

INSPECTION REPORT

BARTON COURT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Canterbury

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118916

Headteacher: Dr S Manning

Reporting inspector: Mr T Browne
No 1503

Dates of inspection: 7 to 11 February 2000

Inspection number: 183976

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	mixed
School address:	Longport Canterbury
Postcode:	CT1 1PH
Telephone number:	01227 464600
Fax number:	01227 781399
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Cook
Date of previous inspection:	21 November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
T Browne Registered Inspector		How high are standards? How well are students taught?
S Cash Lay Inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
R Allison-Smith	Art	How well does the school care for its students? Special Educational Needs
M Bailey	Science	
R Coulthard	Religious Education Music	How well is the school led and managed?
M Currie	History	
P Garner	Physical Education	
V Harrison	Information Technology Design and Technology	
S Jordan	Geography	
B Juxon	Mathematics	Equality of opportunity
J Lovgreen	English	
T O'Sullivan	Modern Languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?

The inspection contractor was:

Qualitas Education Consultants Limited
Wickham Court
Layhams Road
West Wickham
Kent BR4 9HH

Telephone number 0181 777 1103

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS OR STUDENTS?	13
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	15
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Barton Court is an averaged-sized, mixed grammar school with 774 students on roll. Attainment on entry at age 11 is well above the national average for all schools. A small proportion of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of students with special educational needs is well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Barton Court is a good and effective school. Standards are high. At the age of 16 students achieve particularly good results in relation to their abilities. The overall quality of teaching is good. There is a very positive climate for learning in a friendly, supportive environment. Leadership and management are effective and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students have very positive attitudes and enjoy their time at school
- The ethos is good with a commitment to high achievement
- Students achieve good results in GCSE examinations
- Standards in geography are very high because of excellent teaching
- There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities, with particular strengths in sport and music
- The overall quality of teaching is good. It was judged to be good or better in about 70 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in about 25 per cent of lessons
- There is a positive approach to school improvement, with particular attention being given to developing the quality of teaching and learning.

What could be improved

- The consistency in the quality of teaching, so that the quality of teaching in all lessons moves towards that seen in the best.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1994. Since that time standards have improved throughout the school. Major improvements to the accommodation have included the creation of a substantial new teaching block, complete restoration to the main Georgian house, and the addition of a library. The school now has appropriate arrangements for students identified as having special educational needs. Work is underway on extending the use of ICT in subjects and across the curriculum, making use of the much improved computer provision. There has been little change in the provision of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

*This comparison has to be against all grammar schools nationally. These generally are much more selective than Barton Court and the other Kent grammar schools. This explains the E grade.

Students at Barton Court achieve high standards, especially at the age of 16. The school has been successful in its target of improving the GCSE and A-level average points scores. Over the last six years the GCSE results have shown a rising trend at a slightly higher rate than that seen nationally. The 1999 results were outstanding in geography, and particularly good in information systems and business studies. The A-level results have improved from below to just above the national average. The 1999 A-level results were strongest in English, geography, business studies and modern languages. Across the school, students achieve well in most subjects; only in religious education are standards below those expected. The quality of students' written work, experimental skills in science and independent work in art are particular strengths.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Students enjoy school. They can concentrate and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good or very good in almost all lessons. Behaviour around the school is very good. Students are sensible and can be trusted.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The ethos of the school engenders mutual respect. Relationships are very positive between all those in the school community.
Attendance	Above average. The school has good systems for monitoring students' attendance and punctuality. Levels of unauthorised absence are low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	very good

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

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Throughout the school, teachers have good subject expertise. They establish positive relationships with the students. The best teaching provides high expectations, pace and challenge, for example in the teaching of geography, music and art. The use of homework makes a strong contribution to students' learning. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching involves too much teacher talk or work that is not well matched to students' needs, or it allows inattention and chatter. The teaching of history has been affected by staffing difficulties and the teaching of religious education is weak overall. The skills of literacy and numeracy are generally well taught and used effectively. Overall, the teaching meets the needs of all students. The strengths in students' learning are their effort and concentration, and their independent work when given the opportunity. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good.

In 92 per cent of lessons the teaching was satisfactory or better, in 70 per cent it was good or better and in 25 per cent it was very good or better. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 8 per cent of lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The broad and balanced curriculum offers a good range of subjects at GCSE and A-level. Careers education is good and the well-developed links with the community especially benefit sixth-form general studies. The good programme of extra-curricular activity involves large numbers of students, and has particular strengths in sport and music.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Students with special educational needs are well supported. Procedures have been improved and now meet the requirements.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall there is good provision for students' personal development. The PHSE programme is good. Social, moral and cultural development is well supported. Provision for spiritual development is less evident.
How well the school cares for its students	The pastoral care of students is good. There are major strengths in the monitoring and review of students' academic progress, together with target setting and support, for example through booster classes.

The school maintains an effective partnership with parents, who make a very good contribution to their children's learning.

The school does not fully meet statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management provide good leadership. Most other managers are very effective. The school's performance and its growth and popularity are evidence of successful school development.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors support the school well and satisfactorily fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has developed very good systems for monitoring teaching and evaluating school performance. These include lesson observation and the analysis of assessment data to provide value-added information.
The strategic use of resources	The school has enough suitably qualified staff, adequate learning resources and now has good accommodation. Overall the school makes effective use of these resources. Students make good use of the library, computers and facilities such as workshops. The school applies best value principles in the management of its finances.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress • The school's expectations of hard work and high achievement • The approachability of staff • Their children like school • Their children are helped to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The timing of homework • How closely the school works with parents • How well they are kept informed about progress • The range of activities outside lessons

The inspection team fully agrees with parents' positive views about the school. The inspection team found that homework makes a good contribution to standards, the amount set is reasonable but, as students also indicate, it is not always set according to the schedule. Whilst a few parents would like more information about how their children are getting on, the inspection evidence did not significantly support this view. The inspection team found the programme of activities outside lessons to be good, with strengths in sport and music, but it may not be as broad and interesting as some parents would wish for.

OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Students achieve high standards at Barton Court and this is reflected in the GCSE results and the improving A-level performance. This also matches the strong view expressed by parents that the school sets high expectations and that their children make good progress. The school usefully sets targets for each subject and analyses performance against these. The school has targeted and succeeded in improving the GCSE and A-level points score per student. Targets are sufficiently challenging.

2. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests, students' performance in English, mathematics and science was very high compared with the national averages. Although the results were below the average for all grammar schools nationally, they were average when compared with grammar schools in Kent, which have students from a similar ability range. Key Stage 3 attainment has shown a rising trend over the last four years, in line with that seen nationally.

3. The 1999 GCSE results were well above the national average but below the average for all grammar schools nationally. However, as at Key Stage 3, the results compare favourably with grammar schools in Kent. Over the last six years the GCSE results have shown a rising trend, at a slightly higher rate than that seen nationally. Taking account of the students' prior attainment, students make good progress in Key Stage 4. The 1999 GCSE results were outstanding in geography, and also good in information systems and business studies. Several subjects, such as mathematics and modern languages, have been less successful than others in achievement at the highest grades A and A*.

4. In the sixth form, the A-level results have also shown a rising trend. The average points score has improved from being below to just above the national average in 1999. A-level results were strongest in English literature, geography, business studies and modern languages. Although the numbers of students taking the GNVQ Advanced business course have been small, the results have been very good.

5. Standards in English are very high compared with the national averages at Key Stages 3 and 4 and results have shown a rising trend. At A-level, the 1999 results were outstanding and an improvement on previous years. Generally however, the high standards in written work are not matched by those in reading, and in speaking and listening. Students start the school with very good literacy skills and these are enhanced across the curriculum. Oral work in many lessons, provision of key vocabulary, and use of the library are particular strengths.

6. Standards in mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4 are very high compared with the national averages, but standards are below the national average at A-level. Students achieve well across the subject including investigative work. At A-level most students achieve the standards expected taking account of their prior attainment. Students enter the school with well above average numeracy skills and continue to improve these, not only in mathematics but also through application in other subjects, especially science, geography and design and technology.

7. Standards in science at Key Stages 3 and 4 are very high compared with the national averages. A-level standards are improving and generally above the national average. Standards in work seen were consistent with performance in examinations. Students' experimental and investigative skills are very good throughout the school. Sixth form students have a secure grasp of relevant scientific knowledge, but a relatively low level of intellectual curiosity.

8. Standards in information technology are above the national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3.

Students are confident users of computers. In Key Stage 3 lessons they develop skills in word-processing, spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing. Those who take the various courses the GCSE and A-level have achieved good results. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 4 often exceed expectations. There is good use of ICT across the curriculum, although this is not consistent, particularly with the restricted access to computers and the limited skills of some staff.

9. Standards in religious education at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Overall students' achievement in relation to their abilities is unsatisfactory at all levels. The unsatisfactory quality of teaching and the poor management of religious education are the main reasons for the low standards.

10. Standards in geography are excellent. Students make very good progress and higher attainers have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Excellent teaching and very good management are the main reasons for the success of geography. Standards in art are also high at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very high at A-level. Independent work and research are strengths in art. There are both good and very good features to all other subjects. Current standards in history are more variable following a difficult period of temporary staffing. In many subjects achievement is occasionally limited when insufficient demands are made on students, for example when teaching is not differentiated or is too teacher-dependent.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Students express very positive attitudes to school and their work. They enjoy school and are very willing to concentrate and do their best. A large number of students are involved in the extra-curricular activities. For example over one hundred were rehearsing for a forthcoming production of 'Grease' and many stay after school to work on their design technology projects. In almost all lessons behaviour was good and often very good, especially when stimulated by the teaching. Even when teaching is pedestrian, many students bring their own enthusiasm and this leads to effective learning. Some students are reluctant to contribute orally to lessons and are passive learners, lacking intellectual curiosity. Only in a few lessons when teaching was unsatisfactory did some students misbehave and disrupt the lesson. Behaviour around the school was very good. Out of lesson time students are allowed into classrooms unsupervised and they prove themselves worthy of this trust. The students' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour lead to a calm, industrious atmosphere in the school. This makes a significant contribution to students' achievement.

12. The ethos of the school engenders mutual respect. The students value the friendliness of staff and their willingness to help. Relationships between students are also very positive. Students and parents report very little incidence of bullying. The students work very well together in lessons when given the opportunity. They listen attentively to each other and value each other's contributions. Students undertake individual research and homework conscientiously. Many, particularly those in the sixth form, have a highly developed sense of responsibility. However, the school council is currently in abeyance and some students would like more opportunities to influence the life of the school. Many students have strong views about matters such as the recently introduced one-way system and classes occasionally being denied access to their rooms at lunchtimes.

13. Levels of attendance are above those found nationally, though slightly below those in other grammar schools. Students arrive promptly. Registers are promptly marked and reasons for absence sought, so levels of unauthorised absence are low. The criticisms of the last inspection have been addressed.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The overall quality of teaching is good and this is a main contributory factor to the high standards achieved. A strong but wide-ranging picture of teaching was seen during the inspection. In 25 per cent of lessons observed the teaching was very good or excellent, in 45 per cent it was good, in 22 per cent it was satisfactory, but in 8 per cent the teaching was unsatisfactory. Some very good teaching occurs in most subjects at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Sixth form teaching is more consistently good and very good. Across subjects, teachers give sufficient attention in their teaching to the important skills of literacy and numeracy. The development and use of ICT skills varies according to teachers' levels of expertise and the subject's access to computers. The school's senior management is well aware of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching, and the current priority in school development of improving teaching and learning is entirely appropriate.

15. Particular strengths are teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding, and their familiarity with examination requirements. These are used well and contribute positively to students' learning. Expertise and enthusiasm are key factors in many subjects, for example in geography, English, and physical education. The students benefit significantly in art from the range of specialist knowledge and in music from the flair and skills of the teacher. The use of language and vocabulary are strengths in English teaching, and expertise is shown in clear explanations and questioning in science.

16. Teachers have good relationships with the students and these contribute to the students' very positive attitudes towards their work. Student opinion is valued and used well in English, and the very good teaching of art inspires and motivates the students. Teaching in modern languages and generally in the sixth form effectively combines support, encouragement and challenge.

17. Classroom management is mostly good throughout the school. Good quality teaching, for example in mathematics and physical education, was based on teachers' good class management skills and the creation of a positive working atmosphere. The response of students was then consistently positive. In a few lessons, for example in English and history, some teachers attempt to teach over students who are chatting and inattentive. Sometimes the use of lesson time and an insufficient variety of activity are further weaknesses. Students themselves commented that they learn very little from just listening to the teachers, which they say sometimes goes on for too long.

18. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are high in most subjects, and the better teaching has pace and challenge. The best lessons got off to a brisk start and the clear objectives were purposefully shared with students. Some inspirational Year 9 geography teaching on the topic of natural hazards set challenging demands, with resources and tasks combined in an experience which resulted in excellent learning. Some Key Stage 3 teaching of ICT involved lively questioning and a variety of activity that contributed to good learning. The expectation that students should evaluate and improve their work is a strength for example in the teaching of physical education and design technology. Constructive marking, regular assessment and helpful feedback make a positive contribution to students' learning.

19. The use of homework makes a strong contribution to students' learning. The full and busy workshops indicated students' enthusiasm for their work out of lesson time. Most parents are satisfied with the homework arrangements and appreciate its value. Students take homework seriously and often produce work of high quality. However, some parents and students feel the homework becomes excessive when it is not set according to the homework timetables. The evidence from the inspection is that the timing of homework would be worth monitoring and reviewing.

20. In the 8 per cent of teaching that was less than satisfactory, there were some common weaknesses. Tasks sometimes were badly matched to the needs of the students, particularly leaving higher attainers

unchallenged. This lack of differentiation in the work also contributed to students' inattention and inactivity. Teaching methods too often did not promote independent learning, with students too reliant of the teacher for instructions and information. Coupled with this there was often too much teacher talk, with students passively listening for long periods during a lesson. Occasionally there was weak control of behaviour; in some lessons students were allowed to lose concentration or chat.

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

21. The school offers a good, balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3 including all required elements of the National Curriculum. Particular strengths include the broad coverage of English, mathematics and science and the recent introduction of two modern languages for all. At Key Stage 4, students follow a core curriculum which includes the required subjects of the National Curriculum and a range of options intended to suit their individual aptitudes and aspirations. All students have equal access to the curriculum, including for example English language and literature and double science. Students with particular abilities are able to study two modern languages, astronomy, performing arts and a rich variety of courses in art. The sixth form is designed to cater for the needs of high-attaining, academic students and offers a good range of A-level subjects and a GNVQ Advanced in business studies. The sixth form curriculum is further enriched by a very good general studies programme, PE for leisure and general fitness, a module of information and communications technology and the opportunity to study Italian to GCSE level. Plans are well advanced for the introduction of an enhanced sixth form curriculum in September 2000.

22. The curriculum is generally well planned, with strengths in English, art, geography, music and physical education. Students with special educational needs are well supported. They have full access to the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities. GCSE PE has been introduced since the last inspection. However, there are still weaknesses in the provision of RE at Key Stage 4, where the Local Agreed Syllabus is not fully followed, and in the sixth form. The school does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. There are also other weaknesses of which the school is aware. Students have insufficient experience of electronics, control technology and textiles in design and technology at Key Stage 3 and information technology is not sufficiently integrated into teaching and learning across subjects.

23. The programme of extra-curricular activities is good, with strengths in sport and music. Students respond enthusiastically to the opportunities on offer such as stage productions. Good study support is offered to students through the "GCSE Grade Booster" sessions which are available in a wide range of subjects. The clubs and societies seen were well attended and carefully structured to ensure all students were fully involved. The library, computer suites, gymnasium, performing arts room, art and music rooms are all used extensively outside normal school time to allow students to enhance their experiences. Visits to the local theatre complement the performing arts programme. Extra-curricular activities are, in general terms, open to all students and the quality of those seen during the inspection was very good.

24. The well-structured PHSE programme is taught fortnightly on a rota basis to minimise impact on the statutory curriculum. The programme covers an appropriate range of topics matched to students' needs as they progress up the school. These include, for example, settling in to a new school in Year 7, decisions and choices in Year 9, life skills and careers in Year 11 and higher education issues in the sixth form. Due attention is also paid to key topics such as sex education and drug misuse. Parents speak highly of the quality of the programme and its impact on their children. There is a good programme of careers education taught through PHSE and involving close links with the local authority careers advisory service. The recently-appointed Head of Careers has set an ambitious and innovative agenda for further development. Together with the extension of the professional librarian's

responsibilities to include careers resources, this has already led, for example, to improvements in the quality of the careers library. All students have one week's work experience in Year 10 and a second in Year 12. The majority find their own placement and many have shown enterprise and initiative in so doing. In the annual Enrichment Week each summer the school's normal timetable is suspended. Students of different ages work together and choose from a wide range of activities and visits. During this time there is the annual Year 9 outdoor activity camp.

25. There are very good opportunities for students to develop socially. They are encouraged to think of others, both within the school and in the wider world. At the time of the inspection, sixth form students were providing a much appreciated Valentine's Day service of flowers, cards and messages, with proceeds going to the British Heart Foundation. There are good opportunities for students to take responsibility for specific tasks and for their own work. Annual productions of musicals, and sporting fixtures, also encourage students to work together. In some lessons, there are opportunities for students to co-operate in pairs and groups, which they do very well

26. There are good opportunities for students to develop cultural interests and an appreciation of the cultural diversity of the world. Art, music and English make particularly strong contributions. In art, for example, students study a range of artists and styles from Europe as well as North American Indian and African art. A large number of instrumental and vocal groups perform in school and locally. The study of the cultural background of English texts encourages an interest in students' own heritage as well as that of other cultures. Students learn about the major world faiths through religious education. The school is aware of students' limited personal experience of people from other cultures and is seeking ways to redress this. A link with a French school has recently been developed and there are worthwhile visits to places of cultural interest during the annual Enrichment Week.

27. Students' moral development is well supported through the school's high expectations of students' behaviour. They are trusted to be in classrooms unsupervised and to take care of equipment. One day each year is set aside for discussion of 'moral choices'. The sixth-form general studies course significantly contributes to older students' understanding of moral issues, such as euthanasia or GM crops. History and geography also increase students' awareness of moral dilemmas, for example through discussions about slavery or conservation issues. However, there are too few opportunities for reflection and a development of spiritual awareness. This aspect of the school's work has declined since the last inspection. Subjects such as religious education and English insufficiently support this aspect of students' personal development. As at the last inspection the school does not hold a daily act of collective worship, although students attend assembly once each week. Assemblies have a moral or social theme but generally do not actively involve students nor allow time for reflection. A Christian youth worker regularly takes assemblies which are appreciated by the school. Too often however, poor use is made of form periods, with little constructive activity for students who tend just to chat or catch up on work.

28. The curriculum is enriched by well-developed links with the local community. The school has good, long-standing links with a nearby initial teacher training institution. Links with the community, business and industry are used to excellent effect in the sixth form general studies programme. Students' skills in information technology and access to the Internet provide further worthwhile opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

29. The school provides good care and support for its students. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place that provide a safe and secure learning environment. Governors review the health and safety policy on an annual basis. Regular checks are carried out on record keeping, equipment, transport and the building. In cases of illness and accidents staff with first-aid qualification are on hand. There is a shared responsibility for health and safety that extends to staff, teachers and students. Health

and welfare are promoted through a good PHSE programme. The local child protection arrangements are fully in place.

30. The monitoring of academic progress by subject staff provides, with few exceptions, an accurate assessment of students' work. Marking in the school as a whole is better than at the time of the last inspection and gives students guidance on how to improve. Assessment data are used to predict performance in tests at age 14 and in examinations at age 16 and 18. There are established procedures in the school for the collection and collation of information and the regular review of students' academic progress, attainment and their personal development. Overall they work very effectively. The school has recently invested in a computer program that allows access and improved flexibility in the way the information can be used.

31. Academic reviews, that follow a reporting period, provide students, form tutors and Year Heads with an opportunity to review targets, pick-up any inconsistencies in performance and negotiate appropriate action. The school has good strategies to support students including extra booster classes and mentoring. For a small minority of students who give teachers cause for concern, progress is monitored lesson-by-lesson. Such reports, together with the annual and interim reports, provide a very good on-going record of students' achievements, their behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning.

32. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. However, in some lessons the information about students' learning needs and the targets that have been set are not used systematically to shape lesson plans. Students with statements of special educational need make good progress in lessons, benefiting from some very good support from learning support assistants. The school provides well for their academic, physical and emotional needs. Since the last inspection, appropriate steps have been taken to fulfil the requirements set out in the SEN Code of Practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. The school maintains an effective partnership with parents. Parents are very positive about the school, particularly regarding the standard of work expected and the progress their children make. Most feel that the school is approachable if they have concerns and that it supports their children's personal development well, setting good standards of behaviour. A few parents would like more information about how their child is getting on but the inspection did not significantly support this view. The quality of reports has improved since the last inspection and they are now good, giving a clear indication of how well each student is doing and providing targets for improvement. The introduction of termly interim reports has been useful. Parents are invited annually to discuss progress with each subject teacher and these meetings are very well attended. They also appreciate the tea party to which new parents are invited in order to meet their child's teachers.

34. General information for parents is satisfactory, with newsletters usually produced twice termly. The school produces clear, comprehensive guides to both GCSE options choices and courses in the sixth form. Parents would welcome more and earlier information about extra-curricular activities. A significant minority of parents do not feel that the school works closely with them. Parents were recently consulted over the new home school agreement. The school valued the contribution which parents made and their comments were incorporated into the final draft. However, parents are not generally consulted about school developments and so have little opportunity to express their views.

35. Parents give good support to the social and fund-raising events put on by the school and the small committee of parents and teachers. Funds raised have, in recent years, paid for stage equipment and lockers, among other items. School productions are very well attended. Some parents are able to offer work experience placements. A few parents expressed reservations about homework. Homework is related well to lessons and is appropriate. But it is not always set for the scheduled times and this

weakness was a concern to students. Parents are conscientious about signing homework diaries. The overall contribution which parents make to their children's learning is very good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

36. The good leadership recognised at the last inspection has continued and contributed to school improvement. There is now a better overall quality of teaching, the school achieves greater examination success than previously, and it continues to grow in popularity. The school has clear academic and social aims which are reflected in its work. The school is moving purposefully forward in realising further the headteacher's vision of a high-achieving, co-educational grammar school with a happy and supportive ethos.

37. The headteacher is effective but unobtrusive in his management. Senior management colleagues have an energetic profile around the school and constantly reinforce the school's values. Following the departure of the second deputy headteacher, the senior management team now comprises the headteacher, one deputy and two senior teachers. Each has specific responsibilities, but those of the deputy headteacher are particularly wide-ranging. The substantial delegation to other managers is efficient. Academic and pastoral matters are organised through a hierarchy of committees, which enable information and views to be disseminated and sought in a well-regulated programme of meetings. Heads of year have an important and increasing role in the pastoral management of students, which they carry out effectively. There are constructive procedures for monitoring students' welfare, progress and behaviour, and for setting targets for students. The overall quality of management of subjects is good, but there are inconsistencies. Management is very good in English, geography and physical education and good in mathematics, design technology and ICT. Elsewhere it is satisfactory, except in religious education, where it is poor.

38. The full governing body meets once each term. Governors support the school by attendance at school functions. They are kept well informed of developments in school by the headteacher and by teacher-governors and through planned visits to departments. Governors warmly acknowledge the achievements of the headteacher in the recent development of the school. They respect and trust his judgement in academic matters and in the devising of the school development plan. They support the decisions of the senior management team in shaping the direction of the school. Their contact with departments is supportive and they are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the governing body satisfactorily fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

39. The school has anticipated the findings of this report by identifying the development of teaching and learning styles as the main priority of its development plan. There are very good systems for the monitoring of teaching and this is standardised through the school. Feedback is provided and departments arrange their agendas for development. Teachers are set targets for their performance, following the process of monitoring. Appraisal and self-review are well established. Expenditure on in-service training is carefully directed to further the implementation of the school development plan. The second major priority for development is to increase the provision and use of ICT. The school has the structures and systems to implement its plans. Staff share a unanimity of purpose and the school has the capacity to carry out its planned developments successfully.

40. There are enough suitably qualified teaching and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum, apart from in history, where there has been a temporary staffing problem. There is a good programme for the induction of staff new to the school, and effective provision for the training of newly qualified teachers and those on initial teacher training programmes.

41. Overall, the school's accommodation is good, and significantly improved since the last inspection. Many new teaching areas have been developed and offer a pleasant working environment. There is a

new library and the sixth form have their own common room. The indoor accommodation for physical education has not improved since the last inspection, when it was reported as inadequate. A small gymnasium and the use of the dining hall are not conducive to effective teaching, and it is difficult to keep these areas adequately cleaned. Secure fencing has been installed around the premises since the last inspection, and this has improved the use the school can make of the field.

42. Resources for learning have improved since the last inspection. The new library provides space for an adequate number of fiction and non-fiction books. In English, there are insufficient class readers for students in Key Stage 3. In most other subjects, there are sufficient books and resources, but in English and design technology, some older textbooks need replacing. Also, resources for religious education have improved little from the poor level noted at the last inspection.

43. A key issue at the last inspection involved improving the school's accommodation. This major development has been managed very effectively with a significant input from governors. The headteacher ensures the annual budget is spent as intended on each year's educational provision. The governing body keeps a sufficient oversight of the school's income and expenditure. Best value principles are applied well, with the bursar and colleagues managing the day-to-day financial procedures. Funding is allocated to subjects according to a plan with scope to fund specific developments. Although the overall spending is not guided by a costed development plan, as recommended at the last inspection, the school has managed to be successful in raising standards and gaining popularity at the same time as providing major building developments.

44. Overall the school is making effective use of staffing, learning resources and accommodation. The deployment of staff makes good use of their expertise and overall the teaching is good. Students make very good use of the library, the computers and other facilities such as workshops. Time in lessons is used well except where poor use is made of form time each morning. This needs to be reviewed.

45. The school provides a good quality of education and students achieve high standards. In relation to its context and income, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. The school should now

- improve the consistency in the quality of teaching by continuing to address this school development priority and giving particular attention to:
 - the amount of teacher talk in lessons
 - the use of activities that promote students' independent learning
 - the use of differentiation to improve the match of work to the needs of students
 - the further development of teaching and learning strategies to encourage students' active involvement in lessons.

See paragraphs 14 - 20

47. The school also should consider the following less important issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve standards, teaching and management within religious education *paras 122 - 126*
- resolve the staffing difficulties in history *paras 93 - 96*
- map out and monitor the use of ICT across subjects particularly in Key Stage 4 *para 101*
- continue to make every effort to improve the accommodation for physical education *para 121*
- ensure that the school complies with
 - the provision of religious education in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form *paras 22, 123*
 - the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. *para 22*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	132
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	20	45	21	8	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	645	129
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	39	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	3	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	32	0

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	8

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.64
National comparative data	7.90

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.31
National comparative data	1.10

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	43	70

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	41	41
	Girls	70	69	70
	Total	112	110	111
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (97)	97 (88)	98 (94)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	88 (83)	90 (84)	81 (79)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	43	43
	Girls	70	69	69
	Total	113	112	112
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	99 (100)	99 (99)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	87 (77)	96 (94)	79 (75)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	29	68	97

GCSE results		5 or more A* - C	5 or more A*-G	1 or more A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	28	29	29
	Girls	65	66	67
	Total	93	95	96
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	96 (98)	98 (99)	99 (99)
	National	46.3 (46.1)	90.7 (87.3)	95.7 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	55.2 (53.3)
	National	37.8 (36.9)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	26	45	71

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	17.2	18.7	18.1 (15.8)	7.0	5.8	6.1 (3.3)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National		n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	8
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	750
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42.2
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.3:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	252

Deployment of teachers:

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.6
---	------

Average teaching group size:

Key Stage 3	29.3
Key Stage 4	24.4

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	1,916,924
Total expenditure	1,915,047
Expenditure per student	2,557
Balance brought forward from previous year	153,811
Balance carried forward to next year	155,688

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	774
Number of questionnaires returned	354

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	45	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	51	1	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	3	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	63	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	34	58	2	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	49	10	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	52	16	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	42	47	3	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	50	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	50	12	2	7

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

ENGLISH

48. Standards in English are very high compared to the national averages at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, and above the national average at A-level. Over the last four years the Key Stage 3 test results have shown a rising trend, especially at the higher levels, with boys tending to outperform girls. In each of the last three years results have been very high compared to the national average, and in 1999 they were close to the national average for selective schools. Work seen in lessons confirmed that the attainment of students currently in Year 9 is at the same very high level.

49. GCSE results show improvement, but with some inconsistencies, notably in English literature. For the last three years the results have been high compared to the national average. In 1998 and 1999 performance in GCSE English language was superior, particularly at the higher grades, and the A*-C pass rate was above that achieved by selective schools nationally. The 1999 English literature results, whilst matching those of all selective schools, showed a decline in the percentage gaining grades A and B. The attainment of the present Year 11 students remains high compared to the national average. At A-level, English literature results in 1998 mirrored the national average and the 1999 results showed significant improvement: the candidates all passed with an outstanding 81% at the higher grades A and B. These results were significantly above those in selective schools nationally. The attainment of students following A-level courses in English literature, media studies, and theatre studies is above the national average.

50. The high standards of written work are not always matched by those in reading and in speaking and listening. Whilst students are competent and often fluent readers they are not encouraged to read aloud often enough. As a result too few interpret the tone and atmosphere of literature in their reading. The very high profile given to writing leads some students to underestimate the importance and value of the spoken word. Up to a third of students take little or no part in class discussion, preferring to try to make notes of good ideas offered by others. Those who are involved are capable of articulate extended speech, many are very aware of the need for Standard English and show the ability to use speech to clarify and develop ideas. A Year 10 class studying 'Macbeth' made exceptional progress in understanding and empathising with the hero's mood as the ambiguity of the witches' predictions became apparent to him. The ablest students make sophisticated use of logic and reference to support or dispute the ideas of other students and the teacher. The speaking and listening skills of almost all students are seen at their best in pair discussion. In class discussion, few students speak loudly enough for all the class to hear, preferring to speak to the teacher. Partly as a consequence, listening skills in class discussion are mediocre, leading to inattention and sometimes minor misbehaviour.

51. The overall quality of English teaching is good, given the examination results, the work seen in students' books and files, and lessons seen during the inspection. Just over half the teaching observed was good or better, and one in six lessons was very good. The best teaching is at A-level, including the media studies and theatre studies courses. All teachers have good knowledge of their subject and are very familiar with the examination requirements. The levels of language and the range of vocabulary which teachers use, and encourage in students, are strengths. Student opinion is valued and effectively used. Regular and relevant homework is set and well marked, with much good advice being given about standards and areas for improvement. However, there is some unsatisfactory teaching which impairs the progress of some students whilst other students compensate by their conscientious attitudes. Weaknesses have an impact on students' learning, especially in literature work and at Key Stage 4.

52. Teachers make good use of opportunities for pair and group work. For example, this allowed a Year 11 class to gain sophisticated insights into Pip's feelings for the convict Magwitch in 'Great

Expectations'. The later part of the same lesson exemplified a weakness in class discussion seen in many English lessons. Quiet students were largely ignored; those who spoke often addressed the teacher rather than the class; the teacher failed to vary the pace or depth of questioning, and tended to focus on individuals or small groups rather than the whole class. In such cases students inevitably become bored and frustrated, and the many good ideas generated in class discussion are shared by too few students. Some teachers talk over the inattention which results, and seem almost unaware of the undercurrent of off-task chatter. Too much teaching is lacklustre, with teachers talking for too long and with insufficient interest or enthusiasm in their voice. This was apparent when students were praised, the tone being courteous rather than appreciative. The study of literature became dry and distant when teachers gave too much attention to analysis, and spent too little time encouraging students to explore the emotional and moral issues which quality writing generates, and writers' vocabulary enhances. In contrast, the wide range of texts studied and regular reference to historical and social backgrounds gave students very good cultural awareness. All students are taught in mixed ability classes, but in most lessons teachers make little provision, either in content or approach, for the range of ability.

53. When given initiative, students use it well and show the ability to probe and query ideas. Written work is conscientious and shows much care and pride; its presentation is invariably very good. This is not the case with a minority of boys, some more able, in Years 9 and 10. Attention levels in lessons are good, but uninspiring teaching results in the level of student involvement and engagement deteriorating.

54. The department benefits from very good leadership and management. The head of department carries a heavy load, but he has a clear and correct view of how to develop the work of the English department, with future plans and priorities well detailed in the development plan. Very good administrative procedures are in place. There is intelligent analysis of examination results and trends. Teaching is regularly monitored, but it is important that more varied teaching styles and strategies are developed. The scheme of work ensures good coverage of the subject and its skills, but lacks sufficient common modules of work to ensure a more equal experience for students, and to allow accurate moderation to take place. Whilst drama and ICT-related work are planned for, the provision is haphazard and too reliant on teacher confidence and access to specialist accommodation.

55. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Standards have been sustained; those at A-level and Key Stage 3 improved. Some of the previous points have been addressed, but issues such as the quality of oral work, the provision of a suitable variety of class readers at Key Stage 3, and catering for the range of abilities in mixed ability classes have not. However, the department is in a good position to effect further improvement.

56. Students join the school with very good **literacy** skills and these are enhanced by strategies agreed by teachers. Staff training time has been used to plan common approaches, though these are inconsistently applied by some teachers. Oral work forms an important part of most lessons: in design technology and geography, students are told when listening to understand a topic is more important than taking notes about it. Students are confident speakers, and this is well used in science and geography, where groups prepare and present talks on their findings following research. In almost all lessons, the contributions which students make are valued and respected by teachers. Technical terms are reinforced by reference to classroom displays of key vocabulary and concepts, and the spelling of these is tested for example in history. In art, students are expected to write at length when evaluating their own work and that of artists. Most subjects make good use of the library, which is attractive, extremely well organised, and much respected by the many students who make use of it. The school is fortunate to have the services of an enthusiastic and hard-working librarian. Book stock is of good quality, but too small to provide the range and variety of reading experiences which students need, as reflected in the drop in borrowing rates from Year 9 upwards and the fact that girls borrow twice as many books as boys.

MATHEMATICS

57. Standards in mathematics are very high in Key Stages 3 and 4. End of Key Stage 3 results in 1999 were very high when compared to the national average of all schools. They were better than the school's results in previous years. When compared to the national average they are similar to the results obtained by the same students in English and science. There is no significant difference between the overall performance of boys and girls, although a higher proportion of boys attained the higher levels. GCSE results in 1999 were very high. They have improved significantly over the past two years and are much better than at the time of the last inspection. They have now reached the selective school average. There has also been a steady rise in the proportion of students obtaining A and A* grades, although this is still well below the national average for selective schools. The A-level mathematics results in 1999 were below the national average. Although an improvement on 1998, the results were below those at the time of the last inspection.

58. In lessons and in other work the overall attainment of students at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is well above the national expectations. For example, by the end of Key Stage 3 all students can solve problems using fractions, decimals and percentages, and they solve linear equations and construct and interpret graphs. They apply Pythagoras Theorem to triangles and co-ordinates and have good data handling skills. By the end of Key Stage 4 students reach high standards across the subject. They analyse data and calculate compound probabilities, and they use the sine and cosine rules appropriately. They conduct investigations, generalising their results and testing their hypotheses. In A-level lessons most students achieve standards expected, taking account of their prior attainment. They have good algebraic skills and reach levels in mechanics and statistics that are at least equal to those found in most other schools.

59. The quality of mathematics teaching is good and occasionally very good. Teachers understand their subject well and have effective class management skills. Through careful preparation and clear objectives they help students to focus quickly on their work and make good use of their time. Most lessons proceed at a good pace, although occasionally teachers spend too long whole-class teaching and students have insufficient time for independent learning. In most lessons teachers use questioning well and this helps students to clarify their understanding. Teachers use resources well in some lessons, such as in a Year 7 lesson when students used a computer program to generate polygons. This helped them to understand the concept of angle and find the angles of a regular polygon. But in another Year 7 lesson the level of work was too low and insufficient new learning took place. Good setting arrangements in other years help teachers to challenge all students and this supports their learning. Teachers use assessment effectively to monitor progress and plan subsequent lessons. Homework is set regularly to extend the work undertaken in class. It is well marked, errors are identified, and students are able to correct their mistakes.

60. Since the last inspection the teaching of mathematics has improved with a much higher proportion of lessons judged to be good or very good. Setting arrangements have enabled teachers to cope more effectively with the range of students' abilities. All students are now able to participate in oral questioning and this assists their understanding and progress.

61. The department is well led and this is contributing to improvements. Relationships are good and all staff are committed to raising standards. Teaching is well monitored and supported. There is a positive ethos for learning in lessons. The curriculum is broad and balanced across all areas of the National Curriculum. There are sufficient good quality textbooks and resources, and access to computers is better than at the time of the last inspection.

62. Students enter the school with well above average **numeracy** skills. They continue to improve their skills not only in mathematics lessons but also by using mathematics in some other subjects. For example in science they use line graphs to represent rate of reaction and loss of temperature; they substitute and evaluate many formulae including Ohm's Law and those involving pressure, energy and power. In geography, measurement and calculations are used extensively; fieldwork data are analysed

numerically and represented by graphs of different types. In design-technology students use basic number skills including ratio and proportion, they measure weights and distances, and present and interpret data using graphs and tables. By the end of Key Stage 4 all students have well-developed numeracy skills which they use confidently.

SCIENCE

63. Standards in science are very high in Key Stages 3 and 4. The 1999 end of Key Stage 3 test results were very high compared with all schools although performance at Level 6 was less strong. Boys slightly outperform girls. Standards over the last few years have been maintained and show an upward trend similar to that seen nationally. The school science results were similar to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English. Performance at GCSE is very high compared with all schools. High results have been maintained over the last few years and the percentage of A* and A grades has increased. Boys slightly outperform girls, which is against the national trend. In A-level physics, chemistry and biology, the pass rates are above the national average. Although the percentage of A-B grades in each subject is below the national average, there is a trend of improvement.

64. The work seen during the inspection was consistent with performance in national tests and examinations. Students' experimental and investigative skills are very good. Their ability to analyse and evaluate results is strong. Literacy and numeracy skills are strong and are well-developed in science, though there are few opportunities for extended writing. Students are competent in using information communication technology to collect data, research and analyse scientific information. A-level students confidently demonstrate higher level experimental and investigational skills. They have a secure grasp of relevant scientific knowledge, but a relatively low level of intellectual curiosity. The narrow range of scientific reading limits the development of these skills.

65. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Learning is very good when teaching engages students, makes them think for themselves and involves students in active participation. A strength of the teaching is the good subject knowledge and understanding shown in teachers' clear explanations and in their questioning of students. There are good relationships between students and teachers. Teachers' competence in teaching basic skills is good and lesson objectives are made clear to the students. Teachers manage students well and insist on good behaviour. The homework given provides effective reinforcement of work done in lessons but sometimes it is insufficiently demanding. At best, teachers use teaching strategies that involve students participating fully in the lesson so that they make good progress in their learning. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson on astronomy, students made presentations based on posters they had produced after research on the solar system. A card pairing activity, in which groups of students linked cards of planet features with the correct planets followed this. Students then worked in pairs on a problem solving exercise, where they had to work out which items of equipment they would need to get back to their base after their vehicle had crashed on Mars. Finally students watched a video showing real photographs of the surface of Mars. This was a carefully structured lesson with a variety of activities enjoyed by the students. They made very good progress due to imaginative teaching, which engendered a very good response. In a very good lesson in Year 12, students were challenged to construct three-dimensional models of the structure of DNA within a given time. Students worked extremely purposefully to get the task completed on time. They enjoyed this creative activity which consolidated their learning very well.

66. In some lessons however, teachers do not select the resources and activities to best match students' needs. Too often, teaching methods tend to be teacher dependent and so do not promote independent learning skills. A few lessons lack a crisp focused pace and the low teacher expectations of high attainers means that students are not challenged sufficiently in their thinking. Marking is thorough but students are not always told how to improve their written work. Students are positive about their

science education. They co-operate and collaborate well in practical work, sustain concentration well and work at a productive pace. However, students do not readily volunteer answers to questions posed by the teacher or indeed ask many questions themselves. Students generally make good progress but the high attaining students make less progress than expected because they tend to be passive and lack intellectual curiosity. Teaching needs to challenge students' thinking with more problem solving activities, so students develop independent learning skills and extend their learning in new contexts.

67. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a focus on monitoring and evaluating the work of the department in order to raise standards further. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning and to improve student progress is satisfactory but needs to be developed. Accommodation is good and the resources are efficiently organised by the team of technicians. The quality of science resources in the school library is good but the quantity of books is low.

68. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have been maintained with improvements in some areas. Teaching and learning have improved and are now good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. A new suite of science laboratories has been built, and risk assessments are now integrated into the scheme of work, although job descriptions are still lacking. The department has the capacity to improve further because of good, thoughtful leadership and a positive team spirit committed to raising achievement.

ART

69. Standards in art are high. In the most recent GCSE examinations the results were well above the national average. In particular the proportion of A* and A grades was high when compared with the results of other selective schools. The A-level results have fluctuated slightly year on year, in the most recent examinations they were above average. The trend in examination results has remained fairly static over the past 3 years and high standards have been maintained.

70. Based on the work seen and from discussions with students, standards overall are well above expectations. Students achieve well and make good progress in Key Stage 3 lessons. As part of their homework programme, students use books and computers to gather information about the work of artists and designers. They express themselves fluently in speech and writing and these skills, alongside a range of practical skills, support on-going evaluations of their work and progress. Their work demonstrates an increasing awareness of the images from different cultural traditions and improving standards of modelling, drawing and painting. Examples from Year 8 and 9 include the designs for a plate based on mythical creatures, modelled structures based on the work of Gaudi and ceremonial masks based on African carvings. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are very high and progress is very good. Students are confident and able to work in a range of materials, for example, with paper and found materials for large-scale collages and mosaics, with wire to make a collection of headdresses and threads to create samples of woven textiles. High standards of research, independent preparatory work and imaginative presentation all make a significant contribution to high examination results.

71. The standard of work at A-level is very high and students make very good progress. Students work independently and creatively and apply intellectual rigor to practical and written tasks. The quality of printed textiles is a strength and demonstrates a deepening understanding of work by contemporary artists and designers. Students are not afraid to experiment and often achieve some very imaginative results by adapting different working methods to suit their purposes. For example, they used screen-printing techniques or manipulated images on a computer and printed directly onto fabric. However, work in sketchbooks does not reflect the high standards seen in other aspects of students' work.

72. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Most of the teaching was good or very good and some was outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject expertise and an enthusiasm for the

subject. This inspires, motivates and builds positive relationships with students. A major strength of the teaching lies in the development of students independent learning skills. Planned experiences progressively build a repertoire of skills, knowledge and understanding. Skilful and challenging questioning causes students to reflect, appraise and explain their decisions. This all contributes to the very high standards. Key Stage 3 teaching was exceptional where organisation and planning were sharply focused on short term learning objectives. A range of teaching and learning styles were employed in order to achieve them. Teaching was less effective where the lesson plan was too general, identifying the task rather than the learning, and where the time was not used to the full. Overall students have very good attitudes to learning. They are hard-working, enjoy the lessons and are very keen to do well.

73. Teachers have a shared commitment to raise achievement and standards at A-level have improved since the last inspection. Policy documents, curriculum planning and assessment materials have also been improved. The next stage is to bring them into line with curriculum levels and to take steps to moderate judgements on standards. The budget is currently insufficient to pay for sketchbooks or introduce computers into the department. Access to software, for creating computer-generated imagery, is therefore very limited. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74. The 1999 GCSE examination results were well above average in food technology, graphics and resistant materials. At A- level the 1999 results were good although the small number of entries make comparisons difficult.

75. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation and match recent teacher assessments. Girls perform better than boys at the higher levels. In design folders the standard of students' graphical skills, research and analysis work ranges from very good to sometimes weaker. The best folders show a variety of presentational techniques using colour, shading techniques, commercial material and use of ICT to support presentation. Weaker folders show a lack of initial ideas, shallow research and brief evaluation. Practical skills are usually well developed.

76. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average overall. Achievement is good and often very good. Predicted grades are indicative of these findings. Students express ideas using a range of skills including graphical, model making and practical activities. Design folders are of a good and often very good standard showing depth of research, sound analysis and thoughtful evaluation. The majority of work involves appropriate use of colour, freehand and formal drawings, use of ICT to support presentation and photographs as part of the design process. Practical work shows a variety of approach to problem solving and students use a range of materials and equipment safely and confidently.

77. Standards at A-level are up to course expectations with examples of good work in design folders and in practical solutions. The Year 12 projects show good design skills and a variety of drawing techniques to illustrate ideas. Investigation of structures as part of the bridge project was particularly well done. Year 13 work is of a good standard with design skills well developed. For example the personal alarm project is of a high standard with in-depth research and analysis undertaken. Practical outcomes are usually good, using a range of materials in addressing solutions.

78. The quality of teaching overall is good. The best teaching has good pace, clear objectives and questioning to reinforce learning and understanding. This was evident in a graphics design and make task where students were involved in a timed project, in a resistant materials lesson where students were investigating a moving creature mobile and in a food technology lesson where students were making a modified product for specific dietary needs. A very positive response by students to all lessons contribute to the quality of learning. This was seen to good effect in a practical lesson where students

were involved in their final projects using a range of materials and processes. Students always settle quickly to their work and the majority can discuss their work with confidence. When required they work in groups co-operatively and share workplaces and equipment willingly. On occasions where teaching and learning are not of such high quality, the lessons lack rigour, or students are insufficiently active, or are off task for short periods. In some lessons the theory in-puts are rather long.

79. Teachers mark work consistently and give good feedback to students. However, Key Stage 3 assessment is linked to subject descriptors and not National Curriculum levels and there is no map of progress linked to levels at present. Teachers link GCSE and A-level assessment to examination criteria and provide supportive comments made as to how the work can be improved. Although the curriculum complies with statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 there are some shortcomings in the programme. Electronics, control, the use of plastics and metals need to be introduced or increased.

80. Accommodation for design technology is mainly good and has improved since the last inspection. Full advantage is taken by students to use the facilities at lunch times and after school. The subject is given valuable support by a technician who works in all areas. Resources are adequate overall although there is a shortage of basic materials. The lack of a complete set of textbooks for use at Key Stage 4 and sixth form is a limitation.

81. Since the last inspection the health and safety issue in food technology has been resolved, marking procedures are now consistent across the department, there is a better balance between subject areas, a computer area provided in the department, and improved GCSE and A- level opportunities, including an increase in the number of students taking A- level.

GEOGRAPHY

82. Standards at Key Stage 3 have improved over the last three years. The results of the 1999 teacher assessments were well above the national average with a significant proportion achieving high levels. Students make very good progress and their achievement in relation to prior learning is excellent. The standards of work in lessons is well above the expected level. High-attaining students have the opportunity to achieve to their full their potential. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the places, themes and processes studied and their work is accurate and well presented. Students have very good attitudes to learning geography, they are almost always interested and frequently enthusiastic.

83. GCSE results have improved significantly and in 1999 were well above the national averages both for all and selective schools. Four out of five students achieved an A* and A grade, an excellent achievement which was well above the school mean. Attainment by girls is higher than that of boys but the difference is not as great as that reported nationally. The attainment of students currently in Year 11 is outstanding and their achievement in relation to prior learning is exceptional.

84. Results in the A-level examinations in 1999 were excellent, with a high proportion of students achieving grades A and B. These results exceeded the school mean and were well above the average reported nationally. Students make exceptional progress in the sixth form. The standard of work is above the expected level with Year 13 students having attained very good results in the modules tested. Written work is of a very high standard, essays are most often structured well, precise and lucid, and conclusions are substantiated by well-chosen evidence and examples. Standards have improved and show an upward trend.

85. Overall the quality of teaching and learning was excellent. There were examples of inspirational teaching as when a group in Year 9 was introduced to the topic of 'Natural Hazards'. The tempo at which the lesson was conducted was brisk, the challenging demands of the teacher, the resources

selected and the appropriate tasks combined in an experience which resulted in excellent learning. The teaching is well planned, and progression and continuity are notable strengths. Year 7 students learnt skills from a decision making exercise on the siting of an Anglo-Saxon town. These skills were used effectively by Year 11 students making decisions about possible land-use in Norwich city-centre. Through the teaching students develop the skills necessary for independent learning and this enables them to take an increasing responsibility for their studies as they move through the school. Teachers have high expectations of the students who make frequent and accurate use of geographical terms in responding to very demanding questioning. The imaginative range of tasks matches the students' needs well. Group work is used effectively and selectively. In the lesson on land-use, students were able to collaborate in making decisions and presenting their findings to the rest of the class who were able to pose focused geographical questions. A relative weakness in the teaching at Key Stage 3 resulted from insufficiently developed class management skills. Teachers make good use of homework and work is marked promptly and carefully. The very good assessment information held by teachers is used to predict and monitor progress. Teachers provide clear guidance, through notes written into the work files and through short-term targets, which fosters further improvement.

86. The range of activity in lessons makes a very good contribution to the development of students' literacy skills. Numerical skills are also given appropriate importance. Skills in measurement, the use of co-ordinates and the appreciation of scale, all very important in the study of places, themes and processes, are well developed. Students in Year 7 were required to choose adjectives which could be used to describe the landscape they had seen on their field visit to Wye Down, these they gave a value and an index of landscape quality was determined. A similar importance of both qualitative and quantitative data was evident when sixth form students described the coast of Yorkshire. Students have well developed ICT skills. Information handling and word-processing are frequently used but the potential for developing aspects of modelling and control are constrained by the difficulties of access to hardware.

87. The management of the subject, although unusual with joint heads of department, is very productive. All aspects of organisation and administration are effective and the management of the curriculum is a particular strength and reflects the systematic evaluation of the learning. The schemes of work are of a very high quality with appropriate importance attached to geographical enquiry. The excellent arrangements made for fieldwork are a joy for both teachers and students. The time allocated to the subject in Year 9 is however not adequate.

88. Since the last inspection further improvements have been achieved in standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The staffing of the department is a considerable strength. The department has both the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.

HISTORY

89. Standards are high across the key stages when compared with all schools and reflect the selective intake of the school. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above the national expectation, with girls performing slightly better than boys. Students in Year 9 were able to select, organise and use a range of sources to produce structured written work, for example when writing an obituary on Arkwright. They were also beginning to analyse the reasons for and the results of historical changes such as the industrial revolution. One Year 8 student was able to give an excellent explanation of why Roman Catholics objected to going to church during Elizabeth's reign. However, when studying Edmund Campion, students did not fully explain their reasoning and were reluctant to participate in discussion.

90. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average for all schools. Results have shown an upward trend in the last three years, with good achievement at the higher grades, in line with other selective schools.

91. Students in Key Stage 4 produced detailed notes and extended writing was also well developed. When evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a film on evacuees, Year 11 students asked good historical questions and were able to cross-reference with sources studied in previous lessons. However, not all students had handed in their GCSE coursework assignments by the due date and some Year 11 folders were disorganised with work missing.

92. A-level results have been good, although the entry has been small. In lessons, students studying the philosophy of history were able to discuss the work of Herodotus in its historical context. They drew upon their own knowledge and the source's provenance to evaluate its reliability and contribution to historiography.

93. The quality of teaching has to be seen in the context of the temporary staffing arrangements in place at the time of the inspection. The quality of teaching observed ranged from good to unsatisfactory. Too high a proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, although teaching was at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons across the school. This compares unfavourably with the last inspection when almost three-quarters of all teaching was reported as good or very good.

94. Strengths in the teaching observed included good use of students' prior knowledge during class discussions on medieval castles, 16th Century missionary priests and evacuees. Students were given positive feedback and encouraged to fully develop their answers. There were also examples of thorough marking of written work with advice on how students could further improve their answers. Characteristic features of A-level lessons were the teacher's good subject knowledge and supportive relationships. Good practice also included the analysis of mock GCSE performance to identify students' strengths and weaknesses to inform future teaching, and the evaluation of role-play resources to raise expectations in subsequent lessons. There is a need for the department to look at ways of sharing the good practice that exists.

95. Weaknesses in the teaching observed during the inspection included low expectations and a lack of pace. Teachers often attempted to teach over students chatting rather than insist on silence. Year 8 students spent the lesson making simple observations about a 16th century painting and were discouraged from using their knowledge of the historical context to evaluate the source. Low expectations were also evident in Key Stage 4. During an independent learning lesson on the *Night of the Long Knives* a significant minority of students wasted time and produced work of poor quality. There was also unsatisfactory communication and co-ordination between the teachers of shared classes, resulting in confusion at the start of a lesson and a lack of continuity in learning. In both key stages there were examples of unmarked written work and comments such as "weak" with no guidance on how to improve.

96. In addition to staffing issues, the other factors that have a bearing on achievement include the limited resources. The narrow range of resources meant that in both key stages and at A-level photocopied sheets were used to supplement a limited and ageing stock of textbooks. The absence of an OHP screen and the use of a small video monitor reduced the effectiveness of these resources. Since the last inspection there has been a decline in the use of educational visits to enhance the teaching of history. Little progress has been made in the use of ICT. However, rooms do now have blackout and there is a policy for the less-able and the gifted.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

97. The 1999 GCSE results were well above the national average for all schools. Current attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national expectation and matches recent teacher assessments. Students achieve high levels and girls perform better than boys, particularly at the higher levels. In

work observed students developed an understanding of the purposes and uses of computers in specific ICT lessons. They study word-processing, spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing. Students are confident users of hardware and can access appropriate software. They understand terminology such as record, field, view, query and sort when working on databases. Students are able to apply this knowledge to wider uses such as seen in the exercise on holidays in Year 8 and the “quality of life” project in Year 9.

98. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 4 often exceed expectations. In a Year 10 lesson based on a hypothetical business exercise, students could search, order, create a formula and calculate discount. In a Year 11 lesson about the Internet students were able to design a home page using Publisher and access Clip-art, and consider why a company may want to use the Internet as a means of communication. Students could create a Web site from given data.

99. Across the curriculum, there is good use of ICT. In Art students scan and print images on to fabric, and in English they use desktop publishing and word-processing. In Science students use Excel to plot graphs and investigate circular motion on the website. In modern foreign languages display work shows use of word-processing and graphics, in the sixth form students use the Internet to access material for course work, and in design technology students use presentation and illustration in design folders. In Geography good use is seen of word-processing and information handling. Geometry and graph work on computers enhances mathematics although use of graphic calculators is underdeveloped. There is no formal taught course in the sixth form but a module of ICT is provided to increase learning opportunities and encourage the use of computer skills in subjects. Most departments would benefit from more hardware to support teaching and some have difficulty in accessing the main ICT rooms. The school has recognised the need for in-service training and regular after-school sessions are being provided for a group of staff.

100. The quality of teaching is good overall and some is very good. The better teaching has pace, clear objectives and good questioning to reinforce learning and understanding. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where students were able to refine data prior to application, in a Year 8 lesson using a database in an exercise on ‘holidays’ and in a Year 11 lesson where students were creating a Web page in a business users exercise. Learning is also increased when productive paired work is used and where students are encouraged to be ‘active’ learners. Where the teaching was satisfactory students had insufficient involvement and were unsure of how to proceed given limited understanding of previous work. However, students’ attitudes to learning are always very good and this contributed to the quality of learning. They respond to paired or group work readily and discuss their work constructively. Most students are very confident in using hardware and accessing appropriate software.

101. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum meets statutory requirements with all classes receiving one hour per week as a discrete lesson. At Key Stage 4 there is an option GCSE course in Information Systems with business studies links. The ICT entitlement for all students at Key Stage 4 is unclear as the cross-curricular provision is not mapped or monitored at present. This needs attention.

102. Since the last inspection resources have been gradually improving. Accommodation is compact in the two main teaching rooms, and there is an additional facility within the Design Technology area. There are also computers in the library and these are well used before school, at lunch times and after school. The department and the students benefit from invaluable technical support. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made by installing better hardware. The student to computer ratio is improved at 9:1 and there is better access to computers, but there remains room for improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

103. Standards in modern languages at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the national average. The 1999 GCSE results were well above the national average overall, though the proportion of grade A* - A was lower than the national average in German and significantly lower in French. Students' average points score in languages was in line with the school average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, although girls perform significantly better than boys at the higher levels. Results in the sixth form GCSE Italian course are very good. At A-level, the results are above the national average in both French and German.

104. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' achievement is in line with the national expectation. Students' listening skills are well developed, but their speaking skills are less impressive: some of their pronunciation is very anglicized, notably in French, and there is insufficient evidence of their speaking independently in sequences of ideas. They do not read enough for personal information and pleasure and, although examples of extended writing were seen which gave a good indication of their potential, this skill is not developed in a regular or systematic way. Overall, there is some under-achievement in relation to students' ability at Key Stage 3.

105. At Key Stage 4, students generally achieve above-average standards, though, as GCSE results indicate, there is insufficient achievement at the higher levels. Their listening and writing skills improve significantly at Key Stage 4: they listen to more challenging extracts of spoken French and German and their writing is much more substantial and enterprising, including, for example, reports on work experience, profiles of famous people and accounts of holidays. There is progress with speaking helped by, for example, the use of personal tape recordings. The ability to speak at length on topics of personal interest is still somewhat under-developed, however.

106. At A-level students' achievement is in line with course expectations in French and above average in German. In GCSE Italian, achievement is good. The most successful students have well-developed skills and use their languages confidently, working in advanced topic areas such as regional studies and social trends in France and Germany. A minority are less confident because of a weaker grounding in their languages before entering the sixth form.

107. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is most consistent at Key Stage 4 and in sixth form German. At Key Stage 3, more teaching is satisfactory than good. Teaching is most successful when it engages students in active tasks which allow them some independence. There is much good teaching of the "building blocks" of communication through good presentation of material followed by intensive practice. There are, however, less opportunities given to students to apply their skills creatively or in new contexts. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is appropriately focused on examination work and is sensitive to students' needs. Teaching in the sixth form effectively combines support, encouragement and challenge. The best learning is promoted in lessons where a lively, interactive approach is used, largely through the target language. Some teaching, particularly at Key Stage 3, involves excessive and sometimes uncritical reliance on coursebooks. This results in work which is unchallenging for higher-attaining students and can involve all in trivial tasks such as drawing, labelling and colouring vocabulary items. Relationships with students are generally good. Time in lessons is efficiently used. There are sound procedures for assessing and recording students' progress and day-to-day marking is good, often featuring helpful indications as to how students can improve their work. Homework is regularly set and is often designed to extend students' knowledge and skills through the use of information technology.

108. Students' very good attitudes contribute to their learning. They answer willingly, work well in pairs or groups and can work on reading and writing tasks with good concentration and at a good pace. Given their aptitudes and motivation, their progress is somewhat sluggish at Key Stage 3. Progress

improves at Key Stage 4 and is good in the sixth form in relation to students' prior attainment. Progress throughout is clearly linked to the demands made by teachers.

109. The department is well managed. The team of teachers is skilled and committed and a good, collaborative culture has been established. Monitoring of teaching is in place and a process of review and change is under way. Key areas which must be addressed include revision of schemes of work to reflect more fully the National Curriculum; a development plan priority to raise standards at Key Stage 3 and higher GCSE grades; improved library and reading resources and better provision of information technology equipment within the department.

110. Since the last inspection, overall standards have been maintained and have improved in French at A-level. Students are given increased autonomy at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and procedures for assessing attainment and progress have been improved. The languages curriculum for all has been extended to include both French and German. The department has made progress and has the capacity for further improvement.

MUSIC

111. GCSE results are well above the national average. Three candidates took A-level in 1998 and all achieved the higher grades. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the national expectations. Students have a very good working knowledge of the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum. They are familiar with treble and bass clefs, with notation and rhythm, and display a good standard of musical literacy. Students in Year 9 demonstrated their skill in using electronic keyboards for composing and performing in performances of entertaining blues songs they had composed about school. These indicated a very good understanding of the required chord progressions, they had added accompanying riffs, and sang their original lyrics in an authentic manner. GCSE students in Year 11 are attaining above average standards in all aspects of the course. Most perform stylishly on their chosen instruments. Composing is of a good standard, with one or two outstanding examples written with genuine flair. Students have a good knowledge of the structures required in composing. They exploit the tonal characteristics of the instruments they use, for example in woodwind duets. They maintain a consistent style throughout a piece. There are good examples of technicalities such as modulation, chromatic writing, suspensions and counterpoint. A few students use a computer skilfully for composing. A small number of students are being prepared for A-level music after school time but it was not possible to inspect this provision. The students' attainment and progress are in line with the school's expectations of them.

112. Students' achieve well in music. In Year 7, they sing proficiently and can write down simple rhythms from dictation. They are able to compose simple and effective descriptive pieces, modelled, for example, on Saint Saens' 'Carnival of the Animals'. By Year 8, they have a good knowledge of a wide range of music from different eras and countries, including gamelan music from Indonesia. They sustain their creativity well and develop a good grasp of musical knowledge and technicalities through applying them in practical assignments. Composing develops well and higher attaining students show a good knowledge of basic keyboard harmony, for example, in writing variations on a theme of Purcell, after studying Britten's work based on the same theme. In Key Stage 4, students are continuing what is for most a serious hobby. They are keen to achieve high standards.

113. The quality of teaching is very good in both key stages. The teacher is an accomplished practical musician, who draws on her wide knowledge to plan interesting lessons. Students are challenged at an appropriate level. The more proficient students are encouraged to use their own instruments and to extend tasks done in class. Lessons are carefully planned to develop an appropriate range of skills and knowledge in a sequential and cumulative way. Less proficient students and the few with special educational needs receive good support and encouragement. Lessons are planned to make

very good use of the time available, and appropriate resources are carefully chosen. Students are constructively involved in the evaluation of their own compositions.

114. The scheme of work is very good and gives students a very wide range of musical experiences. Music provides very good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the work done in lessons. This is supplemented by many opportunities for performing which are arranged in the course of the year. The range of extra-curricular provision is particularly good for a department which has only one full-time teacher. Major events, such as stage musicals, are organised in conjunction with the school's very successful expressive arts department. The teacher assesses the work of individual students constructively in class, but the subject lacks formal assessment procedures. There is no use of computers in Key Stage 3, except by students who independently word-process material they have researched in projects. The management of the department is satisfactory on a day-to-day basis, but routine administration is not always carried out punctually. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 3. The specialist accommodation is new and this is a great improvement. Provision is now very good in both key stages.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Overall standards are good. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are generally in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are more variable with evidence of some students being well above the expectations for their age. GCSE results have varied from year to year but are generally satisfactory. In 1999 the first A-level group completed their course and achieved good results. A large number of students compete for school teams and a number have played for regional teams. The school has had a number of recent successes in netball, basketball, soccer and tennis, and the thriving inter-form competition across a variety of sports contributes to overall standards.

116. By the end of Key Stage 3 students know how to warm up and the reasons for so doing. They stretch out and cool down to good effect. They demonstrated good passing skills in soccer and netball with excellent understanding of attacking and defending in basketball, netball and soccer. In the dance lessons students developed a range of movements, showing collaborative team work and good evaluation of their performance. In gymnastics students worked on a variety of balances developing sequences to include a variety of linking movements.

117. By the end of Key Stage 4 students participate in an increasing range of activities. Some of these, particularly for basketball, badminton and trampoline, are off-site at one of several venues used by the school to complement their limited indoor accommodation. During badminton students showed a range of stroke play, an understanding of scoring and the ability to play both singles and doubles. Trampolining in Year 10 enabled higher attainers to accomplish more-advanced routines. Year 11 students used a fitness circuit which had been designed by one student, with the help of the teacher.

118. In sixth form lessons further opportunities for planning work were seen both in dance and volleyball lessons. The students participate at a more recreational level but good standards of performance were maintained, for example in skills sessions for serving in volleyball together with passing and shooting skills in soccer. The A-level programme gave students further opportunities for planning and evaluating their own work. Students compared gymnastics of today with gymnastics at the beginning of the 20th century. Examination written work is of a good standard showing a variety of written formats, excellent presentation and good use of technical terms. More use should be made of ICT to complement the high quality of written work.

119. The students make sound progress throughout their time in school. During Key Stage 4 students consolidate previous skills, develop new techniques and participate in a range of different activities. Students show considerable ability at relating their acquired skills to competition and in

applying the principles of attack and defence to the game, demonstrated in a soccer lesson with Years 12 and 13. They develop sportsmanship and a sound knowledge of the rules and they learn to judge and evaluate their performances.

120. The quality of teaching is good with a high proportion of very good lessons seen, indicating an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching throughout is enhanced by high teacher expectations of behaviour and the high levels of attainment. Teachers have good class management skills, create a positive working atmosphere, motivate students and ensure that good progress is maintained throughout each lesson. A range of strategies enable lessons to proceed with good pace, to be sufficiently resourced, involve all the students and make good use of the available time. Teachers allowed sufficient time in Year 7 soccer for students to develop and consolidate their work, and also in Year 8 dance and gymnastics provided time for students to evaluate their work and improve their performances. Teachers show good subject knowledge, are well prepared and show a commitment to continual improvement. Curriculum planning has improved since the last inspection with clear policies, helpful schemes of work and an informative handbook. Assessment procedures are well developed and provide students with helpful feedback and target-setting. Assessment is well used to modify long-term planning and reports to parents are informative.

121. Since the last inspection the playing fields are much improved, the introduction of examination courses has enhanced the learning opportunities, and assessment is more focused and playing a vital part in raising standards and strategic planning. The department ensures equality of opportunity but the limited indoor accommodation restricts the programme and hinders further improvement. The boys changing rooms are small for large groups and difficult to keep to an acceptable standard of cleanliness. The good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and includes fixtures, practices, clubs, one off sessions and grade booster sessions. The school encourages participation in clubs and activities provided by other agencies. ICT is not used to any degree as at the time of inspection but this is set to improve by provision of two networked machines with internet access in the near future. The department is led with vision and commitment, and there is clear evidence of a determination to further raise standards and provide more opportunities for all the students.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below those expected in the Locally Agreed Syllabus, although a few students achieve good and very good standards in individual written assignments. The work of individual students presented for analysis was inconsistent in volume and quality. Students in the current Year 9 have a good knowledge of the custom and symbolism of Bar-Mitzvah and Bat-Mitzvah and have written a brief history of Judaism. However, students are not developing the skill of discussion, which is essential for understanding and comparing religious ideas. They have not acquired the range of knowledge expected.

123. Standards overall in Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory. In Year 10, students study religious education for two separate days in the year. With the help of visiting speakers, they study religious and social aspects of important human issues, such as bereavement. These days are carefully planned but do not amount to the provision envisaged by the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In Year 11, where students receive a satisfactory allocation of time for religious education, they do no written work. In the lesson inspected, most students took little part in discussion and therefore gained insufficient understanding of the vocabulary and ideas associated with Judo-Christian and Hindu ideas of God. In the sixth form, as in Year 10, students spend occasional days studying religious and moral topics, but provision is inadequate in comparison with statutory requirements. Students' achievement in relation to their abilities is unsatisfactory at all levels. Students fail to gain the insights into religious education which enable them to evaluate ideas, or relate religious principles to their own lives.

124. In Key Stage 3, students make a satisfactory attempt to respond to the demands of the subject. They are tolerant and passive when topics are unnecessarily literary and teaching methods inappropriate. Some students go to great lengths to research difficult topics and painstakingly illustrate and present their work. In Year 11, whilst some students are attentive and prepared to make positive contributions, the majority do not take part in discussions and their learning overall is unsatisfactory.

125. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching displays a very substantial knowledge of Christianity and other religions and ideas are expressed articulately. Relationships with classes are satisfactory generally, and good with younger classes. However, the work is poorly matched to the abilities of the students. Most tasks are too hard. The range of teaching methods is narrow. Students have too few opportunities to work either independently or in pairs and groups. Oracy is insufficiently encouraged. The teacher, who controls the flow of information, dictates too slow a pace of learning and sometimes suppresses valid queries from students. There is little marking, and assessment procedures are inadequate, so that students' understanding and learning are not checked. Resources, such as videos, are inadequately used as teaching aids.

126. The management of religious education is poor. The scheme of work reflects the content of the Locally Agreed Syllabus but does not cater appropriately for the levels of ability within the school. Planning concentrates on the content of topics, and not on what skills, knowledge and understanding students should be gaining. The teacher of religious education works in isolation and has not responded to opportunities for support and development available through the school's line-management system. There has been no attendance on subject-specific in-service training for eight years, and the department's handbook has not been revised in the last six years. Although students in Key Stage 3 now receive an increased allocation of time for religious education, standards have deteriorated since the last inspection. The range of resources has not been extended as suggested at the last inspection.

OTHER SUBJECTS

127. **Business Studies** is a popular and successful subject. Results at both GCSE and A-level have been good with large proportions of students achieving high grades. The teaching seen was consistently good with very good features. Expertise in the subject and the examination requirements are strong contributors to the rigour and success in both the A-level and the GNVQ Advanced level courses. The work is well planned and the teaching methods successfully use and develop the students' good independent learning skills. This was evident as the GNVQ students researched and prepared presentations following a valuable visit to a paper mill. The students' use of their ICT skills is another very good feature.

128. In the 1999 A-level **Sociology** all students passed although performance was generally lower than other subjects. Students' current attainment is at the level expected at this stage. The teaching in a lesson seen was good. Students' recall of previous work was sound and they were able to use data in answering questions. Considerable importance was placed upon the accurate use of sociological terms. Students ask questions to clarify understanding and have good notes. Marking is good and essays are annotated with helpful comments. The subject is managed effectively.