

INSPECTION REPORT

Alleyne's High School
Stone

LEA area : Staffordshire

Unique Reference Number : 124417

Headteacher : Mrs C A Spears

Reporting inspector : Mrs B O'Brien
13019

Dates of inspection : 18 - 22 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708252

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Secondary
Type of control :	County
Age range of students:	13 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Oulton Road Stone Staffs ST15 8DT
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr P Dove
Date of previous inspection:	15 February 1995

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		Teaching
		Leadership and Management
Mrs S Daintrey, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and students' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Mr D Young	Religious education	The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr B Cue	Post 16	The curriculum and assessment
	Business studies	
Mr E Wakeling	Mathematics	Efficiency
Mr R Hancock	Special education needs	
	Equal opportunities	
	English	
Ms S Dakin	Design and technology	
Mr A Hodges	Science	
Mrs I Randall	History	
	Information technology	
Mr C Gill	Modern foreign languages	
Mr D Jones	Geography	
Mr M Wray	Art	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The overall quality of teaching is good in all year groups with 31% very good or excellent
- The headteacher and deputies provide strong leadership, well supported by the governing body
- The quality of teaching and provision for the sixth form are particularly good
- The school provides good value for money
- Arrangements for the personal and social development of students are very good
- There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour
- The climate for learning in the school is very good

Where the school has weaknesses

- Inadequate accommodation reduces the effectiveness of learning in some curriculum areas
- Students of below average ability are under-achieving in some subjects
- There is insufficient relevance and vocational dimension in the Key Stage 4 curriculum
- There are insufficient resources for learning in some subject areas

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified are to be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of students in the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1995. The response of the school to the key issues raised at the last inspection was effective. A thorough and comprehensive audit of the whole school has been carried out and issues identified have been acted upon. Classes in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4 have been reorganised to provide equality of access to all courses. Whilst good progress has been made in meeting the needs of students of less than average ability, there is still a need to provide a more comprehensive range of vocational experiences in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The governing body and senior staff now have better defined roles in the management of the school, including appropriate systems for review and development. Plans are in place for the revision of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, ready for implementation in September 2000. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the statutory requirements for the maintenance of attendance registers are met. New structures have been introduced to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students, with evidence of appropriate implementation in many tutor groups, but further development is required to ensure consistency across the school.

The school is well placed to successfully continue to implement its plans for improvement.

Standards in subjects

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3 tests	A	C	
GCSE examinations	C	E	
A/AS – levels	B		

The comparison with similar schools in the table above compares Alleyne's with schools which have a similar percentage of students entitled to free school meals. GCSE examination results are unfavourable when compared in this way. However, GCSE results are in line with expectations when compared with the attainment of students as measured by tests on entry to Year 9. It should be noted that the results for Key Stage 3 and for GCSE refer to different cohorts of students and are not necessarily directly comparable.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Year 9	Good	Art; English; drama; mathematics; science; geography; information technology; physical education	A small number of lessons overall in mathematics; design and technology; French
Years 10-11	Good	Art; English; drama; mathematics; science; geography; information technology; music; physical education	A small number of lessons overall in business education; history
Sixth form	Good	Art; English; mathematics; physics; geography; French; Spanish; music; business education; health and social care; sociology; psychology	
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97% of lessons observed, and in 31% of the lessons the teaching was very good or excellent. The very small number of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory was spread through Years 9 to 11.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good around the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It has a positive effect on attainment and progress.
Ethos*	Very good climate for learning. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations.
Leadership and management	Strong leadership by headteacher and deputies. Effective governing body. Good systems for monitoring and evaluation.
Curriculum	Equality of access for all students. Insufficient vocational courses at Key Stage 4. Good sixth form curriculum.
Students with special educational needs	Appropriate attainment and progress. Positive attitudes to work. Improvements in provision since last inspection.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good provision for social development. Good provision for moral and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Well qualified and experienced staff. Inadequacies in accommodation, and insufficient learning resources in a number of subjects.
Value for money	Good value for money.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their concerns are listened to• Students like the school• Students are enabled to achieve high standards• Values and attitudes have a positive effect• The help and guidance available to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient information about what students are learning• Insufficient information about students' progress

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views of the school expressed by parents. The school is welcoming and the staff have a high level of commitment to the welfare of the students. The school is aware, through its own surveys, that more needs to be done to improve home-school communications and to increase the involvement of parents in students' learning. A new pattern of reporting is being introduced which will give parents an opportunity to find out about their child's progress each term.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To build on the school's strengths and to address some important weaknesses the governors, headteacher and staff should give attention to the following issues:

1. Raise standards, particularly of lower attaining students, through:
 - developing strategies to improve the attainment of boys*;
 - introducing a more appropriate range of teaching methods to cater for the needs of below average ability groups;
 - making adjustments to the Key Stage 4 curriculum to improve relevance and the vocational dimension*. (Para. 8, 10, 24, 28, 36, 43, 45, 49, 52, 82, 103, 110, 152, 157, 165, 185, 207, 209)
2. Continue the planned programme of improvements to accommodation, particularly in areas where the condition of the accommodation is detrimental to the quality of teaching and learning*. (Para. 89, 91, 109, 117, 128, 140, 163, 217)
3. Increase the allocation of funding for learning resources to those areas which have insufficient resources to support the learning needs of all students. (Para. 92, 93, 117, 139, 163, 216, 239)

In addition to the key issues, action to address the following weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Ensure consistent implementation of the school assessment policy in all curriculum areas; (Para. 44, 45, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 116, 125, 129, 148, 160, 165, 180, 188, 207, 226, 229, 237)
- Attend to the continuing professional development needs of some middle managers to ensure their effectiveness in the monitoring and evaluation of provision in their areas of responsibility*; (Para. 82, 110, 120, 129, 149, 150, 161, 165, 170, 191, 199, 201, 208, 209, 229)
- Provide sufficient time for the full requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education to be met at all key stages; (Para. 32, 48, 85, 230, 232, 233, 236, 240)
- Ensure that all students receive appropriate experience of measurement and control in the information technology curriculum*. (Para. 28, 48, 49, 85, 165, 193, 201)

NB. *indicates priority areas which are already identified in the 1999/2000 school development plan.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Alleyne's High is a popular school in the market town of Stone just south of the potteries conurbation. It is one of only seven 13 to 19 schools in the county with an established reputation as a community school for the town and surrounding villages of Milwich, Yarfield, Swynnerton, Oulton, Barlaston and Eccleshall. Over the last four years the school's intake has grown steadily from 830 with 120 in the sixth form to over 930 with 215 sixth form students. There is a considerable gender imbalance with the number of boys in the school significantly higher than that of girls. The town's proximity to a number of independent schools in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford, and the independent girl's school in Stone, affects the school's intake, and inevitably affects attainment levels on entry.
2. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Overall, the prior attainment of students on entry is about average, but the school has students who cover the full ability range. The school has 47 students at various stages of assessment on the register for special educational needs with 21 students with statements of special educational needs.

3. The school's aims emphasise the intent to meet the individual needs and interests of its students through a full range of educational opportunities and appropriate challenges in each subject area, and to equip students for their lives. They stress the provision of a caring and committed community built upon co-operation and respect, and the aim to value the individual and encourage the contribution of their strengths to the success of the school. There is a stated aim to maintain the tradition of excellence in all aspects of education.
4. Current whole school priorities set out in the school development plan include:
- Raising the overall residual level for boys so that there is consistency of achievement between the sexes within the next three years;
 - Revising the curriculum provision at Key Stage 4;
 - Improving standards achieved at GCSE and A level;
 - Supporting the academic progress of students through the newly formed pastoral system;
 - Attaining Investors in People recognition.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	121	100	221

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	78	68	85
	Girls	90	78	76
	Total	168	146	161
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	76	66	73
	National	64	60	56
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	43	41	40
	National	34	36	27

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	81	78	89
	Girls	91	75	86
	Total	172	153	175
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	78	70	80
	National	62	64	62
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	40	40	38
	National	31	37	31

Attainment at Key Stage 4

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	121	108	229

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	65	113	120
	Girls	47	99	109
	Total	112	212	229
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	49.0	93.0	100
	National	44.6	89.8	95.2

Attainment in the Sixth Form

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1998	39	38	77

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	16.1	20.1	18.1	4.0	n/a	4.0
National			17.6			2.8

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

	Number	% Success Rate
School	5	20
National		

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	7.4
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.9
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age)

during the previous year :

	Number
Fixed period	21
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	31
Satisfactory or better	97
Less than satisfactory	3

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. Overall attainment across the school is above the national average with students making at least satisfactory progress as they move through the school. On entry to the school, students' attainment is about average as judged by the use of nationally recognised tests. In 1998 attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 for 14 year olds in **English** was above the national average, in **mathematics** it was above the national average and in **science** it was well above the national average. Overall, across all three subjects, student performance in the tests was above the national average.
6. In the same year overall GCSE results, as measured by the total average points score, were close to the national average, but were well below average when compared with similar schools. The standards achieved by boys was above the national average, whilst the standards achieved by girls was below the national average. The percentage of students achieving 5 or more grades A*-C was close to the national average, with the percentage of students achieving 1 or more grades A*-G above the national average. These results represent satisfactory progress overall, including good progress amongst the higher attaining students and those with special educational needs. The average total points score per student based on the last three years was close to the national average but has not risen as fast as the national trend.
7. The average points score for students entered for 2 or more GCE A levels in 1998 was above the national average, and on the basis of the previous three years was well above the national average. The progress of these students is good.
8. In **English** the majority of students make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 attainment is just above average for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good. For the past three years results in Key Stage 3 national tests have been above the national average, GCSE results have been broadly in line with the national average but GCSE English Literature results have been below the national average. Boys are achieving less well than girls and in this respect the school is reflecting the national picture. Attainment at A level is better than the national average.
9. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment in reading is satisfactory and often good. Many students read accurately and with good levels of understanding and some students, usually girls, read expressively. Written work shows that most students are able to write coherently to communicate feelings and ideas and their autobiographical writing is especially good. They are beginning to write in a variety of forms and for different purposes. Levels of accuracy are broadly satisfactory although errors in spelling and punctuation are common in the work of a minority of students, usually boys. Levels of speaking are good and students also listen well.
10. By the end of Key Stage 4 students' attainment in reading is at least satisfactory and is often good. Students are learning how to express opinions on the books they are studying supported by evidence from the text. There is also some good work undertaken in research and investigation. Written work shows that most students are writing in a wider variety of forms than at Key Stage 3, with improvements to accuracy, and the effective organisation of ideas. Some work shows a strong sense of individuality with impressive attention to detail. The students' own original poetry written at both key stages is a distinctive feature of the work of the English department. At both key stages high attaining students are achieving well but some below average ability students, often boys, are only reaching average or below average levels of attainment and need to achieve more.

11. On A level courses students read texts closely and intelligently, and respond to them critically. They compare and contrast texts effectively and write extended essays showing a good capacity for research and investigation. Students have a very good control over a wide range of language use.
12. In the school as a whole, literacy standards are satisfactory. There are a number of examples of good practice where students' literacy is being reinforced. When working with data in information technology lessons, they are helped to identify key words, such as *row* and *column*, and also have weekly spelling targets to meet. In French lessons there is emphasis on the use of correct grammatical terms. Key words are emphasised in science lessons. In art students are introduced to specialist terminology and increasing use is being made of the students' own personal written commentaries on different areas of study. The more able students make good use of appropriate technical terminology in design and technology and in the study of this subject the majority of students are able to make use of good research skills when working on surveys and questionnaires. In some lessons in geography and design and technology, students are helped to organise their writing through the use of structures such as writing frames. The school does not yet have a policy for language or for literacy to spearhead developments but has had the foresight to see the need for further initiatives in this area.
13. The speaking and listening skills of the students are a strength of the school. The majority of students are articulate and very ready to express their views clearly and confidently. They exchange opinions with one another easily and can maintain a well-argued viewpoint producing good evidence to support their opinions.
14. In **mathematics** students make good progress as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is just above the expectations for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good. Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE results are above the national average.
15. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above what is expected for this age group. Number skills are still fairly weak. Students do not have instant recall of their multiplication tables, nor do they have effective strategies to help them calculate. Their skills in other aspects of the subject are satisfactory for their age.
16. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above what is expected for this age group, although many students' basic number skills have not improved significantly. Algebraic skills are particularly good in higher ability sets, but rather mechanical in other ability groups. Shape, spatial development and data handling are generally of a satisfactory standard. There is insufficient use of information technology as a learning resource to improve levels of competence and understanding in these aspects of mathematics. Graphical skills are good in both drawing and interpreting diagrams. Skills in measurement are good both within the subject and in other areas of the curriculum. The extension programme by which the most able students in Year 10 are given the opportunity to take an early entry GCSE raises standards of achievement overall and provides a satisfactory preparation for A level.
17. Attainment at A level is close to national averages but examination results have been slightly below average over the last two years.
18. Numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum, and students in all year groups have the opportunity to apply numeracy skills in a number of subjects, and in many cases they demonstrate good levels of accuracy. For example, in science students are able to calculate and measure with accuracy, use tables and charts for the display of experimental data, plot graphs showing the relationship between variables, and use scales and measuring instruments effectively. They apply their skills with competence in the context of scientific activities. Algebraic skills are particularly good in the sixth form in science lessons. There is evidence of good use of numeracy skills in both history and geography, usually in data handling activities such as drawing and interpreting bar charts, timelines, graphs and spider diagrams. The analysis is less well developed than the construction aspects of this work. In information technology,

spreadsheets are used for formula calculations, and data is converted effectively into charts and diagrams. In art, ratio and proportion are explored when visualising images in both two and three dimensions. The use of perspective is used in design projects to enhance spatial awareness.

19. In **science**, students make steady progress as they move through the school and by the end of Year 11 attainment is just above that which could be expected nationally. In general, students in higher sets are achieving higher levels. However in a number of lessons, at both key stages, a small proportion of more able students do not achieve the higher levels of which they are capable due to the work not being of a suitable challenge for them. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 results are consistently above national averages. The numbers of students gaining the higher grades shows the same trend. Boys and girls are doing equally as well. The proportion of students gaining grades A*- C at GCSE has declined in recent years but has not fallen below the national average. Results for last year showed a modest improvement. Numbers of students doing A-levels are reasonable in physics and chemistry and a large number take biology. The attainment of these students is broadly similar to their predicted grade based on their GCSE results.
20. At Key Stage 3 students are able to separate mixtures using chromatography. They know that mixing coloured pigments produces different results from mixing different coloured lights and can give scientific reasons for the increase of heart and breathing rates in terms of respiration. However, the development of practical and investigational skills is much less developed. At Key Stage 4 students can explain the differences between fungi and bacteria and give a scientific account of the role of enzymes in the process of digestion. They can also describe displacement chemical reactions and give word and symbolic equations for these. Practical and investigational skills are of a much lower order but improve dramatically in Year 11. At post-16, students understand the effect on populations of competition and predation, give good explanations for the deflections of electrons in magnetic fields and show a good understanding of Van der Waals forces.
21. Students make satisfactory progress overall in relation to their prior abilities. The best progress is made in lessons where the work is effectively differentiated rather than in lessons for a particular ability group. At Key Stage 3 there were no instances of unsatisfactory progress seen in lessons. At Key Stage 4 progress ranges from very good to satisfactory. The best progress was seen in Year 11. Good progress is made by students in over two thirds of lessons in science subjects post-16. Overall, satisfactory gains are made in students' knowledge and understanding. The students develop slowly their capacities to think about and carry out investigations. They can, in the main, devise fair tests and make satisfactory predictions. However their ability to interpret results and carry out experiments and investigations is unsatisfactory. Full investigations are not a regular feature of the planned work and many opportunities are missed to reinforce these skills in day to day science teaching. Students with higher prior attainment are not always sufficiently challenged by extension activities or directed questions, but progress for students with special educational needs is good and is well supported.

The remaining subjects of the curriculum

22. In **art**, students make good or very good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 attainment is well above the expectations for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory and often good. Overall attainment is very good and has been steadily maintained and improved over a number of years. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the national average with what could be expected for the age group. A current project on the integration of perspective, focused on artists such as Leonardo and Picasso and provided students with an important stimulus to produce well informed and executed paintings. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above average for what could be expected for the age group. Students have acquired satisfactory research, designing, drawing and making skills that form the basis of much of the department's good practice. They are able to combine their own ideas with those of other artists and produce work of quality and depth. Strengths are identified in both two and three dimensional image making and in the use of sketchbooks. At the end of the sixth form, students'

attainment is above national comparisons for both A level and GNVQ courses. Their work is highly competent, imaginative and founded on well developed skills and knowledge acquired through genuine commitment, ability and very good teaching.

23. In **business education** at the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1998 were above national averages for similar schools. GCSE results improved in 1999. The progress made by students from their overall performance at Key Stage 3, and the value added by the teaching, has been improving steadily over the previous 4 years. Most students are now making progress in line with their previous attainments. At the end of the sixth form, GCE A level results have shown improvement in recent years. In 1998 these results were above national averages in terms of both pass rates and average grades, although the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was below the national averages. The progress made by these students from their GCSE attainments, the value added by the teaching, was in line with national expectations. Overall, attainment in Business Education is now good, and it is improving.
24. The progress made by students in **design and technology** is satisfactory as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is just in line with national expectations. However, significant variations exist between material areas. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with what could be expected for this age group. The majority of students are able to apply appropriate knowledge and understanding to their design and make assignments. Levels of attainment and progress for some groups of below average ability students are insufficient and they lack understanding of how to translate 2D designs into 3D outcomes which hampers their progress. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards produced by girls exceed those of boys. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment for most students is good in electronics, graphics and food, and is satisfactory in textiles. Students with special needs make satisfactory progress in design and technology. A small number of students continue with the subject to A level. Students can talk confidently about the rationale behind their chosen project and use information technology to prepare work to a high level of presentation.
25. In **drama**, the attainment of students at Key Stages 3 and 4 is above average. By the end of Year 11 the majority of students are able to enact events in dramatic form, exercise imagination and work together to develop an improvisation based on a theme. They show good critical skills and use the spoken word well. Their attitude to the subject is excellent. They concentrate hard and are very dedicated in their ways of working. They respond in a mature way when other students present work. Their progress is good.
26. Students make good progress in **geography** as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is often above national expectations. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good. Students are well supported, and appropriate material is used to challenge and develop their performance, particularly in Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is in line with the level expected for this age group. Students in Year 9 are able to analyse weather data and use this to locate places on thematic maps. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is often above the national average and most show very good command of subject vocabulary. Numeracy and information technology skills are consistently employed. By the end of the sixth form students' attainment is in line with the national average. Students research skills are secure and many make good use of the department's Internet facility. The progress of students is good in both Key Stages 3 and 4.
27. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in **history** is in line with national expectation. Higher ability students can understand and respond to reasons for opposing viewpoints in the past. They can ask historical questions about a data file of slave ships, using their background knowledge to help them to form hypotheses. Students are working at nationally expected levels by the end of Key Stage 4. Standards of attainment at GCSE were in line with national average in 1998, with an improvement in 1999. Results at A level have been above national average in the last three years, an improvement since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 13, A level students have very good subject knowledge and competent essay technique. Students' progress overall, throughout the key stages is, as at the last inspection, satisfactory.

28. In **information technology**, standards of attainment at GCSE were above national expectation in 1998 and again in 1999, both in the half and full GCSE courses. The performance of girls is consistently above that of boys. Throughout the school standards of attainment are at national expectation in communication and data handling and in applications and effects. By the end of Key Stage 3, with a varying degree of guidance, students can change the appearance of information to suit a particular audience; with help they can change the variables in a model and comment on the impact of their actions. By the end of Key Stage 4, they can use information technology independently to research and to express their findings in a variety of appropriate forms. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 students are below national expectation in measurement and control. When students with below average ability and special educational needs are given close guidance their performance is above that expected for their ability and they make good progress. Students' progress is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, although insufficient progress is made in measurement and control and data logging overall, as these are not systematically taught to all students. Progress at A level has been impeded by technical difficulties, but these have now been resolved.
29. In **modern foreign languages** students make good progress as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is above the national average. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 3, but less so in later years. At the end of Key Stage 3, students overall make good progress. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE exam results in both French and Spanish are well above the national average, but this is based on only half the school's intake sitting a language GCSE, the majority of whom are girls. Progress at A level is good and students attain grades close to those predicted for them at the start of their course. Regular use of the language laboratory contributes to good development of listening skills.
30. Students make good progress in **music** as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 standards of attainment are well above the expectations for this age group. The overall progress of all students with special educational needs is good. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is above national expectations for the majority of students. Composing and performing skills are particularly good. At the end of Key Stage 4 students' attainment is well above the national average in all aspects of the subject. In particular, composition work is outstanding with some inventive and well-structured work based around chords with added sevenths and ideas stimulated from the ostinato patterns in Ravel's Bolero. Attainment at post-16 is good overall. Students are all capable performers and have a good knowledge of harmonic conventions. The range of extra-curricular activities involve a large number of students performing at a high standard.
31. In **physical education**, students make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with the expectations for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory. GCSE results are slightly below national average. Students are achieving higher standards than the predictions the school makes however, and trends over the last few years are upward, for example, Year 11 students show above average attainment in the water activities module. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations for students of this age, although standards in swimming are above the national expectation. Progress of the majority of students in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, though their progress in swimming during lessons and over time is good. At Key Stage 4, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Progress during lessons is satisfactory, but progress over time in relation to what students know, understand and can do is good. Attainment in A level examinations is good. Students in Year 12 and Year 13 have a good knowledge of anatomy and physiology. They use terminology and appropriate language to describe the ways in which the muscles work and can apply this knowledge to the analysis of movement. Written work is of a good standard. Progress made by post-16 students is good.
32. In **religious education** overall, progress is satisfactory as students move through the school. However, although students make satisfactory or good progress in their individual lessons, the reduced time

allocation is limiting the extent of the progress made over a period of time. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national expectation. There is a wide range of attainment evident across the ability sets. Students in upper sets generally achieve standards which are above the national average. Attainment in lower ability sets is below average but in line with students' abilities. Students demonstrate effectively their ability to explore and understand moral and social issues and how human actions are influenced by religious belief. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 also show a range broadly in line with national expectations.

33. Students make satisfactory, and sometimes good progress in their individual lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Students with special educational needs are generally making satisfactory progress in their understanding of how religious practices influence behaviour, and of the social and moral issues raised by religious belief.
34. **Overall progress** through the school is good. The most able students make good progress in the majority of subjects and students with special educational needs make satisfactory or good progress across the full range of subjects studied. The progress made by students of just below average ability is unsatisfactory in a number of subject areas.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

35. Attitudes to learning are good in all year groups. Students in Year 9 and Key Stage 4 are usually interested in their lessons, pay good attention to the teacher, listen very well to each other and are prepared to ask for help. These good attitudes have a positive impact on the standards which students achieve. There are some very good attitudes in English, information technology, art and music. Students are now able to work increasingly independently, for example in science, design technology, information technology, geography, modern foreign languages, art, music and physical education.
36. The attitudes of the students with special educational needs have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now good. This is because of some highly talented teaching and a more relevant curriculum which is better suited to students with special educational needs, for example in the Year 9* class and the Key Stage 4 Youth Award scheme. Students of high ability respond well to the well-established teaching styles which focus on meeting examination requirements. Some students of average or below average ability are not always motivated by the teaching and curriculum presented to them. This is particularly apparent in Year 10 and in history, modern foreign languages and business studies where students sometimes become bored by the subject and tasks set and occasionally lack respect for the teacher. Students in the sixth form are highly motivated and hard-working and enjoy the opportunities to develop their independent study skills.
37. Behaviour is good. It is very good when students move around the school including on the narrow staircases and in a wet lunch hour. Students show very good respect for property, for example in the information technology rooms. Behaviour is good in most lessons but there are occasions when lower or middle ability students (usually, but not always boys) lose concentration and become silly, noisy or disruptive. This impedes progress in those lessons, which is of concern to some parents. Fixed period exclusions have risen since the last inspection but are now falling to a rate that is a little below the national average for similar schools. Incidents of misbehaviour are often caused by problems which have their origins outside school.
38. Relationships between students are very good and are a strength of the school. The ability of all students, including those with special educational needs, to listen to and help each other and to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups has a notable impact on the progress they make in many lessons, for example in English, science, design technology, information technology, geography, art, physical education, drama and the Youth Award scheme. Relationships between students and staff are usually good. There is very little bullying in the school.

39. The personal development of students is very good and is a strength of the school. It has improved since the last inspection with the introduction of more opportunities for students to assume responsibility and show initiative. As soon as they start in Year 9, students make a very positive contribution to school life, through taking on responsibilities in the library, for example, or devising items for the forthcoming school revue. Students in all years play a full part in the school council by putting forward their ideas in a mature and sensible manner, with the confidence that their views are respected and valued by staff. Sixth form students have a considerable range of responsibilities around the school, including helping in form tutor groups, supporting students with special educational needs, running the tuck shop and the school bank, as well as organising social and fund-raising activities for the sixth form. Students' skills of communication and working with others are highly developed in extra-curricular activities such as music, public speaking and debating, charity fund-raising and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Parents are rightly very appreciative of this aspect of school life.

Attendance

40. Attendance is satisfactory and has a positive effect on students' attainment and progress. Rates of attendance for students of compulsory school age have been gradually rising since the last inspection, in line with national trends, and are a little above the average for similar schools. There are a tiny number of students whose home circumstances lead to poor attendance and subsequent failure to gain any GCSE qualifications. The attendance of sixth form students and students with special educational needs is good.
41. Students arrive reasonably promptly to most registration periods and lessons. Punctuality is good in English, mathematics and music. There are occasional delays caused by the late arrival of buses in the morning, and the distance of the main school site from the sports centre, where most physical education lessons are held. The few late starts to lessons lead to a loss of time which has a negative effect on the progress made by students in some science, food technology and history classes. Sixth form students have a relaxed attitude to punctuality but, because of the school's policy that they remain on site for the school day, they generally turn up to lessons in time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

42. The overall quality of teaching in the school is good. Teaching in 97% of lessons observed was satisfactory or better, with very good or excellent teaching observed in 31% of lessons. This high quality of teaching is widespread across the school with overall teaching in all subject areas being at least satisfactory. Excellent examples of teaching were seen in art, English, drama, geography, information technology, mathematics, science, music and physical education. The consistency of good teaching across all departments is a strength of the school. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in five subject areas. The school's approach to lesson observation and subsequent evaluation is clearly having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.
43. Overall standards of teaching are good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, which makes a positive contribution in the main, to appropriate standards of attainment for the majority of students. High attaining students are well served, with good examples of appropriately challenging work seen in English, mathematics, art, geography, music, psychology and physical education. Students with special educational needs are taught effectively. The targets derived from the students' individual education plans are addressed well in the majority of lessons. One-to-one support is often very good. There were many examples, especially in art, science, religious education and the Youth Award Scheme, of both teachers and learning support assistants helping students to stay on task and explaining things to them clearly. Overall, the quality of teaching of students with special educational needs has improved significantly since the last inspection. Generally, students of below average ability are not always sufficiently challenged, mainly as a result of some dull, ordinary teaching. The quality of teaching in A

level courses is good in all respects.

44. Where the quality of teaching is good or better, common features are seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise, with high quality planning which results in clarity of learning objectives and varied teaching strategies that engage the interest and attention of students. Effective reviewing at the end of lessons consolidates learning points and evaluates the work that students have done. Teachers have high expectations of the students and work is appropriately challenging with good attention paid to the development of ideas. Very good examples were seen in English, drama, mathematics, art, geography, physical education and psychology. Teachers have a good rapport with their students and provide a good level of encouragement and positive support. Teachers make good use of day to day assessment to measure student progress, determine the individual needs of students and set appropriate targets for improvement. Good examples were seen in art, geography and mathematics. However, the use of assessment to improve student's learning is inconsistent across all departments in the school.
45. Where there are weaknesses in teaching, these relate largely to ineffective use of time in lessons. In these lessons, teachers talk for too long and don't engage the students sufficiently in appropriate and challenging learning activities. A high level of questioning to draw out ideas from the students is lacking, and day to day assessment is insufficiently used to measure student progress. Students are unclear about what they need to do to improve. In a small number of lessons observed, unsatisfactory classroom control had a negative impact on the standard of work achieved by the students.
46. Homework is generally well used in the school and in the best practice observed, teachers make good use of opportunities to set homework that reinforces the work done in class and extends the thinking of students. Good examples were seen consistently in art, psychology, religious education, history, information technology, and science across all age groups.

The curriculum and assessment

Curriculum

47. Since the previous inspection report the school has successfully improved many aspects of the curriculum. The introduction of the 9* class has significantly improved provision for students with special educational needs at Key Stage 3. The introduction of courses leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) has also significantly improved the quality of the sixth form curriculum. Many students are now making good progress through this GNVQ pathway, and are using it as an entry to University. The progress at Key Stage 4 has been satisfactory, with the introduction of the Youth Award scheme. The school now plans to implement a GNVQ pathway from the start of this key stage, which will offer students a much wider range of options. All students now have equal access to all parts of the curriculum. The management of the curriculum has been significantly improved, with senior managers having a very good understanding of the changes to the National Curriculum and of the processes of curriculum change. Overall, this represents a good level of progress since the previous inspection.
48. At Key Stage 3 the current curriculum is broad and balanced. It meets most of the statutory requirements, although the requirement to teach control technology, as part of the information technology course, is not being met. There is insufficient time allocated to the study of religious education to ensure full coverage of the local Agreed Syllabus.
49. At Key Stage 4 the current curriculum is broad and balanced and meets most of the statutory requirements, although, again, those for information technology and religious education are not met in full. In the case of information technology, the statutory requirements to teach measurement and control aspects of information technology, are not being met. The curriculum is generally well planned to meet the needs of most students, although the lack of vocational courses is having a negative impact on the motivation of some students. In both modern foreign languages and history, the lack of any alternatives

to GCSE means that courses in these areas do not meet the needs of all students. The school has already taken advantage of the increased flexibility available at the key stage to offer a small group of the students the opportunity to gain recognition for their achievements through the Youth Award scheme. The school should now move to the implementation of its current plans to ensure that the curriculum is fully effective in meeting the needs of all students.

50. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 the curriculum is enhanced through a programme of Personal and Social Education, which includes health, sex and drugs education. There is good overall provision for extra-curricular activities, including clubs and sport, and educational visits. Students also have the opportunity to complete the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
51. There is a very good range of both GCE and GNVQ Advanced level courses in the sixth form. The recently introduced GNVQ courses are already proving popular with both students and their teachers. In order to further improve the quality of the GNVQ courses, the school should ensure the actions recommended by the Regional Development Adviser are carried out effectively. The sixth form curriculum is enhanced through an excellent range of enrichment and General Studies courses. Students also have the opportunity to develop, and gain certification for their achievements in the Key Skills. The impact of the Key Skills lessons is already apparent in the improved quality of the students' personal statements in support of their university applications. Many sixth form students take the opportunity to put something back into their community, taking part in activities such as supporting form tutors, a paired reading scheme, where sixth form students listen to younger students reading aloud, and running the school tuck shop.
52. The curriculum is generally well planned to ensure progression of learning. Liaison with middle schools is generally good, but in need of improvement in information technology. Setting arrangements are working effectively in most subject areas. There are currently no courses at Key Stage 4 which prepare students for vocational education beyond the age of 16.
53. There is an effective, and generally well-planned, programme of careers education and guidance, delivered in partnership with the local Guidance Service. The detailed plans for this programme do not yet specify what students should be able to do at the end of the course. Sixth form students are well supported as they apply for university entrance through the UCAS system.
54. Students develop their understanding of the world of work through a well planned period of work experience. Students further develop this understanding through work set in some subjects. In design technology students learn about mass production through setting up a small company, and about hygiene in food production. In GNVQ courses in the sixth form, students have the opportunity for further work experiences linked to their course-work. This adds interest to the work and is having a positive impact on standards in these courses. GCE A level students in business education make excellent use of a work placement to complete the required personal study. However, these are rather isolated examples of the use of the world of work to add interest to lessons. There is no policy for Work Related Learning.

Assessment

55. There is a clear and comprehensive school policy for assessment. This policy includes a detailed checklist so that subject departments can match their own policy to that of the school policy. This was recommended in the previous inspection report. Most subject departments use this checklist, and marking is now more consistent across the school. However, some inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy remain. The policy itself is not fully implemented by all teachers in design and technology, modern foreign languages and science. Department policies in design and technology and science are not in line with the checklist in the school policy. Whilst the majority of the heads of subjects monitor the quality of the assessment processes, those for English and design and technology do not formally monitor the quality of teacher's assessments effectively.

56. In some subject areas teachers are successfully involving students in the assessment process. In mathematics, information technology, art, music, religious education, physical education and business education, students are involved in assessing their own work. In a few subject areas, students are able to explain how they can improve their work. This is a growing strength in art, and in music students at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are setting subject specific targets for improvement. This is already having a positive impact on standards in these subjects. In mathematics some students are able to explain how they can improve their work, but the effectiveness of this varies from teacher to teacher. Some Year 11 students in business education are clearly motivated through knowing exactly what they need to do to improve, and can explain in some detail how they are planning their work to bring about this improvement. Students on the GNVQ courses are starting to evaluate their own work successfully and, with support from their teachers, set clear targets for higher grades.
57. Teachers in most subject areas make accurate assessments of student's work against national standards. In design and technology the GCSE assessment criteria are not used effectively by teachers, and in modern foreign languages not all teachers are able to make accurate assessment decisions. All assessments made by GNVQ teachers are checked as required, and all meet the requirements of the national awarding body. These GNVQ processes are particularly well managed.
58. Most teachers make effective use, in their lesson planning, of the feedback they obtain from assessing students work. Weaknesses exist in both design and technology and science.
59. Overall, the quality of assessment has improved at a satisfactory pace since the previous inspection. In order to further improve the quality of assessment, all managers should ensure a more consistent application of what is a well formulated policy, so that all students are fully involved in identifying their achievements and in setting of subject specific targets for improvement.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

60. Arrangements for students' personal development have improved since the time of the last inspection and, overall, the school now provides good opportunities. A policy statement presents appropriate definitions of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of the curriculum and a separate document declares that every student has a right to a wide range of cultural activities and to spiritual and moral guidance. The school is largely successful in achieving these aspirations.
61. The school provides satisfactory opportunities for students' spiritual development. There has been a significant improvement in the contribution made by religious education. Opportunities are regularly provided for students to clarify their own values and to express personal responses to a range of ideas and issues. Students are encouraged to reflect on the beliefs of others and to consider their own views in the light of these. Similar opportunities are also provided, although not extensively, in some tutor groups as the thought for the week is considered. Year group assemblies provide further occasions for personal reflection. Students are also encouraged to respond personally to various stimuli during lessons in music, history, and sixth form general studies. However, further opportunities for students' spiritual development are not systematically built into teachers' planning in a range of subjects.
62. The current arrangements for the daily act of collective worship represent an improvement since the last inspection. This aspect of school life has been thoroughly evaluated and new arrangements implemented. These arrangements, with a thought for the week at the centre, are very well supported by extensive documentation for participating staff. The structure of year group and tutor group assemblies provides the opportunity for the statutory requirements to be fulfilled. There is evidence of appropriate implementation in many tutor groups but further development is required to ensure consistency across the school. Year group assemblies, in particular, make a positive contribution to the spiritual and moral development of students.
63. The ethos of the school, including the quality of relationships between adults and students, is supportive

of good moral and very good social development. Modules within the personal and social education programme, together with the manner in which daily life in the school is conducted, contribute to students' awareness of honesty, fairness and a respect for truth. Greater opportunities are now provided for students to take on responsibility and to contribute in relevant ways to the life of the school community. The School Council is having a genuine impact, enabling students in all year groups to express their views on matters of significance. Students were invited, for example, to contribute to the construction of the recently introduced home-school contracts, and the views of samples of students in all year groups are taken into account as departmental reviews are conducted. Sixth form students take responsibility, for example, for running the tuck shop and providing support to younger students in various subject areas, including support with paired reading. The school is also making some progress in its intention to develop learning styles which encourage students to work more independently, including some good opportunities in art, child development, English, geography, music, physical education, and sixth form work experience overseas. Progress in this respect is not yet widespread across all subjects.

64. Students' cultural development is good and is supported by a range of off-site visits to musical, drama, food and textiles events. Annual arrangements for 'Time Out' each summer provide new opportunities for extension and enrichment of experiences, for example in drama and debating. Involvement in activities within the local community provide additional opportunities for some students. The recognition of diverse cultures and preparation for life in a multicultural society are supported by some work in design, history, music, religious education and the study of Caribbean poetry in English. However, there are missed opportunities to use a variety of source materials, literature and resources to enrich this area of experience more widely across the curriculum.
65. Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students have been audited to assess the extent of opportunity across the curriculum. The resulting picture is quite encouraging on paper. There is evidence of progress in the range and quality of opportunities available. However, further evaluation is required of the extent to which these opportunities exist consistently in the experience of all students. There is little evidence of the inclusion of a range of experiences in the day-to-day lesson planning of the majority of teachers.

Support, guidance and students' welfare

66. The school's provision for the support, guidance and welfare of its students is good and gives them a secure basis on which they can make good progress in their academic and personal development. The many strengths in provision have been maintained since the last inspection and are rightly appreciated by parents. There is a strong caring ethos in the school which is developed by highly experienced pastoral staff who know students and their families well and work very effectively together as a team. This was seen, for example, in one of the pastoral briefings involving senior members of staff who meet frequently to share knowledge and discuss issues involving particular students in difficulties.
67. The change from a house to a year system of pastoral support has been managed very well and is very appropriately focused on improving the overall monitoring of academic progress. A very good model has been established in the sixth form and is being further refined to produce half-termly checks involving staff, students and parents. This model is now being introduced in Year 10 alongside an improved mentoring system targeted at under-achieving students. The school has good systems for recording achievement and for encouraging student self-assessment, through the National Record of Achievement and the 'My Days at Alleyne's' booklet, but progress towards targets are not yet being effectively monitored by staff or students.
68. Liaison with middle schools is good which enables Year 9 students to settle in quickly. The personal, social and health (PSHE) education programme is well-established and well-planned. Because of the two-week timetable, it was not possible to observe any PSHE lessons but it was evident that the anti-bullying topic in the Year 9 programme is thoroughly embedded in the curriculum and the life of the school. Students receive good guidance when they choose options at Key Stage 4, post-16 and post-18,

with the school working well with the local careers service and staff sharing expertise effectively. A very few students slip through the net and leave school without a purposeful destination, but the school is working hard to devise alternative pathways and to improve its tracking systems. Tutorial and registration periods throughout the school are generally used successfully to create good relationships and a focus for discussing school issues, such as thought for the day or items for the school council. They also provide opportunities for brief individual counselling and guidance on completing personal statements for university application forms.

69. Support for students with special educational needs has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. There is a good identification of need and match of support to meet the need. Learning support assistants have very positive attitudes and techniques. Very good records are maintained on students with statements. The introduction of the Year 9* class is an innovative and very effective feature of provision.
70. Arrangements for dealing with behaviour and bullying issues are very good. Behaviour policies and procedures have been reviewed and further strengthened since the last inspection to bring them into line with the latest good practice. Rules are clearly displayed and students value the rewards system. Appropriate records are kept on incidents of misbehaviour and exclusion. Parents strongly support the school's measures to combat bullying.
71. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The school responded swiftly to the key issue at the last inspection of ensuring that afternoon registration meets statutory requirements. Attendance records are now computerised and being used increasingly effectively to monitor absence. The school is rigorous in its authorisation of absence and works closely with its feeder schools to discourage term-time holidays. Good use is also made of the Education Welfare Officer. Procedures in the sixth form are good and include an effective system for monitoring attendance at the supervised private study periods.
72. Arrangements for child protection are good with all staff having received appropriate training. Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of students are also good. There is a high level of first aid awareness in the school amongst both staff and students. Accidents are monitored and action taken when appropriate. Departments are successful in minimising risks, although design technology and physical education do not formally record their risk assessments. The school is aware of most of the hazards arising from the school's premises and works hard, within the financial limitations, to deal with those of highest priority. However, there are many health and safety issues arising from the accommodation and furniture in the design technology areas. There are also risks associated with features such as the paving and slopes outside, some rooms which are in need of better ventilation and blinds, an uncovered heater in the theatre and lack of push/pull signs on some doors.

Partnership with parents and the community

73. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory with some strengths. Parents show a good level of support for the school but this does not yet have a very significant impact on raising standards. The school is aware, through its own surveys, that more needs to be done to improve home-school communications and to increase the involvement of parents in students' learning. It has made a satisfactory start on its plans for this area of development.
74. The quality of information provided for parents ranges from very good to barely satisfactory and is satisfactory overall. Parents are given a lot of very good quality information through letters and newsletters about the life of the school. They appreciate the detailed information given on entry to Year 9 and when students are preparing for public examinations. They would like more information about some aspects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, for example which GCSE tiers their children are being entered for. The governors' annual report provides very good information about the progress of the school and its targets for the future. However, there are some omissions relating to the national comparative data on

GCSE results, the funding of students with special educational needs and the admission of disabled students.

75. Annual reports on students' progress meet statutory requirements except for music at Key Stage 3 where attainment in relation to national expectation is omitted. Reports give a generally clear picture of standards and attitudes but vary in quality between departments and are often imprecise in explaining what the student needs to do to improve. Parents are critical of the timing of reports and the brevity of consultation meetings with staff. The school has listened to some of these concerns and is introducing a new pattern of reporting this school year which will give parents an opportunity to find out about their child's progress each term. However, there are no plans to share the results of the interim progress checks with parents, unless the results are particularly good or of concern. The quality of information and reporting in the sixth form is good. Staff maintain close links with parents and parents are informed each half-term of their child's progress.
76. There is good parental involvement in the work of the governing body and the Parent, Teachers and Friends Association. The PTFA raises useful funds towards school equipment and the running of the minibus and also provides an important forum for consultation on school issues, such as the change from a weekly to a fortnightly timetable. Parents' support for homework has a generally positive effect on standards and progress, particularly of students with above average attainment. However, parents are not always aware of the full details of the timetable for setting homework. A small core of parents have low expectations for their children's education which makes the school's work harder in raising the attainment of some students with middle or lower ability.
77. Links with the community have been maintained at the same good level as reported at the last inspection. The partnership with local industries continues to be very strong and enables all students in Year 10 to undertake a two-week work experience placement. In addition, a significant number of sixth form students are able to enrich their studies, for example in A level business studies and French and in Advanced GNVQ land and environment. There are very effective links in design technology through the Marconi Project which gives students opportunities, for example, to attend an after-school Engineers Club and to take part in a Rotary Club competition for Young Chef of the Year. The school became a BT Link school in 1997 with benefits for both student and staff development; for example during the inspection two trainers from British Telecom delivered a well-received session on time management as part of Year 12 General Studies.
78. Links with a wide range of organisations such as local universities and colleges, charities, a national bank and the police and health services enhance many aspects of students' personal and social development as well as attainment in subjects like English, art, music and geography. Standards in swimming and opportunities to take part in a range of sports, such as squash, are greatly enhanced by the sports centre provision which is run jointly by the school and the local Borough and County Councils. Students have some opportunities to contribute to the local community, through the annual senior citizens party, Duke of Edinburgh award placements and helping in local primary schools, but overall this is not a strong feature of school life.
79. The school is appropriately supporting the development of the adult education institute which operates on the site for two evenings a week. Through the institute, sixth form students have the opportunity to improve their GCSE grades in mathematics and join physical recreation classes, and parents have the opportunity to develop computer skills and learn new languages. Both the school and the institute are aware of the potential that this partnership has to encourage a culture of lifelong learning in the community which will help to raise the academic achievement of students.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

80. The strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the deputy headteachers provides clear educational direction and a firm steer to the work of the school. There is a comprehensive statement of aims which focus on developing the individual student through a full range of educational opportunities and appropriate challenges. These are reflected through the daily life of the school. Parents are supportive of this view and students feel a sense of belonging to the school community. There is a positive ethos which reflects the school's commitment to the improvement of quality and the raising of standards in the school. Since the last inspection a programme of departmental, pastoral and senior management team reviews has been initiated. This is proving to be beneficial in identifying strengths and areas for development in the work of the school, with clear action plans being implemented to good effect.
81. The governing body is supportive of the headteacher and staff in the school, and has developed a good strategic view of the school's development. Governors carry out their role effectively through a sub-committee structure. They have a good understanding of the work of the school, their role in ensuring the quality of education within it, and are united with the senior management team in their efforts to seek constant improvement. The work of the governing body is a strength for supporting future school development.
82. At the time of the last inspection new approaches to planning were being developed. The school development plan now clearly identifies relevant priorities, targets, actions to be taken, resource implications and monitoring and evaluation strategies which provide an effective strategic direction for curriculum development and teaching in particular. Development plan priorities drive the school. Middle managers are clear about their contribution to school development through the use of departmental plans which reflect whole school priorities. However, there are still inconsistencies in the extent to which middle managers monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility. For example, whilst the target setting procedures are contributing to the raising of standards overall, there is still a weakness in identifying the learning needs of particular ability groups in some subjects.
83. The school's approach to the evaluation of its work is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. The school is well placed to use these structures to disseminate aspects of good teaching and learning throughout the school.
84. There is an up to date policy on equal opportunities which covers all the significant aspects of the school's work and which is implemented effectively. There is a detailed policy for special educational needs in which good attention is paid to the Code of Practice. The governing body has a special educational needs representative who meets with the SENCO weekly, and this is the major means by which the governing body receives regular reports of progress. Provision for special educational needs is well managed with the headteacher giving a strong lead. The school has made good progress in this area since the last inspection.
85. The school meets statutory requirements well, with three exceptions. Although structures have been put in place to provide the opportunity for a daily act of collective worship for all students in line with statutory requirements, there are still inconsistencies in the implementation of this activity within tutor groups. The time allocation for religious education throughout the school is inadequate to cover the full requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus. The school does not fully comply with statutory requirements for information technology. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there are insufficient opportunities for students to study the measurement and control aspects of the information technology curriculum.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

86. The teaching staff in the school are very well qualified and experienced to meet the needs of all areas of the curriculum. Overall, the staff are experienced and many have long service in the school. Teachers' qualifications are well matched to the subjects they currently teach and there has been a reduction in the amount of part-time and non-specialist subject teaching since the last inspection. There has been a reduction in the level of administrative responsibilities required of senior staff and a resultant increase in the numbers of support staff available to take on these duties. In addition a significant budget deficit has been removed in recent years which has involved staff redundancies. These developments have been carefully managed with a view to increasing the teaching staff's focus on the curriculum and students' learning.
87. The school has a development plan for support staff which is contributing to the rationalisation of roles and improvements in the effectiveness of both teaching and administration. There are sufficient support staff to attend to the administrative needs of the school with the exception of inadequate technician support in the design and technology curriculum area. Learning support assistants are well trained and make a positive and committed contribution alongside the excellent expertise of teachers of students with special educational needs. Staff development is carefully planned for support staff and includes the opportunity to study for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ).
88. There are good procedures in place to attend to the continuing professional development needs of teaching and support staff. Appropriate induction arrangements are provided for all newly appointed staff. All training is related to development plan priorities and costed within the plan. There is equality of access to further training for staff in all subject areas. The successful appraisal scheme has been supplemented, since the last inspection, with an additional programme of personal professional interviews with the headteacher for both teaching and support staff. The management roles of middle managers are further supported by effective line management relationships with members of the senior management team. Good use is also made of staff development funding by buying in external speakers to address whole-school needs.
89. The age and condition of the buildings present significant management challenges. The lay-out of the older buildings is inappropriate for current needs, including, for example, a number of inadequately sized rooms. The use of some teaching rooms as dining rooms inhibits their improvement to the standards desired for effective learning; art rooms are much too small for the increased numbers studying this popular subject; and there is inadequate accommodation for music. Limited funds have been very effectively used to refurbish many areas of accommodation, including replacement windows, cloakrooms converted to teaching spaces, and the first part of a rolling programme of improvements to the science laboratories. The school is to be commended for the manner in which standards of achievement are maintained despite very difficult circumstances.
90. There are health and safety issues arising from the current condition of the accommodation, these include, in particular, cracked and broken paving in the external circulation areas and hygiene issues in food preparation areas within design and technology.
91. Good progress has been made since the last inspection with the improvement of accommodation. There is a good understanding of what needs doing but immediate action is restricted by insufficient funding. A programme of further refurbishment is planned, including the conversion of a gymnasium to a performing arts centre, refurbishment of additional science laboratories and, longer term, the creation of a learning resource centre.
92. The number of computers available for use by students and staff has significantly increased since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average. There have been improvements to the library, including the information technology resources available. The library plays a more significant role in the

life of the school than at the time of the last inspection. However, the size, layout and location of the library detract from its effectiveness as a vibrant resource for learning. The budget allocation for the purchase of books is low and overall resources have limited appeal to young or reluctant readers. The concept of a new resource centre at the heart of learning in the school needs to be vigorously pursued in order to contribute more effectively to standards of literacy across the curriculum.

93. There are inadequacies in the provision of books and learning materials in a number of subject areas including art, business education, design and technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. The sharing of text books places a particular strain on effective learning.
94. The school has made significant progress in the management of staffing issues, and accommodation is well managed within the limitations of available expenditure. It is now appropriate to review the allocation of finance for the full variety of learning resources with a view to improving provision in areas of need.

The efficiency of the school

95. There is very effective financial planning with careful and well-considered budget allocations that support school and subject development plans. The governing body and its finance committee play an active part in these arrangements both in the support of developments and in the monitoring of expenditure. They have a good understanding of the school's priorities for development, through their work in committees, and the budget is constructed to take account of these. Significant decisions are based on a good understanding of changes to the curriculum or to pupil numbers. The resulting adjustments to staffing needs are appropriately planned for. Governors have access to regular reports provided by the school's finance officer, to help them make appropriate financial decisions. Account is taken of recommendations from the LEA in achieving best available value for money when making purchases.
96. The deployment of staff is efficiently managed. The proportion of the budget spent on staffing has been reduced in recent years and is now broadly in line with the national average. The ratio of teachers to students is also in line with the national average and, overall, the teachers are allocated effectively to meet the needs of the teaching timetable. The delegated funding for students with special educational needs is fully spent in this area with some additional support from the school's main resource budget.
97. The allocation to the school of funding for repairs and maintenance takes no account of the age or prior condition of premises, requiring governors and senior staff to make imaginative use of limited funds and to bid extensively for additional funding. The governors and senior management team are very aware of the inadequacies of some of the existing accommodation and have a phased plan in place to attend to refurbishment and improvement, as funds become available. Despite the inadequacies of some areas of the accommodation, existing rooms are appropriately and efficiently used in a manner which supports good teaching and learning in all curriculum areas.
98. Capitation allowances to support the purchase of resources in subject areas have been based on historical allocations and are generally below national averages. A loan from the County Council is enabling the school to invest in computers to develop the use of information technology across the curriculum. Careful use and prudent management of resources has ensured that curriculum needs are largely met, although there are shortages of resources in some subject areas. The school is aware of this and aims to improve expenditure on learning resources as funding levels allow.
99. There are clear financial procedures in place and these are administered effectively. Financial management and control are very effective and operate according to requirements. The school accounts are appropriately audited and carefully monitored by the governing body. Spending decisions are based on careful projections and an appropriate contingency fund is maintained. The most recent auditors' report commended the school for its financial arrangements and offered a small number of recommended

improvements, all of which have since been implemented.

100. Taking into consideration the good educational standards achieved and the good quality of education provided in relation to the school's context and income, the school provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

101. The majority of students make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 attainment is slightly above average for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good. For the past three years results in Key Stage 3 national tests have been above the national average, GCSE results have been broadly in line with the national average but GCSE English Literature results have been below the national average. Boys are doing less well than girls and in this respect the school is reflecting the national picture. Attainment on A level courses is better than the national average.
102. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment in reading is satisfactory and often good. Many students read accurately and with good levels of understanding and some students, usually girls, read expressively. Written work shows that most students are able to write coherently to communicate feelings and ideas and their autobiographical writing is especially good. They are beginning to write in a variety of forms and for different purposes. Levels of accuracy are broadly satisfactory although errors in spelling and punctuation are common in the work of a minority of students, usually boys. Levels of speaking are good and students also listen well.
103. By the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment in reading is at least satisfactory and is often good. Students are learning how to express opinions on the books they are studying supported by evidence from the text. There is also some good work undertaken in research and investigation. Written work shows that most students are writing in a wider variety of forms than at Key Stage 3, with improvements to accuracy, and the effective organization of ideas. Some work shows a strong sense of individuality with impressive attention to detail. The students' own original poetry written at both key stages is a distinctive feature of the work of the English department. At both key stages high attaining students are achieving well but some below average students, often boys, are only reaching average or below average levels of attainment and need to achieve more.
104. On A level courses students read texts closely and intelligently. They respond to them critically. They compare and contrast them well. They write extended essays showing a good capacity for research and investigation. They have a very good control over a wide range of language use.
105. In the school as a whole, literacy standards are satisfactory and there are no subjects where significant numbers of students are being prevented from learning because their reading and writing skills are undeveloped. There are a number of examples of good practice where students' literacy is being reinforced. When working with data in information technology lessons, they are helped to identify key words, such as *row* and *column*, by means of coloured highlighting, and also have weekly spelling targets to meet. In French lessons there is emphasis on the use of correct grammatical terms. Key words are emphasised in science lessons. In art students are introduced to specialist terminology and increasing use is being made of the students' own personal written commentaries on different areas of study. The more able students make good use of appropriate technical terminology in design and technology and in the study of this subject the majority of students are able to make use of good research skills when working on surveys and questionnaires. In some lessons in geography and design and technology, students are helped to organise their writing through the use of structures such as writing frames. At present all of these initiatives are isolated and not part of a planned systematic attention to language, so their overall impact on literacy development is somewhat piecemeal. The school does not yet have a policy for language or for literacy to spearhead developments but has had the foresight to see the need for further initiatives in this area. The library, whilst providing many useful services, is not at the heart of literacy development in the school.

106. The speaking and listening skills of the students are a strength of the school. The majority of students are articulate and very ready to express their views clearly and confidently. They exchange opinions with one another easily and can maintain a well argued viewpoint producing good evidence to support their opinions. Students become more confident as they move through the school and are undoubtedly helped by the scope given to them in a wide range of lessons to develop their skills. The standard of spoken presentation is high. The school has had considerable success in debating and public speaking competitions, further evidence of the good standards described at the time of the last inspection being maintained.
107. The majority of students have a good attitude to this subject and it is popular with many of them especially at Key Stage 4. They listen well and work hard. They have positive attitudes to books and to reading and writing. Students with special educational needs have a positive attitude to their work generally. Behaviour is largely good although in some lessons at Key Stage 4 the immature attitudes of a minority of boys hinder their progress. Many students show great confidence when speaking aloud.
108. In the majority of lessons the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In about one third of lessons it is good or better. When the teaching is satisfactory lessons have clear objectives; appropriate learning tasks and lessons are well organised. A weak feature of the teaching is the lack of detailed written guidance on students' work to show them how they might improve and make faster progress. When teaching is good or better teachers work at a fast pace, make very good use of challenging questions, set high expectations and give the students a good degree of responsibility for their own learning. The teaching of A level English classes is especially good. Lively and relevant texts, good ways of ensuring that the students interrogate the texts appropriately and the scope given to the students to present their findings after working collaboratively are all working well. A very mature ethos prevails in these lessons. Overall, the impact of teaching on attainment and progress is positive. Teaching standards have improved since the last inspection. The high quality of sixth form teaching is now a distinctive feature of the department's work.
109. The quality of subject leadership is satisfactory. Courses are clearly described, properly resourced, and appropriately assessed. Responsibilities have been fairly and efficiently allocated. There are clear lines of communication between members of the department and between the department and senior management. The curriculum has breadth and balance although information technology is not prominent in the work of the department. Liaison with other schools is good and the curriculum has continuity and shows progression. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some respects in that it is very dispersed and some rooms are used by the students to eat in at lunchtime. This means that it is difficult for them to be set up as dedicated learning areas with an atmosphere conducive to study. One room has carpet tiles and curtains, and a much improved learning ethos was reflected in the students' improved attitudes and concentration. Some rooms are spacious and allow for effective group work but others are very cramped which makes group work difficult and drama work impossible. Key reference books such as dictionaries and manuals on approved English usage are not always evident in teaching rooms. Although there are links with the library, stronger ones need to be forged so that powerful support is provided for the future development of literacy.
110. The quality of education represents a similar standard to that indicated in the previous OfSTED report. The overall level of attainment has slightly improved and the high standards of speaking and listening have been maintained. English Literature GCSE results are less good. Information technology has not been developed since the last inspection. The attitudes of the students are still good. The quality of teaching is now better. Provision for students with special educational needs has improved. Accommodation is still in some respects a weakness. In order to improve the quality of the provision for English, attention should be given to the following: improving the attainment of students of below average ability at both Key Stages 3 and 4; developing marking so that students are given more helpful written guidance as to how they might best improve their work; ensuring that accommodation is enhanced to provide a more consistent atmosphere for effective learning, including frequent and appropriate access to information technology.

Mathematics

111. Students make good progress as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is just above the expectations for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good. Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSE results are above the national average.
112. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above what is expected for this age group, although number skills are still fairly weak. Students do not have instant recall of their multiplication tables, nor do they have effective strategies to help them calculate. Their skills in other aspects of the subject are satisfactory for their age.
113. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above what is expected for this age group. For many students, basic number skills have not improved significantly. Algebraic skills are particularly good in higher ability sets, but rather mechanical in other ability groups. Shape and spatial development is generally of a satisfactory standard but could be enhanced with the use of information technology to support learning. Data handling is also satisfactory but again needs the support of information technology as a learning resource to improve levels of competence and understanding. Graphical skills are good in both drawing and interpreting diagrams. Skills in measurement are good both within the subject and in other areas of the curriculum. The extension programme by which the most able students in Year 10 are given the opportunity to take an early entry GCSE raises standards of achievement overall and provides a satisfactory preparation for A-level.
114. Attainment at A-level is close to national averages but examination results have been slightly below average over the last two years.
115. The quality of students' response to this subject is good in most lessons seen. The level of interest shown is usually good. The students' commitment and levels of endeavour are good in many cases and this helps to improve standards of attainment and enhances progress. Where concentration is weaker, this is often attributed to a teacher who has failed to capture the imagination of the students and the lesson lacks stimulating approaches, or the lesson lacks variety. In these cases, progress is poor, or at best moderate. Behaviour is good in the majority of lessons seen. Students show respect for their teachers, and respect for each other. Most students cooperate fully in their lessons. In rare instances behaviour is unacceptably poor. There are too few opportunities for students to work collaboratively. The best opportunity for collaborative learning was seen in the weakest Year 9 set where the teacher had provided a game activity which required students to work independently of the teacher, but in collaboration with each other. The class was encouraged to work effectively as a team exploiting the strengths of individuals but making sure that everyone was involved. The quality of the learning in this lesson was extremely high and attitudes towards the subject were greatly enhanced. The contribution to social development was likewise considerable.
116. The quality of teaching is good or better in nearly all lessons. However, it is sometimes no more than satisfactory and occasionally poor. When teaching is good, it has the following features. Lessons are well planned and students are made aware of the learning objectives. Explanations are clear, and teachers question students effectively. Most teachers are very experienced at this school and know their subject well. They are able to respond well to students' questions and comments immediately, inventing supportive examples to clarify points. Teachers use positive encouragement when it is deserved. Many teachers have a good rapport with their students and have established good working atmospheres in their classrooms. The new marking policy is being used consistently by teachers, and this is helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses. When teaching is not good, it results from too much talking by the teacher and too much passive listening by the students. From time to time, insufficient feedback is given to students in a lesson to inform them about how well they are doing. Some students spend too much time copying the teacher's work from the board and this uses up valuable time better occupied in

trying out new examples for themselves. The teachers are attempting to improve key number skills through constant practice rather than the development of a range of helpful calculating strategies. Homework is set and marked regularly by all teachers. Overall, the impact of teaching upon the standards of students' attainment and progress is good.

117. The quality of subject leadership and coordination is good. The amount of money spent on learning resources is low by national comparisons. The accommodation used for teaching mathematics gives some concern as it has joint use with dining facilities.
118. Numeracy skills are generally satisfactorily developed across the curriculum, and students in all year groups have the opportunity to apply numeracy skills in a number of subjects, and in many cases they demonstrate good levels of accuracy. For example, in science students are able to calculate and measure with accuracy, use tables and charts for the display of experimental data, plot graphs showing the relationship between variables, and use scales and measuring instruments effectively. They apply their skills with competence in the context of scientific activities. Algebraic skills are particularly good in the sixth form in science lessons. There is evidence of good numeracy skills in both history and geography, usually in data handling activities such as drawing and interpreting bar charts, timelines, graphs and spider diagrams. The analysis is less well developed than the construction aspects of this work. In information technology, spreadsheets are used for formula calculations, and data is converted effectively into charts and diagrams. In art, ratio and proportion are explored when visualising images in both two and three dimensions. The use of perspective is used in design projects to enhance spatial awareness.
119. There is also evidence of the development of numeracy skills in design technology (measurement and data handling), modern foreign languages (reading train timetables), and business education (basic calculations). Much of this is not planned as part of a whole-school approach to numeracy but happens in an *ad hoc* manner. The school has identified this as an area for development. To ensure consistency of approach, efficient and effective methods, and continuity across the curriculum, numeracy developments need to be planned and monitored more systematically across the curriculum.
120. The quality of education represents an improvement of standards since the last OfSTED inspection report. In order to improve the quality of the provision in mathematics, attention should be given to the recommendations of the review undertaken last year of which some have yet to be implemented. The use of ICT to support the curriculum is long overdue. Good practice in teaching needs to be shared with other colleagues.

Science

121. Students make steady progress as they move through the school and by the end of Year 11 attainment is just above that which could be expected nationally. In general students in higher sets are achieving higher levels. However in a number of lessons, at both key stages, a small proportion of more able students do not achieve the higher levels of which they are capable due to the work not being of a suitable challenge for them. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 results are consistently above national averages. The numbers of students gaining the higher grades shows the same trend. Boys and girls are doing equally as well. The standards of attainment of Key Stage 4 students has varied over recent years. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-C has declined but has not fallen below the national average. Results for last year showed a modest improvement. Numbers of students doing A-levels are reasonable in physics and chemistry and a large number take biology. The attainment of these students is broadly similar to their predicted grade based on their GCSE results.
122. At Key Stage 3 students are able to separate mixtures using chromatography. They know that mixing coloured pigments produces different results from mixing different coloured lights and can give scientific reasons for the increase of heart and breathing rates in terms of respiration. However the development of practical and investigational skills is much less developed. At Key Stage 4 students can explain the differences between fungi and bacteria and give a scientific account of the role of enzymes in the process

of digestion. They can also calculate accurately the size of fuse needed for a domestic appliance and know that resistance in an electric circuit changes with the thickness of a wire. Students can also describe displacement chemical reactions and give word and symbolic equations for these. Practical and investigational skills are also of a much lower order but improve dramatically in Year 11. At post-16, students understand the effect on populations of competition and predation, give good explanations for the deflections of electrons in magnetic fields and show a good understanding of Van der Waals forces.

123. Students make satisfactory progress overall in relation to their prior abilities. The best progress is made in lessons where the work is effectively differentiated rather than in lessons related to a particular ability group. At Key Stage 3 there were no instances of unsatisfactory progress seen in lessons. At Key Stage 4 progress ranges from very good to satisfactory. The best progress was seen in Year 11. Good progress is made by students in over two thirds of lessons in science subjects post-16. Overall, satisfactory gains are made in students' knowledge and understanding. The students develop slowly their capacities to think about and carry out investigations. They can, in the main, devise fair tests and make satisfactory predictions. However their ability to interpret results and carry out experiments and investigations is unsatisfactory. Full investigations are not a regular feature of the planned work and many opportunities are missed to reinforce these skills in day to day science teaching. Students with higher prior attainment are not always sufficiently challenged by extension activities or directed questions but progress for students with special educational needs is good and is well supported.
124. The response of students in lessons is good overall with some very good features. Students often showed good interest and many showed sustained concentration. In lessons the best response was noted in Year 13. In others years a high proportion of good behaviour was noted. This level of response is consistent through the school from Year 9 to Year 13 and has a positive effect on the learning of students in the school.
125. The quality of teaching overall is good, ranging from excellent to satisfactory with the majority being good. There has been an improvement since the last inspection. The best teaching has clear lesson objectives, is well rooted in the National Curriculum and is helped by a very good knowledge of the subject, skilled classroom management, good differentiation and enthusiastic delivery. The weaker teaching lacks clear scientific focus, moves at a slow pace, fails to inform students of the progress they are making and doesn't take sufficient account of the needs of all students. Teaching is a strong feature of the department and has a positive impact on standards.
126. Curriculum provision since the last inspection has steadily been improved. Further curriculum changes are planned and thought is being given to courses with a vocational flavour as well as certificates of attainment with a view to increasing standards. The interim development plan for science has many issues that are being actively worked on and these should positively affect standards. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but now requires further refinement to ensure better progression and rigour in experimental and investigative science.
127. The schemes of work are under urgent review. The quality of the present schemes are unsatisfactory. They are in need of further improvement by a greater focus on meeting the needs of students of all abilities, the structured use of information technology, risk assessments, the addition of elements of the programme of study to enhance the contribution of the subject to the students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and improving links to the education plans of students with special educational needs. The subject is well led by a head of department who has clear goals for improving the department. Towards these aims a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the department is being adopted.
128. In the main, resources are adequate for the delivery of the curriculum. Since the last inspection accommodation has been improved by the very recent refurbishment of two laboratories. The quality of the other laboratories does not enhance the ethos of the school. The programme of refurbishment of the laboratories needs to be continued and extended to include preparation areas. The work of the science

department is greatly enhanced by the dedication of the laboratory technician team who are a great asset to the department and make a considerable contribution to the students learning.

129. To further improve standards the department should now: develop further the strategies to ensure that work is targeted to address the needs of students of all abilities, especially the more able in each teaching group; continue to develop more rigorous strategies for monitoring standards and the effectiveness of developments within the department.; develop a greater range of assessment strategies that will inform more fully curriculum and lesson planning.; develop programmes of work that will encourage greater use of experimental and investigational skills in day to day lessons in the lower part of the school; develop the full use of information technology to enhance the teaching of science; enrich the schemes of work by adding further material on risk assessments, differentiation, Individual Education Planning and elements of the programme of study; continue the planned programme of accommodation improvements so that all lessons take place in appropriate environments and that preparation facilities are developed to match.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

130. Students make good or very good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is well above the expectations for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory and often good.
131. Overall attainment is very good and has been steadily maintained and improved over a number of years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
132. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is above the national average with what could be expected for the age group. Emphasis on the formal elements of drawing, recording, colour work, designing and making creates a firm basis from which to work. It also provides secure underpinning for effective progression to Key Stage 4. Students develop confidence, expertise and knowledge in the use of materials and interpretation of the work of artists and designers. A current project on the integration of perspective focused on artists such as Leonardo and Picasso, providing students with an important stimulus to produce well informed and executed paintings. Sketchbooks are used well within the department's culture for detailed research and in support of individual projects.
133. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above average for what could be expected for the age group. Students have been professionally guided to acquire satisfactory research, designing, drawing and making skills that form the basis of much of the department's good practice. They are able to combine their own ideas with those of other artists and produce work of quality and depth. Strengths are identified in both two and three dimensional image making and in the use of sketchbooks. These well planned and wide ranging experiences extend students' repertoire of creative skills, knowledge and understanding to prepare them well for A level and Further Education courses.
134. At the end of the sixth form, students' attainment is above national comparisons for both A level and GNVQ courses. Their work is highly competent, imaginative and founded on well-developed skills and knowledge acquired through genuine commitment, ability and very good teaching. Students demonstrate a mature approach to assignments, studio work and independent research. It is testament to the quality of the department's work that a proportionally high number of students transfer to courses in Further and Higher Education.
135. The quality of students' response is consistently good in all key stages. There are positive attitudes, genuine interest and commitment across each key stage. They sustain enthusiasm and involvement and make the most of opportunities provided. Relationships are good between students and students and teachers. Students show courtesy, respect and are supportive to each other.

136. The quality of teaching is always good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan lessons from detailed, well structured schemes of work that provide for clear paths of continuity and progression. They are enthusiastic, frequently inspirational and ensure that their high expectations of students are consistently met. Maximum use is made of time and resources together with good classroom organisation and management. The marking and assessment of projects and homework is conducted systematically across all key stages. Criteria for awarding grades is shared with students and individual evaluations are a growing strength of the department. Homework in the form of research tasks is regularly set on a weekly basis providing students with useful referencing and investigative skills in support of their work.
137. The impact of teaching upon the standards of students' attainment and progress is very good. The consistency of good teaching and collaborative ethos of the department has been a key contributory factor in ensuring high levels of student attainment over a number of years.
138. The quality of subject leadership, knowledge and co-ordination is very good. Requirements of the National Curriculum in Year 9 and those of examination syllabii in Key Stages 4 and post 16 are firmly in place. The curriculum in art is broad and balanced to ensure comprehensive coverage of two and three-dimensional experiences. These successfully incorporate the work of artists and designers of Western origin as well as some from other cultures. Procedures for marking and assessment follow the school's policy and are being securely implemented. The department should develop the use of positive written comments further to guide students towards the next stages of learning. The art curriculum and ethos of the department makes a significant contribution to students' personal, social, spiritual and cultural development.
139. Subject resources are in general appropriate, well organised and easily accessible to students. However, the continued uptake of students at GCSE, A level and GNVQ will demand increased provision and extension of specialist opportunity; for example, the development of creative textiles, photography and an increased emphasis on information technology.
140. Accommodation and storage facilities are unsatisfactory with little improvement being made since the last inspection. Teaching areas are cramped, poorly lit and inappropriate for a large proportion of the work that takes place. Much of the furniture and equipment is out of date, fails to meet the needs of current practice and is often camouflaged by the high quality of displays, stimulus and resource materials. Health and safety arrangements are in general appropriately addressed.
141. The quality of education represents a well maintained and slightly improved high standard since the previous OfSTED report. Appropriate action has been taken to develop the use of homework, evaluate projects and to extend the quality and range of resources. Students with special educational needs are well supported in their learning. In order to improve the quality of the provision for art and design attention should be given to the improvement of accommodation; an increase in resourcing, together with further opportunities in creative textiles and the integration of information technology.

Business education

142. There are no business education courses at Key Stage 3.
143. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1998 were above national averages for similar schools. GCSE results improved in 1999. The attainment of students in lessons is usually good, but in one lesson observed, attainment was unsatisfactory as students failed to produce sufficient work at the required standard. The progress made by students during Key Stage 4 has been improving steadily over the last four years. Most students are now making progress in line with their previous attainments. In most lessons observed the progress made by students was good.
144. At post-16, GCE A level results have shown improvement in recent years. In 1998 these results were

above national averages in terms of both pass rates and average grades, although the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was below the national averages. The progress made by these students from their GCSE attainments and the value added by the teaching, was in line with national expectations.

145. Overall, attainment in business education is now good, and it is improving.
146. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good. They respond particularly positively when the good range of work sheets produced by the teachers are linked to local business contexts. Assignments and tasks which lack this local dimension do not produce the same positive response, particularly at Key Stage 4.
147. The quality of the teaching is usually good or better. Teachers have a very good command of the subject and use a wide range of business contexts which are successful in interesting students in the work. Teachers usually make good use of oral questions in class, directing them at individual students to ensure all are fully involved. However, in a few lessons observed, some students were allowed to sit quietly, letting others do all the work in answering the questions. Control, discipline and the management of students are usually effective. Teachers have been successful in creating good working environments in the vast majority of lessons. Teachers work well with small groups of students, achieving a good balance between support and challenge. In the single lesson where the teaching was found to be unsatisfactory, many students spent a lot of the time gossiping with their neighbours. The approaches used by the teacher were ineffective in involving most of the students in the activities in this lesson.
148. The department assessment policy broadly reflects the checklist in the whole school policy. Half-termly assessment tasks are carefully marked in line with the policy. Teachers add helpful comments which give students guidance on what they need to improve. Other class-work is not always marked in this detailed way, but students are given oral feedback on their work. As a result of this feedback, all Year 11 students are clear on the current grading for their work: they know what GCSE grade they are working towards.
149. Nearly half of the Year 11 students are able to explain how they can improve the standard of their work. One student was able to explain that she needed to give more examples to illustrate her answers, and how she was using this in her planning. Another student was able to explain that he needed to make better use of business terms in his answers. These students were clearly motivated through knowing what they had to do to improve. Most of the Year 13 A level students are similarly able to identify clear strategies for improvement. Leadership of the subject is proving effective in improving both the quality of the education provided and standards of achievement. The GNVQ course has been successfully introduced and is proving successful in helping a wider range of students realise their full potential and to progress. Exam results are carefully analysed, and the quality of the teaching monitored. A development plan is in place, but this does not yet set specific and measurable targets for improved performance, following from the analysis of the results.
150. In order to further improve the quality of provision the department should: ensure all students are fully engaged during class questions; improve the teaching strategies used in those classes which contain students with a wide range of attitudes to learning; further develop the use of local business contexts in assignments and tasks; continue to implement the assessment policy, so that all students are able to set specific learning targets for improvement; include in the development plan specific and measurable targets for improved exam results. These should be linked to the actions needed to reach the targets.

Design and technology

151. Students make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is just in line with the national expectations for this age group. However, significant variations exist between material areas. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with what could be expected for this age group. Students work with a wide range of materials and equipment, including computers. This shows an improvement since the last inspection. They use a variety of practical techniques to produce outcomes in food, textiles, resistant materials, graphics and electronics.
152. The majority of students are able to apply appropriate knowledge and understanding to their design and make assignments. They use results from research and investigations to inform their designing, for example, when working in food they are able to brainstorm ideas and evaluate their work as it develops through the use of star diagrams. In resistant materials, students are able to design a range of imaginative devices to assist with picking up specified items, for example, an item to assist a grandparent to pick up letters from the doormat after a hip operation. Levels of attainment and progress for some groups of below average ability students is insufficient and their lack of understanding of how to translate 2D designs into 3D outcomes hampered progress.
153. Over emphasis on design folders and repetition of elements of the design process reduces the amount of practical work. By the end of Key Stage 3, assessments show that standards produced by girls exceeds the performance of boys. At the end of Key Stage 4, progress for most students is good in electronics, graphics and food, and satisfactory in textiles. Attainment in design and technology has shown an improving trend over recent years. Most students' ability to research, investigate, design and evaluate results are good. A disproportionate amount of research is being produced by some students, sometimes to the detriment of practical work.
154. Progress in resistant materials by below average ability students is unsatisfactory. Students have weaknesses in researching, designing and presenting their work. Poor organisational skills and unrealistic expectations of their own abilities has resulted in a significant proportion of students not meeting coursework requirements. Girls are generally achieving better GCSE results than boys because their attention to detail in planning is better. Boys studying graphics and electronics attain higher standards. A small number of students continue with the subject to A level. Those who do, achieve good results. Students can talk confidently about the rationale behind their chosen project and use information technology to prepare work to a high level of presentation. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in design and technology. The special needs department link has been effective in helping colleagues contribute to meeting students' Individual Education Plans.
155. The quality of students' response is satisfactory and often good across all key stages. All students enjoy the practical nature of the subject which has a positive impact on the quality of outcome. The majority of students persevere with design folders and value help and support they receive from teachers. There was evidence of inappropriate behaviour in isolated lessons when students were unclear of teacher expectations and the next stage in the design process.
156. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 is usually satisfactory but often good. A level teaching is good. In a small minority of lessons seen, teaching was unsatisfactory, and this was characterised by lack of clear learning objectives, lack of pace and low teacher expectation. When teaching is good it is well structured and resourced, teachers questioning skills are used effectively to check out students' levels of understanding and specific goals are set to be achieved by the end of each lesson. All teachers have a high level of skill and knowledge in their subject and in some cases use their industrial experience to make a positive contribution to their teaching. Teachers have high expectations of their students and share their expertise through effective demonstration. However, the expectations are not always effectively communicated to students.

157. In some lessons the level of challenge is appropriate to the ability of the students, for example, some good resources have been produced in food and textiles at both Key Stage 3 and 4. However, in many cases, particularly in mixed ability groups at Key Stage 4, insufficiently structured tasks and resources do not meet the needs of all students. The development of design folders to cater for two broad ability bands has been used effectively, but, a more structured, systematic approach to the production of tasks which meet the needs of the most and least able students is needed.
158. Teaching is enhanced effectively when students have opportunities to relate their school based experiences to the world of work. Examples such as Young Engineers Club, fashion shows and a visit to the Good Food Show provide valuable cross-curricular links and promote an exciting realism into the curriculum. The department makes good use of the limited resources available. Parental support in providing fabric, food ingredients and access to some recycled materials has a positive impact on the curriculum.
159. Good work is beginning to develop in information technology, but the area of control technology is not being adequately addressed due to insufficient equipment. Homework is often relevant, challenging and extends learning, but not all teachers are setting homework on a regular basis or, if it is set, it is not always recorded.
160. Assessment procedures continue to be developed. National Curriculum assessment levels are recorded regularly and throughout Year 9, but there is a lack of ongoing assessments. Data collected is not yet being used to inform planning. The assessment criteria is available to students but, they do not understand how to apply it to their work, and the inconsistent approach to marking does not help students know how to improve.
161. The quality of subject management within the contributory areas of design and technology is good. A more integrated approach to planning schemes of work would maximise student time and encourage a more practical approach. The organisation of resources and display is a strength, as is the co-operation and liaison between staff.
162. Where technician support is available it contributes significantly to the quality of learning, and the maintenance of a safe learning environment. At present technician support is insufficient resulting in inefficient use of teacher time.
163. Accommodation is poor with the exception of the electronics room. The small, cramped outdated rooms are used to maximum effect and teachers are to be congratulated on their efforts to maintain them. No progress has been made with the replacement of poor lighting and old furniture and equipment in the food and textiles rooms identified in the previous inspection report. The old wooden furniture in the food technology room does not meet requirements of the Food Act. Facilities and equipment to aid designing are required to improve the quality of student work.
164. The issue of old, outdated information technology equipment raised in the previous report has been addressed by the development of a shared information technology area. Access to these facilities has had a positive impact on the quality of student work and progress needs to be maintained and extended to include a range of CAD/CAM equipment.
165. The quality of education represents an improvement in the standard indicated in the previous report. In order to improve the quality of provision for design and technology attention should be given to: continuing the development of a differentiated scheme of work which uses a broader range of teaching styles to help address the underachievement of boys; implement assessment procedures which are understood and used by students and teachers to identify targets for improvement; continue to extend the range and use of control and information technology equipment and incorporate CAD/CAM to meet requirements of the new curriculum; improve the accommodation to enhance the learning environment and address health and safety issues; review the range of teaching styles used across the department to

include a more practical, investigative approach to support the development of independent learning skills.

Drama

166. Drama is in the process of establishing itself in the school. At present it is available as part of an expressive arts course for all students in Year 9 and as a GCSE option in Year 10. This is an appropriate way of building up the subject and represents a good start to the process of enabling the subject to be a significant feature of the curriculum. The drama club, productions and visits to the theatre are all helping drama to show what it can offer to students.
167. The attainment of students at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is above average. The majority of students are able to enact events in dramatic form, exercise imagination and work together to develop an improvisation based on a theme. They show good critical skills and use the spoken word well. Their attitude to the subject is excellent. They concentrate hard and are very dedicated in their ways of working. They respond in a mature way when other students present work. Their progress is good.
168. The quality of teaching is very good or excellent. It is characterised by an excellent choice of material which is both interesting and challenging, a strong rapport with the students which encourages them to give of their best, and an experienced way of casting ideas into dramatic form which helps develop a wide range of skills.
169. There is still a great deal of work to be done before the subject can firmly take its place as a significant part of the curriculum particularly in relation to the provision of detailed schemes of work and courses which promote continuity and progression through to the end of Year 13. There is a brief development plan.
170. In order to improve the quality of provision for drama, attention should be given to the following: a more detailed development plan is needed to show how the subject will develop, especially in relation to the other expressive arts and the wider school curriculum, and the securing of suitable accommodation, equipment and resources to do full justice to the commitment and skills that the students are bringing to their work.

Geography

171. Students make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 attainment is often above national expectations. The overall progress made by students with special educational need is good, students are well supported and appropriate differentiated material is used to challenge and develop their performance, particularly in Key Stage 3.
172. Teacher assessment grades at the end of Key Stage 3 show above average performance from the majority of students. These grades are slightly higher than those awarded in the core subjects. GCSE results in 1998 were above the national average and have been so for some time although the 1999 results show a decline. The department is particularly effective at challenging and supporting middle ability students to enable them to attain a grade C.
173. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is in line with national expectations. Students in Year 9 are consistently provided with challenging tasks. They respond well to carefully structured work on weather and climate. Students in a number of Year 9 lessons were analysing weather data and using this to locate places on thematic maps. Evidence from a scrutiny of work and lesson observations shows that students display good numerical skills when responding to data based tasks. Atlas skills are satisfactory.
174. At the end of Key stage 4, students' attainment is often above the national average. Students are well prepared for the examination and most show very good command of subject vocabulary. Numeracy and

information technology skills are consistently employed to raise the standard of coursework. Excellent use of the departments' Internet access is helping to raise the standards of students coursework submissions. In Years 10 and 11 lessons, excellent teacher questioning consistently drew accurate high level responses from groups across the ability range.

175. At post-16, students' attainment is in line with national expectations. Students research skills are secure and many make good use of the departments' Internet facility. In a Year 12 lesson seen, students were drawing effectively from their previous work on flood hazards and the most able were using their knowledge of alluvial processes to answer challenging questions.
176. The progress of students is good in both Key Stage 3 and 4. Students are working securely at national average levels when they enter the school in Year 9. Subject liaison is effective. Work produced for the Geographical Associations 'Geography Action Week' and displayed from a wide range of feeder schools shows how enquiry skills are consistently developed.
177. Evidence from students' books shows many Year 9 students are already working at levels appropriate for GCSE courses. This helps the majority to start their examination courses strongly. The consistent development of subject vocabulary and numeracy skills is helping many middle ability and lower ability students obtain a higher grade than might be expected.
178. The quality of students' responses is good in all lessons because strong teaching supports and challenges them. Relationships between students and with adults are very good.
179. The quality of teaching is almost always good and in half of those lessons seen was very good or excellent. Teachers' command of their subject is often excellent, tasks are well planned and students are consistently involved in their own learning. The impact of teaching upon students attainment is often very good, with clear explanations, precise use of subject vocabulary and supportive questioning raising the standard of students response. In Year 11 clear tasks that were well structured to the examination boards requirements, helped a wide range of students to develop their written responses.
180. The quality of subject management is very good. The planning and organisation of the subject shows innovation and strong team-work. Procedures for assessment are improving but insufficient use is made of the QCA exemplar material. Moderation of GCSE grades is secure. Pupil self-assessment has been introduced and clear guidance is given to students on how to improve. The department makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with the breadth and balance of the experience it provides. A strong emphasis on the environmental consequences of development, challenging field work in the local area, the awe and wonder of natural phenomena and good links to Italian and Spanish schools is a feature of the departments work.
181. The department is staffed by a very strong team of talented teachers. Accommodation is satisfactory but many text book resources are showing considerable wear. The department has some good information technology facilities and these are very well deployed to raise standards, but access is limited to one room and this significantly handicaps the work of the rest of this talented team, limiting their ability to raise standards further.
182. The quality of education represents a maintenance of the high standards indicated in the last OfSTED report. Progression between Key Stage 3 and GCSE has improved, as has the use of assessment to improve teaching at GCSE. In order to further improve the quality of provision, attention should be given to the following: further develop the provision of IT access in the department; develop further the application of numeracy within the subject; reduce the level of text book sharing at advanced level; replace some GCSE resources that are reaching the end of their working life.

History

183. Standards of attainment at GCSE were in line with the national average in 1998, with an improvement in 1999. Results at A level have been above the national average in the last three years, an improvement since the previous inspection. At Key Stage 4 and post-16, the results in public examinations reflect the ability of the students choosing to study history.
184. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectation. Above average ability students can understand and respond to reasons for opposing viewpoints in the past. They can ask historical questions about a data file of slave ships, using their background knowledge to help them to form hypotheses. The majority of students, however, tend to rely on the teacher's response without working it out for themselves. They argue from the viewpoint of the present about particular issues in the past. Students are working at nationally expected levels by the end of Key Stage 4. They have good subject knowledge, and effective examination technique, but their class work shows dependence on teacher guidance in decision making. By the end of Year 13, A level students have very good subject knowledge and competent essay technique. In British history they can extract the main points of a situation to make presentations to others, and ask relevant questions about research carried out by their peers. In European history they understand and can discuss their teacher's presentation of issues. Their essays show a strong grasp of basics but they have little awareness of the significance of different historical interpretations.
185. Students' progress throughout the key stages is, as at the last inspection, satisfactory, but is still impeded by the nature of tasks and resources. The majority of students make satisfactory progress, but some classes have insufficient opportunity for the most able to use their individual flair to develop higher level reasoning. Students of average ability tend to rely on hearing the answer from the teacher rather than working it out for themselves. They therefore develop good knowledge of subject content with insufficient understanding of the use of historical sources. Below average ability students at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 struggle with comprehension of difficult historical sources. Those who are given sufficient guidance and personal help overcome this, giving perceptive oral answers or asking good questions. Students with special educational needs cope with the written work when given appropriate assistance. They have difficulty recognising how the work is relevant to their lives and so do not retain the large quantity of factual material.
186. Students' response to history varies according to their ability. At Key Stage 3 the most able work neatly, in good detail, and complete their work, while below average ability students tend to leave work incomplete and to write brief phrases rather than full explanations. When given the opportunity to do so, they enjoy working in discussion pairs and groups. They listen well to teachers' explanations. Above average ability students work hard in the GCSE course, accepting the challenges it presents. Below average ability students struggle with its relevance, its considerable dependence on historical sources that are linguistically complex, and with the need to express themselves in continuous prose. They respond better to diagrammatic representation and to the possibility of expressing their findings orally or visually. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there is some poor behaviour among students who do not find the work interesting. The number of A level students varies widely, but there is a large take up in Year 12, from students who gained good grades at GCSE last year. By Year 13, students are confident in presenting their research findings to the others in the group, and in asking questions to improve their understanding.
187. Teaching is usually satisfactory, with some good lessons seen during the inspection. Specialist teachers' historical knowledge is good, and the non-specialists are effective in planning activities to motivate students. The department has wide experience of public examinations that they exploit in training students. All teaching at GCSE and A level gives very clear guidance on examination requirements and technique. When teaching is good, teachers have adapted resources and tasks to the needs of the students. In one lesson seen at Key Stage 3 the teacher motivated students by providing a well paced series of opportunities for group discussion on the background to the slave trade, and in a GCSE lesson

for a below average ability group, the teacher had adapted the task sheets to provide effective visual representation of relevant ideas. Effective teaching at A level involves students in their own learning when they are required to present the results of their own research to the others.

188. As at the time of the last inspection, however, teachers provide insufficient variety of activity. Where students at all key stages are required by the task to make decisions about the evidence, the teacher often relies on a few able students to give the desired response, so that the others rarely need to consider the problems independently. Teachers do not always ensure that below average ability students understand difficult sources or tasks. At Key Stage 4 teachers have low expectations of below average ability students, sometimes failing to engage their interest and therefore having problems with discipline. Teachers' approach to task planning varies greatly in effectiveness. When lower ability students are given opportunities to express their ideas in forms suited to their abilities, their standard of work and attitude to the course is greatly improved. Students are given insufficient feedback on their work. Where work is marked there is useful comment to enable students to improve. The high proportion of written work done in class time is not usually marked, but teachers do repeat explanations orally when they realise that students have not understood. Students receive insufficient feedback about the quality of their GCSE coursework, and so do not know how to improve their grades in this element of the course.
189. Some of the curriculum issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed, for example the introduction of information technology at Key Stage 3. A spreadsheet of the slave trade seen during the inspection is effective in raising issues and testing hypotheses. The curriculum is narrow, however, with courses at GCSE and A level that concentrate heavily on the 18th and 19th centuries, so that the British history of that period is studied in every year throughout the school. Planning is still presented in terms of areas of historical fact with little attention to progression in historical skills and processes.
190. Although there is a wide range of textbooks, teachers depend heavily on photocopied booklets. These do not match the needs of the full ability range, nor do they give scope for variety of teaching approaches or student experience. Some opportunities are provided for independent research, but the study of historical sources in the majority of lessons is dominated by the decisions of the teacher, not the students. Although teachers use the same resources and outline schemes of work, they do not collaborate over the adaptation of tasks for students of differing abilities, so that opportunities to share good practice are missed. There are few meetings to inform non-specialist teachers fully about the requirements of the students. There has been strong liaison with local middle schools to ensure that the school is aware of the students' standards and experience on entry, but this information is not used to inform planning of appropriate tasks.
191. In order to improve further the quality of provision, attention should be given to the following: provide more extensive opportunities for students to think independently and to present their own interpretations of historical sources and situations; provide a greater variety of tasks and activities more consistently matched to the abilities and learning needs of all students; ensure that planning documents give sufficient attention to the historical skills and processes to be addressed, in addition to the content.

Information Technology (IT)

192. Standards of attainment at GCSE have been above national expectation in 1998 and again in 1999, both in the half and full GCSE courses. The performance of girls is consistently above that of boys, with girls producing a higher standard of coursework. All students now study a discreet course of IT at Key Stage 4, and all take the half GCSE course. Some students follow an optional course in information systems. The first cohort studying IT at A level are the current Year 12.
193. Throughout the school standards of attainment are at national expectation in communication and data handling and in applications and effects. By the end of Key Stage 3, with a varying degree of guidance, students can change the appearance of information to suit a particular audience; with help they can change the variables in a model and comment on the impact of their actions. Students are aware of the

wider uses and impact of IT in the community. By the end of Key Stage 4, they can use IT independently to research and to express their findings in a variety of appropriate forms. They do not, however, research the audience effectively before producing a publication. At both key stages students are below national expectation in measurement and control to which there is at present no entitlement, either at this school or in the feeder middle schools. By the end of this year all students in Year 9 will have experienced datalogging in geography lessons, but there is no such provision for those students who do not study geography at Key Stage 4. A level students in the first year of their course are performing below the level expected at that stage, but are struggling with new and difficult procedures. Those who have grasped the processes are able to provide valuable explanations to others in the group.

194. The most able students are performing below expectation in IT because of the limitations of the curriculum that do not extend their experience. Students of average ability are performing at expected levels, but have insufficient opportunities for independent decision making at Key Stage 4. When students of below average attainment and those with special educational needs are given close guidance, their performance is above that expected for their ability. In classes where such help is not provided they are left behind and leave work incomplete.
195. Students' progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 in those areas of the curriculum that are taught. At Key Stage 3 students of high ability are constrained by the nature of tasks designed for entire year groups, but at Key Stage 4 they have greater opportunities to work independently within given structures. Students of average ability make good progress at Key Stage 3. They rapidly learn to operate the system in school and to use a range of applications at appropriate levels. At Key Stage 4 they quickly develop good understanding of the importance of IT in society, particularly in the world of work. Less able students' progress is constrained by the pace of the lessons that prevent them from completing tasks, with the result that they do not understand what they are achieving. At Key Stage 3 students with special educational needs make very good progress with close guidance tailored to their needs, so that they have already learned to predict outcomes of changes to a spreadsheet model. Progress at A level has been impeded by technical difficulties, but these have now been resolved.
196. Students enjoy IT, and take pride in their achievements. They behave responsibly in computer rooms, treat equipment well and use the facilities for serious purposes. Many maintain progress by coming in to work outside normal lesson times. The majority are confident but some are diffident about asking for help in class. Students and teachers relate well to one another, engendering a positive attitude to learning in almost all classes. They work hard and keep their files in good order. Students at A level are keen and persistent in the face of difficulties. Almost all students at all key stages are willing to give and receive help.
197. Teaching in discrete IT lessons is always at least satisfactory, with some very good and excellent teaching. At Key Stage 3 the department is beginning to co-operate with other areas of the curriculum, for example geography, history and some mathematics for students with special educational needs, to provide relevant contexts for the development of IT and the host subject. Tasks are well designed, especially for students with special educational needs. In some classes the pace of the lesson prevents students from completing the task, so that the curriculum is covered but not fully learned. Teachers at Key Stage 4 have good subject knowledge. They relate well to the students and have appropriate expectations of students with different abilities. They work in contexts relevant to the world of work, challenging students to consider issues as well as procedures. Some lessons, however, are very heavily guided with insufficient opportunities to develop the ability to make independent decisions. Throughout the key stages teachers regularly set homework appropriate to the lessons, allowing students access to the IT rooms to enable all to complete it. They assess the students' standards regularly, and plan informal support to meet the needs of all.
198. IT is at present insufficiently used across the curriculum, except in geography where the full range of appropriate applications is used to enhance learning, including measurement of river flow and weather,

research using Internet and a range of means of expressing findings. The art curriculum allows students to manipulate images including photographs taken by digital camera, but is limited by lack of expertise on the part of some teachers. At present it is possible for departments to book IT rooms, but few have made use of this. There are no opportunities to use IT to enhance learning in mathematics with the exception of the excellent contexts for IT taught to students with special educational needs at Key Stage 3. The science department does not use computers to measure physical variables, nor is there any use of computer assisted control in design technology. Students do use IT independently to enhance their coursework in other areas of the curriculum, and are encouraged to do so, but are not often guided towards the effective use of IT to enable them to improve, e.g. by using word processing as an aid to organisation of extended writing. The school is planning to remedy this within the next year and has started by using subject teachers working in tandem with the IT department at Key Stage 3 to provide appropriate contexts. At present teachers across the curriculum have insufficient expertise to provide a consistent experience of the use of IT in subject areas. The school has provided some internal in-service training, but there are plans in place to ensure that all staff are fully trained to teach using IT.

199. The department is well organised to provide a consistent experience that enables students to make good progress throughout the school. The development plan has dealt with the issues raised at the last inspection, although some, for example the dissemination of IT across the curriculum, are still not implemented. The appointment of IT representatives in all departments has given potential for improvement across the school. The department has put effective systems in place for sharing lesson planning, assessment of basic skills, recording and analysing results and reporting them to parents. The results of assessments are also used to plan support for individuals, and are available in the classroom at all times for reference. The co-ordinator established liaison with local middle schools, and used the resulting data to inform planning, but the system has recently broken down at the other end and needs to be re-established.
200. The school has recently improved the number and quality of computers and other equipment so that it is now in line with national average, and will again improve next term. An efficient system has been set up in which all students and teachers can access the network, use Internet and transfer data from school to home computers so that work begun in school can be continued at home. There is open access to computers in IT rooms and the library before and after school sessions. The school has made a flexible choice of software to enable the maximum benefit across the curriculum, while enabling departments to select appropriate subject specific programs and equipment.
201. In order to further improve the quality of provision, the department should ensure that it meets in full the statutory requirement for all students to have access to the full curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4, while fulfilling present intentions to train all teaching staff in the use of IT within their curriculum.

Modern foreign languages

202. Students make good progress as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is above the expectations for students of this age. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 3, but less so in later years.
203. At the end of Key Stage 3, students have made considerable progress. While general ability levels at entry are in line with national averages, attainment in French among students of all abilities is above average using national curriculum assessment data at the end of Year 9. Spanish is offered to all students who wish to take it at Year 9.
204. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE examination results in both French and Spanish are well above the national average, but this is based on only half the school's intake sitting a language GCSE, the majority of whom were girls. The current Year 11 is the first for whom a language has been compulsory, and progress among below average students is being impeded by a lack of motivation among some lower ability groups, many of which are made up predominantly of boys. No alternative to GCSE has been

introduced, and only limited funding has been made available to cater for the increased numbers of students at Key Stage 4. A large number of the most able students are appropriately prepared for A level, but numbers of students studying Spanish or French are not high, and no alternative to A level currently exists in languages.

205. Progress at A level is good and students attain grades close to those predicted for them at the start of their course. Regular use of the language laboratory contributes to good development of listening skills, and the recent participation of the entire Year 13 group in French work experience placements added particular value to their linguistic progress. The department does not have access to computers for any of its students, so information technology skills cannot be delivered through this area of the curriculum.
206. The quality of students' response is generally good, particularly where they are challenged with appropriately varied work, although some students in lower ability groups at Key Stage 4 lack motivation and are occasionally disruptive.
207. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons observed, with more than half the teaching good or very good. At its best, lessons are full of pace and variety, and concentrate on practical tasks. Students of all levels of ability are encouraged by friendly, relaxed relationships and student centred learning is now very much in evidence. There were some instances where students were not sufficiently stretched, and some teachers resorted too frequently to making students copy out. Relations in some of the less effective lessons were too confrontational at times. Use of day to day assessment to inform teaching is generally good, particularly with regard to the large amount of learning homework which is regularly set and marked, but formal assessment is more varied. The department policy of linking work to National Curriculum levels is not being followed consistently. The impact of teaching upon standards of students' attainment and progress is good in most lessons seen, but where practice is less skilled, it is contributing to the lack of motivation among less able groups at Key Stage 4.
208. The department is working well together in many ways, but there is a need for more direction in some areas. There is a need to spread the good teaching and assessment practice which exists in the department more thoroughly, and to develop clear plans for providing an appropriate linguistic experience for more students at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. While staff turnover in the department has been an issue in recent years, and there is a need to review recruitment and training procedures, the current team is creating a strong ethos for learning and building firm foundations for future development.
209. The quality of education represents some improvement on the standard indicated by the previous report. In order to improve further the quality of the provision for modern foreign languages, attention should be given to the following: finding a more suitable curriculum plan for all students aged 14 and above, to include work related language alternatives; seeking a greater variety of teaching and learning methods, including the use of information technology and more practical skills; reviewing monitoring and evaluation, particularly in relation to recruitment, retention and development of staff, in order to maximise the spread of good practice.

Music

210. Students make good progress as they move through the school, and by the time they reach the end of Year 11 standards of attainment are well above the expectations for this age group. The overall progress of all students with special educational needs is good.
211. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above national expectations for the majority of students. Composing and performing skills are particularly good. Students compose music such as variations on well known melodies and using scales based on aeolian and dorian modes. They perform with control, a good sense of rhythm and an awareness of style. Many show the ability to capably use chord patterns and harmonic conventions within their work.

212. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is well above the national average in all aspects of the subject. In particular, composition work is outstanding with some inventive and well-structured work based around chords with added sevenths and ideas stimulated from the ostinato patterns in Ravel's Bolero. The majority of students play a wide range of instruments in demanding class performances such as an arrangement of 'Take Five'.
213. Attainment at post-16 is good overall. Numbers opting for music A level have been too small to make national comparisons but at the time of the inspection the attainment of a talented group of five students in Year 13 is above the national average with good predicted grades. They are all capable performers on their instruments and have a good knowledge of harmonic conventions such as suspended notes in cadences which they identify and apply in, for example, singing a Bach Chorale in harmony.
214. The progress of students is good, and in examination groups is very good as they make significant gains in musical skill, knowledge and understanding in composing and performing skills.
215. Response to music lessons is always good and in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is very good. Students concentrate, work collaboratively and with initiative. Behaviour and relationships are very good and students are always courteous, responsible, trustworthy and show a respect for property and equipment. The examination students plan, rehearse and direct each other well in other locations around the school.
216. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is always good. At Key Stage 4 it is always very good and at post-16 it is occasionally excellent. The consistently high quality of teaching is characterised by the very good command of the subject, high expectations, and very good relationships with students. There is a good scheme of work and lessons are well planned with well-focused objectives. Resources are very well used to promote learning but the level of resourcing is generally unsatisfactory. There is an ancient stock of mini-sized keyboards, no information technology resources, and a lack of equipment set up for multi-tracking or for the students to make their own recordings in satisfactory isolation. There is a shortage of basic percussion instruments. Music makes a strong contribution to the cultural and multi-cultural dimensions of the curriculum
217. The high standards of achievement are as a direct result of the quality of teaching in the department, but the accommodation is recognised by the school as being unsatisfactory. There is restricted opportunity for ensemble work in Year 9 or for examination students to have appropriate, satisfactory, isolated space to practise or record their music, particularly when peripatetics are in school.
218. The head of department works energetically with great commitment and provides very good management and leadership to give opportunities for students to gain a rich musical experience. The very good tuition provided by the Staffordshire Music Service and the range of extra curricular activities which involve a large number of students performing at a high standard is a particular strength of the school.
219. The high quality of music provision has been maintained since the last inspection and progress has been made. In order to improve the quality of the provision and to raise standards even further the department should improve the resources for making music in the department, particularly the use of information technology, and improve the accommodation.

Physical education

220. Students make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with the expectations for this age group. The overall progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Key Stage 3 teacher assessments indicate that the majority of students attain levels in line with expectations. GCSE results are slightly below the national average. Students are achieving greater standards than the predictions the school makes however, and trends over the last few years are upward. Students at the beginning of their GCSE course are developing a basic understanding of body systems, although students in Year 11 have made much progress in their knowledge and understanding of how the body works. Year 11 students show above

average attainment in their water activities module, demonstrating good skills in the water and a good knowledge and understanding of the principles of water survival. A small group of students are achieving standards for this practical activity well above the national expectation. Written work indicates attainment levels across all GCSE grades.

221. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations for students of this age, although standards in swimming are above the national expectation. In swimming, students can enter the water safely and can demonstrate at least two strokes effectively and efficiently. They know and understand the basic survival techniques and can apply these to their practical work. Activities are performed with a satisfactory understanding of the safety aspects. In netball, the girls can demonstrate well-developed basic skills of passing and receiving, shooting and footwork. They understand the games principles and most know and understand the rules. Attacking and defending principles are also understood, and students in Year 9 are beginning to use simple strategies within the game to change its outcomes. More opportunities are needed for students to evaluate their own and others performances and to suggest ways in which they can improve. Progress of the majority of students in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, though their progress in swimming during lessons and over time is good.
222. At Key Stage 4, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. In volleyball the girls can demonstrate satisfactory ball skills of volley, dig and serve, although the skills of anticipation, placement and movement on court need to be developed further. They know the basic rules of the game and understand the rotation and scoring system. The transfer of practised skills effectively into the game itself needs to be developed further. In soccer, the boys can demonstrate good skills of passing and shooting, they know and understand attack and defence strategies and know the rules of the game. Their knowledge and understanding of the game by Year 11 is good. This was particularly evident in one lesson where the boys had devised strategies for re-starting the game in a variety of ways. They practised their set pieces and then transferred them into the game successfully. Progress during lessons is satisfactory, but progress over time in what students know, understand and can do is good.
223. Attainment in A Level examinations is good. In lessons observed the level of attainment was good. Students in Years 12 and 13 have a good knowledge of anatomy and physiology. In one Year 12 lesson seen, the students were engaged in the analysis of the golf swing and comparing it with the known skill of hitting a ball with a hockey stick. They were able to use their existing knowledge to make the comparison and knew and could talk about the 'transfer of skill.' In Year 13 students also have a good knowledge of anatomy and physiology. They use terminology and appropriate language to describe the ways in which the muscles work and can apply this knowledge to the analysis of movement. They express their ideas and opinions in a mature, well-informed way, listening to and appreciating each others' contributions. Written work is of a good standard. Progress made by students in the sixth form is good.
224. All students are given the opportunity to extend and develop their skills through a range of extra-curricular activities which prepare them for representation at school, district and county levels. Provision is good and the teams and individuals do well in competitions at all levels. The 'house matches' which are held each half term attract a good number of students to take part in a competition which is more recreational yet still competitive.
225. The quality of students response is very good in all key stages. The best attitudes to learning were seen in the sixth form where students are highly motivated. All students are well behaved and show interest in their work, they are well motivated and show good levels of determination. Students work well together and are supportive of one another's efforts. Relationships with their peers and their teachers are well established and play a significant part in allowing all students to participate fully in lessons. Take up rates for GCSE and A level studies are good and last year seven students went on to higher education to study physical education or sport related courses.
226. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is particularly strong in examination groups where they

quality of teaching is having a significant impact on the quality of students' learning. Teachers planning follows the national curriculum programmes of study and schemes of work and meets the needs of all abilities. All teachers have a high level of subject knowledge and expertise, which allows them to challenge all students both physically and intellectually within a well managed learning environment. They promote high standards of student behaviour and participation and have very good relationships with the students they teach. All teachers have the ability to encourage and motivate the students through their own experiences and enthusiasm for the subject. Where teaching could be further improved: teachers need to consistently share learning objectives with their students throughout the lesson time, giving more opportunities for the students to make their own evaluations and to seek ways in which to improve the outcomes sooner. All teachers need to consistently involve non-participants in the learning, they need to be fully integrated into the lessons so that they too can make progress in their knowledge and understanding of the activity despite not being involved practically.

- 227. The quality of subject leadership and co-ordination is very good. The curriculum is well planned to provide progression and continuity from the middle school and across the key stages. Schemes of work are well written and at Key Stage 3 have been developed with the middle school co-ordinators to provide a common approach. The subject contributes well to students' social and moral development, but there are no planned opportunities for the cultural or spiritual dimension of the subject. The procedures for assessing attainment are thorough with a profile of written evidence being built up for each student across the key stages. Development plans are firmly linked to the key areas within the school development plan and set realistic but challenging targets for the department. Delivery of the curriculum is very good and systems are in place for monitoring coverage, teaching and learning, examination performance and assessment, recording and reporting.
- 228. The quality of education represents an improvement to the standard indicated in the previous OfSTED report. Progress has been good in developing a range of teaching styles which provide challenge and differentiation for all students. Progress has also been made in addressing the three strands of the National Curriculum and developing procedures for monitoring the curriculum and assessment practices.
- 229. In order to improve the quality of provision for physical education attention should now be given to the following: continue to monitor teaching across the department to eradicate the inconsistencies in the sharing of specific learning objectives, the evaluating of learning outcomes, the setting of future targets for whole class and individuals and the involvement of non practical participants; further develop teaching styles and methods which enable students to be more involved in the continuous assessment and evaluation of their work.

Religious education

- 230. Overall, progress to date has been satisfactory as students move through the school. However, the recent reduction in the time allocation for the subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 is having an effect on the continuity of teaching and learning. There is limited evidence at this early stage in the new school year of the long-term impact of this change. However, although students make satisfactory or good progress in their individual lessons the reduced time allocation is limiting the extent of the progress made over a period of time.
- 231. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national expectation. There is a wide range of attainment evident across the ability sets. Students in upper ability sets generally achieve standards which are above the national average. Attainment in lower ability sets is below average but in line with students' abilities. Students demonstrate effectively their ability to explore and understand moral and social issues and how human actions are influenced by religious belief. Students in upper ability sets in Year 9, for example, showed a good understanding of the symbols used to represent beliefs in infant initiation ceremonies in Christianity and Islam.
- 232. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 also show a range broadly in line with national expectations. In

1999, all students in Year 11 studied the short GCSE course in religious education. Entries for the examination were on a voluntary basis. Approximately 30% of students were entered and this included students from all ability levels. 60% of those entered achieved grades A*-C which is above the national average. The limited time allocation available for the study of religious education in the current Years 10 and 11 restricts the depth to which complex, abstract ideas may be developed, and this is inevitably having an impact on the overall standards of attainment which will be achieved at the end of the Key Stage.

233. Sixth form students have opportunities to consider moral and social issues within their enrichment programme. It was not possible to observe the religious education elements of this programme but the overall time allocation is insufficient to do justice to the full requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
234. Students make satisfactory, and sometimes good progress in their individual lessons at both key stages. Students with special educational needs are generally making satisfactory progress in their understanding of how religious practices influence behaviour, and of the social and moral issues raised by religious belief. Learning from religion is generally a stronger feature of the progress made by students in both key stages than learning about the beliefs and practices of religious communities. There is only limited evidence, for example in students' books at Key Stage 4, of experiences drawn from major world faiths other than Christianity.
235. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection. It is always at least satisfactory, and good in the majority of lessons. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, together with good expectations of the behaviour and involvement of students in lessons. There has been a significant improvement in the range of teaching methods used. Lessons contain a variety of well-timed activities, using effective resources which are introduced in a structured and well organised sequence. A good pace is maintained in the majority of lessons and the interest of students is captured by the variety and relevance of the activities introduced. The most effective lessons are characterised by a challenging questioning style which probes students' knowledge, encouraging them to respond at an increasingly deeper level of understanding. Students are generally required to seek out answers for themselves rather than relying solely on the expertise of the teacher.
236. Where lessons do not achieve their full potential it is generally because students' involvement in discussion and the development of ideas is not fully exploited. Year 9 lessons, for example, in which infant baptism was discussed, failed to offer sufficient opportunity for students to talk about their own experiences of similar ceremonies. The limited time allocation for the subject restricts opportunities to develop themes in this more extensive manner. The discussion of social and moral issues does not always take sufficient account of religious perspectives, consequently restricting the unique contribution of the subject to students' personal development.
237. There are good examples of helpful marking in students' books, which offers clear advice about how work may be developed and of the next steps which students need to take to improve their performance. Good progress is also being made with the development of new approaches to the assessment of students' work. Students are effectively involved in the assessment of their own work and are encouraged to identify individual targets for improvement. It would now be helpful to use the attainment levels provided in the Agreed Syllabus to provide more subject-specific criteria against which progress could be assessed. Homework is effectively used to extend knowledge and to prepare information and ideas for future lessons.
238. Students of all abilities, in both key stages, behave well in lessons and sustain their concentration on tasks set. They work well both individually and in co-operation with each other. Progress is supported by the level of interest shown by the majority of students. Many students are prepared to read aloud, with confidence, and reading is generally fluent and expressive. Good examples were observed of students showing appropriate respect for the views of others in class discussion, for example in a Year 10 lesson

dealing with difficult issues of suffering and religious responses. Despite the quality of generally stimulating and well prepared teaching, there are examples of small numbers of students, particularly boys in lower ability sets, who respond with passive resignation rather than self-motivated interest. Overall, the subject is making a strong and positive contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of students.

239. The subject is effectively co-ordinated by an experienced teacher recently appointed to this position of responsibility. Her oversight of the religious education department is a response to recent staffing difficulties and is a temporary arrangement in the light of her other senior responsibilities. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified and, in a short time, significant progress has been made towards their implementation. Suitable structures have been identified for the improvement of schemes of work, lesson plans and approaches to assessment. The resources used for teaching, including visual materials, artefacts and printed text, are generally of a high quality. However, both the numbers of copies of existing texts and the range of materials available to support learning at both key stages are insufficient.
240. Religious education has made significant progress since the last inspection, not least through the successful implementation of the short course GCSE. In order to improve further the quality of provision, attention should be given to the following: to increase both the time allocation to the subject at each key stage and the number of specialist teachers in order to maintain this level of progress and to meet the full requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus; to extend both the number of copies of existing texts and the range of materials available to support learning at both key stages.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y8 - Y13	928	31	47	47

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y8 - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

55.7

Number of students per qualified teacher

16.7

Education support staff (Y8 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff

11

Total aggregate hours worked each week

239

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

78.1

Average teaching group size:

KS2

N/A

KS3

24

KS4

23

Financial data

Financial year:

1999

£

Total Income

2053503

Total Expenditure

2038241

Expenditure per pupil

2227.59

Balance brought forward from previous year

49960

Balance carried forward to next year

65222

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

928

Number of questionnaires returned:

296

Responses (percentage of answers in each category)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	15	65	14	5	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	26	63	7	3	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	13	47	32	6	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	14	55	16	12	3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	19	56	13	10	2
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	23	60	13	2	2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	18	57	18	4	3
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	17	60	13	9	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	18	52	22	7	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14	54	22	8	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	28	54	13	4	1