a number of activities, such as a day centre for the elderly and housebound and an annual holiday for handicapped children. Pupils are regularly and effectively involved in charity appeals, many of which relate to the worldwide community. Adults use the site extensively on weekday evenings and at weekends, and this provides a further effective link with the local community. Pupils, and frequently their parents, are involved in school-based community activities. There are active Parent-Teacher and Former Pupils Associations, which run a number of well-supported events through the year.

103. The school has an effective working relationship with external agencies such as the Education Welfare Officer, the Careers Service and the Brentwood Childrens Society. Work experience is well organised and involves many local employers. Organisations where parents and/or governors are employed are also heavily involved. Other links with employers are satisfactory and the school is actively increasing its work in this area. There are good relations with external agencies who support the work of the learning support department.

104. Overall, community links have a major impact on pupils’ personal and intellectual developments, especially with regard to their spirituality and this is a particularly effective area of the school’s functioning.

· **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

· **Leadership and management**

105. The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear and effective leadership and they are well supported by other staff in positions of responsibility and the staff in general. There is a clear sense of purpose. Working together the staff have established an excellent ethos, which promotes the achievement of high educational standards and good progress through providing an effective learning environment. There are good internal

communication and consultation processes; individual members of the senior management team have clearly identified responsibilities for departments and aspects of the pastoral system. Staff work together effectively at all levels, their morale is high and there is a clear commitment to maintaining and where possible improving on the present high standards. At the time of the inspection two staff with key management responsibilities were absent because of illness. The strong, supportive ethos in the school and the sense of teamwork had enabled in the one case a new co-ordinator to settle quickly into the role, and, in the other, senior colleagues to cover the areas of responsibility effectively.

106. The mission statement is very influential in guiding the work of the school, and its development as a Christian faith community. Parental support for the aims of the school and the values and attitudes it promotes is very strong. One parent described arriving at the school as the answer to their prayers. The admissions criteria give preference to baptised and practising Roman Catholics or Christians. The school is very effectively achieving the aims set out in the prospectus except in relation to the breadth and balance of the curriculum for a number of pupils in Key Stage 4. Relationships between members of the school community and with parents are excellent and contribute strongly to the very positive ethos. The school successfully seeks to improve the performance and raise the self-esteem of all pupils within the school community. It is aware of individual pupils' needs and evaluates the performance of girls and boys. Pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are small in number and are integrated well into the school.

107. The school has in place a range of strategies for reviewing progress. These revolve around the senior management team who together have a good and detailed knowledge of the school. Key members of this group have begun reporting to governors in a formal and systematic way. The governors monitor the work of the school largely through reports from senior managers, the level of pupil achievement in a number of areas and the range of contacts they have with the school. As a group they show a good knowledge and understanding of the school. Governors justifiably exhibit a high level of respect for and trust in the senior staff in the school, and work effectively with them. They have, however, identified the need to extend their monitoring role and influence on the future direction of the school, and individual governors have recently been linked to departments. The role of governors in staff appointments has been minimal in recent years. Whilst the success of the school indicates that the appointments procedure has worked effectively, their greater involvement would improve their effectiveness and benefit the school.

108. The provision of information for monitoring pupil attainment and progress has been developed considerably since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4. This information is being used by some members of the senior management team to set targets at both school and pupil level. It is beginning to be used more widely by staff, but the processes for this are not yet formally and uniformly established. There is an excellent post-16 self-evaluation and target setting programme but the analysis of student progress post-16 in comparison with students of similar ability in other educational institutions is limited. Monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice at departmental level have improved considerably since the last inspection. They are generally good with some excellent practice seen. The process is supported effectively by four members of the senior management team, each with responsibility for a group of departments.

109. The School Improvement Plan is well structured and identifies a wide and appropriate range of areas for development. It includes aspects such as clear success criteria and performance indicators, the absence of which were identified as a weakness in the last inspection. The quality and effectiveness of departmental planning have improved since the last inspection. Planning is at least satisfactory and mostly good across the departments. The linking of four of the senior managers to named departments has improved the reviews of progress and the coherence of planning, an area of concern in the last inspection.

110. The school is meeting statutory requirements apart from two aspects of curricular provision in Key Stage 4.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

111. The school has maintained the high quality of staffing reported in the last inspection, and there are sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is a very good balance of experience and expertise amongst the teachers and they are effectively deployed. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by experienced teachers, and the qualified learning support assistants.

112. Recently the management and organisation of IT have been strengthened. The provision of support staff is generally very good, particularly in IT, science and in the library. Administrative staffing is good and the group of staff is appropriately experienced.

113. Arrangements for staff appraisal are supportive and well established. Appraisal is used to identify systematically teachers' professional development needs. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good, as are aspects of the induction of new teachers, who are supported by very clear and concise documentation. The programme of support for the newly qualified teacher is extensive and of high quality. This has resulted in good awareness of provision and has contributed positively to the school's strategies on raising attainment. Reviews of progress, target setting and self-evaluation are particularly good with excellent support from the heads of year and the senior management. Procedures for monitoring the value of courses and for the dissemination of outcomes are well structured and effective.

114. All three buildings are well kept and inviting. In the upper school building, displays of pupils' achievement brighten the environment. Pupils take care of their environment and there are no signs of graffiti or litter. The movement of pupils around the site has improved since the last inspection and movements from the lower and middle school buildings are via well laid out routes.

115. The accommodation is good in many respects for the effective delivery of the curriculum in the majority of subjects, but some science laboratories need to be remodelled or replaced. The multi-gym is an excellent facility and the school is seeking funds for the provision of a sports hall. Since the last report the accommodation for the teaching of English has significantly improved although it remains on two sites. The library, although well used and organised, is small for a school of this size.

116. The grounds are attractive and well kept by a conscientious site manager, and they are used as part of the learning environment. Pupils respect the environment. The school chapel is used for the celebration of the Eucharist and for private prayer. During the week of inspection pupils and staff frequently visited the chapel at certain times during the day. There is good provision of playing fields, which are well maintained. Eating areas both inside and out are calm and orderly.

117. The design of the school and the configuration of the accommodation preclude those with physical disabilities from having access to all parts of the building; however, some parts of the school building have access via ramps.

118. The school makes good use of its resources. Since the last inspection, when it was a key issue, the provision of resources for learning has improved and the present level of provision is at least satisfactory in virtually all areas of the curriculum. The provision of critical texts for supporting independent study in English in the sixth form is, however, unsatisfactory. Resources in geography, modern foreign languages and the business studies and economics area are very good. Learning resources for pupils with special educational needs are appropriate and generous both in quality and quantity. The library supports learning effectively and it is well managed. The English department makes particularly effective use of the library. There are well kept records and the number of books borrowed per month has substantially increased since the last inspection.

1. The school has responded positively to the last inspection and significant developments have taken place to ensure that IT is adequately provided for within the curriculum and that resources are sufficient

to meet the curricular demands. The significant enhancement in the provision of hardware, specialist accommodation and staffing over the last two years is considerably strengthening the quality of provision. The demand for IT, however, continues to increase as its use increasingly becomes an integral and useful part of the learning in the wider curriculum, and there is presently insufficient regular access to enhance learning across subjects of the curriculum. The number of computers is in line with national averages.

120. The resources to support careers are good and there are developing links with industry and commerce. The school now makes better use of the resources in the surrounding areas and there are profitable links with the local community.

119. **The efficiency of the school**

121. The school plans effectively for the future. Educational developments are supported through careful financial planning both in the short and longer term. Clear development plans exist at various levels and these are related to cost. Forward planning for building maintenance is particularly good. Governors are given full and detailed financial information. Financial planning is strongly driven by the senior management team.

122. The school uses available funding effectively. The proportion of budget spent on teaching staff is high; however that spent on non-teaching staff is relatively low. The governors should note that the provision of learning resources is still only satisfactory. The unit cost per pupil is above average, but this is balanced by above average expenditure per pupil. The school has been most effective in gaining grants from both the LEA and the DFEE to enhance its facilities. The successful and meticulously prepared bids represent particularly efficient use of senior management time and energy. Funding for special educational needs (SEN) is effectively used to employ an SEN co-ordinator and a number of learning support staff. Overall expenditure on special educational needs exceeds the income the school receives for it. The school site is used extensively by the local community on weekday evenings and at the weekends and this provides a major source of income.

123. The use of staff, accommodation and learning resources is very good. Of particular note is the extremely efficient timetable. This ensures that there are practically no lessons taught by non-specialists and that each member of staff's time is used effectively. Staff contact time is average and the size of teaching groups throughout the school is reasonable. A small number of post-16 teaching groups are very small. However, their existence is justified in that they contribute to the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Arrangements for covering for absent staff remain particularly cost-effective, as was indicated in the last inspection report. Non-teaching staff are efficiently deployed and effectively support the work of the school. Accommodation is very efficiently used. Very few lessons are taught in non-specialist accommodation and no rooms are left unoccupied for an unreasonably high proportion of the week. The library is small and is heavily used. The major investment in IT over recent years is justified by the fact that existing equipment has a satisfactory rate of usage. Resources are distributed to different areas of the school using a clear and equitable system. Departments are adequately funded and the system for reprographics, referred to in the last inspection, is fair and effectively monitored.

124. Systems for financial control and school administration effectively support the central purpose of the school. The most recent audit, two years ago, highlighted only minor matters, which have been addressed. The school's financial position is monitored monthly by the County monitoring team, as well as continuously by the school's own senior staff. Administration is sound and time-effective and systems for security and financial checks are secure.

125. Taking into account the quality of the education provided by the school, the pupils' attainment, overall progress and attitudes and the educational outcomes achieved, the school provides very good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

119. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

126. The English department is a good department with a very strong ethos, a clear focus on pupil achievement, very positive relationships and appropriately high and consistent expectations. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection.

127. Standards in English by the end of Key Stage 3 are good. This is reflected in the National Curriculum tests and the standards of the current cohort of Year 9 pupils. The results of the tests at the end of the key stage are well above the national average and the average for similar schools. While girls outperform boys, in line with the national trend, boys achieve well above the national average by over half a level.

128. Standards in listening by the end of Key Stage 3 are very good both in English and across the school. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other and take account of another point of view. Standards in speaking are good and the department gives a good focus to this aspect of the work encouraging active and participative approaches. Pupils are able to give a presentation engaging the audience's interest and using more formal standard English. For example in Year 8 pupils gave a confident and articulate talk describing the stories they were writing. There are good opportunities for discussion across the curriculum, for example, in history.

129 Standards in writing are good by the end of Year 9. Pupils write with confidence and accuracy using a variety of styles and for a variety of audiences. For example one class in Year 9 were engaged in sensitive written responses to the novel 'Daz 4 Zoe' which also included paired proof-reading. Presentation of written work is usually good and consistent across subjects. There is a good focus on spelling. Pupils' individual spelling books include subject specific technical language and many departments display these words to develop this aspect of language awareness. Because of this appropriate emphasis across subjects, spelling is normally correct and departments give good support to developing accuracy.

130 Standards of reading, in English, are good by the end of the key stage. Pupils are able to respond sensitively to a variety of texts and discuss the critical themes or the characters within the book. The English department operates a library policy whereby pupils visit the library to choose and select books. It also operates its own system to encourage pupils to extend their reading from a selection of new attractive texts. The school encourages other general reading within form periods. Nevertheless, the encouragement of wider reading is not as well co-ordinated as some other aspects of language development, such as the spelling initiatives, particularly in the encouragement of pupils to tackle texts that are more demanding and in the consistent development of a more overt book culture. Pupils in a higher ability Year 8 group were reading books a very high proportion of which they had read before, in some cases many times, and some of which they had first met in their primary school. Initiatives such as the school's book week do make a significant contribution but, nevertheless, the use of the library and book withdrawals tails off considerably as pupils move through the school.

131 Standards in English, in English Language and Literature, by the end of Key Stage 4 are very good. This is seen in the GCSE examination results and in the standards achieved by the current cohort of Year 11 pupils. Pupils tend to score a half a grade higher on average than the national average in English Language. In 1998 the A*-C grade pass rate was 63.3 percent, significantly above the national figure of 56.5 percent. There have been fluctuations in results due to differences in the ability of particular cohorts but the results show a rising trend. Girls outperform boys although results in 1997 showed boys getting close to the girls' A*-C pass rate. Boys achieve above, and girls, well above the national average.

132. Standards in speaking and listening are very good. Pupils are able to communicate in presentations with poise and confidence and participate effectively in discussion. In one class, boys gave personal and sensitive talks about people who were particularly important to them. Speakers were able to make personal revelations about their feelings because of the confidence they had that the audience of boys was mature and receptive. Standards in reading by the end of Key Stage 4 are very good. Pupils are able to respond critically to a range of demanding texts and can, again, discuss underlying themes with sensitivity and maturity. They can express a personal view about a book with close reference to the text to support their viewpoint. Standards in writing are also very good by the age of 16. Ideas are lucidly and coherently expressed in a range of forms and styles. The drafting process is established well. Some course work is word-processed but all work is attractively presented with a high degree of accuracy.

133. Standards in the sixth form are generally at least sound in the GCSE course and in A-level. They reflect the broad range of ability of students taking the courses. Students attain the full range of grades. In 1998, the average points score for English A-level, of all students taking the examination, was slightly above the national average, 6.3 as against the national figure of 5.7, approximately a grade C pass. The overall standards achieved by the current cohort of students are satisfactory. Standards in listening are very good. Standards in speaking are more variable and depend on the confidence of individual pupils in discussing the texts being studied. Whilst the standard in reading the texts is appropriate to A level study there is little evidence of students reading widely to support and extend their knowledge and understanding of their chosen subject. Standards of writing are in the main at least appropriate and for some individuals are very good.

134. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. There are three main factors for this consistency of progress. The first is the cumulative impact of quality teaching. The second is the development of very positive pupil attitudes by the departmental staff. Pupils know what is required of them and why, they also know what they have to do in order to improve. They are motivated and come to the English lessons prepared to learn. The third is the good match overall of the appropriately demanding and challenging material to the abilities of the pupils. The one exception to this occurs in the work set when pupils join the school. There are some indications from the scrutiny of work in the first few weeks of Year 7 that full account is not being given to the work in English in the primary school. Greater familiarisation with the work of the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stage 2 will assist the department to refine this induction work.

135. The attitudes of pupils are usually good or very good throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are able to sustain their concentration and work effectively on the task set. There is a good work ethic in almost all classes. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good and pupils work effectively in groups, for example, in discussing a particular feature of a text. In the one lesson seen where pupils' attitudes were unsatisfactory the department very effectively followed it up. Students' attitudes are consistently good in lessons in the sixth form. However, not all students show the additional maturity or the enthusiasm and interest for the subject expected at this level. Some do not read widely or take greater responsibility for their learning.

136. The teaching is consistently of high quality. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and is usually good or very good. The quality of teaching is at least good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Lessons are prepared well and teachers have good subject knowledge. Relationships with all pupils are good, and this supports the learning and the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Marking, particularly of course work in Key Stage 4, is often incisive and supportive. Homework is set regularly and is appropriate. The quality of teaching is consistently good and pupils are effectively challenged across all classes, and the cumulative effect of this is an even more important factor than the quality of teaching in individual lessons.

137. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although no drama was seen during the inspection. Units of work are carefully constructed and reviewed by the department. Consideration of literature from other cultures does occur but is currently not a clear entitlement. The provision for

pupils with special educational needs is very good. This is achieved through effective setting arrangements, which ensure small groups for these pupils. The department has effectively introduced single sex teaching in the upper school. This has been introduced carefully and the effects have been thoughtfully considered. Examination results have shown improvement for both boys and girls compared to when they were taught in mixed groups. Lessons observation indicates a sense of pupils being at ease within the group structure. They appear to be more confident and compete less directly for the teacher's attention. The department clearly feels that this strategy is successful. It allows them to tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' needs, and the experience gained is also providing benefits through improving their approach to teaching further down the school.

138. The provision of critical texts for supporting independent study in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There have been significant improvements to and rationalisation of the departmental accommodation although it remains split on two sites. Classrooms, despite attractive displays have an institutional feel and harsh acoustics because of the lack of carpeting. Though the department is supportive and encourages the use of information technology, its role in the school in contributing to pupils' technological capability and the accessing of resources to achieve this lack clarity. Significant review is required in this area.

139. The department is led very well. The head of department is thoughtful and the work of the department is considered with care. The leadership is also supportive and sensitive. Throughout the department, there is a strong sense of democratic teamwork and a sense of professionals sharing and developing their expertise. Monitoring of the work of the department is good and has clearly contributed to the high degree of consistency of teaching, the high expectation and the focus on pupil achievement.

119. **Mathematics**

1. Attainment is very good by the end of Key Stage 4. GCSE results are well above national averages as they have been since 1996. The mean grade achieved by the Year 11 cohort in 1998 was over a grade higher than the national mean grade. In 1999 almost three-quarters of the pupils in Year 11 achieved grades A*-C at GCSE with girls achieving slightly better results than boys but not significantly so. Attainment of pupils in Year 11 is well above national expectations. A group of Year 11 pupils, for example, were able to work out correctly the constant of proportionality for a variable, which varied both with the square of one variable and the inverse of a second. They were then able to apply this information correctly. Attainment of pupils in the classroom across the key stage is also good.

141. Attainment in the sixth form is good. Mathematics results at A level were above the national averages. In 1998 almost two thirds of pupils achieved Grades A or B. All pupils entered for Further Mathematics in 1998 and 1999 achieved pass grades, and went on to university to study mathematics or mathematics related subjects. The attainment of pupils in Year 13 is above the national average.

142. At Key Stage 3 pupils' achievement in mathematics was well above the national standards in 1998 and the results for 1999 were higher than those of the previous year. Although the results for boys were slightly better than for girls in 1998, the average level attained by both boys and girls was well above the national average. Over the last three years results have been well above the national averages and improving over this period in line with the national trend.

143. Attainment of the present Year 9 is good. Some Year 9 pupils for example, in an investigation on lines, cross-overs and regions, had been able to develop and follow alternative approaches using a range of mathematical techniques. They had been able to use symbols consistently to convey mathematical meaning and were able to evaluate their solutions.

144. Pupils have very good numeracy skills and they are able to apply these skills in other contexts. In physics pupils in all years are able to demonstrate and apply appropriate numerical skills. Pupils in

Key Stage 4 in science are able to manipulate formulae. In geography Year 7 pupils are able to plot line graphs correctly and draw conclusions from the graphs. Pupils throughout the school use calculators appropriately. Pupils are taught and encouraged to develop a range of number strategies, to consider whether their answers are reasonable and to have strategies for checking their accuracy. In Years 7 and 8 most mathematics lessons include a short period when teachers reinforce and consolidate the pupils' number skills.

145. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 improving in all aspects of mathematics. In Year 7 pupils are able to recognise patterns in a range of number sequences and work out the rule for the next number in the sequence. Some pupils are able to work out a formula to give the value of any number in the sequence. From early in their first year at the school pupils are taught in groups formed on the basis of prior attainment and this enhances progress through the key stages. In Year 8 for example high achieving pupils quickly gained skills in multiplying both very small and very large numbers written in standard form, whilst low achieving pupils were able to consolidate their skills of multiplying and dividing by 10, 100 and 1000.

146. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 4. In Year 10 pupils quickly establish confidence in forming equations and seeking solutions. They show a growing awareness of how to manipulate algebraic expressions such as adding and subtracting expressions with algebraic numerators and denominators. By Year 11 algebraic skills are well established. For example a set of high achievers quickly and securely mastered the skills of solving quadratic equations by factorising.

147. The skills established during Key Stage 4 are extended in the sixth form and progress is again good. In a Year 12 class for example, students made good progress in developing their skills in differentiating products and quotients.

148. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. The grouping of pupils according to prior attainment enables the department to have small teaching groups for these pupils. Support teachers are used to provide individual support for particular pupils in the classroom. However, they also support other pupils where they feel it to be necessary. In a Year 10 class for example support teachers worked effectively giving individual tuition to pupils to help them develop and consolidate their understanding of indices.

149. Pupils' behaviour is very good throughout the school. Pupils display an excellent attitude to mathematics and are keen to learn. In lessons, for example, pupils ask their teachers to explain points that they have found difficult in the previous night's homework. There is almost no off-task activity, pupils concentrate well and complete allocated tasks and their homework conscientiously. Pupils respond well to questioning by teachers and relationships with the teachers are excellent. The work they produce is neat, well presented and appropriately set out. Pupils arrive punctually for lessons and quickly and effectively get down to work.

150. In all the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory; in some lessons it was very good. Where lessons were good or very good, the teachers involved the pupils using interactive questioning which moved the learning forward at a challenging pace towards the achievement of clear learning objectives, and the planning took account of the range of ability in the group. In lessons where teaching was satisfactory, whilst the strengths outweighed the weaknesses, the pace was more laboured with some teachers focusing too much on the average ability pupils. For example one teacher spent much of a lesson explaining a particular skill, without taking sufficient account of the range of ability in the group or allowing sufficient time for some pupils to practise using the skill.

151. Teachers within the mathematics department have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. All teachers manage their pupils well and they are generous with their time at lunchtime and after school to support the pupils' learning. Sixth form students attend a residential mathematics course at Southampton University each year and also attend day conferences in London. Revision lessons and extra lessons to extend the learning of high achievers are arranged for Year 11 pupils. A mathematics

club meets regularly.

152. Teachers use resources effectively and appropriately. For example in a Year 9 lesson pupils each had the use of a graphical calculator on which they were taught to solve simultaneous equations.

153. There is a comprehensive scheme of work for both key stages and the sixth form. This provides a framework for the teaching programme and ensures that all aspects of mathematics are covered. Within the limitations of access to the centralised information technology (IT) facilities opportunities to develop IT skills in the context of mathematics have been incorporated into the scheme of work for each of the year groups.

154. In Year 8 the department has begun to divide the scheme of work into units of work defined by listing the learning objectives for that part of the programme. Pupils are able to assess their own progress by recording which learning objectives they have successfully mastered. However, at the present time the link between these learning objectives and National Curriculum levels is not clear to pupils. Pupils work is diligently marked. However, the marking system does not always indicate which learning objectives have been achieved. As the units of work are further developed, there will be an opportunity for the department to relate assessment more closely to what the pupils have learnt rather than what has been taught.

155. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have been raised and pupils use appropriate mathematical terms when talking about mathematics. Teachers are using a wider variety of teaching styles. There is a scheme of work for both key stages and the sixth form, which includes learning objectives. There is a good departmental handbook and appropriate monitoring of the teaching and pupils' progress. Teaching resources have been improved.

1. The head of department provides clear educational direction for the department, which is well managed and led. Teaching and pupils' progress overall are well monitored by the head of department. There is good use of assessment data to review progress and assess potential. The department has a clear development plan focused on raising standards and there is a strong and positive ethos for the learning of mathematics.

156. **Science**

157. Attainment of the present Year 9 pupils is above average, particularly in scientific knowledge across the three attainment targets. In the 1998 end of key stage tests, pupils' performances were well above average at both Levels 5 and 6. In over half the lessons seen there is high attainment. Attainment of pupils in the lower bands is in line with expectations. In Year 7, pupils start with a good grounding in practical skills and laboratory techniques but there is clear evidence that not all groups build on the achievements of Key Stage 2. The relative weakness in pupils' attainment throughout the key stage lies in their ability to draw detailed conclusions and explain their ideas, particularly in analysing and evaluating outcomes from experiments. However, even the lower attaining pupils including those with statements of special educational need do well and are performing in line with age related expectations by the end of the key stage. Science results over time indicate that attainment in the school is improving while national and local trends show a decline. The 1999 test scores show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 and above in the school whereas nationally there has been a decline over the last three years.

158. In Key Stage 4 the move to double science has been influential in bringing about a dramatic improvement in the quality of provision for all, as well as on the overall standards in science. Attainment of pupils towards the end of Key Stage 4 is well above national averages. In general, pupils achieve one grade higher than the national average. Standards in A level chemistry are good with over half of pupils in Year 13 performing above average. Pupils' achievements in biology and physics in Year 13 are in line with national averages. In the 1998 A level examinations the mean point scores in

biology, chemistry and physics were above the national averages with improving trends particularly in chemistry and biology.

159. Progress throughout all key stages is good. Some low ability groups make very good progress both in lessons and over time. Progress in Key Stage 4 is particularly good. Progress in the A level science subjects is good overall, particularly for those who start the courses with the lower GCSE points scores. Progress is very good in chemistry, good in biology and sound in physics.

160. Pupils' attitudes and the overall response to learning in science are excellent. The quality and quantity of work covered and the way in which pupils present their work show clearly the high expectation of pupils and teachers. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and pupils work very well together and support each other. All pupils have very responsible attitudes to safety. Younger pupils show curiosity and enjoyment in the work and the older pupils willingly question and show a keenness to learn and do well in tests.

161. The overall good quality of teaching throughout the school reinforces both pupils' very good responses to science as well as the good progress and achievements of all pupils. In two thirds of the lessons seen, teaching is good, very good or excellent, the remainder of lessons being satisfactory with a balance of strengths and weaknesses

162. The following typical quote from part of a lesson observation illustrates some of the good aspects of the teaching:

'The teacher has an excellent manner with the pupils and uses a brain-storming strategy of the highest standard to introduce the work, with good use of praise. The teacher has high expectations and challenges pupils through very effective questioning. The lesson is well planned and prepared and the management and organisation of pupils' learning is very good. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the pupils are excellent. The teacher moved the lesson on with skill ensuring that all pupils were prepared for the next step¼'.

163. Where teaching was not as good but was nevertheless satisfactory, it was mainly due to the roles teachers adopt within the context of practical work, particularly in their limited intervention to challenge pupils' ideas and thinking and move beyond the supervision of activities. In Year 7 teachers need to make more effective use of the knowledge, understanding and experiences pupils bring from their primary schools.

164. The key to the successes in science throughout the school is linked closely to the department's use of on-going assessment, the provision of feedback, constant reinforcement and a clear review and reflection on the learning intentions set by teachers. Even when the learning objectives are common for all groups in schemes of work, teachers balance the activities, in the best lessons, with clearly directed instructions and good exposition; they teach science with a clear focus on pupils' learning. Both teachers and pupils have high expectations. This is seen in the quality and quantity of work covered in each year group. The rigorous use of technical language by both staff and pupils during discussions, and the feedback, constantly reinforces the focus on high achievement. Pupils develop a good understanding of investigation skills in the context of scientific ideas. There is generally very good development of numerical skills across the curriculum. Examples range from graphical and statistical work in Key Stage 3 and the calculation of moments of forces by low ability pupils in Year 10 to finding equilibrium constants in A level chemistry or the translation and interpretation of complex formulae in A level physics. Pupils are using literacy skills effectively to produce reports on experiments and factual information on scientific issues. There are some very good profiles of famous scientists by younger pupils and clear evidence of pupils using research techniques to find out information on an energy project. Some very good work was also seen with pupils from a range of abilities using information technology and data loggers to plot cooling curves and to analyse the effects of force on the speed and acceleration of a trolley.

165. Departmental management is good; the head of science has only recently taken on the role but she has a clear agenda for improvement and development. Priorities in the development plan are appropriate although some tasks need to be more evenly distributed and success indicators made more specific. There has been significant improvement in the standards and the quality of provision since the previous inspection. All the issues raised in the 1994 inspection report have been addressed. Monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress and the analysis of performance is exemplary. Monitoring and more importantly, evaluating the work of the department is still at an early stage of development particularly in the involvement of middle managers and the governing body. The department has access to a wide range of learning resources that are used effectively, particularly the growing use of information technology to support science. Staff deployment is very good and the work of the technicians is excellent. There are however significant weaknesses in the accommodation particularly in the older rooms where the layout does not readily support the full range of teaching strategies. There are a number of safety issues associated with storage in the laboratory preparation rooms in the middle and lower school and the accessibility of mains gas and water taps. The LEA had highlighted these in a recent safety audit. Despite the fragmentation of the department with laboratories and storage areas spread over three separate sites on a large campus, the department works very well as a team, contributing positively to the excellent ethos and standards achieved.

156. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

156. **Art**

166. The attainment of pupils towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. In Key Stage 4 the 1999 GCSE examination results were above national expectations with 58 percent gaining grades A*-C. In the previous year 1998 an excellent 83 percent obtained grades A*-C far exceeding national expectations. The attainment of the pupils in the present Year 11 is above the national average. At 'A' level the results have been much less impressive with three of the four students in 1999 achieving passes at grades A-E. In the previous year the pass rate was well below national expectations with only 50 percent of the group of 12 students gaining grades A-E. Attainment in the present sixth form is just in line with the national average. Pupils with special needs achieve good results and the department provides extension or support activities for these pupils.

167. Pupils at both key stages make good progress through the subject. This is partly predicated on the well-constructed curriculum and schemes of work, which help pupils to build their skills sequentially and develop their confidence. This is true of children of all abilities. There is a good range of basic skills in evidence including pencil, pastel, paint, 3D and some IT work. For example in Year 8 pupils' observational drawings on the theme of 'Celebration' demonstrate good compositional skills and in some 3D work there is a clear awareness of the work of other artists. In particular, the use of strong and vibrant colour is very evident but this is balanced in other work by sensitive observational drawing using pastels. Composition, however, is weak amongst some of the lower ability pupils. Although there is evidence of planning for work that uses art of non-western cultures, there is insufficient celebration of these cultures within the department. Homework is an excellent regular feature of all lessons and, importantly, is seen as integral to providing progression in the development of the skills of pupils. Bearing in mind the number of pupils who take GCSE in the subject, very few students take art at A level. Overall progress in the sixth form is not as good as in the earlier years but it is satisfactory.

168. A key feature of the success of the pupils is their high level of personal commitment to the subject. At both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils and students listen attentively to the very good lesson introductions. Because they know clearly what is required of them they diligently tackle their work.

169. The quality of teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form is never less than good and on some occasions it is very good. Lessons are well prepared and are underpinned by appropriate schemes of work. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and its techniques. Introductions are explicit and help pupils to know exactly what is required of them. In the case of the older pupils who

are developing individual projects, teachers operate as both teachers and consultants; open questioning is used to very good effect with the views and intentions of the pupil placed at the core of the advice wherever possible.

170. Resources are adequate for the delivery of the current curriculum but need to be continually reviewed. In addition to the purchase of IT equipment since the last inspection, book stocks have been improved. The syllabus is placed in the school library so that appropriate books can be purchased to support the curriculum. However, in the main, they are only adequate for a basic fine art curriculum. Since the last inspection a computer, a scanner and a printer have been introduced to the department and efforts have been made to find some time in the IT suite. This is satisfactory but only a beginning.

171. The department is well led. There is an appropriate scheme of work, and documentation within the department is good. The head of department monitors the work of the department well and, together with her colleague, moderates the assessments made. Marking of work is informative and regular with the criteria for success known by the pupils. The falling A level results and the poor recruitment of A level students is a very significant issue for the department. Senior management has given appropriate support and in consultation with the head of department, a range of satisfactory actions has been decided upon.

156. **Business Studies and Economics**

172. The Business Studies, Economics and Law Department provide the following courses: at Key Stage 4 GCSE Business Studies and GCSE Economics, and post-16 GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies and A levels in Business Studies and in Economics.

173. The examination results over the past three years show improvement. The 1998 examination results were the lowest of the last three years in GCSE Business Studies and were below the average for all comprehensives. The reasons for this have now been addressed and the 1999 result with 68% of pupils attaining grades A*-C, indicate the success of the action taken. At 'A' level the business studies results were good in 1999 with all 25 students gaining A-E grades and 24 of them gained grades A-C. In economics, a smaller group of seven students achieved 71% grades A or B, an excellent result. GNVQ Intermediate students acquitted themselves well, all gaining passes, some with merit. The present groups of pupils and students in Years 11 and 13 are generally working at levels above the national expectation.

174. The reason why students of business studies and economics make good progress and achieve a high level of attainment at both Key Stage 4 and post-16 is the very good standard of teaching. Teachers have high academic expectations and the progress of each student is carefully monitored. In lessons the learning process is aided by the use of a variety of techniques to involve the students. Each lesson is carefully planned and begins with a clear statement of objectives. Listening skills are very well developed and there is an apparent eagerness to learn. The use of a variety of listening, reading and problem-solving techniques makes the learning active and attractive. Teachers use questioning to good effect. At Key Stage 4 questions are used to check learning. At A level and in GNVQ pupils are also actively engaged with many lessons including opportunities to apply new knowledge and make sense of difficult concepts. Most lessons, both at Key Stage 4 and post-16, involve students using numerical and communication key skills to solve a challenging problem. Teachers move around to check progress and learning. The attitude and behaviour of the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 are always good or very good. Post-16 students arrive with enthusiasm ready to learn. They are able to use the subject vocabulary with confidence. They engage the teachers and their peers in active learning to test out hypotheses. In an economics lesson on the distribution of income one student provided a reasoned argument for government intervention through taxation.

175. The assessment process underpins progress and attainment. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and post-16 students are given the assessment criteria for their subject. Year 10 pupils are beginning to understand

the assessment criteria and Year 11 pupils are able to assess their own progress working with the teacher and set new targets. Post-16 students are applying the criteria before they hand in work. Those spoken to are very aware of their responsibility to contribute to their progress and attainment. The GNVQ Intermediate Business Studies students are assessed against a set of national standards. Although they are at an early stage in this challenging programme, students are beginning to understand the need to meet the standards. Their planning skills are developing well and they are making good progress.

176. The department consists of a good professional teaching team, which is effectively led. Their aim is to enable pupils and students to achieve the best results commensurate with their ability.

156. **Design and Technology**

177. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory and in line with the national average, with small but significant numbers achieving at higher levels. From Year 7 pupils make sound progress in resistant materials, food and textiles in both the designing and making aspects of the subject. They are able to describe their tasks and the processes used with clarity and understanding. Pupils experience a well-balanced range of making and designing activities throughout the key stage. They use a range of common tools, utensils, equipment and machines, with competence, in a safe and responsible way, and are confident in choosing and using these resources. Their technical language is also developing in line with the range of experiences they gain.

178. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils' knowledge and understanding of designing and making is appropriately secured and reinforced through a balanced range of practical projects and tasks. Pupils develop an increasing range of practical and problem solving skills in the implementation of designing and making for different purposes and in different contexts. These include designing and making a Christmas card with an electronic action that involves pupils making a simple electronic circuit, in textiles designing and making a bookmark, and preparing and making a fresh fruit salad. Pupils showed sound skills in using soldering irons, food preparation equipment and in the basic use of a sewing machine. Pupils are able to use resources, make choices, and investigate and use a range of communication techniques, which are integral to the learning process.

179. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is mainly good and above the national average. Throughout the key stage pupils develop a sound understanding of the basic design and make processes and can communicate their ideas well both graphically and through discussion and written description. Pupils often achieve good levels of skill in both designing and making but their design skills are more consistently good. Their results in GCSE subjects are well above the national averages.

180. In the sixth form, standards are in line with course expectations. Attainment in the most recent A level examination was broadly in line with national averages. Students design and make with a clear understanding of the technical processes involved. They are able to apply their knowledge and skills productively and show high levels of competence in investigating and implementing their ideas for designs. In some cases their graphical communication skills are very strong. The attainment in Year 13 is presently in line with national averages.

181. Pupils in both key stages and students in the sixth form make good progress overall. Where they are suitably challenged by the task and clearly understand the objectives of the lesson, then pace and purpose are more consistently good. Pupils show sound and often good levels of skill in research and investigation activities.

182. The design and technology curriculum is carefully planned, and the schemes of work are well prepared. They ensure a suitably broad and balanced programme for those pupils who have access to

the course. For about half the pupils in Key Stage 4 there is no provision for this subject and as a result statutory requirements for the national curriculum are not met.

183. Assessment and record keeping are well managed and pupils' progress is tracked. The teaching staff develop a clear knowledge of pupils' ability and attainment. but the information and data available from the system are not always used as effectively as they should be to inform teaching and planning through identifying strengths and weaknesses. Formative assessment strategies are not yet sufficiently well developed.

184. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was never less than satisfactory with well over a quarter of lessons being good or very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are mainly good and where development needs are identified they are suitably addressed

185. Where teaching is strongest a good balance of interaction with pupils is maintained, lessons are not over directive and pupils are encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning. Throughout the aspects of the subject, nearly all lessons are consistently well structured and organised, and pupil management is good. A range of teaching approaches is used which is largely suitable for the context of the lessons although where the teaching is too dominant, pupils become more passive in their response and the pace of their work is reduced. In a very small number of the lessons seen, clearer learning objectives were needed and differentiation strategies were limited.

186. The overall management and co-ordination of learning and teaching in design and technology are good and take appropriate account of progression and continuity within the curriculum. The staff has made commendable efforts to transform the workshop environment into an area that is more conducive for the teaching of technology. The rising standards within the department reflect their commitment.

187. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection. There is a clearly defined development plan and assessment procedures have been strengthened but formative assessment and the use of assessment data to inform teaching and planning need further development.

156. **Information Technology**

188. Attainment in Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory or better and broadly in line with the national expectation. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1999 show that attainment for the large majority of pupils is at or above the standard expected nationally. In Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is mainly in line with or above expectations for their age. GCSE IT was taken as a public examination for the first time in 1999 and pupils achieved significantly above the national average. In the sixth form, standards are generally in line with A level course expectations with some students achieving at a high level. GCE A-level results were good in 1999 although the small number of students who followed an A/S course achieved poor results.

189. Pupils throughout Key Stage 3 achieve sound standards generally although a large number receive no discrete IT provision in Year 8. For these pupils their opportunity to achieve at the higher levels by the end of the key stage is reduced. Most pupils show good skills in word processing and are able to apply them to a range of tasks in IT and to supporting their learning in other subjects. In addition, they can use basic spreadsheet and database applications for specific tasks and they understand how to create, alter and combine text and images using desktop publishing for their hotel and magazine projects. The use of the internet, e-mail and CD-ROM software for research and investigation is a developing feature of pupils increasing skill in and understanding of the use of information technology to support learning.

190. In Key Stage 4, pupils broaden the use of their IT skills through direct application to a number

of curriculum subjects. They use word processing and desktop publishing confidently and for a variety of purposes. In history, pupils use CD ROM applications for handling census data and in German IT is effectively used for translation exercises. GCSE IT pupils show sound skills in producing a database as part of their coursework and are developing competence in creating files, in interrogation, and in using data capture methods and flowcharts.

191. In the sixth form students' knowledge and understanding in IT are variable and initially reflect their previous mixed experience. Some students embark on the A level course in computing without previously having studied the subject at GCSE. The structure of the course, however, allows for this and students develop an appropriate and secure level of competence in IT concepts, skills and knowledge. A small number of students have very good levels of competence in those areas in which they have a particular interest. They can generally discuss their work and ideas with confidence, solve problems using computer applications and reach conclusions when given a task.

192. In Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, pupils and students usually make sound or good progress in developing their knowledge and application of skills. This is achieved through the provision of an increasing range of opportunities to develop skills in communication, information and data handling, modelling, using control systems and desktop publishing.

193. IT provision meets with statutory requirements and is delivered through taught periods in the timetable and through other subjects of the curriculum, particularly science, mathematics and design and technology. A broad and balanced curriculum provision is planned for pupils throughout the key stages. The significant enhancement in the provision of hardware, specialist accommodation and staffing over the last two years has considerably strengthened the school's capacity to ensure significant improvement in the quality of provision.

194. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good in the designated IT lessons. Lessons are efficiently planned and carefully organised, and pupils follow a clearly defined programme of work. In Key Stage 3 pupils follow a series of planned tasks to ensure national curriculum coverage. The quality of teaching and learning could, however, be further strengthened if the planning took more account of the need for well-defined learning objectives and linked these to strategies for meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. This is presently a weaker area in the Key Stage 3 provision. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form the quality of teaching observed was mainly good and ranged from satisfactory to very good.

195. The use of assessment information throughout the school to inform teaching and planning is only partly addressed. Summative assessment data is available at the end of each key stage but formative assessment data and information are less in evidence. The more structured use of monitoring and of available data would enable the department to make judgements in managing and developing the subject and in identifying strengths and weaknesses from a better information base.

196. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave very responsibly in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work purposefully to gain new skills. Pupils are able to work independently on their computers in the specialist areas and enjoy the challenge of new tasks as their confidence grows. They are responsive and co-operate readily; they enjoy discussions about their work and are usually enthusiastic learners.

197. The school has responded positively to the last inspection and significant developments have taken place to ensure that the subject is adequately provided for within the curriculum and that resources are sufficient to meet the curricular demands. Such demands are, however, continuing to grow as greater use of IT is increasingly becoming an integral and useful part of the learning in the wider curriculum. More recently the management and organisation of IT have been strengthened. It is

too early to judge the impact of the newly created roles and of the new staff.

198. Technical support in IT is very good. The network systems are skillfully managed and staff and pupils receive good support. The ratio of pupils to computers is in line with the national average for secondary schools.

156. **Geography**

199. On entry to the school, pupils' levels of attainment are, on average, a little above national norms. By the end of Key Stage 3 there has been a marked improvement in attainment, with the result that pupils performance is very good and well above national averages. In Key Stage 4, geography is a popular, optional subject and attainment is excellent with the present Year 11 group attaining at a very high level which is well above national averages. GCSE examination results have been very good for a number of years. In 1999 they were outstanding, 21 candidates gained passes at A* and a further 22 gained A grades. Fifty six percent of candidates gained passes at these top two grades and 95 percent of all candidates gained higher grade passes within the range A*-C. This is far above the national average, which was 51.5 percent in 1998. Attainment at A level is also excellent. In 1999, 14 candidates out of a total of 21 gained grade A. All candidates gained a pass at grade D or above. These results are well above the national average. Both A level and GCSE results have been very good for a number of years prior to 1999. The attainment of the present A level group is very high and well above the national average.

200. In Key Stage 3 most pupils make very good progress. However, some lower attainers and others with special needs find the challenge of the course very demanding. Despite making good progress, few of these pupils choose to continue with geography as an option in Key Stage 4. From the outset the work is challenging. In Year 7, pupils learn the basic skills and techniques of geography to a high level. By Year 8 they can understand and discuss maturely environmental issues relating to the pollution of rivers and by Year 9 they can appreciate and evaluate the reasons why people choose to live near potentially dangerous volcanoes. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form progress remains excellent and pupils and students learn to think, speak and function like geographers, a key aim of the department.

201. In both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils and students demonstrate a very positive, hardworking and frequently enthusiastic attitude to work. Behaviour is of a very high standard and this enhances learning. Pupils are polite, demonstrate a high capacity for personal study and take pride in completing work correctly and fully.

202. Teaching in the department to pupils of all ages is of a very high standard. Every lesson seen was at least good, and over half the lessons were very good or excellent. At the heart of the department's most effective teaching lies a highly structured course in which every lesson and the associated material are planned in advance. Worksheets and information sheets are extensively used and are of great assistance to all. However, some of the lower attaining pupils find it difficult to cope with the quantity of work and the reading. The teaching staff is dedicated and committed to high standards. All lessons are characterised by rigorous and appropriate use of geographical terminology, a wide variety of activities and a positive and supportive attitude towards the pupils. Video film clips are used particularly effectively. The worksheet approach, coupled with individual help from teachers, ensures that all pupils learn at a level and rate appropriate to their ability. Factual and theoretical concepts are constantly reinforced resulting in high levels of understanding on the part of the pupils. Thus Year 10 pupils, when discussing the causes of Savannah climate are able to understand fully, how the seasonal pattern relates to the position of the sun. Pupils' work is generally marked regularly; however, written comments on pupils' work indicating what they need to do to improve are relatively uncommon.

203. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The enormously detailed

scheme of work is meticulously organised and provides breadth, balance and continuity of learning in both key stages and in the sixth form. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural issues are covered in the syllabus; however, other cultures are not celebrated but are studied from a purely geographical point of view. Development planning is thorough and all aspects of the department's functioning are carefully monitored. The staff in the department operates most effectively as a team. Coursework in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is of a very high standard. The use of IT is insufficiently developed and the department is aware of the need to develop its use as was mentioned in the last inspection. Plans are in place to move this important area forward in the near future.

204. The department's three classrooms provide good accommodation, and storage facilities are satisfactory. Resources are good. The wall-mounted video players in each classroom are a great asset to teaching. All lessons are taught by the three specialist geography teachers who maintain high quality wall displays in their rooms and in nearby corridors.

156. **History**

205. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is in line with national norms. However, by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is above national averages and there are examples of where it is well above. Pupils are able to use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and in context. They can discuss cause and consequence in a mature manner and give very good examples of what influences the way human beings think. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of pupils is well above national norms. In 1998, 62.5 percent of pupils gained grades A*-C compared with 52 percent nationally. In 1999, 77 percent of pupils gained A*-C grades, confirming a rising trend in examination performance. At the end of this key stage, pupils are able to handle a variety of sources effectively and gauge both their reliability and usefulness to historians. They can also define bias and give telling examples to support their views. In recent A level examinations the percentages achieving both at grades A/B and at grades A-E have been above the national averages. In 1997, 30 percent of pupils gained grades A/B and in 1998 this rose to 40 percent. In lessons and in the work seen the majority of students in the sixth form are displaying high levels of understanding including the skills of evaluation and interpretation. In Year 12, they can distinguish between Tories and Canningites and can give reasons why Sir Robert Peel was embarrassed by their support during the Roman Catholic emancipation debates. In Year 13, they offer quite perceptive summaries of the motives and opinions of a variety of nineteenth century writers on the new Poor Law. In the sixth form attainment is above national norms.

206. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress overall in both key stages and in the sixth form. Moreover, there are examples of very good progress in all key stages. Pupils are building up a bank of historical words and are gaining confidence in taking part in historical debate, presenting a balanced argument and learning from the views of others. They are becoming more skilful in drawing conclusions from the increasingly complex evidence available to them. In addition, they now have a deeper understanding of cause and effect.

207. The response of pupils to the teaching of history is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Pupils' behaviour is generally excellent. They are pleasant, polite, engaging and forthcoming. They display excellent attitudes to study and work well in pairs and in groups. Pupils' relationships with each other are excellent. Furthermore, they have the utmost confidence in their teachers and speak very highly of them. They enjoy and are often fascinated by the subject matter and are desperate to answer questions. They are willing to celebrate the achievements of their classmates and are delighted when other pupils succeed.

208. The quality of teaching is a major strength of the department. It is never less than satisfactory and in nearly 90 percent of lessons it is good or very good. Very good teaching was seen from every member of the department and in all key stages. Teachers place great emphasis on the acquisition of skills, but also interest and amuse their pupils by relevant historical anecdotes. They display good subject knowledge and control their classes in a calm, confident and assured manner. They have high

expectations of their pupils and use challenging questioning techniques to ensure progress. Praise and humour are evident and there is good support for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers encourage their pupils to judge the past on its own standards and values; the work they complete in Year 7 on the life of a Roman legionary serving on Hadrian's Wall is a strong feature. The oral history project in Year 9 gives pupils the opportunity to act as young historians, and their assignments, often word-processed, are of high quality. In Years 10 and 11, the consideration of evidence to gauge its reliability and utility in relation to housing conditions during the Industrial Revolution is particularly effective. The presentations by Year 12 and 13 students on the Poor Law, Catholic Emancipation in the nineteenth century and also aspects of post-revolutionary France are testaments to the high quality of teaching in the sixth form.

209. The history curriculum is broad, balanced and fully meets requirements. On-going assessment in lessons is a strength. There are, however, few diagnostic comments on written work to assist pupils in monitoring their progress. Learning resources are adequate, and teachers work long and hard to supplement textbooks with relevant and thought-provoking materials. Accommodation is good and, although two of the classrooms are small, the specialist teaching areas are adorned by pupils' work and also by good examples of historical terminology.

210. The work of the department makes a profound contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Awe and wonder are very much in evidence. Teachers are good role models, treating their pupils with the utmost respect and insisting on the highest standards of behaviour and industry. Teachers encourage pupils to co-operate with each other providing many opportunities for group and paired work.

211. The department has made considerable progress since the last inspection. For example pupils' grasp of interpretations of history is much better developed. They are able to handle sources critically and to evaluate effectively. Teachers are considering ways to enhance their pupils' skills in IT. The project for Key Stage 4 pupils is a good example of this emphasis.

212. The head of department leads the history department with skill, verve, industry and sensitivity. All members of the subject area are talented teachers and the department displays a real team approach. There is mutual respect; and all members of staff recognise the strengths of colleagues and have a vision for the effective teaching of history. They care deeply for the well-being of their pupils. The department is, therefore, well placed for the future development of history in the school.

156. **Modern Foreign Languages**

213. Attainment in modern foreign languages overall is good and progress in relation to pupils' prior attainment is very good across the age and ability range in both key stages and in the sixth form. Taking account of all the evidence, attainment is judged to be good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in relation to their ability. High standards of attainment and progress come as a direct result of the quality of teaching, which is consistently very good, and of the effective use of the Foreign Languages Assistant, who operates as a highly skilled classroom teacher.

214. The majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are working securely in line with national expectations in French and German with the more able working above national expectations. In the current Year 9, in French and German, the attainment of pupils has already reached an appropriate standard in relation to the National Curriculum programme of study and the level descriptions for listening and responding, speaking, reading and responding, and writing. In French, the more able can take part in conversations which include making future plans, and have a good grasp of a range of vocabulary to state their preferences. This was seen during a lively and stimulating lesson on making a date. Written work, including impressive displays of word-processed texts, demonstrates the ability of pupils to express themselves for a range of purposes, using simple, descriptive language in paragraphs. Pupils of average ability can describe their daily routine in speech and writing and follow sustained

instructions in the target language from their teacher. Pupils of lower ability are able to take part in structured conversations and are happy to use French for real purposes, when, for example, holding a brief spontaneous conversation with the inspector.

215. In Year 9 in German, pupils have just completed their first year of study, they are very proficient in listening skills and are able to understand extended paraphrase and explanation of new vocabulary, when, for example, learning about rooms and furniture. They use German to manage their learning, for instance, when asking for clarification or making simple requests and are confident in using their knowledge of language to adapt and substitute single words and phrases, for example, in describing their daily routine in speech and writing.

216. At the end of Key Stage 4, those pupils who continue to study a modern foreign language attain above national expectations. Results in both French and German in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE are significantly above the national average. The more able pupils in Year 11 in French have a sound knowledge of grammatical rules and can apply what they know actively when, for example, writing an account of holiday sports. They can state and justify their opinions in relation to what they like and dislike. The progression in making extended sentences linked by connectives is due to well structured teaching opportunities, using a range of media and games to stimulate language use. Pupils of average to lower ability are developing good listening skills and can identify detail from long extracts of language spoken at normal speed. In German, pupils are able to note down detail and understand complex sentences from video material. They can ask and answer questions using full sentences in speech and writing.

217. There are no Year 13 groups in French or German in this academic year and the numbers of candidates entered for A level in recent years are too small for valid statistical comparisons to be made with national averages. The attainment of those preparing for A level in the current Year 12 is good in French and very good in German. The attainment of those studying for a vocational qualification in Spanish is also good in relation to course requirements.

218. In the current Year 12, the most able students can use German confidently to discuss and formulate their ideas to problems set by their teacher. They can respond to authentic printed material and to video material fluently. There is a spread of ability within the group, but the overall standard of linguistic proficiency is high. In French, the profile of ability is wider. The most able students can listen to authentic radio material and pick out detail from recorded texts with significant background noise, for example, sports commentaries. The majority of students are developing the ability to use language fluently in a range of new contexts, for example, adapting and modifying structures to deal with the unpredictable elements in producing extended narrative.

219. Those students preparing for the RSA certificate in Spanish are attaining well in relation to the course requirements. This was demonstrated by their ability to understand and conduct a conversation, book a hotel room, and handle specific requests for detail.

220. Progress in modern foreign languages makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy skills. The approach to teaching across the department provides a focus on language function and form. Pupils of all ages and abilities make very good progress in all four of the attainment targets in the National Curriculum programme of study for modern foreign languages. Pupils make rapid progress in the ability to manipulate language structures in speech and writing. In Key Stage 3 they build systematically from using single words to making short sentences to using language in short paragraphs and dialogues. They continue to build incrementally, increasing their grammatical awareness in order to produce extended communication in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. An area of relative weakness is pronunciation and intonation, which tends to be rather anglicised. This should be a target for improvement in both French and German. The very good rate of progress overall is supported by meticulous curriculum and lesson planning by teachers, which pays appropriate attention to the need to match the level of work to the pupils' performance, capability and learning styles.

221. Attainment and progress in information technology are also very good through the medium of modern foreign languages. Pupils have regular opportunities to use information technology for drafting and redrafting their creative writing and for the display of statistical information. Pupils in German are making good use of the CD ROM to support their progress. There are regular homework assignments which require pupils to record their work onto audio-cassette and the camcorder is used frequently to record role-plays in lessons. There has been very little progress, as yet, in the use of e-mail and the internet. This should be a priority for future development for all pupils.

222. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils listen with concentration to their teachers in most lessons. They readily accept the target language as the working language of the classroom and there has been good progress made since the last inspection in the degree to which pupils use the target language themselves for seeking help or explanation. Pupils use reference materials sensibly and organise their learning in a mature manner. They are able to work effectively individually, in pairs and in small groups. They use equipment with respect, including independent listening equipment such as junction boxes and headsets. Pupils complete taped assignments at home from Key Stage 3 onwards. This builds a very solid foundation for independent work, as was seen in the sixth form, where students regularly research and record their own authentic listening material from the radio and set each other a range of challenging listening activities.

223. All teachers have a secure command of the target language and use it with fluency and confidence in the classroom. They provide excellent role models for pupils. It is quite natural for teachers to engage in brief individual conversations with pupils, which encourages pupils to use the target language for themselves. Lessons are carefully planned. Objectives are clear and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. There is an infectious enthusiasm for the subject, which is shared by teachers and pupils alike in most classes. Lessons are conducted at a brisk and purposeful pace, with energy and imagination. There is a very good variety of activities provided, which allows pupils to repeat, rehearse and consolidate new language. Pupils are given opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups with a range of media and resources. Lessons start with stimulating presentations and always end with a recap, so that pupils have no doubt about what has been achieved. This is a significant contributory factor to ensuring very good progress in the majority of lessons.

224. The curriculum is planned very effectively to provide clear incremental progression and continuity across key stages. There is a balance in the learning opportunities provided to ensure that there is progression in all of the attainment targets. There are regular planned assessment opportunities, which comprise class tests and the involvement of pupils in making their own assessment of their skills. Assessment information is used by all staff to set appropriate targets for individual pupils. These targets are not always recorded and this should be an area for development in departmental planning.

225. The department is well led. There is a shared vision and clear direction for the department, which support the ethos of the school and maintain high standards.

226. Since the last inspection, the school has made progress in most of the areas identified for improvement. The large numbers of pupils in the teaching groups in Key Stage 3 have been reduced. The time allocation for lessons in Key Stage 3 remains lean but the time available is used very effectively and the time allocation in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is generous. Strategies to address boys' achievement are being developed and there has been a real improvement in the independent use of the target language by pupils. However, not all pupils continue with the study of a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4. Therefore the subject is not meeting current statutory requirements. In the interests of equality of opportunity, it is recommended that the school explore a wider range of courses and a more flexible curriculum offer in Key Stage 4.

156.

Music

156.

227. Pupils come to the school with varied experience of the subject and by the end of Key Stage 3 the great majority of pupils reach national expectations with a minority exceeding them. At this level pupils have particular strengths in listening to music and writing it.

228. At Key Stage 4 attainment is good and group sizes are reasonable but not large enough to make valid judgements on trends in performance. Recent GCSE results have ranged from just below national expectations to well above. Pupils at this level are good composers and performers, and the present pupils are performing at least in line with the national average.

229. At A level the results in 1998 and 1999 show improvement from those in 1997. The numbers taking the subject are very small and valid comparison of examination performance with national averages is not possible. Students have strengths in musical analysis and performing. Some music technology students are relatively weak in reading music.

230. Progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good due to the consistently good quality of teaching. At Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress in developing listening and performing skills both as instrumentalists and singers. GCSE pupils make good progress in writing songs and in practising individual and group performances. Progress at A level is satisfactory given the differing aptitudes and interests of the students. Students make satisfactory progress in aural training, discussing historical issues and in using music technology. Pupils of different abilities and with special needs make appropriate progress.

231. Pupils enjoy their music. At Key Stage 3 they work hard at composing and perform to each other. GCSE pupils concentrate over long periods of time in composing music and rehearsing. A level students make sustained efforts in analysing music. Discipline is good and pupils show respect in using the equipment. There are good, co-operative relationships between pupils and staff.

232. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Teachers make good use of time and resources and this contributes to good progress. Lessons are well planned. Teachers ensure that pupils develop their natural abilities in music through regular singing. Group teaching and individual advice are both used effectively. In the sixth form teaching is adequate or better. Teachers make satisfactory use of time and good use of resources. Teachers have good subject knowledge and encourage students to develop their skills and judgement in listening to and discussing music. The homework set is appropriate at all levels. There is an effective assessment policy but staff do not use it fully at all levels. The staff meet regularly to plan and review their teaching

233. National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 3 are met, but there are no opportunities for pupils to use IT at this level. GCSE and A level syllabuses are met in full.

234. Pupils with special needs have equal access to the curriculum through responsive teaching and they make satisfactory progress. The curriculum is well planned to ensure good progress.

235. The provision for cultural and social education is good. Pupils are heavily involved in services, concerts in and out of school and the school musical. These are well attended. There is a choir, a concert band, wind group, string group, liturgy group and recorder ensemble. The London Symphony Orchestra puts on workshops for GCSE pupils and A level students. Pupils and students study a range of world music in depth.

236. The head of department has a clear vision of music and leads an effective and well-trained teaching team. Meetings are held weekly to monitor the work of the department. Development planning is effective. The pupils learn within a positive and caring ethos. Classrooms are attractively decorated with informative subject displays.

237. The standard of accommodation is very good. The provision of resources, apart from IT at Key Stage 3, is good. The generous budget allocation for music has been well used by the staff, particularly to enhance the curriculum at Key Stage 3.

Physical Education

238. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 assessments 84.9 percent of Year 9 pupils achieved the national expectations and 17 percent of the cohort were working beyond this level. These are good standards. The GCSE results showed considerable improvement from the 34.5 percent A*-C grades in 1997 to 51 percent in 1998. This was 2 percent above the national average and better than the results reported at the last inspection. There was no entry in 1999. All the students taking A level in 1999 passed with 38 percent achieving grades A or B. These are good results and also represent an upward trend as in 1997, only 20 percent achieved an A or a B.

239. The proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding national expectations is broadly in line with that found nationally in Key Stage 3 and is above the national average at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are no significant differences in boys' and girls' achievement. Standards in games and health aspects are better than in gymnastics.

240. Towards the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve expected levels in football, netball and rugby. Most show good control and consistency in passing the ball, tactical awareness and teamwork in attack and defence and have a satisfactory knowledge of rules. There are some unsatisfactory standards in gymnastics in Years 7 and 8. Pupils devise sequences of movement but for many performances these lack precision, refinement and complexity. In all lessons in the key stage pupils understand the importance of a warm-up and cool-down.

241. Towards the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of pupils is broadly in line with or beyond national expectations. Most Year 11 GCSE pupils achieve average or better levels in tests and homework. They have good knowledge and understanding of the circulatory system when tested in the lesson and many do sound written work. In relatively new games, the range of skills and tactics is limited. In the use of the multi-gym many Year 11 pupils work at very good levels. They have a good grasp of the effects of endurance exercise on the body. They use and adapt the equipment to meet their fitness and training needs independently of the teacher.

242. Year 13 A level pupils meet course expectations. They produce well-researched and debated work and reveal sound knowledge and understanding of contemporary sporting issues.

243. In lessons, progress is mostly good or very good and never less than satisfactory. It is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Many pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities and their age, especially in the performance and health aspects of the Attainment Target. In the planning and evaluating aspects progress is less evident but it is satisfactory. Much improvement is seen where expectations of teachers are high and the work is interesting, enjoyable and related to pupils' abilities. In gymnastics the courses are too short for improvement to be significant in raising skill levels and quality in performance. Pupils with special educational needs progress as well as others.

244. Pupils' attitudes are good to excellent in most lessons and never less than satisfactory. This was a feature of the previous inspection. They are eager to participate, well motivated and confident. They behave well and show interest and enjoyment in their work, sustaining their focus and concentration for long periods. This is largely because the teachers are consistent in their approaches to all lessons and pupils see the relevance of tasks. They relate well to others, working co-operatively in partner and small group work, sometimes coaching and assisting one another. This feature is particularly good in Year 11 in the multi-gym where pupils worked, largely, independently of the teacher. In some lessons there are too few such opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their

own learning.

245. Overall the teaching is good; some is very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Occasionally, it is outstanding and never less than satisfactory. A key strength lies in consistency in lesson procedures. Lack of consistency was a criticism in the last report. All lessons begin with a focus on the objectives. Activity is always preceded by a warm-up and concludes with a cool-down. The teachers have good subject expertise and this is revealed in good lesson planning. Expectations of standards and good behaviour are generally high. The work is interesting and organised in a range of activities, helping to sustain the concentration and motivation of pupils. All teachers know their pupils well, good relationships are established and encouragement and help are given to those who need it. Sometimes there is too much direction leaving few opportunities for pupils to observe, analyse and plan responses. Good teaching was a feature of the last inspection and it is evident the good standards are being maintained and improved upon, especially in Key Stage 4.

246. The curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the planning does not indicate which aspects are being covered through the key stages. Schemes of work lack clear objectives linked to assessment but lesson planning is good. The Key Stage 3 curriculum lacks balance and depth in some aspects. There is an over-emphasis on games which takes up 68 percent of the programme, at the expense of aesthetic aspects. This results in insufficient time for proper coverage of some other programmes of study and contributes to some unsatisfactory standards in gymnastics.

247. Strong leadership and efficient management of the department have led to good teamwork among the teachers. The department has made good progress on developing the monitoring of teaching and of linking assessment to the National Curriculum requirements, issues identified in the last inspection.

248. Extra-curricular activities were identified as a strength at the time of the last inspection and the commitment of teachers and the participation of pupils continues to be impressive. Successes have been achieved at local, regional and national levels in a range of activities. Pupils are proud of the school's achievements and this has a positive influence on their perceptions of physical education.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

156. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

249. The inspection was carried out by a team of 13 inspectors, which included a lay inspector.

Before and during the inspection:

- 203 lessons or parts of lessons were observed;
- further observations were made during assemblies, registration and tutor periods, extra-curricular activities, breaktimes, lunchtimes and before and after school;
- interviews were held with the headteacher, members of the senior management team, heads of department, heads of year, teachers, support staff, administrative staff, representative governors and pupils;
- samples of pupils' work, records and reports were examined in detail;
- formal discussions were held with pupils from each year group;
- a comprehensive range of school documentation was analysed, including policy documents, guidelines, schemes of work, the school development plan, budget figures and forecasts, pupil intake data, data on pupil attainment including value added data, a sample of minutes of meetings and teachers' planning;
- attendance registers were checked;
- a questionnaire was sent to all parents asking for their views of the school and 582 replies were received, these and other written comments from parents were considered;
- a meeting was held prior to the inspection to which all parents were invited.

· **DATA AND INDICATORS**

250.

· **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1107	7	78	39

· **Teachers and classes**

· **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	65.56
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.89

· **Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	398

[**Secondary schools**]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79.0
Average teaching group size:	KS3 29.0
	KS4 23.3

· **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	2,666,203
Total Expenditure	2,757,186
Expenditure per pupil	2491
Balance brought forward from previous year	64876
Balance carried forward to next year	-26107

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1107

Number of questionnaires returned: 582

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	32.1	58.3	6.9	2.6	0.2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	36.6	51.6	8.3	2.8	0.9
The school handles complaints from parents well	20.6	49.5	24.1	4.7	1.0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	32.5	56.6	8.8	1.7	0.3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	36.7	51.7	9.0	2.6	0.
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	40.5	53.6	5.0	0.7	0.2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	33.3	55.0	9.7	1.9	0.2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32.6	56.5	6.2	3.6	1.0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	39.3	53.6	6.0	0.7	0.3
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	46.6	47.8	4.3	1.0	0.2
My child(ren) like(s) school	35.9	52.2	9.1	2.3	0.5