

INSPECTION REPORT

The John Ruskin School
Coniston

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique Reference Number: 112384

Headteacher: Mr J M Major

Reporting inspector: Mr R Holmes
2632

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708501

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lake Road Coniston Cumbria LA21 8EW
Telephone number:	015394 41306
Fax number:	015394 41123
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Ennion
Date of previous inspection:	January 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr R Holmes Registered inspector	Science	Attainment and progress
Mrs M Jacobs Lay inspector	Design and technology Key Stage 4 non-NC	Teaching Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Partnership with parents and the community The efficiency of the school Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Ms J Fitzpatrick	English	
Mr A McGregor	Religious education Mathematics Physical education Equal opportunities	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Ms K Ardley	History Geography	Curriculum and assessment
Mr B Downes	Information technology Modern foreign languages Special educational needs	
Mr G Kinder	Art Music	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

The inspection contractor was:

Peak Education Partnership
19 Huddersfield Road
Barnsley
S70 2LT
01226 280290

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

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

- What the school does well
- Where the school has weaknesses
- How the school has improved since the last inspection
- Standards in subjects
- Quality of teaching
- Other aspects of the school
- The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

1 - 4

- Characteristics of the school
- Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

5 - 78

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

5 - 18

- Attainment and progress
- Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
- Attendance

Quality of education provided

19 - 52

- Teaching
- The curriculum and assessment
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
- Partnership with parents and the community

The management and efficiency of the school

53 - 78

- Leadership and management
- Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
- The efficiency of the school

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science 79 - 105

Other subjects or courses 106 - 162

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 163

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in many lessons.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- The school takes good care of its pupils and they take good care of each other.
- The provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is good; social development is very good.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- There are strong links with the community.
- The school has a good, positive ethos.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Assessment is not used well enough to help pupils make progress.
- II. The co-ordinators of a few subjects do not manage well enough.
- III. The role of the deputy headteacher does not match the seniority of the post.
- IV. The reading skills of many pupils are too low.
- V. Systems for financial management and planning are not strong enough.

John Ruskin is a very caring school with many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses are to be tackled and a copy of the plan will be sent to parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The previous report identified five key issues for action. These issues have been addressed and some have been resolved. The length of time pupils are taught has been extended and now matches the recommendations. Mostly, lessons now have a good pace and challenge the bright pupils. The curriculum is now broad and balanced, but collective worship does not take place each day. Staff work very hard, but some still do not contribute sufficiently to the effective running of the school. Management is more clearly focused on school improvement. Overall, considering the work still to be done and the fact that many of the improvements are recent, the school has not made sufficient progress since the last inspection.

The recent appointment of the headteacher and the involvement of the two key stage co-ordinators in the management team strengthen the school's position considerably and it is well placed to move forwards.

Standards in subjects

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	K
Key Stage 3 Test	D	E	<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>average</i>	C
GCSE Examinations	C	D	<i>below average</i>	D
			<i>well below average</i>	E

Results at Key Stage 3 in 1999 were better in mathematics and English than in science. Taking the last four years' results together, performance is close to the national average in all three of the core subjects. At Key Stage 4, attainment is better than most schools achieve in art, design and technology, and geography. In most subjects, pupils perform as well as in other schools, but results are a little lower in English and below average in history and German. Results at both key stages, particularly in English, are affected by the low reading ability of some pupils.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English; mathematics; art; geography; design and technology	German
Years 10-11	Good	English; mathematics; art; geography; design and technology	History and German
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Ninety-four per cent of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and 58% was good, very good or excellent. Teaching is equally good at both key stages.

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 in lessons and around the school. Exclusions are rare.
Attendance	Good and continuing to improve.
Ethos*	Good. Relationships are very good and pupils are keen to learn.
Leadership and management	The headteacher's leadership is effective and is well supported by the key stage co-ordinators, but the deputy headteacher's role is under-developed. Governors carry out their role conscientiously.
Curriculum	Sound, with a good range of extra-curricular activities. Assessment is not used well enough to improve performance and teacher assessments are not accurate enough.
Pupils with special educational needs	Well organised. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and there is a need to extend support to those who have difficulty with their reading.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good overall, with social development very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There are sufficient qualified staff; resources are adequate and the accommodation is good, having benefited from considerable self-help improvements.
Value for money	Sound. Many aspects are good, but financial planning and control are not strong enough.

**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
VI. The school is approachable.	XIII. They are not told clearly enough
VII. Behaviour is good.	
VIII. Standards of work are good.	XIV. The amount of homework.
IX. They are able to be involved.	
X. Problems are handled well.	
XI. Extra-curricular activities are very good.	
XII. Children like the school.	

Inspectors agree with the parents' strongly positive views of the school. It is a very caring community; children are supported well and make good progress in happy surroundings. Information about the curriculum is not written clearly enough. Homework was set regularly during the inspection and effective use is being made of the planners to keep parents informed.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to raise standards even further, staff and governors should:

- improve the reading skills of the relatively large group of pupils whose reading age is below their chronological age. This will involve extending the current range of special needs support and working in conjunction with primary schools so that the improvements can be made as early as possible. A whole school approach is needed, not just efforts within the English department. *(see paragraphs 6; 12; 82; 83; 90)*
- ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate, and make more effective use of assessment information to identify where pupils need to concentrate their efforts in order to improve. *(see paragraphs 33; 35; 36)*
- ensure that all subjects are well managed and that the staffing structure in the school reflects the importance of successful subject management. *(see paragraphs 54; 105; 150)*
- review the role of the deputy headteacher, which does not currently reflect the seniority of the post and is not sufficiently involved in school improvement. *(see paragraphs 55; 75)*
- strengthen the arrangements for financial management so that there is clear responsibility for day-to-day control and a single IT system for recording transactions. A long-term plan is needed to overcome the growing deficit, and the efficiency and effectiveness of all spending should be considered carefully. *(see paragraphs 56; 77)*

In addition to these key issues, the school should address the following less important points.

- Provide an act of worship every day in order to conform to statutory requirements.

§ **INTRODUCTION**

§ **Characteristics of the school**

1 John Ruskin is a mixed comprehensive, taking pupils between the ages of eleven and sixteen. There are currently 225 pupils on roll, making it much smaller than most secondary schools. All pupils are white and have English as their first language. Eight pupils have statements of special educational needs, and there is a total of 52 pupils on the school's register for special needs, which, as a proportion, is above the national average for secondary schools.

2 The school has a very pleasant situation on the edge of Coniston, between the mountains and the lake. Pupils come to the school from the small town and from villages and farmsteads in the surrounding area, some making journeys of over an hour. When

they come into the school at the age of eleven, pupils have a very wide range of attainment, particularly in reading; about a third have reading ages three or four years in advance of their age and another third are equally far below. Overall, pupils' attainment is average, but the range is wider than is found in most schools. Six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is only about a third of the national average. This figure by itself does not give an accurate picture of the school; whilst some pupils have advantaged home backgrounds, others do not and overall these balance out to give the school a broadly average intake.

3 The aims of the school are:

- . to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all pupils, appropriate to their abilities and enabling them to achieve their full potential;
- . to provide equal opportunities for all, regardless of race, gender, disability or social status; and to meet the individual educational needs of every pupil;
- . to be an accepting and caring community that provides for the welfare of each individual pupil;
- . to create an enjoyable and stimulating environment in which pupils can acquire knowledge, concepts, skills and practical abilities, and the will to use them;
- . to encourage the concept of the school as part of the wider community, and to foster positive relationships between the two;
- . to encourage parents to be involved in the educational process;
- . to develop an understanding of, and a respect for, other individuals, their beliefs and ways of life;
- . to foster a respect for the earth and its resources, and a recognition of our responsibility towards them; in particular, to foster an understanding of, and a commitment to, the wellbeing of our own unique local environment;
- . to develop personal and social skills that promote self-confidence and self-esteem, and to lead pupils to take responsibility for their actions;
- . to enable pupils to develop a system of personal, moral values, and an awareness of a spiritual dimension to life and experience;
- . to encourage pupils to think, question, evaluate and communicate in an appropriate form;
- . to recognise, and, where possible, reward achievement and effort;
- . to help pupils to develop their abilities to meet the requirements of public systems of assessment under the National Curriculum;
- . to equip pupils for life after school in terms of work, leisure and education as a lifelong process.

4 Current priorities for development are:

- . to raise attainment, particularly for the more able;
- . to review assessment arrangements;
- . to increase the level of differentiation in lessons;
- . to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment;
- . to increase the involvement of staff, reviewing staff structure and job descriptions;
- . to raise the profile of the school in the community.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999			56

National Curriculum		English	Mathematics	Science
Test Results				
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	17	24	21
	Girls	12	11	9
	Total	29	35	30
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	52(70)	62(55)	54(59)
	National	64(65)	62(60)	54(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	14(43)	27(39)	20(32)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)
Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	23	22	31
	Girls	18	13	16
	Total	41	35	47
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	73(73)	63(75)	83(93)
	National	65(62)	65(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	35(43)	36(43)	53(55)
	National	32(31)	38(37)	29(31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	40	23	63

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	15	32	40
	Girls	14	22	23
	Total	29	54	63
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	46(37)	86(93)	100(98)
	National	(44.6)	(89.8)	(95.2)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed	Authorised	School	%
through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Absence	National comparative data	6.7
	Unauthorised	School	7.9
	Absence	National comparative data	0.3
			1.1

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Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	7
	Permanent	0

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Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	16
	Satisfactory or better	94
	Less than satisfactory	6

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5 The previous inspection reported that standards at GCSE were above national and LEA averages, with all pupils being entered for five or more subjects. A slightly higher proportion than average achieved five or more grades A-C and significantly more pupils achieved five or more A-G grades. At Key Stage 3, most pupils achieved a level 5 in English, mathematics and science. At the time of the report, national figures were not available for comparison. Standards in the school at GCSE have improved; there have been some marked fluctuations, with results well above average in 1997 and below in 1998. Overall, the trend is rising, but not as quickly as the national rate.

6 When they come into school at eleven years of age, pupils' attainment, as demonstrated by standardised tests, shows an unusually wide range. Reading ability in particular varies more widely than in many schools. Currently about a third of the Year 7 pupils have reading ages at least two years in advance of their age, and another third have reading ages two years or more below their chronological age. Overall, this gives the school an average intake, but with a higher proportion of both high and low attaining pupils than is usually found.

7 In making comparisons with other schools, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is usually used. Statistically, this gives a good indication of how well pupils should normally do. In the case of John Ruskin, the low percentage of free school meals, 6.3 per cent compared to a national average of 17.5 per cent, does not give a fair picture of the school's intake or of the level of advantage pupils have at home.

8 In the 1999 GCSE examinations, 46 per cent of pupils achieved five or more grades A*-C, which is very close to the national average. This is much better than the 1998 results, but the increase has come entirely from an improvement in girls' performances; 61 per cent of them achieved five or more A*-C grades, compared with only 38 per cent of boys. Nationally, girls do better than boys, but the difference is not as great as this.

9 Results in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been close to the national average over the last three years. In 1998, they were above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. A similar proportion of pupils reached level 5 as in other schools, and more were able to reach the higher level 6 in English and science. In the 1999 tests, 52 per cent of pupils reached level 5 or above in English, compared with 64 per cent nationally, and of these, 14 per cent reached level 6 compared with 23 per cent nationally. These figures are both below average. In mathematics and science, the proportion reaching level 5 or above was very close to average, fewer than usual went on to reach level 6 in mathematics, and in science, the proportion was well below the national average. A relatively large number of pupils did not take the test in English and mathematics, whilst most did in science. Taking this into account, the scores in science were average, in mathematics they were below average, and in English they were well below average. Statistics used by the school for comparison have been worked out using the number of pupils entered for the test rather than the full year group. This has given an incorrect picture of the school's performance. Taking the three core subjects together,

results for 1999 are below average, and well below those achieved by similar schools.

10 In the work seen in the school at Key Stage 3, standards are sound in English, pupils express themselves well in speech and listen carefully; they write effectively in different styles, but reading is not as good as in many schools; although many pupils read well, an unusually high proportion are not confident readers. In mathematics, pupils handle numbers competently and standards are sound. Standards are also sound in science, pupils handle investigations effectively and are developing a clear understanding of science concepts. In other subjects, standards meet expectations in design and technology, information technology, music, physical education, French and religious education; they are below expectation in German and history. They are above in art and geography.

11 At Key Stage 4, attainment in lessons, and shown in pupils' work, is a little below average in English, largely due to the high proportion of pupils who do not read well. It is average in science and mathematics, where pupils have sound knowledge and skills in the subjects. Attainment in German remains below expectation and falls to below in history as a result of teaching that often confuses the pupils. Standards are in line with expectation in information technology, French, music, physical education and religious education, and are above expectation in art, design and technology and in geography.

12 The only areas where pupils do not make enough progress are in German and in history at Key Stage 4. Progress is good in mathematics and geography at both key stages, pupils make good progress in design and technology at Key Stage 4, and in history and music at Key Stage 3. In art, progress is good at Key Stage 4 and very good at Key Stage 3 as a result of teaching that inspires pupils of all abilities. Pupils with special needs make good progress, but there is a need to extend the provision to cope with pupils who have difficulty with their reading, although they are not necessarily on the special needs register.

13 Pupils make effective use of their literacy skills across the curriculum. Technical vocabulary is introduced well through a number of subjects, including science, design and technology, art and music. Pupils are encouraged to express themselves through speech in a number of subjects and they are confident and often persuasive in debates. Written work is often clear and well matched to its purpose, but spelling is often inaccurate. Pupils are expected to read for information in many subjects; many are very competent at this, but a large proportion are not fluent and their low reading ability depresses their performance in a range of subjects. Good use is made of numeracy in science, geography and physical education; pupils use numbers confidently and interpret graphs and charts correctly. Satisfactory use is being made of information technology across the curriculum, mainly for word processing. Pupils studying food technology make good use of information technology to research nutritional information from databases.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

14 Pupils throughout the school show good attitudes to their work. They listen, concentrate hard, show interest in their learning and respond well to teachers' instructions. Most pupils are eager to answer questions and to join in discussion. They demonstrate routines in physical education with confidence and Year 9 pupils participate actively in role-play in French. Year 11 pupils understand the need to meet deadlines for GCSE coursework. Pupils make good use of open access to computers for personal study. However, book stock in the library is limited and reference books are not well organised,

which restricts opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. The school has recently introduced the Sirius Club to encourage high ability pupils to extend themselves. This is a positive move, but many of the pupils involved feel embarrassed about attending and have not valued some of the sessions.

15 Behaviour in and around school is mostly good. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and there is little disruption. However, there are sometimes background conversations whilst a teacher is talking. Occasionally, pupils miss instructions and do not understand what they should be doing. Behaviour at lesson change-over times is usually sensible and pupils move around with the minimum of supervision. At lunchtimes, pupils are trusted around the grounds, often without a conspicuous adult presence, but with a healthy respect for the discipline expected by their conscientious lunchtime supervisors. Pupils are not always polite, but respond very well when courtesy is extended to them. If pupils do break the code of conduct, they fully understand the range of sanctions that may be used, including the academic performance and behaviour report. Pupils who misbehave on the buses are reported by bus monitors and may be placed on bus report. The school excludes pupils only under the most extreme circumstances and does so rarely.

16 Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils value the small, warm, friendly atmosphere where everyone knows each other. Staff and pupils inter-relate well and pupils of all age groups mix together for work, extra curricular activities and in their break and lunchtime. Relationships are fostered by the buddy system whereby Year 9 pupils form friendship groups with Year 6 pupils in the feeder primary schools just before they move up. They are carefully matched so when they become Years 7 and 10 they can travel together as well as giving support in school. Pupils say there is very little bullying, either verbal or physical and they are confident that any incidents are dealt with firmly and fairly. Residential visits successfully help to foster and build relationships.

17 In Year 11, all pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility and they make a strong contribution to the school community. All are appointed as prefects, but if they do not behave properly, the badge is withdrawn. They act as lunchtime and bus monitors, as well as generally helping other pupils and staff around school. Each form elects representatives to the school council, which then elects a chairman and secretary. The council is very active in negotiating and organising events to raise money to buy equipment they want in school, such as outdoor seating and soap dispensers. They have recently devised a code of conduct for discos and a letter to parents to grant permission for their children to attend the disco. Council members are good at reporting straight back to their form groups and all pupils feel that the council is giving them a voice in the school. Pupils throughout the school lead teams and are eager to represent their school in a wide range of games and sports. Personal and social education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Attendance

18 Attendance is good and continues to improve. Attendance figures are better than national average and unauthorised absence is below national average. Pupils come willingly to school and arrive on time. Parents understand the need to inform school of reasons for absence and usually do so promptly. Most staff complete computerised registration sheets and absence reports correctly. The school receives good support from the education welfare officer. The statutory requirements for the recording and reporting of

absence to parents are met.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

19 The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Ninety-four percent of lessons were at least satisfactory, and six out of ten lessons were good, very good or excellent.

20 The previous report found teaching unsatisfactory in almost a quarter of lessons, and only about a third of lessons were good. In many lessons, the teacher did not give the pupils an active enough role and work was not matched well enough to pupils' abilities, with the most able pupils suffering most from lack of pace and challenge. A few lessons were spoilt by poor behaviour not being properly controlled. The first key issue in the last report was to develop these aspects of teaching. The current position represents a considerable improvement. Three of the staff have been assessed successfully for advanced teaching skills status.

21 Planning for lessons is generally good in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Good planning clearly identifies what the pupils will learn before setting out the activities that will take place and how pupils of different abilities will all be involved. Some planning is less detailed and concentrates on what the pupils will be doing rather than on their learning. Planning at this level led to satisfactory lessons rather than good ones. Even more cursory planning that did not match activities to pupils' needs led to unsatisfactory lessons at Key Stage 4 in history. Planning is sometimes supported effectively by good subject documentation, such as in geography, where the work of a number of teachers is co-ordinated very effectively.

22 Most lessons are lively and stimulating. Teachers convey their own enthusiasm for the subject in a number of lessons. This is particularly effective in art, when teaching is very good and pupils are often inspired to produce exceptional work, and pupils of all abilities are given the support they need to improve. English lessons make good use of role play and teachers are able to help pupils understand a wide range of feelings. Some lessons in science use an unusually wide range of activities to help pupils come to grips with difficult concepts and to make learning memorable, writing poems about the body's endocrine system and acting out the role of molecules in a liquid. Very few lessons suffer from poor teaching methods, for example giving instructions that are too hard to follow in an information technology lesson and not providing enough opportunity to practice the language in German.

23 Relationships are good and lessons are well organised. Pupils' behaviour is good and teachers manage this aspect of the classroom very well. Poor behaviour was not a feature of the few unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers know the pupils well and often pose questions skilfully to draw the best out of individuals. They are often very sensitive to particular needs and support pupils well to ensure that they make progress, for example in design and technology, where tasks are made manageable for pupils with poor co-ordination or problems with reading.

24 Responses to questions are encouraged and pupils are thoroughly involved in most lessons. Incorrect answers are treated sensitively and many teachers make good use of them to diagnose reasons for misunderstandings. Pupils' work is marked regularly and helpful comments are sometimes made to show pupils how to improve. Overall, not enough use is made of assessment information to identify areas for pupils to improve, much being left to general encouragement to try harder.

25 Homework was set regularly during the inspection, recorded in pupils' planners and provided a useful extension to the work done in class.

The curriculum and assessment

26 The curriculum provides an effective framework within which pupils are offered a reasonably broad and balanced education. The aims of the school include the provision of a broad and well balanced curriculum. There is no formal statement of how the curriculum is monitored and evaluated. Whilst monitoring and evaluation happens in individual subjects, there is no consistent, whole school approach to monitoring the curriculum. It is also not clear which member of the senior management has an overview of the whole curriculum. All pupils have equality of access to the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in order to ensure access to the subjects of the curriculum. The needs of the most able pupils are not always fully addressed by the curriculum.

27 The requirements of the National Curriculum are satisfied. However, the time allocated to science at Key Stage 3 is slightly less than recommended by the Department for Education and Employment, and less than found in most schools. The percentage of time allocated to music and art in Key Stage 3 is slightly more than usually found in schools. Other than the differences identified, the allocations of time to subjects are adequate for the courses provided and are similar to those found in most schools. All subjects are provided, including drama and personal and social education. Information communication technology is provided as a discrete subject throughout both key stages. In Year 7, all pupils take German as a modern foreign language, and from Year 8, French is added to the curriculum. A programme of personal and social education is provided throughout both key stages in form groups. From Year 10, it includes the teaching of health, sex and drugs education together with careers education. This is a valuable course that helps pupils to consider important issues in their lives and to develop a basis of knowledge from which they can make informed choices and decisions affecting their educational, social and personal lives.

28 At Key Stage 3, pupils are divided into two form groups in each year. Each form group contains pupils from the full range of attainment. In Year 7, pupils are regrouped within these forms for mathematics and science according to their attainment. This arrangement is effective in establishing a context in which pupils can work at levels best suited to their attainment in the subjects, although it does not remove the need to ensure that within each lesson work is suitably differentiated to reflect the needs of individual pupils. Pupils are also regrouped within design and technology to provide opportunities for smaller groups of pupils to experience the range of subjects within technology. These arrangements continue throughout Key Stage 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the mainstream programmes.

29 The curriculum at Key Stage 4 consists of a common range of subjects for all pupils,

which occupies sixty per cent of the programme, together with four other subjects or courses. Slight variations in the elements that make up the curriculum between Years 10 and 11 reflect differences in the needs of pupils. In Year 10, there is the opportunity for pupils to follow a course in environmental geography, leading to a Certificate of Achievement, as an alternative to the geography programme assessed by GCSE examination. While they are in Year 9, pupils receive guidance about the choices available in Key Stage 4. An options booklet clearly identifies the elements of the core curriculum and the choices available. Pupils receive guidance from teachers and the Careers Service adviser to support their decisions. The range of subjects on offer as options is inevitably narrow, given the size of the school. Pupils have a limited choice of vocational subjects; currently only motor vehicle engineering is offered and there is no recognised qualification offered at the end of the course. The school should explore the provision of increased vocational options in Key Stage 4.

30 The length of the teaching week has been extended since the last inspection and is now officially twenty-five hours for both key stages. This is slightly longer than the minimum recommended by the Department for Education and Employment. Each day is divided into six periods of fifty minutes. This length of time provides an appropriate period for learning.

31 The curriculum is supported and enhanced by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. Some provide additional opportunities for pupils to extend curriculum subjects, such as art clubs, trips to the theatre, to a local farm and to complete a river study. Others help pupils to develop and pursue additional interests. An Activities Week is provided each year in July. Many pupils make use of the ICT facilities before school and during the lunch break. The annual fell race provides an opportunity for most pupils in the school to further their physical and personal development. For all age groups, extra-curricular sporting activities include competitive games within school, fixtures with other schools and outdoor pursuits activities which often include a valuable residential experience. Pupils have many opportunities to spend time abroad. They include a visit to Germany to provide language experience. Musical activities are many and varied, including instrumental and vocal tuition, the opportunity to play in ensembles and groups, and recently to take part in the school's production of the musical "Grease". During Year 10, all pupils undertake a period of work experience. Many pupils make the arrangements for their own work placement using family contacts. This is helpful, given the limited numbers of placement providers in a rural community. Some pupils have to travel long distances to experience the world of work in their chosen vocational area. Occasionally, pupils arrange to stay with relatives in other parts of the country in order to take a placement. The careers teacher liaises effectively with providers to ensure work placement is a positive experience for all pupils.

32 Overall, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities programme represent a satisfactory range of educational provision, which prepares pupils for further education and training, as well as for adult life and employment. It makes an important contribution to the educational standards that are achieved and provides effectively for the personal and social development of pupils of varying levels of attainment.

33 The school's assessment policy sets out the purposes and methods of assessment. However, there is a lack of coherence and consistency in the implementation of the policy. Several departments demonstrate very good practice in elements of assessing, recording and reporting. Some departments have made a very good start with target setting activities with individuals and cohorts. The headteacher interviews all pupils individually to discuss strategies for ensuring progress towards their targets. The responsibility for the co-

ordination of assessment procedures is not clearly defined. There is no named co-ordinator for assessment, and recording and reporting of achievement. There is no whole school approach to marking and feedback and, whilst some departments demonstrate good practice, there is a need for greater consistency so that all pupils understand how they are progressing in all subjects.

34 The school meets the statutory requirements with regard to pupil records and reports. There is a discrepancy between teacher assessment in some subjects and the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3. The school should provide opportunities for teachers to be involved in further moderation and standardisation activities to improve the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' levels of attainment.

35 The school collects a range of information about pupil performance and attainment. However, although this data is collected and collated, there is little attempt made to analyse it. The school should adopt a coherent approach to managing performance data. Analysed data should be carefully examined and interrogated in a systematic way. Pupils' achievements should be monitored by gender and attainment. Questions and prompts should be used across all teaching and year groups to identify how assessment information may be used more effectively in curriculum planning. The results of the analysis of assessment and performance data should be shared with relevant staff and used with pupils in order to raise expectations and attainment.

36 Several features of the curriculum and assessment have improved since the last inspection. In particular, substantial improvement has taken place in the provision of ICT. The length of the teaching week has been increased to comply with national recommendations. The time allocations for subjects at Key Stage 3 have been improved, though there is a need to review the under allocation for science. Consideration should be given to the extension of vocational opportunities that would provide for a wide range of attainments, aptitudes and interests and prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives. Departments need a strategic approach to using assessment outcomes in curriculum planning and in reviewing the effectiveness of the courses they provide.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

37 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The programme for school assemblies is prepared in advance, with contributions being made by a number of local men and women from different faiths; most assemblies incorporate a collective act of worship and are of a broadly Christian character; at present, there is little pupil involvement in assemblies. Each half term an assembly is held to celebrate pupils' achievements. Assembly does not take place on Wednesdays, when the school's PSE programme is taught, and there is no provision for a collective act of worship on that day. Nevertheless, the school has made advances since the last inspection in its provision of a daily collective act of worship and plans to develop this further. The curriculum contributes to the pupils' spiritual and moral development in a variety of ways, with provision in art being notable for elements of awe and wonder. Good use is made of the majesty of the surrounding countryside to help pupils appreciate the grandeur of creation, and religious education helps pupils' spiritual development by providing them with insight into and appreciation of several of the world's major religions.

38 Provision for pupils' moral development is good. There are clear expectations of good standards of behaviour, and achievement is frequently celebrated in lessons and, at

regular intervals, in assembly. The school's ethos conforms with its aims in that individuals are cared for, achievement is valued and there is a climate of mutual respect. The good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves helps to promote good behaviour and a sense of order. The consistent application of the school rules helps pupils to know right from wrong and to accept that they must take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

39 The social development of pupils is very good. Each year, there are opportunities for a residential visit by every year group; these visits enrich the curriculum and also help to foster positive relationships throughout the school. There is a rich programme of inter-school competitions in sports such as football, including girls' football and rugby, and participation in a broad range of outward bounds activities such as camping and orienteering. Pupils who have achieved a certain standard in outward bound activities are this year going on an expedition to Morocco. Each year, the whole school, staff and pupils alike, takes part in a traditional fell race. A great deal of social maturation and development is achieved by the care taken of individuals by dedicated members of staff through subjects like art, physical education, geography and English. Music, art and drama also help to educate pupils' feelings. In addition, the "buddy system", whereby older pupils in Years 9 and 10 take special responsibility for pupils in Year 7, contributes to the caring ethos and helps older pupils to learn how to take responsibility. Older pupils also act as monitors on the buses, help weaker readers in Year 7, and some take on the responsibilities of prefects and librarians. The school has a number of clubs, such as the art club, and the school council is active, discussing issues like healthy eating and playing a vital role in the organisation and supervision of events like discos. There are strong links between the school and the community, with a powerful investment from the community in the school and from the school in the community, adding to the pupils' sense of pride and identity.

40 The cultural development of pupils is good. The strength of subjects such as music and art, as well as the breadth of literature covered in English and the multi-faith approach taken to religious education, all contribute to pupils' cultural development and their appreciation of cultures different from their own. The two exchange visits per year undertaken by the modern languages department, as well as trips to places like Morocco and the cultural visit to Crete organised for school leavers by the English department, help to broaden pupils' horizons and to prepare them for life in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. The strong sense of community in the school and in the district also helps pupils to develop a good knowledge and appreciation of their own local culture. Together with the Cumbrian Educational Development Centre and St Martin's College, the school has made a successful bid for £5,000 to support the development of its links with Burkino Faso, which will enable it to broaden the scope of its links with Africa in an exciting millennium project linking rural family areas. The school's production of the musical Grease involved a great many pupils and was widely appreciated in the school and in the community.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

41 The school makes good provision for the educational and personal guidance of pupils, overall, and takes good care of their welfare, health and safety. The school has an effective pastoral system, which is supported by staff who are caring, sensitive and understand the needs of pupils in their care. Form tutors have a key role in supporting and monitoring their pupils' welfare and progress. Since the last inspection considerable attention has been given to enhancing and developing the role of form tutors, to good effect. Pupils appreciate the practical advice and help they are given including individual interviews and there is a valuable programme of support for Year 7 pupils which provides

detailed help with pupils' planning and organisation, such as diaries, gives positive feedback to them and supplies a range of support which starts from when pupils are in Year 6. A local residential experience arranged for Year 7 pupils in their first term also provides invaluable induction opportunities. Form tutors provide good guidance and support throughout the school, know their pupils well and usually keep the same tutor group during the five years the pupils are in the school. Pupils' academic progress is monitored by tutors, subject teachers and other key staff as part of a well developed network of provision. Through written comments, school reports and individual discussions, teachers help pupils to understand what progress they are making and to set targets for future improvement. Pupils with special educational needs have good support and individual pupils are offered guidance for social skills and behaviour in a sensitive way. Individual education plans are appropriate and helpful and the support for pupils with special educational needs individually or in small groups makes a positive contribution to their progress.

42 Considerable commitment has been given to developing a comprehensive programme of study for personal, social and health education since the last inspection. As in all the developments, the co-ordinator is giving a strong and informed lead, actively supported by the staff who have engaged in an extensive range of staff development, related to support guidance and pupils' welfare and clearly reflecting the priority given to this area by the school. The programme for personal, social and health education is largely delivered through the extended tutor time on Wednesdays. It is well organised and delivered with planned progression across the year groups. The programme includes good attention to a range of important aspects including sex and drug education, behaviour and bullying, records of achievement, study skills and other aspects of citizenship. The whole programme is well organised and co-ordinated, with planned progression across year groups. It provides valuable opportunities and benefits for all pupils.

43 Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and given good support and guidance. Individual education plans are appropriate and useful. Child protection procedures and arrangements are thorough and staff suitably trained, with support available from outside agencies. Behaviour policy is based upon respect and concern for the needs of others. Pupils know clearly the difference between what is right and what is wrong; they know what is expected of them and need few reminders. There are differentiated targets and a formal monitoring system for those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Bullying is rare and if it does occur it is dealt with promptly and effectively. The issue of bullying is covered very well within the school's personal, social and health education programme. Attendance is good with clear and effective procedures in place for monitoring and following up any absences.

44 Overall, the school makes sound provision for careers education and guidance, with a number of good features. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of developments, including improvements in the careers evening, which now takes place in Year 10 rather than Year 11; the introduction of high profile career interviews held in local hotels, and involving outside personnel, including the local careers service, where pupils have to take full part in all the stages of applying, preparing and attending a job interview, with a debrief following. There is an appropriately structured system for careers guidance and support, which is well led by the co-ordinator and actively and effectively supported by the local careers advisory service, with whom there are very good links. Parents are closely involved in the process. Programmes for both key stages have been extended to include further provision for skills development, teaching approaches and joint planning, although it is recognised that a few areas could still be developed further, especially in relation to the exploration of attitudes and values to extend pupils' horizons in terms of the range of career

opportunities available. Good relationships and links continue with post-16 providers and local employers, and work experience is very effectively organised and monitored. The school is planning to attain a County Quality Standard, which is externally validated, and the intention is to start in February of next year.

45 Health and safety policy is clear and detailed and covers all aspects of school life. Risk assessments are carried out as a matter of course in every key area of activity, and applied well. The issue raised in the last inspection report related to the kiln has been effectively dealt with. The arrangements for the wellbeing of the pupils are good. There are well documented procedures dealing with such issues as the administration of medication, the organisation of school visits, and guidance on dealing with accidents or minor illness. Through the very effective personal, social and health education programme, pupils are made aware of the dangers of drugs and are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This is reinforced through physical education and science programmes, which strongly emphasise sport and physical fitness, and cover key issues such as sex education, first aid, financial matters and citizenship. High priority is given by the school to support for pupils, their welfare and guidance and this area is a strength of the school.

Partnership with parents and the community

46 The school values its partnership with parents and the community. The links with the community are a real strength and the school is working hard to build on the solid foundation of goodwill it has from parents.

47 The prospectus and governors' annual reports to parents are sound, factual documents that give parents a lot of information. However, both are produced in small, close type, without the benefit of illustration or graphics to make them more eye-catching and interesting to the reader. In contrast, the JR Star newspaper produced by Year 9 and 10 pupils is lively, wide ranging and well illustrated. Some parents feel that the school does not give them enough information about the curriculum, although the problem is not so much lack of information, but how it is presented. As well as subject information in the prospectus, the school now has its own web site, but the quality of the data is variable. Parents of pupils in Year 9 receive a useful booklet about options for GCSE. The new school planner gives parents and pupils information about all aspects of school life, as well as homework, and is being well used as a means of home school communication. Most parents have now signed the home/school agreement. Reports to parents clearly explain what their children know, understand and can do. Attainment and effort grades are explained and targets for improvement set. Pupils also review their own achievement and set their own targets. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are properly involved in annual reviews.

48 A small group of parents is actively involved in supporting the school through the parent teacher association and other parents help at events. The money raised is much appreciated and teachers request items they need that cannot come out of their regular subject budget. Attendance at parents' evenings is satisfactory and the school does try to contact those parents who cannot make the date to offer alternative meetings with form tutors. Parents support extra-curricular activities by providing transport and being prepared to collect their children from matches and tournaments. Several parents helped with the production of 'Grease', for instance making costumes. There are now five parent governors to represent the parents' view to the governors.

49 The school works closely with its feeder primary schools and in particular the village school. Pupils help at the school voluntarily and on work experience. Those undertaking the Junior Sports Coaching Award take weekly games sessions. Primary school pupils are taught swimming in the school pool in the summer term and there is also a multi-sports tournament in the summer.

50 Pupils find work experience particularly beneficial. They choose a wide range of positions in and around the Lake District and further afield. They feel the opportunity gives them a first view of the world of work and helps to broaden their horizons and in some cases experience life in a city for two weeks.

51 The school works very closely with the village community. They have been part of the successful Village of the Year Award submission in 1997 and the Coniston in Bloom environmental initiative. The building is used every night for group activities, and a lifelong learning class in the art department on Wednesday afternoons is very successful. The car park is available for tourist parking and raises useful revenue. The tennis courts are open for public use, as is the swimming pool in summer. Money raised is put back into improving sporting facilities. Pupils are actively involved in the life of the village. They weed neglected corners, rebuild dry stone walls and pick litter. The school is a centre for fell walking and annual events such as the Coniston 14, where refreshments are provided by the parent teacher association.

52 The school is very good at promoting pupils' appreciation of the wider community. It is an active participant in the Rainbow project, which is creating a huge rainbow banner to be completed in the millennium year. This is a worldwide scheme started in Cumbria and will have run for seven years to represent the colours of the rainbow. The school is closely linked to a school in Moscow for this project. Pupils participate in fund raising for national and international charities. There are opportunities to visit cities in the United Kingdom and European countries that raise pupils' awareness of what life is like in different places, whilst giving them the opportunity to describe their experience of living in a rural community.

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

.. **Leadership and management**

53 The headteacher has been in post for just over a year. He has established a clear view of the school and identified how it should move forward, maintaining the level of care and concern that is shown to pupils and enhancing its reputation in the community for academic attainment. A number of priorities for development have been agreed with governors and progress is being made.

54 The previous inspection reported that some staff in school were not sufficiently involved in the organisation and management of the school. Previous headteachers carried too much of the administrative burden of the school and there was little delegation of management responsibilities. This situation was worsened by the allocation of promoted posts having been made to reward responsibility for aspects such as community links rather than co-ordination of curriculum areas. A major, recent development has been to raise staff awareness of the need for more involvement in management and for the effective co-

ordination of subjects. Subject management has improved considerably and is good or very good in English, art, geography and information technology. Management is sound in most other subjects, but developments are still needed in science and German.

55 The senior management team has been increased to include two senior members of staff, together with the headteacher and deputy. The senior teachers are each responsible for the pastoral and academic oversight of a key stage, as well as having responsibility for major subject areas. These considerable responsibilities are carried out very effectively and provide them with very well informed views of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which they are able to bring to bear to plan developments. These roles and responsibilities contrast markedly with those of the deputy headteacher. He has responsibility for finance, which is shared with the school secretary, and for the analysis of assessment statistics. Even with other general duties, this does not constitute an appropriate range of tasks for such a senior post. He is a long established and respected member of the school community, but his role is not contributing sufficiently to the school's movement forward. His role in financial management has not resulted in contingency plans being considered to meet the projected budget deficit and little use is made of assessment data to identify ways of improving performance.

56 Governors are conscientious, committed to the welfare of the school, and very conscious of its important place in the community. They receive regular reports of the school's performance and have recognised the need to make savings in order to balance the budget. Some measures are being taken, including reducing the Year 7 to a single class for some subjects, but there has been little consideration of alternatives and no significant financial modelling of the consequences over time of different savings, to example changes to the staffing structure. This low level of financial planning is serious, particularly with the budget moving deeper into deficit.

57 School development planning is based on a review of the position in each subject area following monitoring by the headteacher. Targets for improvement have been agreed with each co-ordinator. This process has raised awareness of the importance of the co-ordinators' role as well as identifying important areas for development. Areas identified in the current plan are appropriate and there are realistic timescales for development with reasonable costings and responsibilities clearly defined.

58 Plans that have been in place since the previous inspection have addressed most of the five key issues that were identified in the report. The length of time pupils are taught has been extended and now matches the recommendations. Mostly, lessons now have a good pace, and challenge the bright pupils. The curriculum is now broad and balanced, but collective worship does not take place each day. Some staff work very hard, but others still do not contribute sufficiently to the effective running of the school through the co-ordination of subjects or involvement in planning and decision making. Management is more clearly focused on school improvement. Overall, considering the work still to be done and the fact that many of the improvements are recent, the school has not made sufficient progress since the last inspection. The recent appointment of the headteacher and the involvement of the two key stage co-ordinators in the management team strengthen the school's position considerably and it is well placed to move forward.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

59 The proportion of part-time to full-time staff has increased slightly since the last inspection and overall numbers remain the same. Staffing continues to be satisfactory for most subjects. The staffing for science is adequate for the current low timetable provision and adequacy of staffing in religious education depends on the services of a volunteer, the local vicar. The pupil contact ratio, high in the last inspection, is now average. The burden of middle management and subject responsibility is not equally shared and some staff are carrying an excessive load.

60 The employment of a high proportion of part-time staff enables the school to continue to provide teaching in all subjects by suitably qualified specialists. There are also six instrumental music teachers, most of whom have qualified teacher status.

61 Support staff remain effectively deployed. However, given the wide range of abilities in the school and the large proportion of lower attaining pupils, the quantity of support possible in English and special educational needs is insufficient.

62 The quality of support is good. Support staff work closely with teachers and good practice was seen, for example, in English, mathematics and design technology. The support from non-teaching staff is generally satisfactory and the caretaking of the school is well run by the site manager.

63 Special educational needs teaching staff are appropriately qualified. Technician support has been extended since the last inspection to cover design and technology, but support in science is limited by the technician's present lack of qualification to undertake all duties. This puts pressure on the newly qualified teacher who takes the main responsibility for science. Otherwise, induction for new staff is effective.

64 At the time of the last inspection, staff appraisal was on target to meet statutory deadlines and the first cycle has been completed. The process is currently suspended pending advice from the teaching unions. The school intends to apply for 'Investors in People' status and an element of appraisal will be integral to this.

65 Good staff development and in-service training records continue to be kept and there has been an improvement in monitoring the effectiveness of staff development and training. A priority for many staff is further training in the use of information computer technology.

66 The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils on roll. Rooms vary in size and the smaller ones offer less flexibility in the way they can be used, which limits the range of teaching styles. Mathematics classrooms are small and the layout of the benching in science is not ideal. Since the last inspection, pupils' lockers have been provided, which helps to address some of the overcrowding in classrooms. There is good disabled access to the physical education areas, but access to the upper storey of the main teaching block is by stairs only.

67 Some improvements have been made in the quality of the accommodation. The design and technology rooms have been extensively refurbished in-house and the music room redecorated by staff. There is appropriate specialist accommodation, except for physical education, where the hall continues to double as a gym. The difficulties this presents are compensated for by the excellent outdoor facilities, including, in the summer, the open-air community swimming pool. The science rooms are still used as tutor bases, which because of health and safety considerations, limits pupils' access to their form rooms. Parents gave considerable practical help in the conversion several years ago of the

ROSLA block to an arts area. Its drama room is used mainly for religious education and English lessons; drama continuing to be taught in the hall, which offers a larger working space.

68 There has been some improvement in the display in classrooms. It is good in geography and art for example, but barely adequate in German. Display around the school is reasonably attractive, but could be livelier. Some is out of date and needs revising. The local education authority has done much since the last inspection to improve the external fabric of the building, especially to the hall. The leaky windows have been replaced. Cleaning costs are relatively high, but the school is well maintained.

69 The generally adequate level of resources reported in the last inspection continues. There is a satisfactory range of textbooks in most core and foundation subjects and the stock of books in English is good.

70 The library supports teaching and learning well. There is a good collection of fiction suitable for teenagers. Some non-fiction stock is inadequate, but most books are of an appropriate level. The good collection of magazine articles has been maintained and the careers and reference sections are good. Some labels on the shelving are missing, making some non-fiction subjects hard to locate. There is an excellent, computerised catalogue of all the stock. No issuing records are kept and many losses result, so that the library capitation is largely spent on replacing stock.

71 Helped by in-house initiatives, computer stock has been updated and is now good. The ratio of these up-to-date machines to pupils is 1:8, which is good. Information computer technology stock in classrooms varies, but is generally satisfactory and the main computer suite is accessible to all. The resourcing of the vocational motor vehicle course is good.

72 Resources beyond the school are well utilised. There are good school exchanges in French and German; history and geography make good use of museums and field study centres, and physical education and art capitalise extensively on the many opportunities offered by the rich local environment.

73 The school is well funded; its allocation puts it in the upper quartile. Development planning has improved in some subjects, but is still embryonic in others.

.. **The efficiency of the school**

74 Financial management and control are insecure. There is insufficient understanding of the need to forward plan and project in order to forecast possible financial problems. The school's budget is severely constrained by fluctuating pupil numbers and the need to subsidise bus travel for pupils who come from outside the designated catchment area. The governors have oversight of budget planning and review spending regularly. However, they do not understand sufficiently their role in monitoring spending to ensure that very restricted money is being spent in the wisest manner to support educational developments. The school tries to take the budget into account when formulating its development plan. Governors discuss the draft, but rarely question any costing that is included. The school had an overspend in the last financial year and governors are predicting that this overspend will grow during this financial year. They do not currently have firm plans to try to limit the over spending. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately, but there is insufficient money available for additional support. The school constantly tries hard to raise extra revenue by additional use of the premises. Tourists use the car park and the building

is let most nights. Revenue raised from public use of the tennis courts and swimming pool is put back into purchasing equipment for the physical education department. The parent teacher association also raises money for the school to buy equipment it could otherwise not afford.

75 Teaching staff is mostly well deployed within subject areas, which they have trained to teach. There is some imaginative use of part-time teachers to ensure coverage of all subjects. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a significant subject teaching commitment, which detracts from the time she can give to special educational needs. The music teacher is shared with two feeder primary schools. The site manager is conscientious and fulfils her range of duties with enthusiasm. Technical support staff efficiently assist subject teachers. There is a limited role for the deputy headteacher, which he has difficulty fulfilling. In particular, he is not in control of financial operations, nor does he have a proper oversight of the budget. The secretary currently does not have time to deal with the financial aspects of her job. However, the clerical assistant is being trained to take over the tasks relating to attendance and a new telephone system should also help to free the secretary to spend more time on routine finance.

76 The school is situated in an idyllic environment and makes very good use of its location. The building is also very attractive and adequate in terms of size and space for most teaching groups. Some rooms are slightly cramped for larger classes. All pupils have a locker, but bags placed in corridors and on classroom floors during lesson times restrict movement. The separate arts block is used well. Staff and parents have worked very hard to make good improvements to the accommodation and equipment for information technology, design and technology and music at minimal cost to the school. The standard of display is variable. In some classrooms and corridors, display is used very effectively and in others is rather uninteresting. The school is clean and the building and grounds are kept mainly litter free. However, there is a general impression of untidiness, disorder and clutter in some rooms and offices.

77 Office staff deal with routine matters relating to pupils and parents. They carry out their secretarial and clerical roles without fuss. They offer good support to teachers with photocopying and placing orders. Attendance records are accessible. Routine financial administration is shared between the deputy headteacher and the secretary. However, they do not use the same systems so they cannot quickly confer. The deputy headteacher has his own records, in addition to the system from the local education authority. A recent audit report found most of the school's financial systems to be satisfactory overall and the recommendations have been considered and are being acted upon. However, the recommendations all referred to routine operations that needed to be improved. There is no use of data to forward plan and make budget projections to ease the school's financial difficulties.

78 Teaching is good, pupils make good progress, attainment is satisfactory, relationships are very good and pupils are well behaved. Costs are high and financial planning and control are unsatisfactory. The school, therefore, gives satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

79 Standards of attainment in lessons are about in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 3; they are below that level at the end of Key Stage 4.

80 The results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 indicate that pupils' results are below the average for all schools and well below the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The 1999 results indicate an improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 or above and a slight decline in the proportion gaining level 6 or above. The average points scored by girls in these tests have been above the national average for girls in the three years 1996 - 98; in the same period, the average points scored by boys have been below the national average for boys; girls regularly do better than boys by an exceptionally large margin.

81 In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the school's results were below average for comprehensive schools in English, and close to average in English literature. Although national figures are not yet available for 1999, it is likely that the school's results will again be below average in English and close to or slightly above average in English literature. In 1998 and 1999, the results of girls were considerably higher than results for boys by a significant margin in both English and English literature. When compared with national averages, the school's results in GCSE examinations have varied in recent years. In 1996 and 1997, the school's results were above the national averages in both English and English literature. These variations are linked to variations in the attainment of pupils on entry to the school.

82 The attainment profile in English of pupils entering the school is unusual. In the present Year 7, no fewer than 12 pupils, or 36 per cent, had a reading age of 13 or above, considerably above their chronological age; however, at least a third of the entrants had reading ages below their chronological age; a majority of these were boys. In previous years, as many as 60 per cent of entrants have had reading ages below their chronological age, with a significant number having reading ages two or more years below their chronological age. In every year group, there is a long tail of pupils whose reading is relatively weak. There is, therefore, an unusually wide spread of attainment in English, ranging in most years from well above average to well below average. In every year, there is an unusually large proportion of pupils, mainly, but not exclusively boys, whose progress in English - and in other subjects - is impeded by their low level of attainment in reading; the most serious of these receive regular support and attention from the co-ordinator for special educational needs (the SENCO) and support assistants, but not all are able to receive this additional support.

83 The progress made by pupils is generally satisfactory. This is shown in the results achieved in English and English literature at GCSE from year to year, and in the results obtained in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is also satisfactory. The school's results or CAT scores for the same group of pupils in 1996 and 1999 respectively indicate that almost all made satisfactory progress in that time; in both years, boys accounted for the majority of pupils

with scores below the mean. The school's records of the progress made in reading by pupils with special educational needs indicate a satisfactory rate of progress. However, it is relatively unusual for these pupils, or a significant proportion of them, to catch up with their peers in their reading performance.

84 Inspection evidence indicates that standards of listening and speaking at the end of both key stages are in line with national averages. Pupils in Key Stage 3 listen with good levels of attention and carry out instructions willingly. Year 7 pupils enjoyed relating incidents in the class reader, "Boy", to their own experience. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 talked productively in small groups while working on their units of study. Pupils in both key stages are relaxed and confident and will ask for further clarification or will volunteer a point of view in the knowledge that it will be well received by the teacher and other pupils.

85 As already indicated, there is a very broad range of reading attainment at the end of both key stages. Higher attaining pupils read demanding texts with good levels of understanding, fluency and accuracy. They know how to locate and retrieve information in books and can use the library computer to find books on a particular subject. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils enjoy Shakespeare, and pupils in Key Stage 4 taking English literature handle set texts with confidence and enjoyment. Some Year 11 pupils read sections of Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible' with good levels of dramatic skill. Lower attaining pupils, by contrast, often have difficulty in coping with relatively undemanding texts; their decoding skills are limited and they have a restricted sight vocabulary.

86 Inevitably, the writing skills of pupils reflect their variable attainment in reading. Pupils write in a good range and variety of styles: narratives, book reviews, diary writing or 'logs', letters and poems. One higher attaining pupil in Key Stage 3 completed an extended project on Whitby, which was well organised, clearly written and very well presented, using word-processing. A lower attaining pupil in the same key stage produced some thoughtful autobiographical writing of considerable length. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 produced some good quality news reporting as part of their study of literary genres. In both key stages, a good proportion of the pupils' writing is appropriately based on reading. Pupils regularly re-draft their writing, working first in rough or drafting books and re-drafting on sheets collected in a yellow folder. In some cases, re-drafted writing does not represent a sufficient gain in terms of content, expression and improved spelling and presentation. In general, standards of presentation are satisfactory or better, but standards of spelling are more variable and many pupils make basic spelling errors. The general standard of writing is satisfactory; most pupils produce an adequate volume of writing in their own words and the teaching methodology adopted encourages pupils to write in a variety of styles. However, some lower attaining pupils produce little writing, and their writing is marred by low standards of spelling, punctuation and presentation.

87 Most pupils have positive attitudes to English. In Key Stage 3, pupils are eager to answer questions and take part willingly in classroom discussions; pupils will gladly relate incidents from their own experience to the teacher and the rest of the class, and most work conscientiously and stay on task. Pupils in the upper set classes in Years 10 and 11 are very positive in their response to the subject. They enjoy the challenge of the set texts, discuss issues with enthusiasm and are ambitious to do well. Pupils in the lower set classes in Key Stage 4 are usually well behaved and conscientious, but on occasion, can chatter and waste time or can destroy the work atmosphere by muttering while the teacher or others are talking or reading aloud.

88 The quality of teaching is mainly good and never less than satisfactory. Some of the teaching is very good. At the time of the inspection, one of the regular teachers of English, who makes a significant contribution to teaching at Key Stage 4, was absent due to illness.

Lessons are well planned and prepared, resources are appropriate, reading material is generally well matched to pupils' interest and attainment, and the pace of most lessons is brisk and efficient. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and interact with them skilfully to maintain their attention: in one Year 7 lesson, the teacher produced sweets similar to those being described in the class reader so that pupils could identify by sight and taste the experiences being described. Teachers are familiar with the study units and can prompt pupils to think and write 'in role', maintaining a good level of enthusiasm. They give clear instructions, answer questions from pupils skilfully and, during group or activities work, circulate to support individuals and groups. Pupils with special educational needs often receive additional support from the SENCO or a special needs assistant, and teachers are familiar with the needs of different pupils. They assign homework on a regular basis and mark pupils' writing conscientiously; they regularly show pupils how their work could be improved.

89 Pupils in Key Stage 3 receive a period of drama each week and the quality teaching in this was good or very good; pupils learn to use their body to communicate meaning and the subject engages and exercises their imagination and contributes to their self confidence and skill in speaking and listening. All pupils, regardless of their attainment in formal English, experience some success in the subject.

90 However, although teachers and support teachers and assistants work hard, their lack of numbers means that they are not able to give sufficient individual attention to the large proportion of pupils who have weaknesses, especially in their reading. Additional support is given to weaker readers: for 15 minutes each week some Year 11 pupils work with weaker readers in Year 7 and about seven outside volunteers provide further support to the SENCO for about an hour a week. Pupils with special educational needs also receive regular individual attention from the SENCO. Given the scale of the problem in the school, however, the support provided by the school is not commensurate with the need. The school needs to give urgent attention to methods by which it can improve the reading performance of the large number of pupils, especially those in Years 7 and 8, whose reading age falls below their chronological age. This will mean working in close collaboration with its main feeder school and organising resources, personnel and accommodation in such a way that close attention can be given to pupils' needs. If the problem is followed up in a sufficiently systematic and thorough way, using staff trained in modern methods of reading recovery, over time the general level of pupils' reading should improve and a large proportion of pupils with diagnosed reading difficulties should be able to catch up with the average reading age of the year group. If this were to happen, the difference in attainment between boys and girls would be reduced, since the proportion of boys who are weak readers is considerably greater than the proportion of girls.

91 The teaching of the subject is greatly assisted by a good quality scheme of work that provides detailed guidance on the units of study for each year group, as well as on resources and activities. The work of the department is assisted by a good collection of teenage fiction in the school library. The head of department provides good leadership and support to others and carries a heavy teaching load in addition to his other major responsibilities in the school. English and the special educational needs department work closely together. Since the last inspection, there has been improvement in the quality and range of pupils' writing, a good proportion of which is word-processed. The department has no computers of its own at present, but several new computers are due to be provided

shortly.

Mathematics

92 The results in the national tests, taken by all 14 year olds in summer 1998 were close to the national average both overall, and for those achieving the higher levels. When compared with schools having about the same proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the results for 1998 were below average. This represented a drop from the previous year and a trend in results over the previous years which had been upwards, albeit at a slower rate than the increase nationally. However, amongst other factors, the year group contained a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The equivalent results for 14 year olds in 1999 are below the national average overall, but more pupils have reached the higher levels. Girls have done better than boys over the last few years. The GCSE results showed a similar trend, with below average results in 1998 that have been substantially improved in 1999, especially when compared with predicted grades. Most pupils during the inspection, at both key stages, are achieving standards in line with national expectations.

93 By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils are able to identify patterns from sequences of numbers and many can confidently express their findings in algebraic form. Many higher attaining pupils are able understand and use appropriate formula for finding circumferences and radii of circles. Most pupils have an appropriate knowledge about shape and space, with a satisfactory and sometimes better grasp of number skills, including rapid recall of number bonds. Lower attaining pupils use and apply their mathematical knowledge appropriately in tackling 2D symmetry, finding perimeters of simple shapes, and measuring angles. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with expectations, and on occasions better. Many pupils have a sound understanding and approach to investigative work with an appropriate range of skills; they can identify patterns and discuss their results with confidence and understanding. Their knowledge of a range of number techniques, such as rounding, is mainly secure, most have a sound understanding of Pythagoras' theorem, which they use appropriately to find the hypotenuse and other sides. The higher attaining pupils have an above average knowledge about algebra and many can rearrange complex formulae successfully. Lower attainers handle co-ordinates appropriately and can find competently areas and perimeters of two-dimensional shapes. Attainment in number work across the curriculum in both key stages is mainly average. In science, geography and information technology, they draw and interpret graphs well. Elsewhere pupils use their number skills thoughtfully and appropriately, for example in measuring and estimating accurately, such as in physical education and associated with financial matters in the personal, social and health education programme.

94 Pupils make sound progress, overall, at each key stage; sometimes it is good. At each stage, the best progress takes place where work is carefully targeted and matched to pupils' prior learning and attainment within the set, and high quality, direct teaching of rapid pace is in evidence. Pupils in Year 7 mostly make a positive start. Many grasp new ideas well, with higher attaining pupils achieving good standards and lower attainers making appropriate progress, for example in estimating the lengths of classroom furniture and equipment. Pupils continue to make sound and sometimes good progress in the key stage. On occasions, however, although the work is generally tailored to build upon pupils' previous learning, the actual tasks could be more astutely matched to what some different groups within the same set know, understand and can do. The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 4 is similarly sound and often good, although on occasions, a few Year 10 boys are progressing slowly through lack of sustained attention, in spite of the positive teaching

commitment concerned. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress, and work is often very appropriately matched to need; appropriate use is made of individual education plans for most of these pupils.

95 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, overall. In most lessons, pupils worked hard, listened and concentrated well, took a pride in their work and, when the occasions arose, collaborated well on joint tasks. Most pupils see mathematics as important and readily ask for help when they feel it is needed and often put forward confidently their own ideas and suggestions, and respond well to questions from their teachers. Very occasionally, some pupils' attention, usually boys, wanders during a lesson, but when their interest is captured, most pupils show sustained effort, and many clearly enjoy different aspects of the subject.

96 The overall quality of teaching is good and it varies very little between key stages. In the best lessons, work is carefully planned and organised with good attention to the match and pace of work. Tasks build effectively on pupils' previous learning and are interesting and challenging. Good quality, direct teaching is a key factor in such lessons, with good use of ongoing assessment and high expectations of behaviour, attitudes and pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers' planning, overall, is of good quality, with clear learning objectives for lessons. Resources are used well to support pupils' learning. On rare occasions, pupils, usually boys, lack sufficient self control in their mathematics lessons and their progress is correspondingly reduced. Elsewhere, on occasions, the match of work is insufficiently rigorous to challenge, at an appropriate level, all the pupils within a given set. Teachers communicate clearly and the most effective lessons start with a recap of the previous lesson, have an explanation of what is to be done, and close with an effective plenary session. Teachers often make very effective use of questions, although on a few occasions too much use is made of closed questions to challenge and extend pupils.

97 The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and provides equality of opportunity to all pupils. The schemes of work are clear. The new head of department is providing a very positive lead and good support for her colleagues in the short time she has been in post. There are a number of good aspects of monitoring, including the analysis of results, but it is also recognised by the school that monitoring could be developed further to enhance the good practice which is evident in targeting, and precision in the match of work, on occasions, within some sets. Good examples of marking are to be seen, but overall, greater consistency is needed to ensure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers know their pupils well and are working very hard in their interests. The school is appropriately resourced for the subject. Standards of presentation are generally good. The subject makes a positive contribution towards the ethos of the school.

Science

98 In the GCSE examinations for 1999, about two thirds of the pupils entered for the double award examination achieved a pass at grade C or above. This compares favourably with the national picture, where just less than half the candidates reach that level. However, a number of pupils were entered for the single award examination and were far less successful, with only a fifth of them gaining a grade C or better, which is about the national average. Taking the two examinations together, half of the year group achieved a science pass at grade C or above, just above the national figure, with girls performing very slightly better than boys. Results have been better than this in previous years and have been above the national average.

99 Results in the national tests for the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were close to the national average overall, more pupils reached level 5 than nationally, but fewer reached the higher level 6. In 1998, many more pupils were successful at the higher level. Over the last three years, the results in Key Stage 3 tests have been close to the national average, with girls performing markedly better than boys and with considerably more difference than is found nationally. Teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 are much higher than the test results. This is only partly explained by the assessments, including pupils' abilities in carrying out investigations, which are not covered in the tests.

100 Pupils' performance in lessons reflects these examination and test results, and pupils demonstrate a wide range of attainment, even within the ability sets that have been established. In Key Stage 3, pupils in the upper groups handle science equipment well and take readings carefully and are able to record them on charts and as graphs. A Year 8 group was able to set up its own experiment to investigate whether hot water cooled quicker than cold water. They understood the need to make the test fair and were careful to keep as many factors the same in both parts of the comparison. The graphs they plotted were clear and accurate and the pupils could interpret them correctly. Pupils in Key Stage 4 develop their investigative skills even further, showing a good level of independence in investigation they have designed. They make good links between their findings from investigation and their knowledge of science. Attainment in investigative aspects of science is sound and often good at both key stages.

101 Pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical aspects of science is developed well. At Key Stage 3, pupils, including those in the lower set, have a good grasp of matter being made of particles and can use this understanding to explain the properties of solids, liquids and gases. Pupils understand chemical symbols and, although some cannot remember the details, they can use the symbols to represent chemical reactions and balance the equations that describe them. Older pupils showed a sound understanding of the refraction of light in lessons, and work they have done indicates good understanding of forces, electricity and similar topics. Life and living processes are covered and pupils develop a sound knowledge of the information, but not such a deep understanding of the underlying processes as they do in the other aspects of the subject.

102 Pupils respond well in science lessons. They use equipment responsibly and are aware of the need to work safely. They collaborate well in groups, for example sharing out tasks in an investigation, and respond well to questions from the teacher. Many are willing to think deeply about the subject and, particularly in upper sets, pose questions of their own, which demonstrate an ability to link aspects of knowledge and to explore new ideas.

103 Teaching in science is good. The two teachers involved have different styles, one being very experienced and the other recently qualified. Both set clear objectives for what the pupils will learn each lesson, involve the pupils in their learning through practical work and discussion, and achieve successful outcomes. In the most successful lessons, there is very careful use of correct terminology and questions are used very skilfully to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage their thoughtful understanding of processes. There were some particularly good examples of using pupils' answers to explore their difficulty in understanding a particular concept and providing suitable extra support, for example in helping a Year 8 group understand the radiation of heat. Teachers know the subject well and are able to make the work lively and stimulating, particularly in the physical sciences.

104 The curriculum is well balanced in science, but pupils have rather less time for

science at Key Stage 3 than in many schools, with ten per cent of the time rather than fifteen per cent. Assessment is used very effectively to diagnose individual pupils' problems with the subject, but teacher assessments are not always matched accurately enough to National Curriculum levels of attainment.

105 Science is currently being managed by a newly qualified teacher. It is normal practice to give new teachers a reduced timetable and no extra commitments while they refine their classroom skills, so teaching a full timetable and organising a department is an unusually heavy burden. The work is being carried out with a great deal of commitment and enthusiasm, but the lack of experience shows and there is a need for tighter organisational routines, such as in ordering equipment for practical activities. The laboratory technician is not trained for the work and needs closer supervision than can be provided with the current arrangement and so he is unable to provide the level of support to the teaching that he would like. Accommodation, with two laboratories and prep rooms, is good, but seating arrangements in one laboratory make it difficult for some pupils to see the board.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

106 The good standards noted in the previous inspection have been well maintained. Attainment at the end of both key stages is above national standards. Knowledge of art history, a weakness in the last inspection, is now solidly grounded. GCSE results for those obtaining A*-C grades have been well above national averages in the last four years. For such a small school, relatively large numbers of pupils take the examination. The largest cohort was entered in 1999 and they got the best results. In all years, all pupils gained a certificate. At Key Stage 3, observational drawing is good and painting is done confidently. Printing seen in Year 7 is competent. The very good clay work in Year 8 and Japanese project in Year 9 show imaginative design. Pupils' understanding of art from other cultures is very good. At Key Stage 4, computer graphics are good. Control of a wide range of media is good and the way pupils are able to develop their ideas from concept to realisation is often exciting. Progress through Key Stage 3 is very good. The gain in skill and understanding from Year 7 to Year 9 is striking. Progress in lessons at Key Stage 4 is similarly very good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in art.

107 The last report found many enthusiastic pupils who took pride in their artistic endeavours. Happily this has not changed. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are still very positive and committed. They listen carefully, watch demonstrations attentively, and show good self-discipline in their individual tasks. Motivation is high and behaviour is good. They can discuss their work confidently with adults.

108 Teaching, satisfactory to good in the last inspection, is now very good at both key stages with some excellent features at Key Stage 3. The teaching promotes high standards and the very positive relationships and spirituality of approach contribute to this. Expectations are high, pace is well maintained, and tasks are suitably challenging. Planning is very good. Projects are logically sequenced and pupils of all abilities work at appropriate levels. The teaching of critical studies is now very good. Methods are very well matched to pupils' needs and lessons are very well organised. Pupils are well managed, and time, accommodation and resources are used to maximum effect. Assessment is good and pupils receive helpful, verbal feedback. Homework is carefully thought out and set regularly.

109 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Now that the problems with the kiln have been overcome, the lack of three-dimensional work noted in the last report is no longer evident. The time allocated to the subject has been increased substantially. The departmental documentation is excellent. The strong focus on non-western art is valuable in such a mono-cultural school. Learning benefits from the many links made with visiting artists and the rich local environment is used well. Subject leadership is excellent. The working space is satisfactory, but storage facilities are poor. Consumable resources are barely adequate.

Design and technology

110 The number of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was close to the national average for both resistant materials and for food. Results in earlier years have been higher than this and examination results are generally higher in design and technology than in most other subjects at the school. The teacher assessments of

pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 are close to national expectations, with most pupils achieving at least level 5 and a good proportion reaching level 6.

111 These assessments are borne out by the standards pupils are demonstrating in lessons and the quality of work they produce. At both key stages, there is a very wide range of attainment. Pupils currently working in Key Stage 4 are likely to achieve grades ranging from E to A, with most on line to reach at least C. Much of the project work being undertaken is ambitious and has been chosen by the pupils because of a real need, for example a car trailer to carry off-road motor cycles and a Celtic harp. A good range of materials is being covered and most pupils are making good use of skills and techniques they have learnt earlier in the school and are producing well made projects with a good quality of finish. The quality of design work in pupils' folders is generally satisfactory, but pupils are not reaching as high a standard in this aspect of the subject as they are in making things. Design for resistant materials projects often concentrates on the aesthetic aspects of design, and considerations of strength of structures or alternative ways of assembly are under-developed. From conversations with pupils, they have often considered a range of approaches, but these are not always recorded. Similarly, considerations of strength are based on experience or what looks right, for example in the choice of metal section for a framework, rather than considering the loads it is expected to bear. Research work for textiles and food projects is often extensive and well presented. Pupils make good use of information technology to calculate the nutritional value of meals they are designing and they are able to take account of special dietary needs, often responding to real situations of cooking for a diabetic or designing meals to match their own sports training programme.

112 There is also a wide range of attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3, with more variation in pupils' designing skills than in their skills at making things, particularly in resistant materials. In their work with food, pupils handle equipment well and are very aware of the needs for safety and hygiene. They carry out basic processes well and are well organised and tidy in their work, often producing good quality results. In designing meals, they are able to consider mixing ingredients to achieve effects of flavour combinations and contrasts, texture and appearance. They assess the quality of what they have made, but this is sometimes done in general terms, asking tasters if they like the dish, rather than focusing on the effect that was aimed for in the design, for example a combination of textures. In their work with resistant materials, pupils also learn to use tools safely and accurately. The programme concentrates on developing skills and techniques rather than designing. Pupils learn to work from well produced drawings, but do not have enough opportunity to draw ideas of their own. The making skills are important, but increasing design skills at Key Stage 3 would be a useful foundation for the Key Stage 4 work in resistant materials.

113 Teaching is good throughout the subject. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make the subject interesting for pupils. They expect and achieve high standards from the pupils and make good use of their knowledge of individual strengths and weaknesses to ensure that all make good progress. Activities are adapted for the least and most able to ensure that they are stretched appropriately. Relationships are good and teachers give very sensitive support to ensure that everyone is able to achieve some success.

114 Pupils respond well to lessons, work hard, and often take a thoughtful approach, although this is not always recorded in their design folders. They are attentive to instructions and demonstrations, and are keen to answer questions. When appropriate, they work well together, sharing ideas and supporting each other on large projects.

115 Management in the subject is effective, but there could be stronger links between the food and resistant materials areas, for example using a common format for design sheets and evaluations. Much of the work now being done separately could be shared and this would reinforce the philosophy of the subject that both teachers share.

116 There is good accommodation for the subject, which has been greatly enhanced by a considerable amount of self-help work put into the structure and decoration of the resistant materials areas. Both areas have been enhanced by attractive and informative displays.

117 The motor vehicle engineering course provides a good experience for pupils who are not well suited to more traditional GCSE subjects. It would be even more valuable if it led to a recognised qualification. Proposals to institute a food hygiene course are well advanced and together these courses could help to develop links with further education institutions and extend the range of the school's curriculum into more vocational areas.

Geography

118 Attainment at the end of both Key Stages is above the levels expected nationally. Since the previous inspection the standards achieved have been enhanced. The department is well placed to sustain further growth and improvement.

119 Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average with the majority of pupils gaining the expected level or higher. At the higher levels, the attainment of boys and girls shows no marked difference. However, a higher percentage of girls reach the national expectation. (63% boys, 78% girls). Pupils have a clear focus on geographical terminology.

120 Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. In 1999 boys attained more A* to C grades (61%) than girls (55%) in GCSE examinations. Almost all pupils entered for the examination gained a graded result. Pupils demonstrate a wide range of geographical skills in their coursework including the collection and analysis of original data from which the more able make subtle comparisons and inferences.

121 At Key Stage 3 pupils of all abilities make satisfactory or good progress. Some pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Across each year and within each unit a clear focus is placed on the development of geographical keywords. From Year 7 pupils develop and extend their geographical vocabulary by using key word lists for each unit of work. By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils are able to complete a geographical enquiry and demonstrate a range of research and recording skills. High attaining pupils produce work of very good quality including the presentation and interpretation of data. Some lower attaining pupils with special education needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. For example they can identify the factors influencing population distribution and they can describe the basic features of a river.

122 At Key Stage 4 pupils of all abilities make at least satisfactory, and often good or very good progress. Less able pupils are making satisfactory or good progress in their work on rainforests. They are able to identify the main effects of deforestation and the likely consequences for the native Indians. By the end of the Key Stage pupils of all abilities are able identify and describe the features of a drainage system and show understanding of the

effects of industry and flooding on the river. They can identify the short and longer term effects of flooding and a settlement and can suggest a range of strategies to limit damage. Most pupils are able to produce a sketch map of Lynmouth with confidence. Pupils are able to use a range of fieldwork techniques and some collate, analyse and present data using ICT. Most pupils are able to use statistical analysis and draw valid conclusions effectively. Higher attaining pupils can also evaluate their fieldwork methods objectively.

123 Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost always good or very good. In some lessons, a few pupils engaged in discussion not related to the learning task, but they were focussed back to their work by the teacher. Pupils work well in groups; they share ideas and listen attentively to the views of others. In Key Stage 3 pupils often choose to sit in single sex groupings when not directed into mixed gender groups by the teacher. Pupils demonstrate their capacity for independent study in project work on Europe and in their fieldwork. Many pupils expressed their enjoyment of the subject especially the fieldwork element. Year 8 pupils found their river work in Year 7 both useful and motivating.

124 Teaching is good overall at both Key Stages. It varies from satisfactory to very good. All teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and are effectively supported by the subject leader. They manage pupils well and use a variety of appropriate resources to match the different abilities in the classes. Teachers communicate the learning objectives clearly to pupils. The best teaching challenges pupils, involves them in evaluating their own learning and injects pace and urgency into the lesson. This occurred when pupils were reinforcing and extending their knowledge of the effects of flooding through activating prior knowledge, watching a video sequence and organising information. Individual and teaching group target setting activities have been introduced into the subject very effectively. Feedback to pupils is inconsistent. Day to day marking is regular and uses merits and praise to support pupils' work. Written feedback in exercise books generally contains little comment on exactly what pupils must do in order to improve or obtain a higher grade or level. Feedback to pupils on end of unit assessments is more detailed and is often referenced to clear criteria for levels or grades. This is good practice and should be used consistently to improve pupil's understanding of what they should do next. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of numeracy through graphical skills and statistical techniques. The development of pupils' generic writing skills is enhanced through their work in geography. There is opportunity to make a greater contribution to the development of pupils' skills in ICT. Homework is regularly set and marked. It includes a range of appropriate activities that consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.

125 The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and together with the GCSE course at Key Stage 4 provides a coherent and progressive programme of study. This programme effectively prepares and enthuses pupils for further study of geography in post 16 education. Some pupils currently in Year 10 are following a course of study which will lead to a Certificate of Achievement. This course is well designed to meet their needs and interests. It is providing an appropriate and motivating experience that will help prepare them for adult life.

126 The management of the department is very good. The subject is clearly and confidently led and there is a clear focus on teaching and learning. Recent staff development on thinking skills, target setting and writing skills is evident in classroom practice. Policies and documentation are clearly presented and are implemented in day to day practice. The accommodation and display are good, providing an environment that stimulates, supports and celebrates pupils' work. Learning resources are good in general

with the exception of appropriate software to further promote the development of ICT. Other learning resources are well managed and used effectively. The development plan shows commitment to raising attainment. The department is well placed to do this effectively.

History

127 Attainment at the end of both key stages is below the levels expected nationally. Since the last inspection, the standards achieved have declined. The number of entries for GCSE examinations is small, reflected by the small numbers of pupils choosing to study the subject in Key Stage 4.

128 By the end of Key Stage 3, slightly less than half the pupils attain the level expected nationally. Over half of the girls attain the expected levels. Only one third of the boys attain the levels expected at the end of the key stage. The higher attaining pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of their own historical heritage from the Norman Conquest to the international conflicts of the twentieth century. They acquire insights into present day life through their study of industrialisation and conflict in Britain and other countries. They show good understanding of chronology and are able to explore links in cause and effect. Some lower attaining pupils are able to sequence events, organise information and begin to prioritise events and changes in order of importance. Others are unable to access the written information provided and are not provided with opportunities for success. Many pupils are able to use historical terminology accurately and, in discussion, suggest possible actions for key historical characters.

129 At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations was below the national average. In 1999, five out of thirteen pupils entered for GCSE examinations gained B or C grades, seven pupils gained lower grades and one pupil failed to gain a grade. Four out of eight boys gained higher grades. One girl out the five entered gained a high grade. These are below the national average, but comparison is of limited value with such a small entry.

130 Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory for most pupils. For some less able pupils, progress is unsatisfactory. Some pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good or very good progress. Across each year, and within each unit, there is a clear focus on the development of historical vocabulary. Throughout the key stage, pupils are encouraged to consolidate and extend their use of historical vocabulary by the use of key word lists. By the end of the key stage, most pupils are able to complete a historical fieldwork enquiry and demonstrate a wide and developing range of research and recording skills. High attaining pupils produce work of very good quality, including the collection and organisation of evidence of the development of Piel Island and Furness Castle. They are able to evaluate the contribution made by individuals to the early industrial development during the Age of Steam. Some lower attaining pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment; for example they can make informed suggestions about how William could divide land in England after the Norman Conquest.

131 At Key Stage 4, progress is less than satisfactory. Pupils make progress in expressing their knowledge and understanding in extended writing. They are able to write at length, showing detailed knowledge of developments in mechanisation during the Industrial Revolution. Their understanding of the impact of these developments is less secure. Some pupils find the vocabulary associated with the textile industry difficult. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring a sound factual basis for their studies and the more

able can investigate and explain the complex events and issues involved.

132 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour at both key stages are good. At Key Stage 3, pupils engage in lively discussion of events and consequences. They respond very well to activities, offer ideas and ask well informed questions. They co-operate and collaborate well. Relationships with other pupils and with the teacher are positive. They work productively in small groups and report back their findings to the whole class articulately using appropriate vocabulary. They listen to the contributions and questions of others with interest. At Key Stage 4, pupils feel that the subject is difficult. They are often unclear about what they must do in order to improve and gain better grades in history. Pupils work quietly in class and are well behaved. Teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil relationships are positive. A ceiling is sometimes placed on the learning of pupils because they do not have the opportunity to discuss and explore other interpretations or explanations.

133 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Almost all the teaching is good or very good. One lesson observed was unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4, a limited amount of teaching was observed and this was unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good or very good, lessons are well planned and prepared with clear objectives that are communicated to the pupils. Strategies to promote the recall of prior knowledge are used very effectively. Pupils' opinions and ideas are valued and discussed. Expectations for work and behaviour are high and clear. Time is managed well and lessons have good pace. The lessons are divided into distinct segments with different activities in each. There are clearly differentiated tasks and materials to match pupils' abilities. Historical vocabulary is used effectively. Spelling strategies are modelled to support learning, and pupils' spelling ability (of key words for the unit) is assessed. Resources are well matched to the learning objectives and the pupils' learning needs. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own achievements. They reflect on their strengths and identify areas for further improvement with the help of detailed feedback from the end of unit assessments. These lessons end with the effective consolidation of the learning covered. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, some pupils' learning needs are not met by the resources and activities used. There is a lack of clarity about the learning objectives, which leaves some pupils unclear about what is expected of them. Some teaching has slow pace with little urgency or excitement. Homework is regularly set and marked. Homework tasks are used effectively to consolidate and extend the learning. Where descriptions of levels of the National Curriculum are used, pupils are clear about their attainments.

134 Management of history within humanities is satisfactory. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge. They have undertaken appropriate in-service training, which has focused on teaching strategies. Much of this training is apparent in the good teaching in Key Stage 3. The departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities for further improvements. The introduction of reviewing activities and targets is improving the quality of pupils' awareness about expectations. There is a need to review the Key Stage 4 syllabus to ensure that the pupils are provided with the optimum content to match their interests and abilities. Textbook resources are adequate and there is an expanding stock of library resources. Greater use could be made of ICT resources to support learning in history. Accommodation is adequate and there is some very good display, which stimulates and supports learning. The department has clear plans to improve standards and attainment, especially at Key Stage 4. Development work aimed at increasing the numbers of pupils opting for the subject at Key Stage 4 is planned. When the results of this work are felt, the subject will be well placed for further improvement.

Information technology

135 Information technology is taught as a discrete subject in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, as well as in subjects across the curriculum.

136 In the 1998 GCSE examinations, there was only one entry for information technology. The one entry in 1998 passed at grade D. In 1999, there were 27 entries, 16 of whom gained grade C or above. An information technology short course was offered also. In 1998, there were fifteen entries. Seven pupils passed at grade C and eight at grade D. In the 1999 examinations, there were fourteen entries, with one pass at grade B, seven at grade C, five at grade D and one at grade E. The school is aware that take-up rates for information technology have been low, and has taken steps to improve the situation that has led to an encouraging rise in the present Years 10 and 11.

137 In lessons and in work seen, attainment of 14 and 16 year olds is at the level expected for pupils of the same age. By age 14, the majority of pupils are confident in using computers and have satisfactory word processing skills. They have a good awareness of how computers can help them with their work in other subjects. Pupils in modern languages, for instance, make use of graphics and word processing, with different fonts and sizes, to produce illustrated letters to 'pen friends'. In Year 8, pupils carry out surveys and record their results on simple spreadsheets. This leads to work on the everyday applications of such data recording techniques.

138 By age 16, pupils develop more complex skills and knowledge in subjects such as design and technology, for instance, when pupils use Internet access to research nutritional values of foods they are preparing for special diets, and for measuring, producing models and testing. Good use is made of information technology in English, the humanities subjects, and in art, where pupils use computers to create imaginative graphics. In the taught information technology lessons, pupils work on a number of projects that may include the production of advertising, logos, and business cards. Pupils routinely make good use of computers for producing coursework and homework. Pupils of all ages do very good work with their teachers to produce a lively and interesting school newspaper and a school set of website pages.

139 Overall, pupils' make satisfactory progress at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, but their progress is unsatisfactory in the taught information technology course in Key Stage 3 because of deficiencies in the method of teaching at this key stage. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils.

140 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are well behaved and take care of equipment. The vast majority of pupils concentrate well in lessons and are keen to do well. In Key Stage 4 particularly, pupils show a developing capacity for independent study.

141 The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall, but aspects of it are not satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and this leads to attainment and progress being less than it should be. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because the teacher gives verbal instructions for the sequence of operations to the whole class. Higher attaining pupils, and those with good levels of concentration, cope well with this. However, lower attaining pupils cannot complete the operations at the required speed and fall behind. Pupils who 'lose the thread'

of concentration also fall behind and cannot access the information required. The teacher then goes round to help those individuals because there is no visual prompt that pupils can use to help them catch up. While the teacher is helping these pupils, the faster workers and higher attaining pupils are waiting to move on, thus losing time for their work. Neither higher attaining, nor lower attaining pupils gain from this arrangement. There are also significant strengths in the teaching. Planning for lessons is meticulous and provides a progressive and suitably challenging course for the pupils. The teacher has good class control and very good subject knowledge, and this becomes apparent in Key stage 4 where pupils need a higher level of skills teaching to make progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from the teacher. Pupils are often helped by the technician, who gives valuable assistance in many lessons.

142 There are very good assessment procedures in place to track pupils' attainment and progress, but the data available is not yet being fully utilised to record the skills the pupils have learned, to diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses, or to set individual targets for improvement. The department handbook and scheme of work provide good coverage of skills to be learned and give good continuity across both key stages. These contribute to pupils' progress. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. He has made good use of the funds available to provide a well resourced computer centre, and with the help of the technician, has assembled the equipment, which has resulted in a large saving for the school. The equipment is freely available to pupils at all times during the day, and they make full use of it to enrich and enhance their learning. He has recognised that there is a need to raise the number of pupils taking the subject at Key Stage 4, and this is already producing good results. He has, also, a realistic view of future developments and how to take the department forward in the next few years. The previous report mentioned an overall lack of co-ordination across subjects. This has been successfully addressed. The subject meets the statutory requirements.

Modern foreign languages

143 In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the level of A*-C passes in German was well below the national average and below the level of most other subjects in the school. It was also well below the level for schools of a similar type. Results in German were close to national averages in the three previous years, but have not risen as fast as results for most of the other subjects in the school. There was a small entry for French in the 1998 examinations. Of the nine pupils entered, there was one pass at grade A, four at grade B, one at grade C, two at grade D and one at grade E. In both French and German, all the pupils entered passed at grades A-G. The results for 1999 show that the decline in A*-C results has continued in German, but there are signs that both the number of entries, and the levels of A*-C passes are rising in French. The 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed a minority of pupils at the national average of level 5, and no pupils above that level. These results also showed a decline since the previous year.

144 In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards at age 14 are below the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Overall, attainment at age 16 is also below the level expected. There are no significant differences in attainment between girls and boys. There are also no significant differences across the four aspects of the subjects. Reading is the weakest because there is no great emphasis on it and speaking is the strongest because many lessons have a high speaking content. In general, pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate levels in relation to their prior ability. Middle and higher attaining pupils do not reach their maximum level, especially in German, because there is a lack of work suited to their particular level of ability, and little extension

work for pupils who finish quickly. The previous report found that attainment was in line with national expectations, but pupils rarely achieved higher levels. There has been a steady decline in attainment since that report.

145 By age 14, pupils can answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as descriptions of people, directions in town, the weather and parts of the human body. Most pupils listen carefully to audio cassettes, and to the teacher and other pupils when they are talking. There is only a minority with poor listening skills. When speaking, pupils' responses are often limited, but many are confident speakers and try hard with pronunciation. In a number of lessons, pupils' opportunities to really practise their speaking are limited because they are expected to read from prompts that they are given even in pair work activities. The activity then becomes a basic reading exercise and pupils have few opportunities to use memorised language or to vary it to suit different situations. This is clearly evident in many of the German lessons. Where pupils are given real opportunities to practise, they do so well. For instance, pupils in a Year 7 class can already make good responses, with a variety of vocabulary, to pupil and teacher questions. Pupils' reading skills are very limited, usually to skimming short passages in textbooks to find the answers to questions. The school has recognised this and taken steps to correct it. Extra reading materials and dictionaries have recently been bought and further funds are being made available to develop reading further. In their written work, pupils move from writing single words and phrases to writing short sentences by the end of Year 9. Although some higher attaining pupils occasionally produce extended writing of real quality, the levels of punctuation, spelling and grammar are not high overall.

146 By age 16, pupils return to these topics as revision and preparation for examinations. Where opportunities are available, a greater range of language is used when pupils are speaking. This was evident, for example, in a Year 11 French lesson where pupils spoke with confidence, touches of humour, and good pronunciation about their daily routine. In written work, pupils extend their vocabulary and use of tenses to produce letters on such topics as descriptions of their families. Higher attaining pupils produce some good extended writing with improved accuracy.

147 Progress is unsatisfactory at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. This is especially so for middle and higher attaining pupils who do not have work set that is likely to enable them to make good progress. Because of the basic nature of much of the work, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Inspection evidence strongly suggests that where pupils are taught by the newly appointed teachers, their progress is much greater.

148 Behaviour in class and pupils' attitudes to work are good. There are good relationships between pupils, and with their teachers in most lessons. Pupils generally show good levels of concentration and satisfactory care over the presentation of their work. There are limited opportunities for pupils to undertake personal study, especially in Key Stage 3.

149 The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall, and in one-fifth of the lessons it is good. It is also unsatisfactory in one-fifth of the lessons. All of the unsatisfactory teaching occurs in German lessons. The teachers all have good subject knowledge and good control of their classes. They make satisfactory use of information technology to broaden and enrich the curriculum. Pupils' books are marked and corrected, sometimes with useful comments to point out the way to improve. Where teaching is good, there are additional

features. The lesson is planned to bring greater variety and challenge so pupils are more actively involved and are made to think about and vary their use of language. This brings greater interest and increased motivation. The previous report drew attention to a restricted range of teaching strategies. Although the newly appointed staff have brought an improvement, there is still little use of overhead projectors, music and songs, role-play, poetry or reading for pleasure seen in the lessons. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, the teaching gives few opportunities for pupils to really practise and develop their language.

Typically, speaking practice consists of pupils reading to each other from prompts that are given to them and which they are told to follow exactly. A typical piece of writing, seen for example in a Year 10 German lesson, involves the pupils following a set format that is written on the blackboard by the teacher. The pupils simply change words to fit, but follow the set pattern. This kind of work presents little challenge to middle or higher attaining pupils, in particular, and does little to raise standards.

150 The department handbook and schemes of work have been revised and updated and provide satisfactory continuity across and within the key stages so pupils have a progressive programme of work. There are satisfactory procedures in place to track pupil progress and attainment, but little use is made of the data available to set pupils' targets or to identify individual strengths and weaknesses. The school has exchange arrangements with a school in France, and also visits Germany regularly, which make a good contribution to pupils' personal, social and cultural development. There has been no programme of regular, structured monitoring of teaching in the department and this has contributed to the decline in standards. Taking into account the standards being achieved, and the deficiencies in teaching, the department has not made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. There has been marked improvement in the management of the department recently and it is well placed to move forward.

Music

151 Parents expressed disappointment that music had been allowed to languish and were delighted with the recent improvements. Attainment is, once again, as it was at the time of the last inspection, in line with national standards at both key stages, many pupils demonstrating good musical ability. In the last three years, GCSE results have been above or well above national averages for those obtaining A*-C grades, and all those entered have gained a certificate. At Key Stage 3, singing is good in Years 7 and 9, but some struggle with the demands of notation in keyboard performing. Composing is often good. Key Stage 4 pupils have good listening skills. Progress at both key stages is good and pupils are developing their use of technical language well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in practical work. Attainment and progress in instrumental lessons are generally satisfactory to good. There is good achievement in the extra-curricular groups and the solo and choral singing in the recent school production was very good.

152 Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They listen well and participate in singing and instrumental activities with enthusiasm; they collaborate well in independent, small groups with good self-discipline. Behaviour is good and pupils are well motivated. They support the extra-curricular activities well and there are some very committed musicians.

153 Teaching at both key stages is good. Pace and expectations are generally appropriate and tasks are suitably challenging. Relations with pupils are good. Pupils' very differing musical needs are not always met in the lesson planning. Practical and theoretical aspects are well integrated. Methods are usually good. More vocal activity would enhance learning, and the purpose of written work is not always clear. Pupils are very well managed and lessons are well organised. Good use is made of time, accommodation and resources, and there is good verbal feedback to pupils. Instrumental teaching is satisfactory to good, but there is not always sufficient attention given to technique. Coaching of the extra-curricular ensembles is good. There is insufficient recognition on the part of the school of the value of music in the daily act of worship, which would benefit from more structured listening and opportunities to sing.

154 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The time allocation, barely adequate in the last inspection, is now good. There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities and the instrumental teachers contribute well to running these. The recent very successful musical production was a major initiative for the department. The subject is well managed. Accommodation is good and resources are adequate.

Physical education

155 At the end of both key stages, the attainment of most pupils is in line with national expectations; for some pupils, their knowledge, understanding and performance exceed expected levels. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils plan appropriately complex sequences of movement. The majority are able to adapt and refine their skills and apply these to different situations, as in gymnastics, where pupils are able to apply effectively skills and sequences of movement developed from floor work to another level on the apparatus. Many pupils are able to perform satisfactorily a number of different balances, rolls and vaults, some of a good standard. They show good attention to safety aspects by providing effective support for others, for example, in vaulting exercises. In games activities such as hockey and rugby, most pupils are developing an appropriate range of skills and understanding, with some pupils achieving good levels of performance and control. Pupils

are able to plan activities, and adapt and refine skills that they can perform in a variety of practical situations. They understand the need for warm-up routines before vigorous exercise and know about the important effects of such exercise. By the end of Key Stage 4, most show developments in technique in their chosen activities, and their performances are enhanced by their own evaluations and valuable responses from others. Most pupils have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of principles related to a healthy lifestyle and actively take part in a number of related activities. Many pupils undertake different roles and responsibilities not least, for some pupils, as part of a Junior Sports Leader Award Option offered by the school at Key Stage 4; this well structured and implemented course is clearly providing valuable and worthwhile opportunities for those pupils involved and also in a different way for the beneficiaries within the community, such as local primary school pupils.

156 Across all the year groups, pupils make at least steady progress overall, and often it is good. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are consolidating and building effectively on their skills, knowledge and understanding. Where good progress is taking place, ample opportunities are provided for pupils to refine and improve performance through extended, challenging and sustained tasks within the overall programme. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are good and many pupils look forward to and enjoy their lessons in the subject. On rare occasions, a few pupils become a little over-exuberant, but these occasions are well handled and the pupils' enthusiasm and energy are effectively channelled within the lesson. Overall, pupils behave well, take pride in their own and others' achievements, make active contributions to the lesson, listen well to instructions and work hard during lessons. Pupils often collaborate and work well together in pairs, groups and as part of a team. In mixed games activities such as football and hockey, girls and boys work very well together and equality of opportunity is a strong feature of the overall programme. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, are integrated, and contribute well to lessons and achieve appropriate standards.

157 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced, have a good knowledge of the subject and know their pupils well. Lessons are well planned and organised, with clear learning objectives, although, on occasions, these could be more explicitly stated in the short term planning. Good use is made of resources and a variety of learning strategies employed to develop pupils' skills and understanding. Questions are used effectively to consolidate and extend learning. Appropriate use is made of demonstrations by pupils and the judicious use of high quality teacher demonstrations. In the best lessons, good quality, direct teaching is used very effectively to heighten progress and raise standards of performance, as in the development of stick control and use of space in hockey, rucking and lines of running in rugby and straddle vaults in gymnastics. There is a clear structure to each lesson, the pace is consistently rapid and activities are sequential and interesting. On occasions, more time could usefully be spent on improving a specific element of performance before moving on to another task. The quality of teaching overall has a positive impact on the attainment of the pupils, and on their enjoyment of the subject. The curriculum is well planned and provides a good range of activities, including swimming, athletics, outdoor and adventurous activities, a good range of games activities and gymnastics, which meet the appropriate requirements. Documentation is of sound quality overall, and some aspects are of good quality. However, a few parts are in need of updating to reflect improvements already made in practice in physical education in the school. Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory. Teachers give unstintingly of their own time, not least in the wide range of extra-curricular sporting and related activities on offer in this small secondary school, including numerous teams for girls and boys, a very successful school fell race that is actively supported by the whole school, and residential

experiences for each age group. There is a strong and valuable link with activities in and for the community with the sharing of facilities, such as tennis courts, links with other local teams and organisations such as the rugby club, and good use of specialist visitors and visits. Overall, resources for the subject are good and equipment is appropriately maintained and replaced or added to as the need arises. Indoors, games activities and gymnastics, on occasions, can be restricted by the limited gymnasium available, which is also used for other school activities. Outdoor facilities are extensive and include tennis courts and a swimming pool, all of which are well used. The department is highly committed, well led and organised, and the range of physical education activities makes a strong contribution to the ethos of the whole school.

Religious education

158 Standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are in line with those recommended in the local Agreed Syllabus. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 have a sound knowledge of some of the key features of Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 take the GCSE short course, and a reasonable proportion achieve a grade A*-C. This course was introduced last year, when 43 per cent achieved a higher grade A*-C; this year more than 60 per cent achieved one of these grades.

159 Most pupils are well motivated to learn in the subject. They generally listen well to teachers and to audio tapes, watch video films with close attention, volunteer answers willingly and take part in discussions. Pupils in Key Stage 3, in particular, enjoyed talking about the experiences narrated in 'I am David' and 'The Diary of Anne Frank', showing empathy for the main characters. In Key Stage 4, most pupils followed instructions and answered questions accurately, but a minority lacked interest, wasted time and answered questions in a mechanical way. Some, by contrast, took a very lively part in the discussion of ethical issues. The subject makes a contribution to the pupils' spiritual development by helping them gain insight into, and develop respect for, religions other than their own. The quality of pupils' writing in the subject varies, but some pupils re-told biblical stories in their own words with a good level of skill and there were examples of good quality notes on Judaism and Islam.

160 At the time of the inspection, the staffing of the subject was in a state of flux. The former head of department had retired from the subject, although he continued to take Year 11 pupils for the GCSE short course. The acting head of department was about to move to another school; and a local vicar, who is not qualified as a teacher, taught several classes on a voluntary basis. The school intends to make good the present shortfall in staffing through a new appointment in the near future.

161 The general quality of teaching is sound and occasionally good. In Key Stage 3, good use is made of appropriate literary texts, and pupils' interest is aroused and sustained by lively reading by the teacher, as well as by the use of audio tapes and video films. Teachers intervene skilfully to ask questions, and take pains to develop pupils' imaginations and powers of empathy. They encourage pupils to grasp the significance of religious faith in people's lives and to apply what they learn to their own life experience. On occasion, questioning is too abstract and is not sufficiently targeted at individuals. In both key stages, teachers explain key terms and often enter them on the board; some key religious terms from the main faiths are displayed in the RE classroom. In Key Stage 4, teaching is focused strongly on the short course and is well supported by the use of video films and related worksheets. Teachers explain questions clearly to the pupils and test their knowledge through regular tests.

162 A scheme of work has been drawn up since the last inspection. It outlines the curriculum for each year group and in this way helps to ensure continuity and progression. At the time of the inspection, however, the uncertain staffing situation led to a certain loss of progression, as there was some repetition of teaching and learning between classes in different years. In time, when a new head of department is in place, the scheme of work should be reviewed and greater emphasis placed on the skills and qualities of understanding, the subject might be expected to develop. The subject is satisfactorily supported by a range of bibles and textbooks, as well as a broad range of video films and some audio tapes. However, there are virtually no religious artefacts, despite the fact that the last inspection report recommended that some be purchased.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

163 During the inspection:

- 102 lessons or parts of lessons were observed;
- 7 acts of collective worship were observed;
- pupils from each class were assessed in their reading;
- discussions were held with pupils to assess their knowledge and understanding in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, and geography;
- lunchtimes and playtimes were observed and many informal conversations were held with pupils about their life in school;
- samples of pupils' work, including recordings, from across the range of attainment and from each class were examined;
- discussions were held with teaching and non-teaching staff about their roles in school;
- school documentation and planning were evaluated;
- governors were interviewed about their involvement and roles in managing the school;
- parents were asked about their views of the school, through the use of a questionnaire and at a meeting;
- attendance registers were examined;
- photographic and video evidence of the school's activities was examined;
- a range of people from the community who visit the school were interviewed.

§ **DATA AND INDICATORS**

§ **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	222	8	52	14

§ **Teachers and classes**

§ **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	14.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	15.1

§ **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	1
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	32

§ **Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes** 74

§ **Average teaching group size**

KS3	20
KS4	21

§ **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	629,977
Total Expenditure	635,581
Expenditure per pupil	2,553
Balance brought forward from previous year	11,830
Balance carried forward to next year	6,226

§ **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 230
 Number of questionnaires returned: 55

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	22	56	13	9	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	44	49	5	0	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	17	56	21	4	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	15	56	11	19	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	25	47	13	11	4
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	29	55	15	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	35	53	11	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	18	51	13	16	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	29	62	5	4	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	15	64	22	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	40	51	7	2	0

§ **Other issues raised by parents**

At the meeting on 13 September, the 29 parents present expressed considerable support for the school and general satisfaction with its performance. They stressed the quality of the care and concern the school has for its pupils. There was some concern that parents are not given enough information about what is being taught and that homework is not set consistently. There was also some concern about pupils being put off German by the way it is taught and an attitude amongst some pupils that does not value high achievement. Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views of the school's pastoral care. Homework was set regularly during the inspection and there are new timetables for homework. Teaching in German is not as good as in many other subjects. The school has set up the Sirius Club to encourage high attainers, which is a positive move, but many of the pupils involved said that they do not like attending some of the sessions.

