

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **CHURSTON FERRERS GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Brixham

LEA area: Torbay

Unique reference number: 113525

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Kings

Reporting inspector: Mr David Roberts  
7582

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 184160

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Churston Ferrers Grammar School  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Cooke

Date of previous inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1994

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Inspection Quality Division  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Churston Ferrers is a mixed Grammar School which serves the communities of Brixham, Paignton, Kingswear and Dartmouth and the surrounding areas of Torbay and nearby parts of Devon. There are 811 pupils on roll which is roughly the same as at the time of the last inspection in December 1994. This includes 211 post-16 students. Intake into year 7 is by the LEA's selective process at 11+, although the school attracts a lower proportion of the highest attaining pupils than the other selective schools in Torbay. Students from other schools are admitted for post-16 courses without an entrance test. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (7.2 per cent) is below the average for all schools nationally. A small number of pupils have English as an additional language but all are effective English speakers. The school has identified 1.1 per cent of its pupils as having special educational needs (SEN), including one who has a statement of SEN. This is well below the national average for all schools. There is an even balance between the numbers of boys and girls overall, but with variations in the balance from year to year. Pupils' attainment levels on entry to the school in year 7 are well above the national average with all pupils having achieved at least a level 4 in English, mathematics and science before they enter the school.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Churston Ferrers Grammar School is a school with many good and very good features and where strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Taking account of the relatively favourable socio-economic context of the school, its good overall effectiveness (despite the decline in results at key stages 3 and 4 in 1999) and the fact that the school's expenditure per pupil is in line with the national average for this type of school, the school is judged to be providing satisfactory value for money. Provision post 16 is very cost effective.

#### **What the school does well**

- There is good quality teaching and learning.
- The school develops very positive attitudes and values in the pupils; behaviour is very good.
- Attendance is very good, as are procedures for ensuring this.
- There are very good relationships; oppressive behaviour, on the few occasions it occurs, is handled very well.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activity and this is of very good quality.
- The sixth form is effective in all respects.
- The school achieves high levels of approval from parents.
- There is good day-to-day management and communication.

#### **What could be improved**

- Sharpen the focus on raising attainment through improved development planning.
- Improve the standards achieved by pupils, particularly those at each end of the ability range.
- Improve pupils' access to, and use of, computers in some subjects.
- Further improve the quality of teaching.
- The full implementation, across the school, of a number of valuable initiatives recently developed including those relating to assessment of pupils' work, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and strategies for extending the most able pupils. .

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The rate of improvement has been satisfactory, since the school's last inspection in December 1994, having increased upon the appointment of the current headteacher.

The school's GCSE results have improved since the last inspection although in 1999, in the Key Stage 3 national tests in English, mathematics and science and in GCSE examinations, they declined compared with previous years. Observation indicates that pupils' standards of attainment in English, mathematics, information technology and German have improved since the last inspection. In most other subjects, the high standards have been maintained. At A level, results improved significantly in 1999 and are now very high in comparison with the national average for all schools. High levels of attendance continue. The attitude and behaviour of pupils remains very largely positive.

The quality of the teaching has remained high. There is scope to generate more effective sharing of good practice. A self-review policy has been recently introduced but has yet not been in place long enough to have had an impact on improvement.

The school's monitoring of pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Progress on the school's main targets in its development plan is reviewed annually, but the plan is not yet constructed in a way which relates strategies and actions clearly enough to the declared aims of the school. The plan does not place a sufficient focus on raising standards further, although the school has set targets for improvements in older pupils' attainment, but not yet for the end of Key Stage 3.

Staff remain fully committed to the school's success. Pupils and parents demonstrate a clear overall satisfaction with the school. Working relationships are good.

There has been satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues raised by the last inspection although :

- ⊖ there remains insufficient time allocated to the teaching of religious education in the sixth form;
- ⊖ the use by pupils of information and communications technology (ICT) is not yet effective in all parts of the curriculum;
- ⊖ there remains the need to develop a more differentiated approach in many subjects to meet better the learning needs of pupils, particularly of the most able and the least able.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average points scores in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3 tests	A*	A*	A	E	Very High A*
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	D	well above average A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A*		above average B
					Average C
					below average D
					well below average E
					Very low E*

At the end of Key Stage 3 overall attainment in National Curriculum tests in 1999 was very high in comparison with the national average in English and mathematics and well above the national average in

science. In comparison with similar schools nationally, the results were well below the average. However, the data on the school's pupil intake does show that the school attracts a lower proportion of the highest attaining pupils than similar schools in the area, as well as a small number of pupils whose level of ability on entry is below that found in the other local grammar schools. Similarly, in GCSE examinations the performance in 1999 was below the average for similar schools nationally as a result of the disappointing performance of a small number of pupils. The school has set improvement targets for GCSE results in 2000/01 which, if met, will bring the school in line with similar school averages nationally. At A level, results in 1999 showed a significant improvement over the previous three years and were very high compared with the average for all schools. In lessons, pupils of all ages are achieving generally very good standards. However, there is evidence in several subjects of the most able pupils not being adequately stretched.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	The pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They show a high level of interest in their lessons and other activities provided by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils are generally very well behaved in lessons and around the school. It is an orderly environment.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils are confident, mature and responsible. They establish very good relationships with others, leading to a caring and harmonious atmosphere in the school.
Attendance	The pupils' attendance is very good.

The majority of pupils are very well motivated and keen to learn, both in school time and during extra-curricular activities. Very good relationships exist, including between older and younger pupils. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development. These strengths contribute to the standards the pupils achieve.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>Aged 14-16 years</b>	<b>aged over 16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 is good. At Key Stage 4 it is good in science and very good in English and mathematics. Post-16, it is very good in all these subjects. The main strength of the teaching overall is the subject knowledge and understanding of the teachers. Homework is very well used in most cases. Teachers manage pupils well and they make good use of the time and resources available. Their planning is good, except in relation to the needs of pupils at the extremes of the ability range. Teaching literacy and numeracy skills to those younger pupils who need it is not satisfactory, especially in English and science. Teaching is best overall in mathematics, art and geography and is at least satisfactory overall in all subjects.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally not well planned although many of these pupils make satisfactory progress. Of the 192 lessons observed, 96% were satisfactory or better, 32% were very good or better and 4% were unsatisfactory. Pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding



best in mathematics, art and religious education. Pupils put increasing effort into their work as they get older. At all ages, they work at a good pace, they show interest and concentrate well.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and post 16
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is unsatisfactory as insufficient use is made of Individual Education Plans but most pupils identified as having SEN make satisfactory progress. Others with special needs are not identified and consequently not provided for appropriately.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development is good overall. Their spiritual development is satisfactory; their social development is very good and their moral and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in securing high levels of attendance and good behaviour.

The school's partnership with parents is good. The school provides helpful information to parents except with regard to information about the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Information on individual pupils' progress has improved recently, as has the cycle of consultation meetings with parents. There is a high level of parental approval for the school and parents support the work of the school well.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced, meets statutory requirements and is relevant to the needs of the pupils. There is a good range of GCSE options at Key Stage 4 although the requirement that all pupils take a design and technology course is not met. There is a wide range of A level courses which meet the aspirations of students but, as yet, there are no vocational alternatives provided. The range and quality of extra curricular activities are very good.

There is good pastoral care of pupils, supported by a good programme of personal, social and moral education. There are some weaknesses in health and safety procedures.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall, with strengths and weaknesses
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall – governors support the school well and are committed to its success but there are a number of unsatisfactory features.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Not yet fully satisfactory although recent significant initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact, for instance in relation to the assessment of pupils' work.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory as yet as spending decisions are not clearly enough related to educational priorities in the development plans

There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum. Despite some shortcomings the accommodation overall is adequate. There is good provision of learning resources.

Day-to-day management and communication are good. The headteacher is leading the school satisfactorily, though cautiously, through a period of change. Strategic development planning is unsatisfactory. Management by heads of department is mainly good but management structures are not fully effective.

The school has begun to apply the four principles of best value, and has been very effective in achieving competitive contracts for provision of building work and a range of services.

**PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are happy at school.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• Pupils behave well.</li> <li>• They are helped to become mature, responsible adults.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects hard work from pupils.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems or concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount and regularity of homework.</li> <li>• The information about their children's progress and about the work they are doing.</li> <li>• The liaison with parents.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team broadly agrees with the views of parents as summarised here. While there remains a small proportion of parents who feel that the school still needs to improve its partnership with them, it is clear that there has been significant improvement over the last two years. The inspectors consider that the school makes available a very good range of high quality extra-curricular activity. The use of homework is generally good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Standards achieved at key stages 3 and 4 and post 16 are very high. In 1999, pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, were well above the national averages for all schools in English, mathematics and science. In English and mathematics, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 or better was very well above average. Work of an equally high standard was seen in design and technology, history, geography and religious education. Compared with standards achieved in similar schools, however, pupils' performance in the English and mathematics tests in 1999 was well below average. In the science tests the standard was comparatively very low. The trend in the school's Key Stage 3 test results for all subjects is broadly in line with the national trend for both boys and girls. There was a significant decline in English results in 1999 compared to 1998 in the Key Stage 3 tests due to the reduced number of higher grades obtained. The school has not set targets for improving its results in the Key Stage 3 tests.
2. Compared to national expectations, standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 are very high in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and history. Standards are high in geography, ICT and religious education. In art, French, German, music and physical education standards are in line with national expectations but below the expected standard in similar schools.
3. Overall, the results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were very high compared with the national average and there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The trend in results over the last four years is broadly in line with the national trend. Compared to similar schools, the percentage of pupils passing the GCSE examination in five or more subjects and the percentage of pupils passing at least one GCSE examination were broadly in line with similar schools. However, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A\* to C was well below the average for similar schools.
4. Compared to national expectations, standards of work seen in Key Stage 4 are excellent in design and technology and ICT. Standards are very high in English, mathematics, art, history, geography and religious education. Standards are high in science and physical education. Compared with similar schools, standards in Key Stage 4 are below the expected level in English, French, geography and music.
5. Progress made by gifted and talented pupils in the school is unsatisfactory, and they achieve less than might be expected. This contributes towards the relatively low number of pupils achieving the higher grades in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations.
6. The school has set itself appropriately challenging targets for GCSE scores in 2000 and 2001. On the basis of pupils' current work, the quality of the teaching and the curriculum, these targets are within reach provided that teaching stretches the most able pupils more effectively.

7. From work seen in the sixth form, students achieve very high standards in English, mathematics, science, technology, geography, religious education and art. Standards are high in French, German and physical education. Standards are broadly in line with those achieved in similar schools in most subjects except in history and music. The average point score of pupils entered for two or more 'A' Levels in 1999 was very high in comparison with the national average and this has been the case for the last three years.
8. The small proportion of 11 to 16 year-old pupils with special educational needs is making satisfactory progress, and pupils for whom English is an additional language are making good progress overall.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9. The pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour, personal development, relationships and attendance are strengths of the school and contribute very positively to the standards they achieve. The school's aims place a high priority on this aspect of its provision. It successfully meets these aims. Parents approve of the way in which the school helps their children to become mature, responsible and well-behaved young adults.
10. The pupils are keen to succeed at school and are interested in the work they are asked to undertake. They move from lesson to lesson quickly and purposefully. They settle to task promptly and answer questions willingly. When pupils are sought for role play demonstrations or reading to the class, there are always willing volunteers who perform with confidence.
11. The pupils generally behave very well in lessons, responding rapidly to the wishes of the teachers. However, occasionally there is minor indiscipline in year 9 which slows the pace of learning. Behaviour around the school is very good, even when crowded corridors and dining halls lead to congestion. Pupils are polite and trustworthy. Bullying is very rare and pupils usually respond well to intervention. All pupils know who to turn to if they have a problem.
12. Pupils form constructive relationships with one another, collaborating well. They listen to one another's opinions with attention and respect. Throughout the school, the pupils readily accept responsibility for aspects of school life, such as membership of the school council and participation in representative sports teams. Students in the sixth form are particularly responsible, confident and articulate. Prefects support tutor groups in year 7, acting as caring listeners for the younger pupils. Pupils working successfully in teams to produce the school magazine or to take part in the Young Enterprise scheme demonstrate good economic awareness and organisational skills. In physical education, pupils demonstrate high levels of communication skills and leadership ability when working with primary school pupils on the Community Sports Leadership Award scheme.
13. Throughout the school, there is an awareness of the needs of those suffering from disasters or deprivation in other countries. The school raises large sums for charities, particularly in the third world. Pupils show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. When the "thought for the day" is well used as a basis for tutor group discussion, the pupils are able to address moral topics with considerable insight, drawing on their learning in other subjects and their out of school experience. This was demonstrated when a year 12 tutor group considered the theme of conscience, students from the religion A level group contributing particularly well to the discussion.

14. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and rates of attendance are high, comparing favourably with other schools nationally. The rate of unauthorised absence is very low and there is very little truancy. The pupils are well motivated and punctuality is good.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

15. Taken overall, the quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Nearly every lesson is at least satisfactory, about two-thirds are good or better and about one third is very good or better. Teaching is best post-16 and least good at Key Stage 3 where there is less very good or excellent teaching than with the older age groups. At all ages, pupils are acquiring new knowledge and skills, developing their ideas and increasing their understanding. In year 7, pupils are already conscious, in most subjects, of the progress they are making although some of the higher-attaining pupils make insufficient progress at this early stage, for instance in mathematics. In the other year groups, discussion with pupils generally reveals a clear sense of progress. This is supported from the observation of lessons, particularly in English, mathematics, science, design, technology, history and religious education.
16. In the clear majority of lessons, pupils are making the effort needed to make appropriate progress across the whole curriculum. The teaching encourages this effort in most cases, although there are examples of lessons where the range of teaching strategies is too narrow and where pupils become unduly passive in their learning. This hampers the progress of the higher attainers in some lessons, for instance in English and mathematics.
17. Pupils generally show a keen interest in their work. This is particularly the case where teachers explain the aims of the lesson and where progress is reviewed at the end of the lesson. The pace of lessons is generally well-judged by the teachers, and the pupils are keen to work at a fast pace.
18. In some subjects, pupils have been helped to gain a clear view of the progress they are making and the levels they are attaining through teachers' marking and feedback to them. Most teachers adhere to the school's revised assessment and marking policies. However, in some lessons, pupils are given too little information about their attainment and about how they can improve further, for instance in modern foreign languages.
19. Although many teachers do not know the targets which are indicated in the Individual Education Plans of pupils identified by the school as having special education needs, or the targets are insufficiently clear, these pupils generally make satisfactory progress. However, there are instances where individual pupils' with particular educational needs experience difficulty due to a lack of appropriate strategies and resources to meet their needs. Lower-attaining pupils make best progress where teachers have identified ways to develop their literacy skills and their study skills. This is an area for improvement in a number of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3.
20. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 is good. At Key Stage 4 it is good in science and very good in English and mathematics. Post-16, it is very good in all these subjects.

21. All teachers demonstrate very secure knowledge and understanding of, and enthusiasm for, their subject. They are able, most effectively, to transmit this to pupils. Teachers also have a good knowledge of the examination syllabuses. Their lesson planning is generally good although they do not always share these plans with the classes they teach. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always sufficiently tuned to individuals and groups of pupils. This is true particularly at Key Stage 3 and relates both to the higher-attaining and the lower-attaining pupils. The work set and the methods used by teachers are insufficiently matched to the needs of the pupils in a number of lessons, particularly in modern foreign languages and some history lessons.
22. Teachers' management of pupils is generally good. There are occasions, however, when teachers do not hold the attention of all pupils and this can lead to some unsettled behaviour in a minority of lessons, particularly in personal and social education in year 9. Observation indicates that boys are more likely than girls to become uninvolved in the learning on these occasions
23. Teachers generally use the full length of the seventy-minute lessons well, varying the activities in a well-judged way to maintain pupils' commitment. Support staff are very well-deployed and very effective for instance in providing technical support to science and technology lessons. Artefacts and other resources for learning are well used in most subjects and especially well in history and religious education. However, computers are too seldom used to support learning in many subjects, particularly mathematics, technology and art.
24. Except in modern foreign languages, there is satisfactory use of ongoing assessment by teachers to help them plan future work for the classes they teach. In art, it is excellent. However, the setting of targets for individual pupils, based on these and other assessments, is at a very early stage of development except with post-16 students. The quality of ongoing assessment is improving and teachers have begun to report to parents on this basis.
25. Homework is regularly set, usually to the schedule published to pupils and parents. It generally comprises worthwhile activities to extend pupils' understanding of the work they do in class. Teachers take care in designing the homework and making certain that pupils have noted it down accurately. Particularly effective homework tasks are set in mathematics and history.
26. The school has begun to develop across the curriculum, a range of strategies for teaching pupils identified as being particularly able in each subject. There have been inconsistencies in the criteria used to identify such pupils and not all departments have yet completed the exercise. There is as yet very little evidence in lessons of this potentially very valuable initiative. The management of the project is committed and enthusiastic but as yet there are insufficient resources and strategies to ensure its successful impact across the school.

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

27. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject in years 7 and 9. Although pupils' ICT skills are developed through other subjects in year 8, the curriculum time devoted to ICT is less than recommended across the key stage. A second modern foreign language is introduced into the curriculum in

year 8 and science is taught as three separate subjects in year 9. This provision is relevant to the needs of the pupils.

28. The range of options available for GCSE is good and pupils are well supported by the school during the 'options' process in choosing an appropriate balance and breadth of courses. Design and technology is not part of the entitlement curriculum for all pupils at Key Stage 4, and this is a statutory requirement. All pupils follow short courses in ICT and in religious education both of which lead to GCSE examinations. The amount of time allocated to religious education is slightly below the recommendation for teaching the Devon Agreed Syllabus and the course does not fully prepare pupils wishing to continue their studies to A level. Although individual pupils are offered careers guidance appropriately, the overall provision for careers education for 13-16 year olds lacks cohesion, due to insufficient overall management of the programme in the school. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education.
29. The quality of the post-16 curriculum is good. The school provides a wide range of A level courses, which meets the aspirations of the present students. In addition all students study for A level General Studies. There are A/S level courses available in some subjects and students may begin to study GCSE Spanish. The statutory requirement to provide religious education lessons for all is not met, although the general studies course includes an ethics module in both years 12 and 13. The students' academic programme is supplemented by a number of additional courses some of which are optional, for example, the community sports leadership course and the preparation for teaching course. All year 12 students also take part in games lessons. The use of ICT as part of students' regular A level work is limited although students develop some ICT skills through a seven week module in general studies in year 12. There is insufficient provision of computers within the sixth form study room.
30. The school currently offers no GNVQ course or vocational A levels although the school is preparing well for the new curriculum arrangements for September 2000 and is planning to introduce a small number of vocationally based courses. Careers education within the sixth form is clearly focused on higher education. The provision of personal and health education is limited. For example, sex and drugs education is confined to a general studies module. The oversight of sixth form students' welfare and guidance is good and is closely monitored by the director of sixth form and the heads of year 12 and 13, as is their academic progress. Students are aware of the targets that have been set for them in their A level subjects and find them a useful guide, although, as yet, they have little involvement in setting these targets. Commendably, all students are involved in one week's work experience at the beginning of Year 13. Some students also increase their knowledge about the world of work by taking part in the Young Enterprises scheme which captures the enthusiasm of those involved.
31. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, the provision for the small number of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Individual education plans (EPs) are not sufficiently clear for teachers to plan from, and some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are not registered within the school and are not appropriately provided for. There is appropriate provision for pupils who need additional help improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills through the English and Mathematics clubs. There are no whole school policies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy although in some subjects, for example geography and physical education, there is some good practice in developing specific mathematical skills. The approach to developing pupils' higher order literacy and numeracy skills is inconsistent between subjects .

32. The limited specialist knowledge of staff means that they are not always able to identify or fully meet the needs of all pupils with special education needs. Pupils with physical disabilities are able to access all areas of the curriculum and their needs are being met.
33. The equal opportunities policy is well-written and provides a secure framework on which to build pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. It is a strength of the school that there is no evidence of oppressive behaviour. The curriculum generally provides equality of access and opportunity for pupils to make progress. However, access to computers to enhance learning is largely dependent on teachers' choice. Some post-16 students are not able to follow the general studies course because of the combinations of their A level subjects.
34. There are some specific examples of equal opportunities being promoted through the curriculum, such as work in religious education on prejudice and discrimination at Key Stage 4, focusing on women poets in year 13 English and on the role of women in history. There is equal focus on boys and girls in teaching, including teachers being careful to balance questioning between boys and girls, though more boys than girls contribute to oral discussion in modern foreign languages. In history and science there is some structuring of mixed gender groups, and for paired work in English.
35. The school's aims state its Christian values and these are reflected across the school. All pupils attend assemblies twice each week led by senior staff or visitors. On other mornings a thought for the day is considered in tutor groups. The themes for assemblies are predominantly moral and social and some have an explicit Christian element. Thoughts for the day are drawn from a variety of literary, multi faith and historical sources and are again predominantly moral and social. Of the assemblies observed, one included two minutes for personal reflection on the theme of valuing people. None of the assemblies or tutorials observed met the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
36. The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory, though the support for this comes almost exclusively from religious education, where the teaching of the spiritual dimension is excellent. Moral development is good and social development is very good. The personal and social education programme makes a particularly effective contribution, through units of work, such as on money management, prejudice and sex education. Other curriculum areas support pupils moral and social education, particularly through religious education, but also through looking at the issues of urbanisation and population control in geography, industrialisation in history and consideration of the rights and wrongs of experiments on animals in science. Social development is promoted by the high quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves. The fund raising work that pupils do on behalf of charities provides further very good opportunities for the promotion of the school's social and moral values. The cultural development of pupils is good. It is promoted through the curriculum through working on case studies of other cultures in geography, by looking at art and listening to music from a range of cultures and periods, and by learning about the lifestyles of followers of the major world faiths in religious education. There are modern language exchanges to Germany and France, a religious education visit to Italy, and many opportunities for pupils to join trips to theatres, concerts and galleries.
37. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities is very good. These make a strong contribution to pupils' social development. There are very many and varied clubs, extra classes, sports and drama activities for pupils of all ages to take part in both at lunch times and after school. Sixth formers play a strong part in these and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of the experience for the younger pupils. There are



many sports teams, some of which compete at regional and national levels. A range of musical activities enrich the school's curriculum significantly. Trips to the theatre, field trips, visits abroad and foreign exchanges play a valuable part in enriching the curriculum. Additional study support for pupils preparing for public examinations is very good in many subjects including mathematics, English and design and technology.

38. The involvement of the post-16 students in the work of the main school and partner primary schools is good and is clearly demonstrated, for instance, through the student 'listeners' scheme and the community sports leadership course. These activities and others, for example, Young Enterprise and the sixth form committee, provide opportunities for students to show responsibility and initiative.
39. Links with the local community are strong and make a good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. There are good links with the local churches and the school does important and significant work for many charities. Community service week is a regular feature of the school's calendar. Work experience weeks in year 10 and 12 build links with the local business community. The wide range of evening classes and community sports events are attended by members of the public and pupils of the school, and are led by professional coaches, and teachers. This partnership has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes towards sports and the standards that they achieve.
40. Links with universities are good and regular visits are made to a wide range of institutions by year 12 and 13 students, which has a positive impact on both the quality of the curriculum and the careers guidance programme in the sixth form. Curriculum links with partner primary schools are less well developed and continuity in pupils' learning between primary and secondary education is not secured. This weakens the year 7 curriculum, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?**

41. The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils and students, in line with its aims. This makes a positive contribution to the welfare and progress of the majority of pupils. There are, however, some unsatisfactory features in the provision for health and safety. At the time of the inspection, a full health and safety audit by the appropriate authority was to be held in the following week.
42. Parents are very pleased with the care provided for their children and state that the vast majority of them like school. The induction process is sensitive and thorough, enabling the pupils to make a confident start on their school career. Arrangements whereby trained sixth form students are attached to each tutor group in Year 7 ensure that the pupils are well known and supported. The teams of year heads and tutors, led by the deputy head, know the pupils well and relationships with them are positive and constructive. The pupils may have several changes of tutors and heads of year during their school life but, as a result of the size of the school, the thorough handover process at the end of each year and the useful records, their welfare and progress are not impaired. As far as practicable, no pupil is denied access to the full range of the school's activities due to financial disadvantage. Arrangements for child protection comply with locally agreed procedures and all staff are regularly reminded of school policy. There is good liaison with external agencies in this respect.
43. Pupils with illnesses and physical disabilities are well provided for. However, there is a lack of expertise in the identification of and response to specific learning difficulties which leads to the needs of a few pupils not being fully met. The advice of outside experts, when sought, is not always fully implemented by all teachers involved with the pupils

concerned. The small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties also suffer from the limited access to expert guidance in drawing up individual behaviour plans and targets for improvement.

44. There are weaknesses in the policy and provision for health and safety. The governing body is very committed to the maintenance of a safe environment and has taken steps to improve security. Fire safety is well provided for and first aid arrangements are sound. However, other delegated responsibilities for health and safety are unclear and there is a low level of awareness and training overall. Regular inspections and formal risk assessments are not systematically recorded. An exception to this is in the science department, where practice is exemplary. Health and safety concerns identified during the inspection include the condition of some of the hard surfaces used for physical education and the inadequacy of dust extraction or the prevention of inhalation in the technology workshops.
45. The school has very effective measures to promote good attendance. Registration procedures are purposeful and comply with legal requirements. Tutors expect every absence and late arrival to be accounted for. The dedicated telephone line is effective and valued by parents as a good way of promptly identifying unexplained absence.
46. The school has high expectations of good behaviour which are consistently demonstrated by members of staff. Supervision at lunchtime and breaktimes is good; meal time assistants are well chosen and effectively deployed. The rare incidents of indiscipline are thoroughly investigated and oppressive behaviour is clearly not tolerated. Sanctions such as, detention or being placed on report are usually effective. Exclusion is used rarely but correctly in response to extremely challenging behaviour.
47. The well structured programme of personal, social and moral education (PSME) gives pupils the knowledge and skills to enable them to make healthy choices in life and to protect themselves from harm. Visiting speakers, such as the school nurse and the police youth affairs officer, make a very good contribution to the programme, skillfully delivering topics from their particular areas of expertise. Throughout the school, pupils and students are taught study skills and examination techniques in order to help them raise their attainment in external examinations and tests, although practice in this area is not consistently good.
48. Progress made in assessment and recording since the last inspection is satisfactory. However not all the issues raised in the last inspection report have been fully addressed; there is still variation in practice.
49. The school's systems for assessing attainment are improving. The school now has a concise but clear policy on target setting and assessment. Staff training has taken place to ensure that all departments are aware of it. Marks are given for effort and for achievement. There is a clear expectation that work will be marked regularly but at present there is no agreement about practice across the school and even within some departments this varies considerably. Pupils do not always know how well they are doing or how they could improve although reports to parents are usually clear and informative. The recording of pupils' attainment and progress also varies amongst subjects but progress is being made in establishing a system across the school. The new procedures are well established in some subjects, for example in art and in English.
50. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is satisfactory. The needs for pupils with special educational needs are assessed but this does not mean that they are always given sufficient support in class. In most subjects, in line with recently developed

school policy, the most able pupils have been identified and strategies have been drawn up to extend these pupils further. However, as yet there is too little consistency in how pupils are identified and they are rarely given extension work in class.

51. A thorough analysis of examination results is carried out and this compares the school's results with other similar schools nationally. However, most subject departments are not yet experienced in the use of these analyses to suggest changes in the way they might teach the subject.
52. The school's arrangements for monitoring of the pupils' academic progress and personal development are currently satisfactory overall, contributing to the progress the pupils make. Recently introduced changes in this system are leading to more focused academic guidance and support. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and builds on the good practice developed in the sixth form. A start has been made with target setting by individual pupils in conjunction with their tutors. The targets are not yet sufficiently precise. More subject-specific information would improve the usefulness of these targets.
53. Many tutors regularly check the pupils' planners as a good way of providing encouragement and identifying those who are falling behind with their work. Effective systems are used to pass on concerns and to consult other members of staff involved with pupils experiencing difficulties. Many departments provide extra support classes at lunchtime or after school to help those in danger of falling behind or having problems with elements of their learning.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

54. There is a high level of parental support and approval for the school. Parental involvement in their children's attendance and school work makes a positive impact on the progress they make.
55. A large majority of the parents responding to the inspection questionnaire expressed satisfaction with the teaching, particularly in terms of teachers' high expectations, the management and leadership of the school. Their children like school, behaviour is good and the pupils make very good progress, both academically and in terms of their personal development. Whereas they felt happy approaching the school, a significant minority felt it did not work sufficiently closely with parents, particularly in supplying them with information about their children's progress and the subjects being studied. There is a need to improve the information provided to parents of Key Stage 3 pupils about the curriculum. A few also expressed concerns about the consistency and amount of homework and the range of extra-curricular activities. The use of homework was found by the inspection to be generally good. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities is judged to be very good.
56. The school provides a good picture of its ethos and expectations in its prospectus, although there are some inconsistencies in the details about its rules and several legal requirements are not met, for example in respect to information on its policy for special educational needs. Regular newsletters and other communications with parents are well-presented and convey important explanations, for example about changes to the reporting system as well as general information on a wide range of events and activities. The governors' annual report to parents gives a good picture of some of their concerns but also omits several legally required items such as those concerning security and pupils with disabilities or special educational needs.

57. Curriculum information is full and helpful at transition points, such as when pupils are choosing GCSE courses or post-16 options. At these times, it is usefully supplemented by meetings at which parents can gain further information on the subjects offered and career implications. However, such detail is lacking in Key Stage 3, where parents do not have sufficient information to be able to support their children's learning.
58. Information for parents on their children's progress has improved recently. The full reports are a satisfactory summing up of the pupils' progress, adequately covering various aspects of the subjects being studied, including the pupils' attainment, effort and attitudes to the subject. Useful statements on personal development and data on attendance are included and pupils are expected to write an evaluation of their progress. Parents have the opportunity to make comments on the reports and agree targets with their children, thereby drawing them into partnership with the teachers. These targets are not yet fully useful as they are not specific or easily monitored. Reports are of higher quality in the sixth form, particularly in terms of the self-assessment by the students and the guidance given by the teachers, tutors and senior staff.
59. The cycle of consultation meetings for parents has been improved since the last inspection report, with further meetings being introduced into year 7, year 11 and the sixth form. Issues raised by parents around the timing of parents' evenings have largely been resolved. Parents are also invited in at other times when concerns arise with their children's progress or welfare. In this way, the school seeks to increase the involvement of parents at sensitive times in their children's education. The home school agreement is occasionally useful in reminding pupils and parents of their obligations in terms of effort and behaviour, thereby contributing to the pupils' learning. Parents of those pupils with special educational needs are not fully involved in their children's education within the terms of the Special Needs Code of Practice.
60. The work of the school is well supported by parents. There is an active parent teacher organisation which raises substantial funds for school purposes. Parents' views are canvassed over such matters as the home/school agreement and the induction process, the school responding well to their suggestions.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

61. The headteacher and the governors are leading the school satisfactorily, though cautiously, through a period of change. Their vision for the school's continuing development is one where academic success and broad extra-curricular opportunities are supported by a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and by effective links with parents. Parents are generally happy with this philosophy for the school. Senior staff have recently worked to revise the school's statement of its aims, although currently the range of school publications does not contain a consistent statement of aims. In particular, the school's development plan, which covers a three year period and is updated annually, makes no reference to these aims, to the school's vision for itself or to the targets it has set for improving achievement in examinations. This omission hampers the strategic effectiveness of the plan, both in the way it is structured and in its impact on the priorities which departments and individual staff set for themselves.
62. It is not clear from the overall plan, or from many of the department plans, how the school intends to ensure there is no further decline in standards of attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, where test and examination results were disappointing in 1999 as compared with recent years.

63. The plans do not indicate how the several important recent initiatives (including assessment policy, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and provision for the most able) are to become fully embedded in the way the school works.
64. It is evident from observation in and out of classrooms and from discussion with pupils and parents that the school does meet the overarching aims it has set for itself. Pupils do achieve considerable success, both academically and in their personal development. The pupils benefit from good teaching, a broad curriculum and very good extra-curricular provision, and from good relationships among themselves and with staff. There have been a number of projects to improve the school's facilities, notably science laboratories and a sports hall, and the accommodation generally is well cared for even though there remain some shortcomings in subject areas where classrooms are more scattered.
65. All heads of subject departments and project leaders form the middle-management group of the school with the senior team of six. This structure spreads to a large group of staff a range of key responsibilities. These include monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and of the curriculum, setting improvement targets for individual pupils and for subject departments, and ensuring the effective implementation of key school policies. While this structure helps to ensure good communications, it does not generate a clear enough focus on what needs to be done, in what priority order, and how to do it.
66. Together with the shortcomings of the development plan, this situation blurs the focus on a clear set of priorities and slows down the rate of progress on a range of valuable initiatives which the headteacher has launched, including teachers' self-review, the revised assessment policy and the project for extending the more-able pupils.
67. Day-to-day leadership and management of subject departments is mainly good overall. There is a shared commitment to improvement although development plans are mainly unsatisfactory. Individual members of the senior management team have been keen to take on responsibility and all are effective in their contribution to the school. However, each of these staff has too many responsibilities which are sometimes in addition to being heads of department. Responsibility for the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4, and its development, alongside developments in assessment policy is not sufficiently coherent. Similarly, the responsibility for the identification of, and provision for, pupils with special educational needs should be vested in a properly designated special needs co-ordinator (SENCO), with the governors needing to identify one of their number as the SEN governor. An example of delegation of a project to someone outside the senior management team is the More Able Project but current structures do not adequately secure the coherent adoption of the project.
68. The governing body has developed an effective way of working using its committee structure. Governors are committed to the success of the school in all that it strives to do. They closely interrogate examination results to identify any patterns which might emerge, particularly where results have been disappointing, and make it clear that they expect improvement. However, development plans do not focus adequately on securing these improvements.
69. The chair of governors and the chairs of the committees work well in support of the headteacher and staff. Governors have set performance targets for the headteacher which are related to the targets in the school's development plan. From discussions, it is clear that governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They take steps to ensure that teaching is of high quality and they understand the need for effective development of staff, particularly those with additional responsibilities. They keep a good grasp on financial management. They have maintained a strong emphasis

on improvements and additions to the buildings in recent years, having diverted very substantial sums of money into major projects notably the sports hall and the new science block. It will be important for them to evaluate carefully the educational outcomes of this spending, which has significantly reduced the budget share available to teaching, before embarking on further projects.

70. Governors' response to the key issues raised in the previous inspection has been uneven. Accommodation issues have been dealt with effectively but a number of other issues require further attention, including meeting statutory requirements for religious education post 16, provision for collective worship, pupils' use of information and communications technology across the curriculum, and improved provision for the least-able and most-able.
71. The governors' annual report to parents does not meet all of the statutory requirements in that it does not:
- report on progress of implementing their action plan following the last inspection;
  - give information on school security;
  - describe arrangements for admission of pupils with disabilities;
  - provide information on the implementation of the school's policy for pupils with special educational needs.
72. The governor development plan does not indicate that appropriate training has been undertaken by governors.
73. The school's new teacher self-review policy indicates how teaching quality is to be monitored. As the policy is new, it has yet to become fully operational in many departments and it must be given higher priority if it is to have a real impact. Due to the small size of several subject departments, it is not possible for all staff to have adequate opportunities to learn from each other's good practice. There are effective examples of professional development of individuals and teams, although too little emphasis has been placed on developing a wider range of teaching strategies. Plans for staff development generally are not clearly enough related to targets in the school development plan. The school has developed an effective induction programme for newly qualified teachers.
74. The school has begun to collect a wide range of data about the performance of pupils, including standardised tests of their abilities on entering the school. Analysis of this data is developing at senior management level. As yet, most heads of subject have not developed sufficient understanding of the data to help them set appropriately challenging targets for pupils (except in the sixth form) or to identify what developments in teaching strategies are called for.
75. Governors have set appropriate statutory targets for improved performance in GCSE examinations in 2000 and 2001. The school has also set itself appropriate targets for examination performance at A level. These targets are not given adequate emphasis in the school's development plan, however, and actions in the departmental plans are too often unrelated to the achievement of these targets. As yet, there are no targets for the improvement of test results at Key Stage 3.
76. There is good day-to-day management and communication. The school's financial management is careful and arrangements have been generally applauded in the recent auditors' report. However, the formula for allocation of funds to departments is not fully clear to them. The use of additional funds available from specific grants to support

developments is not clearly enough related to agreed improvement strategies, nor are outcomes evaluated carefully enough.

77. The proportion of the school's budget allocated to the education of post-16 students is in proportion to the share provided to the school for this purpose through the LEA's allocation formula. The management of the sixth form is clear and thoughtful and has students' progress and welfare at its heart.
78. New technology is being used extensively to support school management for example in financial management, in maintaining staff development records, in communication and in the analysis of pupil attainment data, but not yet adequately in a number of curriculum areas. Despite considerable spending on computers for pupil use, the school still has a lower computer to pupil ratio than the national average.
79. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff matches the demands of the curriculum very well. There is limited expertise in identifying, and responding to, the needs of pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties, and other special needs.
80. The accommodation is heavily used and well-maintained. A number of shortcomings remain but very substantial improvements have been made by governors since the last inspection. The most pressing accommodation issue now relates to specialist needs in technology teaching. Some minor reallocation of accommodation would facilitate more effective team work in some areas, notably modern foreign languages, geography and sixth form social sciences. The library stock is restricted and its environment unstimulating. The adequacy and use of the learning resources available is good or very good in most departments.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. In order to secure the further improvement of the school, the headteacher and governors now need to:
- (1.) Sharpen the focus on raising achievement, as well as on the school's other key priorities, in the school's development planning, by:
    - (a) improving the school's strategic planning, prioritising targets and relating them closely to the school's aims and its improvement targets (paragraphs 61, 75)
    - (b) ensuring that department plans contain clear targets for improvement based on a full understanding of pupil performance data analysis (paragraphs 62, 68, 97, 108, 113, 119, 138, 148, 174)
    - (c) relating staff development to whole-school and departmental priorities (paragraph 73)
    - (d) clarifying the resource implications of planned developments (paragraph 76)
    - (e) establishing effective processes for evaluating the impact of actions and strategies on the quality of education and the achievement of pupils (paragraphs 69, 76)
  - (2.) Improve the achievements of pupils of all abilities by:
    - (a) better matching of teaching strategies and resources to the full ability range of pupils in each lesson (paragraphs 16, 21, 90, 103, 122, 141, 153, 160, 168, 173)
    - (b) developing the literacy skills of lower-attaining pupils (paragraphs 19, 31, 88, 91, 99, 105, 131)
    - (c) adopting a range of effective strategies in lessons, including the teaching of higher-order thinking skills, to meet the needs of the most able (paragraphs 5, 6, 15, 16, 26, 81, 88, 95, 96, 109, 146, 168, 180)
    - (d) meeting the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties (paragraphs 19, 31, 43, 79)
  - (3.) Further develop the use by pupils and students of information and communication technology applications to support their learning in all subjects of the curriculum by :
    - (a) extending the availability of computers to pupils (paragraphs 23, 27, 70, 78, 95, 113, 18, 122, 131, 138, 148, 170, 173, 174)
    - (b) ensuring all staff are adequately trained and keep up-to-date with applications in their subjects (paragraphs 135, 139)
  - (4.) Improve the quality of teaching further, particularly in those subjects where weaknesses remain, by:
    - (a) fully implementing and further developing the new policy for monitoring of teaching quality and sharing models of very good practice (paragraphs 73, 97, 108, 124, 132, 148, 162, 170)
    - (b) further developing the use of pupil performance data to set appropriately challenging targets and to identify where improvements in teaching need to be made (paragraphs 24, 52, 58, 74, 104, 123, 131, 146, 155)
  - (5.) Ensure the full implementation of key initiatives, including those on monitoring the quality of teaching, the assessment of pupils' work and on extending the most able pupils, by developing appropriate management structures and strategies (paragraphs 24, 26, 63, 65, 66, 67, 73, 183)



82. Other issues raised in this report which should be considered by the school are:

- the need to develop further many teachers' knowledge and understanding of special educational needs and the range of strategies available to meet these needs (see paragraphs 32, 59, 67, 79)
- the need to meet all statutory curriculum requirements such that religious education is provided in the sixth form and design and technology is available for all Key Stage 4 pupils (see paragraphs 28, 120)
- the need to exploit better the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development across the curriculum (see paragraph 36)
- the need to improve health and safety policy, responsibilities and procedures (see paragraph 44)
- the need to ensure that all legal requirements of the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are met (see paragraphs 56, 71)
- the need for better curriculum links, especially in English, mathematics and science, with partner primary schools and the provision of better information about the Key Stage 3 curriculum for parents (see paragraphs 55, 57, 107)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	192
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6%	26%	32%	32%	4%	0%	0%

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>		No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll		811
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		59
Y7-Y13		
<b>Special educational needs</b>		No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		9
<b>English as an additional language</b>		No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language		10
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>		No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission		12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving		19

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.10

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.05

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	55	66	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	53	52
	Girls	65	64	63
	Total	116	117	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	95.8 (100.0)	96.7 (100.0)	95.0 (93.8)
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	75.2	91.7	58.7
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	55	54
	Girls	66	66	65
	Total	121	121	119
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100.0 (96.7)	100.0 (100.0)	98.3 (98.3)
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	89.2 (85.0)	90.1 (95.8)	69.4 (72.5)
	National	31	37	28

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	59	60	119

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	54	59	59
	Girls	57	58	58
	Total	111	117	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	95.0 (97.5)	100.0 (100.0)	100.0 (100.0)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	56 (53.4)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

***Attainment at the end of the sixth form***

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999			101

<b>Average A/AS points score per candidate</b>	<b>For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent</b>			<b>For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent</b>		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	25.3	24.5	24.8 (18.7)	10	4	7.0
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

<b>International Baccalaureate</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the Percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	802
Any other minority ethnic group	2

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff: Y7–Y13**

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	24.3

**Financial information**

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	1,893,404
Total expenditure	1,926,015
Expenditure per pupil	2,375
Balance brought forward from previous year	126,061
Balance carried forward to next year	93,450

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

811

Number of questionnaires returned

214

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	42	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	54	5	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	57	10	2	3
The teaching is good.	40	55	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	49	11	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	37	7	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	20	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	47	14	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	44	4	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	44	2	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	46	10	2	7

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

### **ENGLISH**

83. Pupils' attainment observed in English lessons towards the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average but below that of similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards are also well above the national average but below that for similar schools. The 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests reflect this pattern with scores well above national average but with overall performance well below the average for similar schools due to the low numbers achieving the highest grades. GCSE results in 1999 were well above national averages but the number of very high grades (A\* and A) achieved are below similar schools in both English Literature and English Language. A Level English Literature results for 1999 are in line with similar schools, though A Level English Language is below these schools. The attainment of GCSE drama students in lessons is well above average and in line with similar schools, though the first group of these pupils have yet to take their GCSE exams.
84. The main strengths include the high quality of the teaching and learning, the very good attitudes, motivation and behaviour of the pupils, the quality of media studies teaching, the well developed oral skills of pupils, imaginative approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare in Key Stage 3, very good GCSE drama teaching and the wide range of extra curricular activities which support English provision. Weaknesses are the lack of support in lessons for the small number of pupils with difficulties in literacy at Key Stage 3, a failure to challenge the most able to achieve very high grades and inconsistencies between teachers in the depth and quality of marking. Since the previous inspection there has been sound progress in developing a variety of writing tasks at Key Stage 3, in students using a wider range of appropriate vocabulary in the sixth form, in developing policies and schemes of work, and in acquiring a wider range of books for the higher attaining pupils.
85. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards of oral work are very good and pupils are able to talk and listen confidently in a range of contexts. For instance in a year 9 lesson on media they are able to discuss in detail how images are selected to create a holiday brochure for Gambia, recognising how the audience is being manipulated to see only a selective view of the country. In a lesson on Twelfth Night pupils eagerly respond to questions about characters and plot and they confidently use this understanding to improvise scenes related to the play. Reading skills are well above average at the end of Key Stage 3, and pupils read fluently and can articulate critical responses to poems, plays and novels. For instance, in a library lesson for year 8, pupils talk confidently about the books they enjoy and are able to give detail about the characters, thematic and linguistic features. Evidently the majority of pupils enjoy their library visits and read with enthusiasm. Throughout Key Stage 3, the development of an appreciation of Shakespeare is good. The standard of writing for this age group is well above the national average although compared to similar schools there are fewer of the very high standards expected from higher attaining pupils. Standards of spelling and punctuation are very good; work is both legible and attractively presented though there is not a consistent standard of presentation across the department. There is a very good range of writing including narrative, book reviews, the preparation of a talk for a primary school, a diary arising from 'Mrs Frisby and the Rats of Nimh' and well presented work on holiday brochures with extended and detailed writing including pictures. Much of the writing on display is word processed and attractively presented. Pupils writing in the school magazine is of a very good standard.

86. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of oracy are very good and the majority of pupils can initiate and sustain discussions in a variety of contexts, varying their expression and vocabulary for different purposes. For instance, as part of a study of 'Shirley Valentine' year 10 pupils interview each other about the actions and motivations of the key characters. The questioning is probing as well as confident, and pupils acting out the parts respond in detail and remain consistent to the characters they are representing. In the GCSE drama course pupils show great confidence in acting out the events in 'Lord of the Flies' showing a very good understanding of the characters and the key themes of the book. The overall standards of teaching are very good at Key Stage 4 and pupils respond well to a demanding variety of texts. Pupils show a good understanding of Shakespeare, as for instance in the journalistic writing about The Merchant of Venice. Standards of writing at the end of Key Stage 4 are very good although, as with Key Stage 3, standards for higher attaining pupils are below those of similar schools.
87. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are very good. In A Level English Literature students show a thorough understanding of texts such as Mansfield Park and the poetry of Edward Thomas. They are able to support their arguments with detailed factual references showing a very good understanding of the books studied.
88. The quality of learning is good or better in the majority of lessons and this is supported by active approaches to teaching. For instance, in a year 8 lesson on media studies pupils in groups are preparing to boost the sales of Cream Eggs. As they prepare their power point presentation they make good progress in learning about how the choice of language, form, layout and presentation contribute to the overall effect. In a year 11 lesson on The Merchant of Venice pupils make very good progress in understanding the text through a presentation of key events and characters as a news broadcast. In the sixth form there is very good learning through challenging questioning and discussion, as in a lesson where A Level language students discuss the language of power by comparing advertisements from different periods. A small number of pupils in Key Stage 3 struggling with basic literacy make unsatisfactory progress as there is insufficient structured support for them in the classroom. Similarly, a number of very able pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 make insufficient progress as they are not sufficiently challenged to develop their work further. However, the English Department is well aware of this need to support the most able and has developed strategies which will improve this.
89. Pupils' attitudes are very good; the majority of boys and girls find lessons interesting and they are well motivated. There is very good co-operation between pupils when they are working in groups or pairs and there are many instances of pupils supporting each other in their learning. Pupils work with a sense of purpose in drama and in other active lessons and the majority have a capacity to work well without the frequent intervention of teachers.
90. In almost all lessons observed teaching was good or better and was very good in a half of these. All members of the English team have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and explain the work clearly to students. In the sixth form teachers have a very good knowledge of the texts studied for A Level Literature and a good understanding of the interrelationship between language and society for the English Language A Level Course. In a majority of lessons there are active and challenging approaches to teaching such as the approaches to media studies, the introduction to Shakespeare, and well structured class and group work discussions. Teachers provide much variety in their planning for lessons and use the seventy minute lesson well. Weaknesses in teaching are a failure to provide structured support in lessons for the weakest pupils, a failure sufficiently to challenge a number of very able pupils and in a



few lessons some teachers tend to over dominate, not allowing pupils to develop their own thinking sufficiently.

91. The literacy skills of the majority of pupils are well above national averages with oral skills being particularly strong. In subjects other than English there is some good practice in further developing these skills. However, support for literacy is incidental rather than planned and there is no school policy or strategy to develop this in a coherent way in the curriculum as a whole.

## **MATHEMATICS**

92. In mathematics, pupils achieve very high standards compared to national expectations and above those achieved by pupils in similar schools at both key stages. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999, however, the performance of pupils was well below the average for similar schools due to the low numbers achieving the highest grades. GCSE examination results were very good, with 55 per cent of pupils achieving a grade A or A\* in 1999 which is higher than for similar schools nationally. In the 'A' level examinations, all pupils achieved a pass grade and 32 per cent gained an A or B grade, which is above the proportion nationally but below that for similar schools. Standards achieved by pupils in lessons are above average. Standards in 'using and applying mathematics' are lower than in other areas of the mathematics curriculum.
93. At Key Stage 3, pupils are numerate and are able to calculate mentally, on paper using standard methods and with scientific calculators. Their level of understanding of algebraic techniques is good and they are able to apply these well. Pupils have a very good grasp of probability and of geometry. They are able to use statistical methods to compare sets of data and have a good understanding of angle theorems. At Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils are working at the highest levels and are confidently coping with mathematics at grades A and A\*. In the sixth form, pupils are working at above average standards for the 'A' level mathematics and further mathematics courses. They use graphical calculators and computers confidently.
94. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers prepare the lessons thoroughly and have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the course requirements. Teaching and learning is very often pacey, and homework is generally well used to consolidate and extend learning in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. Question and answer sessions between the teacher and the whole class or with individuals are very high quality, often stretching pupils' understanding and helping them to draw together the links between areas of mathematics. Teaching appropriately emphasises rigour and accuracy and this is reflected in the marking of pupils' work, where often detailed model answers are given, especially in the sixth form.
95. Some of the most able mathematicians in the younger classes are not learning as quickly as they could do, as the teaching often lacks pace and interest for these pupils and the curriculum does not include sufficiently challenging work. The teaching of problem solving and investigative skills is under-developed and does not appropriately underpin the teaching of the rest of the mathematics curriculum. Too little use is made of computers to teach mathematics. For example, spreadsheets could be better used to develop pupils' understanding of algebra and dynamic geometry software could be introduced to develop pupils' spatial awareness.
96. There has been good improvement in the teaching of mathematics since the last inspection. Standards in pupils' attainment have risen and results at GCSE and 'A' level

have improved. Relationships between teachers and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, are very good and the amount of progress pupils make in lessons has increased. Assessment of pupils' work is secure and the new termly tests and reports to parents on attainment and effort, when embedded in practice, will provide a good basis to track individual pupils' progress. Although the amount of computer hardware and software has increased since the last inspection, the use of this has not yet had a significant impact on the teaching and learning of mathematics.

97. The mathematics department comprises a team of extremely committed and hard working teachers who all want the best for the pupils in terms of quality of learning and standards. The team is well led and the day to day management is very good. Weaknesses in strategic development planning mean that initiatives are not always sharply focused on raising pupils' attainment nor appropriately costed. The process of 'self-review' is a new initiative and is not yet a significant evaluation strategy.
98. In order further to improve standards, the department should
- secure high quality policy and practice in the use of computers and teaching the most able mathematicians;
  - broaden the range of teaching styles to captivate the interest and motivation of all pupils and ensure their best progress;
  - improve the evaluation of teaching and feedback to teachers about strategies to improve their quality of teaching and the standards that their pupils achieve;
  - review the teaching of 'using and applying mathematics'. Ensure this underpins the teaching of the rest of the mathematics curriculum;
  - draw up a strategic development plan which systematically addresses strategies for raising attainment.

## **SCIENCE**

99. In the Key Stage 3 national tests, the standards achieved by pupils in science are well above the national average, but are very low when compared to similar schools. Evidence from the inspection indicates that standards are now higher, especially in year 9, where the more able pupils make particularly good progress, with an increasing number of pupils working at the higher levels. Standards in investigational science are improving but are still weaker than those achieved in other aspects of the pupils' work. For a minority of pupils, weaknesses in the development of their literacy skills prevents them from demonstrating their full potential in written science work. Pupils' scientific vocabulary is mostly good. Pupils' skills in numeracy are well developed, especially in number and algebra, although accuracy in the construction of graphs is a weakness for some pupils.
100. At Key Stage 4, standards in the 1999 examinations were very high when compared to the national average but were below those for similar schools. Although all pupils gained a pass in science at GCSE, over the last three years there has been a small decline in the number of pupils achieving the higher grades. Value-added analysis indicates that pupils are making less progress during Key Stage 4 than pupils of similar ability nationally. The performance of girls is slightly higher than that of boys. Evidence from the inspection suggests that there has been a small improvement in the standards being achieved. However further improvement will be needed to reach the targets set by the department for year 11 pupils. By the end of the Key Stage 4, the standard achieved in science investigation is very high and exceeds those in other aspects of the science course.

101. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in the standards achieved in A level examinations in all three science subjects. Standards are in line with, or in the case of biology are above, those achieved in similar schools. Despite these achievements the progress of individual pupils and the numbers reaching the highest grades does vary significantly.
102. There are many strengths in the science teaching. During the inspection three quarters of the teaching was good or better with one fifth being very good; teaching is best post-16. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The science staff are hardworking, dedicated to their pupils and have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject specialism. Lessons are well planned, have a clear structure and are conducted at a good pace which ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning. A wide range of teaching and learning styles are used which motivates pupils and cultivates an interest in science. Pupils were observed using computers to compare the amount of light being reflected off different coloured surfaces, conducting a debate about the moral issues surrounding the work of Edward Jenner, and designing experiments to investigate the effect of caffeine on the human body.
103. Practical work is used extensively to promote learning in science, however too much teacher direction frequently limits the extent to which pupils can demonstrate and develop their investigational skills. Another area that is not sufficiently developed is ability of teachers to provide sufficient challenge in the work they set to meet the wide range of abilities in some classes. As a result the progress in learning for the more able pupils in the class is sometimes unsatisfactory. The setting of pupils in year 9 has enabled teachers to target their teaching more closely on pupils needs and as a result standards have risen. Another strategy beginning to be developed by teachers is to plan work for pupils' different ability levels within the same lesson. This was effectively demonstrated during the inspection in a lesson where pupils were investigating the effect of temperature on enzyme activity. While most pupils were measuring the time taken for the enzyme to work at different temperatures, the more able were asked to work out the rate of the reaction.
104. Assessment within the department is generally good. Pupils' work is regularly marked and grades are given for effort and attainment in line with the school policy. However more guidance needs to be given in the marking as to how pupils can improve their work. The potential for raising standards by the setting of targets, and through self-assessment strategies has not yet been fully explored. Pupils are formally assessed at the end of each unit of work and their achievements are recorded in a central database which allows teachers to monitor progress and identify underachieving pupils.
105. The development of basic skills within science teaching is variable. There is an increasing use of information and communications technology within the department. Pupils use data logging equipment to monitor movement, temperature and light; CD ROMs are used to access information on a range of topics; spreadsheets are used to collate experimental data and produce graphs; word processing is used for writing up reports; there is also a growing use of the Internet for research purposes. Development of literacy skills is somewhat weaker and the department needs to consider the support some pupils need to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate their scientific knowledge and understanding effectively.
106. Pupils' attitudes to learning in science are very good. They come to lessons fully equipped and settle to work quickly. Almost all are fully engaged with their work for the whole of the lesson. Relationships are excellent, both between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. They work co-operatively and collaboratively during

practical work and are able to persevere with tasks even when difficulties are experienced. Pupils behave well in the laboratory, working in a safe manner. They are able to carry out practical work independently and have an excellent health and safety awareness.

107. Day to day management of the department is very good. Documentation and resources are well organised, enabling them to be easily accessed. Accommodation is of a very good standard and is well looked after, with most laboratories being of a flexible design to support a wide range of teaching activities. The support provided by the two technicians is excellent and has a significant impact on the amount and quality of the practical work that the department is able to offer to pupils. Schemes of work are in place for all courses, and these have had an impact in raising standards, especially at Key Stage 3. Further development of the schemes are needed to ensure that opportunities for differentiation and cross-curricular links are more clearly identified. There is also a need to ensure that the work being planned for year 7 takes more account of the prior learning that has taken place in primary schools.
108. Strategic management within the department is somewhat weaker. There is a lack of clarity about the strategic vision for the way the department is led and managed. The potential opportunity for raising standards in science through having a single science department rather than three separate subject departments has not been explored. Although some good procedures are already in place, there is a need to develop further systematic procedures for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within the department in order to identify areas of strength and weakness. Strategic planning is underdeveloped and does not sufficiently focus resources on the raising of standards.
109. There has been significant progress since the last inspection. Two new laboratories have been built and the department is less dispersed around the school site. Access to and the use of information and communications technology has improved. Schemes of work are now in place and lesson planning is much stronger. Development is still needed on the match between curriculum provision and the needs of the more able pupils so that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in their science work.

## **ART**

110. GCSE results in art for the past five years have been consistently above the national average for similar schools. At A level, results are consistently at the national average for grades A/B. In lessons, attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is at the national average; at Key Stage 4 and post-16 it is well above the national average. At all stages some excellence was seen, in work in progress and in sketch books which are used both as homework and as a research base for work in progress. Pupils with special needs attain well, and those with specific talent are stretched. Some really excellent work was seen from year 13 students, including a portrait and a very large scale symbolic work. There is vitality in the school's art work.
111. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4 and excellent post 16. Exactly the same picture applies with learning. Teachers are secure in subject and teaching method, giving pupils full access to experience and expertise. Planning and preparation are excellent. Organisation and pupil management are very good giving pupils efficient access to the curriculum, and a sense of confidence. Good open and closed questioning both reinforces and extends pupil knowledge. Clear targets are set for pupils with equally clear criteria for success. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and how to get there. Sketch books are well used both as a homework and a

research tool. Teacher feedback is good, supporting skill development and refinement of work in progress.

112. Pupil attitudes are very good at Key Stage 3, and excellent at Key Stage 4 and post 16. Attitudes are open and positive, although some year 7 pupils are a little fussy. In many lessons there is a real sense of involvement and excitement. Particularly at Key Stage 4 and post 16 there is commitment to quality. On the one hand pupils accept responsibility for their own work, but are also strongly mutually supportive. In one year 11 lesson there was an unbidden and very intensive silence, and there was an excellent working ethos in all lessons.
113. The teacher temporarily in charge of art is doing a very good job in difficult circumstances, and the quality of supply teaching is very good. Development planning has been unsatisfactory. However planning for the new post 16 provision in art was very good, and was shared with parents and potential students in such a way as to produce excellent recruitment levels. The accommodation is good, if overcrowded, but there will be increasing pressures when the new post 16 courses are introduced. The curriculum is broad and balanced with appropriate multi-cultural content. The lack of information technology was an issue at the last inspection, and there have been no developments as yet. Facilities for display in the department are limited, with insufficient opportunity to share and celebrate pupil attainment. There is a good assessment system, but pupils' assessment in undeveloped.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

114. The standard of pupils' achievement observed in design and technology throughout the school is very good. In 1999, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average and comparable with similar schools. Of those pupils entered for GCSE examinations in design and technology subjects in 1999, 88% gained an A\* to C grade, broadly in line with similar schools. At both key stages, girls performed better than boys although the gap is far less than the national trend for this year. At A level, results in 1999 were above the average for similar schools and were an improvement on the results achieved in the previous two years.
115. All the design and technology teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. They stimulate and encourage pupils to develop their knowledge and practical skills by undertaking novel projects. They use time effectively and present challenging tasks and clear targets ensuring a brisk pace in the majority of lessons. Teachers take opportunities to make connections with local companies and community groups to ensure practical projects are relevant. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and is good at Key Stage 4 and post 16. Not all pupils continue to study design and technology in Key Stage 4 and in this respect the statutory requirements are not met.
116. At Key Stage 3, pupils catch onto ideas quickly although on some occasions a lack of manual dexterity prevents the younger pupils from making swift progress. At Key Stage 4, pupils are capable of producing creative solutions to unusual problems and constructing their solutions to a high standard. Drawing and sketching skills are of a high order. Post 16, student's project work demonstrates near professional level presentation skills.
117. Pupils enjoy their work in design and technology and respond well to their teachers. They have a clear idea of progression within the subject and its relevance to society and the world of work.

118. The department has continued to maintain its high standard of work since the last inspection and the post 16 course is a particular strength. The accommodation and resources, including information and communications technology, available within the department are poor and insufficient to enable all pupils to access the subject in an appropriate environment. Taken overall, the leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. There is good day-to-day management and effective use of assessment data to help improve pupils standards of achievement. Regular assessment of teachers' strengths and weaknesses maintains their subject knowledge and teaching skills. However, development planning is limited and lacks a clear vision for the future development of the subject.
119. The school should now:
- establish a clear action plan for extending and refurbishing accommodation for teaching resistant materials and graphics;
  - extend the computer network to the design and technology areas and provide appropriate software and equipment for pupils to exploit information and communications technology in all key stages;
  - identify pupils for whom design technology is not considered appropriate under present regulations and formally disapply them from the subject at Key Stage 4.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

120. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are attaining standards above the national average, with a few pupils working at the highest levels. They have developed high order mappings skills and use atlases competently. They understand the links between some physical processes and human activity, such as tropical storms. Some pupils are posing good geographical questions on cause and effect and they are developing the information gathering skills required to pursue their enquiries. GCSE standards are good but a little lower than those achieved in similar schools, especially at A\* grade. In lessons, pupils show a good knowledge and understanding across the syllabus and are now developing their skills in evaluation which should enable them to enhance their coursework. A level standards at grades A-E are better than in similar schools, although they are just slightly lower at A-B grades; in particular, relatively few boys are gaining the highest grade. Standards are high in lessons, however, with pupils showing a very good understanding of a range of topics including urban regeneration, the causes of coastal flooding (covering both physical and human factors) and the impact of tourism.
121. Most teaching in geography is good or better with nearly a third considered as very good. Planning is thorough and lessons are usually taught at a brisk pace with a clear focus of activity. Most lessons are strongly teacher led and promote effective learning. There are too few opportunities for the pupils to reflect on their learning and so deepen their understanding.
122. There are opportunities for field work at each key stage, including an extensive residential programme in year 12. Strategies for using computers to aid and develop geographical understanding are being introduced but the use of information and communications technology to support learning in the subject is unsatisfactory. A few pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are not progressing as well as expected and require more support and encouragement to help them to do so as well as they can. Nevertheless, behaviour in class is invariably very good.

123. Marking and assessment of pupils' work is mostly satisfactory although a little of the marking is unnecessarily negative and this contributes to the lower levels of motivation of a few pupils. There is, as yet, insufficient monitoring of the performance of individual pupils. In examination classes, close attention is paid to chief examiners' reports which helps the pupils to develop their examination techniques, including within coursework.
124. The department is well led and all the geography teachers work effectively as a team. There is considerable joint planning, contributing to a good development of learning as pupils progress through the school.

## **HISTORY**

125. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above that expected nationally but it is below that of similar schools in that fewer pupils are reaching the higher levels seven and eight. During the inspection, standards observed were well above the national average and in line with those of similar schools. This discrepancy is because the system of assessment in use is not sufficiently focused on standards at the end of the key stage. At GCSE pupils are meeting course requirements and results well above the national expectations. In previous years the number of candidates being awarded the higher grades had been lower than in similar schools. However, in 1999a larger number pupils were awarded the highest grades. Standards are now in line with similar schools and this was reflected in the work observed during the inspection. A level results are in line with the national level for similar schools although, until 1999, with fewer students awarded A or B grades.
126. During the inspection the standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were judged to be very good. In lessons pupils showed that they are able to understand the causes and results of the major developments of this century. Written work in all year groups is usually well presented and pupils' work includes examples of a wide variety of tasks. Pupils of the highest ability level are able to use complex information and detailed sources and most pupils have a good knowledge of the topics that they have studied. Pupils are particularly good at remembering detail, understanding motivation and evaluating the process of decision making in the past.
127. Standards are also very good in Key Stage 4 classes with pupils showing that they have both detailed knowledge of the topics that they are studying and the high level of skills in essay and document work which will help them to succeed. Pupils answer and ask questions with confidence and in doing so they all show a secure level of knowledge and understanding. Many pupils are very articulate and they are able to base their ideas and judgements on a careful study of extracts and source material. They are very good at evaluating short and longer term causes. The most able pupils respond very well to the detail and complexity of their studies. Individual pupils with special educational needs show a high level of attainment and respond very well to the demands of the course.
128. During the inspection, standards post-16 were judged to be satisfactory. Year 13 students show that they are working in a way which will enable them to meet and possibly improve on their target grades. Students showed confidence in their own judgement in dealing with document questions during class discussions. They are able to appreciate the complexity of factors linking religious and political change in Britain in the seventeenth century. By the second year of the course they have a secure understanding of the major developments in sixteenth century European history, including the Reformation. They consult a wide range of books in the planning and writing of essays. However the content of the course is difficult and the style of both essay and document questions is very demanding. Only the most able students are able

fully to appreciate the factors affecting religious and political change in this relatively remote period. Many students find the material difficult to organise into the standard of answers which could be awarded the highest marks in an examination.

129. The planning for the subject ensures that both skills and areas of knowledge are revisited as pupils progress through the school. Progress is satisfactory in all year groups and good for those pupils with special educational needs. Younger pupils were observed making very good progress in the use of extracts and in the development of skills in research and the evaluation of evidence. By the end of year 9 the majority have a secure grasp of all aspects of the study of history. Those who choose to take the subject at GCSE make good progress in the acquisition of the knowledge content of the course and in developing skills in answering questions and completing coursework. Students also make good progress in some areas of the 'A' level course, for example, document based work, and their contribution in class shows that they quickly adapt to the new way of working. All pupils have the opportunity to go on visits to historic sites, museums and student conferences.
130. The depth and breadth of the topics covered is excellent. The department makes particularly good use of role play and drama to enhance learning. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
131. The teaching of history is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory post 16. During the inspection a third of lessons were judged to be very good or better. Teachers are using a variety of approaches to teaching and learning. They are setting a variety of tasks which make a contribution to literacy and some to the development of skills in numeracy, although there is still insufficient focus on the potential for development of skill in these areas. There is insufficient use of information technology to support learning in the subject. In some Key Stage 3 classes, because of the limited time available, the pace of the lessons is such that there is little time for pupils to reflect on what they have learned. However, a newly developed programme of inquiry based activities is already developing skills in independent research. Assessment procedures are being developed effectively. However, outcomes are not yet used to ensure that pupils of varying ability within the class are given appropriate resources and classroom activities. Good progress is ensured by the quality of questioning in class which is used to review earlier work. In examination classes the very careful monitoring of work makes a considerable contribution to learning. Homework always links well with classwork and thus helps pupil progress well.
132. The management of the subject is good and there is a strong team ethos. There is a clear focus on review and development and the talents and skills of different teachers are used very effectively. Careful planning ensures progression and continuity although monitoring and auditing require a greater focus. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Resources and accommodation have improved and new assessment procedures and enquiry based studies have been introduced.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

133. Pupils' achievement in information and communications technology lessons is good in Key Stage 3 and excellent in Key Stage 4. Their standard of achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 has improved over the past three years and in 1999 was about the national average for all schools and only slightly below the average for similar schools. Girls achieved higher levels than boys.



134. In 1999, the majority of pupils were entered for a short course GCSE examination and 92% gained a grade between A\* and C. These results are an improvement on the previous year and are well above the national average and close to the average achieved by similar schools.
135. Information and communications technology is taught as a discrete subject throughout the school except in year 8. Teaching in these lessons is effective in all years and particularly good post 16. Many teachers in other subjects have good information and communications technology skills which they continue to develop to ensure maximum impact within their subject, but practice in modern foreign languages, design and technology, geography, art and history is not yet satisfactory.
136. Pupils undertake well chosen projects which enable them to address all strands of the programmes of study in their information and communications technology lessons. They respond well in lessons and work at a brisk pace making very good use of the time they have available. However, with a few exceptions, notably in science and music, there are limited opportunities for them to exploit this knowledge in other subjects in school. Homework is set regularly and effectively extends pupils' information and communications technology experience as the majority of pupils have access to equipment at home.
137. Pupils of all ages use information and communications technology equipment effectively and work confidently. Pupils behave well and work enthusiastically and constructively in information and communications technology lessons and on some occasions benefit from working with other pupils. They show considerable initiative when confronted with problems and often chose to solve them without reference to their teacher.
138. Although information and communications technology provision has improved since the last inspection, its impact on the curriculum remains limited. Progress has been made with the installation of a modern computer network which has the potential to bring the benefits of modern information systems to all parts of the school. The number of locations able to use this facility is small and the number of computers available around the school is still below the national average. The day-to-day management of the system is very good but strategic planning for the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
139. The school should now:
- produce a clear development plan detailing outlining the improvements to be made in information and communications technology during the next three years;
  - extend the computer network to all curriculum areas to enable pupils to use information and communications technology as a learning tool;
  - produce clear expectations for staff training to ensure effective use of information and communications technology in all subjects.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

140. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in French are broadly in line with national expectations but below those for similar schools. Whilst some pupils are attaining the higher levels a significant number, in particular boys, are underachieving. In lessons observed and in pupils' work there are too few examples of more extended speaking or writing or the tackling of more complex reading and listening tasks. In German, the

second foreign language which is started in year 8, standards at the end of the key stage are broadly comparable to those in French.

141. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards in French in GCSE examinations are above the national average but below those for similar schools. In German standards are well above the national average and in line with those in similar schools. The numbers of students electing to study German at Key Stage 4 increased by a third in 1999. Of these a significant majority were boys. No analysis has been undertaken by the school in relation to the prior attainment of these pupils. In pupils' work, coursework and examination preparation there are examples of achievement at high levels in both languages. However in lessons observed many pupils were working only in line with national average standards as the teaching is not always extending them sufficiently. Most pupils have excellent attitudes to work, self-motivation and appropriate study skills. Where pupils do not have these skills there is insufficient support, for example for boys. The department recognises that this is an issue which they have not yet addressed within their teaching.
142. Pupils do not always make adequate progress in relation to the activities presented to them in class. Learning takes place in terms of vocabulary across a variety of topics and grammar. There are, however, limited examples of pupils applying this knowledge particularly at Key Stage 3 but also at Key Stage 4 in terms of building up much longer 'chunks' of spoken and written language, recycling previously learned language, tackling new or unfamiliar language or addressing challenging listening and reading texts.
143. Post 16 standards in both French and German are good. In 1999 A level results in German were well above that achieved nationally and in line with that for similar schools. In French, whilst achievement at higher grades was disappointing in 1999, the target grades for 2000 are in line with achievement in similar schools. In Spanish, taught to GCSE, in years 12 and 13, standards are high.
144. Post 16 the quality of learning is good. This progress is demonstrated by the ability to write and speak at length with confidence and fluency on more complex subjects and the skill by Year 13 to access recordings from satellite TV and current newspapers and magazines.
145. Teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall in both French and German. Post 16 it is good. The department has worked as a team to develop a degree of consistency across the teaching of both languages. Staff have good knowledge of the languages they teach and use the foreign language extensively in the classroom. Across the department a variety of resources are used to support teaching. These include the textbooks, worksheets, video and tape recordings, artefacts, satellite TV and information and communications technology. Pupils are encouraged to develop a degree of independence through keeping vocabulary notebooks and post 16 for undertaking research and presenting this to the rest of the class. In all classrooms the quality of relationships is good and classroom management strategies effective. Across lessons a variety of teaching techniques are used including whole class, pair and groupwork as well as role-play, presentations and language games.
146. However, in Key Stages 3 and 4, expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are often too low. Activities in lessons often offer too much support and pupils are not challenged to use and re-use language from memory. In other cases younger pupils are given insufficient practice before being asked to reproduce new language. In most cases there is no insistence from the teacher on pupils using the foreign language routinely in lessons although when this is the case the confidence and intrinsic motivation generated

is high. There is very limited evidence of pupils, particularly the more able, producing more extended language in class or at home for the purposes of assessment. Schemes of work for Key Stage 4 have begun to identify expectations for pupils working at different levels. However teachers' planning does not make this explicit even where the grouping arrangements are broad. Assessment does not yet permeate teaching. The outcomes of tests are not yet used diagnostically throughout the department to identify pupils' needs and to support both teachers and pupils in judging whether they are meeting targets. Marking rarely supports pupils in identifying how they can improve. The faculty portfolio of pupils' assessed work is in need of updating.

147. Since the last inspection the department has made some progress in the development of schemes of work, the increase in resources, the sharing of effective practice in the teaching of both French and German and the development of oral confidence within structured activities. However, limited progress has been made in expectations of pupil performance and in the planning for differentiation other than by outcome.
148. The day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory overall. There is evidence of teamwork and an increasing number of whole department initiatives, for example the production of GCSE support materials. However, there is a need for further development in :
- the analysis of data on pupil performance and achievement and the use of outcomes to set targets for individual pupils' achievement and to inform the departmental schemes of work;
  - systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' work;
  - within the departmental development plan, the identification of a range of success criteria for pupil performance;
  - within schemes of work, the identification of expectations in terms of pupil achievement for the end of each year/Key Stage;
  - increased opportunities for the use of information and communications technology to support learning.

## **MUSIC**

149. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was not carried out but the inspection evidence indicates that pupils are working in line with national average expectations, and occasionally above. In one year 7 class, where pupils are attaining above national expectations, the majority of the class are able to speak individual parts of a rap to a rhythm accompaniment, with accurate control of both the beat and rhythm of the words using some expression. Where pupils are working in line with expectations, year 9 pupils play syncopated bass rhythms well on keyboards during a lesson focusing on samba. Other pupils play typical samba rhythms on a range of percussion instruments to ably accompany the rest of the class in a performance. In one lesson only, pupils were attaining below the national expectations, and made small steps in their learning, due to the slow pace of the lesson. Across the key stage, keyboard skills and understanding of musical concepts are being learnt satisfactorily.
150. The number of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations is above national averages when compared with all schools, but is well below when compared with similar schools. Girls generally do better than boys. During the inspection, the pupils' work scrutinised was in line with national expectations. The more able pupils are making use of good part writing and using complex rhythms in their compositions. Year 10 pupils are gaining good keyboard skills and are able to make good use of computer sequencing programs. A group has composed a very good piece for use in a school fashion show.

Their composition makes good use of a repeated bass with lively rhythms and shows a good understanding of the vernacular. Generally, composing skills are better developed than listening skills.

151. Of the three pupils entered for A level in 1999, all passed. However none achieved A/B grades and this is well below expectations when compared with similar schools. Post-16, students have greater developed composition skills than listening skills. The department has already identified this area of weakness in learning and has begun to address the problem by building a stronger emphasis on the teaching of listening and appraising skills at Key Stage 3. Students observed in year 13 are making good progress and are working in line with expectations. The more able are, for example, able successfully to compose for a purpose when writing a set of piano pieces for children. Each piece has a distinct flavour, including one written particularly well to teach thirds. Lower attaining students need more support and find it hard to extend their compositions.
152. Overall, pupils' response to music lessons ranges from excellent to satisfactory, and is mostly good. Relationships between staff and pupils are good in both curriculum and extra-curricular time. Pupils behave sensibly in their use of instruments and musical information and communications technology equipment and their good behaviour has a positive impact on their learning. They perform with enthusiasm, and support each other without being prompted by the teacher. Year 9 pupils spontaneously applauded after succeeding to improve an ending to a class performance that they had practiced several times. Post 16 pupils have mature attitude to their work. On the rare occasions that teaching lacks motivation, despite this, pupils continue to behave well.
153. At Key Stage 3, teaching is sometimes satisfactory and mostly good. The content of lessons is always clearly explained to pupils informing them of what is expected of them. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to involve pupils in a range of practical musical activities to develop skills. Activities are planned to motivate pupils' interest and are generally well matched to their abilities. Whole class teaching is used well to involve all pupils in musical experiences. Resources, including information and communication technology, are used effectively to support pupils' learning. Good links are made to pupils learning in literacy, when they are involved in work using syllables of words to create rhythms. Pupils are involved in assessing their own achievement of practical work. Teachers' expectations are high, although sometimes too high when not enough time is allowed for consolidation, particularly for the less able pupils. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory the pace was too slow and pupils were not challenged or motivated to work with any enthusiasm and only small steps were made in learning. The range of musical skills taught is broad, but there is an over-emphasis on instrumental performance, at the cost of singing skills. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is very good, and is satisfactory or better post 16. Pupils are given more responsibility for their own learning. Teachers share knowledge and support pupils without stifling their creative ideas.
154. The school provides a good range of musical opportunities for all pupils and a large number of pupils have instrumental lessons and take part in the range of extra-curricular activities available. Visits to musical performances, regular opportunities for pupils to perform in concerts and visiting musicians all enhance pupils learning.
155. To raise standards the department needs to develop a formal system to monitor pupils' performance and continue to develop strategies to raise levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 and post 16. At Key Stage 3, assessment opportunities need to be included in planning.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

156. In physical education, overall, standards are good. The 1999 end of Key Stage 3 internal school assessment shows 97% of pupils reached national expectation, which is higher than the average achieved by all schools nationally. The work observed in lessons during the week of the inspection verified this judgement. At both key stages, standards of performance are mainly in line with or above the national expectation, being somewhat better at Key Stage 4. Pupils' ability to plan and evaluate their own and others' work is not as well developed. Standards post 16 are good and in some aspects of work excellent.
157. On entry to the school, although standards of performance are satisfactory, the pupils' ability to plan their work, make decisions and judgements on their own and others' performance, is below the expected national level. However, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have made good progress in these skills and the greatmajority reach national expectation, although few achieve beyond this level. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are good. In netball and football, most pupils perform skills and techniques consistently and are able to use these effectively in games situations. In football, year 11 boys were able to set up their practices to develop advanced defensive tactics and then use what they learned in an adapted game. Post 16 the physical education A level standards are good.
158. Standards and progress of pupils who are physically less able are good because they are well supported by imaginative teaching and resources which maintain their interest.
159. Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently very good. The great majority of pupils are enthusiastic and concentrate well on their learning. Participation levels are excellent and pupils are always fully involved with lessons. Pupils' personal development is very good and is an outstanding strength post 16 where students take advantage of the opportunities offered in the Community Leaders Award Scheme and attachment to other classes in the school to great effect. In parts of some lessons, a small number of pupils, particularly in year 7 outdoor games, lose concentration. The less able switch off and the more able appear to be coasting. These pupils are either struggling to master sometimes quite difficult skills and techniques or find the work or challenges set too simple.
160. Teaching overall is good, and is broadly consistent across the key stages, although the proportion of good teaching in year 7 and to a certain extent year 9, is lower. This is because pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities or guidance to develop their skills of decision making and evaluating performance. In these lessons, learning objectives are not written to link up with the national curriculum programme of study requirement. Without exception, the teachers establish excellent relationships, which is a significant strength. Lessons are well organised and mostly ensure all pupils participate fully, that progress is maintained for both boys and girls and good use is made of other adults or helpers and appropriate learning resources for lessons.
161. The overall balance and breadth of the curriculum is good. Provision of time at Key Stage 3 is good, but the arrangements for Key Stage 4 are barely adequate. Boys and girls are able to take part in most activities, although some year 11 girls reported they were not able to choose football as one of their options. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is planned so that boys and girls are able to make good progress with the exception of dance and the health related fitness module. The duration of other courses allows for good medium term progress to be made by pupils. The current Key Stage 4 option scheme is unsatisfactory. It is not clear how the year 9, 10 and 11 courses link up with

each other and the system for making choices does not provide pupils with sufficient information at an early enough stage. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good with a wide range of clubs, teams and community provision available to complement the curriculum.

162. The management of the department is satisfactory. Teachers combine well as a team and each takes on a special responsibility for aspects of the department's work. This ensures that the subject makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. The head of department carries a heavy management load, with responsibilities for a year group running alongside her responsibilities for the department. Some aspects of management remain underdeveloped, in particular those relating to monitoring, review and evaluation.
163. The standard of accommodation is very good and well used, but there are some health and safety items that should be addressed.
164. The department has made mixed progress since the last inspection. The ability of pupils to evaluate their own and others work is still inconsistent and too often linked to the individual teacher's ability to plan appropriate teaching strategies, rather than a whole department approach. However, standards of attainment have been improved overall.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

165. Standards in religious education at Key Stage 3 are good. By the end of the key stage pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world faiths, and have well developed skills of reflection, interpretation and evaluation of the meaning of religious teaching for believers and in relation to their own lives. These skills are put to use in activities such as describing spending a weekend with a Muslim friend during Ramadan. Standards at Key Stage 4 are very good. For the past four years, pupils' performance in GCSE has been consistently very high, above national standards compared to all schools and in line with that for similar schools. Since 1998, all Key Stage 4 pupils have followed a GCSE short course in Religious Education. The majority of pupils are in line to achieve grades A\* - C. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the religious responses to a wide variety of social and moral issues and are able to analyse and speculate about these responses. Standards of religious education post 16 are very good. In the past few years, pupil performance at A level has been better than similar schools. By the end of their course, A level students have highly developed skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation in relation to ethics, Christian theology and philosophy, and are able to prepare and present cogent philosophical arguments both orally and in written form. In year 12 all students follow a six week Ethics module taught by religious education teachers as part of the General Studies course. However, the statutory requirements for teaching religious education are not being met.
166. Pupils learning is very good in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and very good post 16. Across each Key Stage and between Key Stages pupils increase their knowledge of religious beliefs, practices and vocabulary. This is supported by the excellent subject knowledge of the permanent teachers and by very good use of artefacts. The emphasis of lessons on the meaning of all religious phenomena enables pupils to deepen their understanding. Pupils apply good intellectual effort to learning activities that are well-matched to their ages and abilities. The interest that pupils show in their RE lessons is due to the teachers' ability to enthuse the pupils, and their productivity results from the teachers' good pace of working.

167. Pupils show good attitudes to religious education at Key Stages 3 and 4 and they are very good at post 16. They listen to their teachers and to each other and in almost every class there is an ethos of mutual respect. Pupils' behaviour is good or very good in almost every lesson, and they are keen to contribute answers and ideas.
168. The teaching of the permanent staff is very strong, with many outstanding features. Particular strengths of the teaching include very good subject knowledge which is confidently presented, and which shows genuine enthusiasm for the subject. The good and better lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils so that they understand the purpose of their learning activities. There is a very strong focus on the meaning of religious teaching and beliefs for believers, and of the relevance to pupils' own lives. In these lessons, questioning often requires reflective and speculative answers, with high levels of challenge to pupils to interpret, evaluate and apply their knowledge, and so deepen their understanding. A weakness of the teaching of all lessons is the lack of differentiation of learning activities for pupils of different abilities, and provision for the more able pupils being in terms of a greater volume of work rather than higher challenge.
169. Teachers have a strong commitment to the pupils. The effective relationships they have with the pupils and between themselves underlies the department's strength in terms of pupil performance in examinations. The department makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very strong community links, such as with the Brixham Churches, and programmes of visits and visitors support pupils learning very effectively.
170. The last inspection identified as a key issue to ensure that the statutory requirements are met in relation to the provision of religious education at Key Stage 4 and post 16. Statutory requirements are now met at Key Stage 4, but not in the sixth form. Very little has been achieved since the last inspection in relation to the concerns raised about a lack of differentiation in lessons, more constructive criticism in marking being needed to inform pupils of how to improve their standards. There is still need for access to information and communications technology facilities.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN INSPECTION**

### **Business Education**

171. Business Education was added to the Key Stage 4 curriculum in September 1998 and the first GCSE examinations will be taken in the summer 2000. Levels of attainment in classwork and homework are at least good for nearly all the pupils and very good for a number. If these standards are maintained the results this summer should be better than national expectations. The pupils show a good understanding of business concepts, such as the multiplier effect, and use terms such as monopoly and economies of scale accurately and with confidence.
172. Pupils' attitude towards the subject are good. They show an interest and willingness to learn and they answer questions promptly and generally accurately. Written work is usually of a high standard. It is thoughtful, carefully presented and, for most pupils, well organised. The pupils work well in pairs but have limited opportunity for working in large groups.
173. The teaching is generally satisfactory but with strengths and weaknesses. Both the overall structure of the course and individual lesson plan are good. The timing is good in some lessons, with changes in activity, but in others there is a lack of pace and variety.

Some useful links with the business community are being developed but there is a need for more topicality in some of the case studies used. The range of learning activities is a little limited currently, with no use of information and communications technology. Pupils' individual styles of learning are underdeveloped as they are given few opportunities to explore and develop their own ideas.

## **Economics**

174. Economics is taught only as an A level subject. Over the past four years, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B has been well below the national average for similar schools and below the average for all schools. In lessons, particularly those in year 12, the level of knowledge, understanding and skills observed suggests that the proportion achieving the higher grades will rise above the recent levels, provided that teacher expectations are pitched appropriately high.
175. Students respond well when challenged by the teaching and most are able to demonstrate at least a satisfactory grasp of the concepts being studied. Students' note-taking skills are variable in quality and require more attention in the teaching.
176. The teaching benefits from very secure knowledge of economic concepts and a sense of real enthusiasm for the subject. However, this is not adequately supported by the use of information and communications technology or up-to-date exemplification. Good quality printed resources are used in the teaching. Lesson objectives are not made sufficiently clear to students nor are they used to generate the necessary review of progress at the end of each lesson. While some of the teaching is very good, it does rely over heavily on teacher-focused strategies and learners are not benefiting from sufficient opportunities to develop as independent learners. Marking is not always sufficiently thorough or constructive as to how a student could improve.
177. The development plan for the subject is not related to the key need to raise attainment. The training needs of the teacher are not being systematically addressed. These relate to developing a knowledge of, and expertise in, appropriate information and communications technology applications, broadening the range of teaching strategies used and developing a range of up-to-date source material. There has been inadequate improvement since the last inspection.

## **Personal, Social and Moral Education (PSME)**

178. The pupils have a good level of knowledge of topics such as health education and sex education. They understand the consequences of peer pressure and are well equipped with the skills to make informed choices and to protect themselves from harm. Their understanding of matters such as money management and awareness of current affairs is sound. Other aspects of citizenship are well developed, such as their response to those suffering in disasters in other parts of the world.
179. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, when the programme is delivered by the tutors, and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, where it is taught by a team of specialists. The PSME programme contributes to raising standards by effectively teaching study skills, exam techniques, self-assessment and target-setting. Features of good teaching include effective planning, subject knowledge and management of pupils. Very good relationships contribute to an atmosphere in which trust is established and sensitive issues can be addressed without embarrassment. Areas that could be improved include the tendency in a few lessons for the teachers to



talk too much and to use closed questions which do not challenge the pupils to think matters out for themselves and develop their own opinions.

180. The pupils' learning is good overall. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and post 16. Features of good learning include the pupils' ability to work well in groups and their self-assessment skills. Areas for further development include the pupils' capacity for higher-order thinking skills and their general knowledge.
181. The programme for PSME is good. Relevant topics are addressed and revisited to meet the needs of pupils at each stage of their development. During the first term in year 7, the focus is on enabling the pupils to make a positive transfer to secondary education, including organising themselves well and planning their work. Amongst other topics, they are given the skills to deal with any bullying they may encounter. At transition points, such as when pupils are deciding on their subjects for the next stage of their school life or making decisions for life after school, appropriate careers education and guidance is carried out to prepare them to make well-informed choices. Academic tutoring is being developed and has yet to complete its first cycle. Support for pupils' self-assessment and target-setting is not yet sufficiently rigorous to enable targets to be fully useful. Good arrangements for sex education are in place, giving the pupils the knowledge to make informed choices, including an emphasis on stable, preferably married, relationships.
182. Assessment in PSME is under-developed. The course is not accredited and work is very rarely marked.
183. Leadership of the subject demonstrates a clear vision and a sound awareness of current developments, in line with the school's aims. Strategies to implement these developments, such as academic tutoring, are not always fully effective as they are not yet embedded in the work of the school. There is no formal monitoring of the success of the subject. Occasionally, feedback is sought from the pupils, for example the survey of careers guidance recently, which showed several minor issues to which the staff have responded. The small team of specialist teachers is experienced, skilled and knowledgeable and well matched to the demands of the curriculum. The use of visitors is excellent. Tutors are not always so well-prepared in delivering the lessons in Key Stage 3, but they are provided with support by the year heads should they ask for assistance with a topic.

## **Sociology**

184. Sociology is taught only as an A level subject. Over the past four years, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B has been very variable. In 1999, it was in line with the national average for similar schools, having improved sharply over 1997 and 1998 when it was very low even compared with the national average for all schools. This variability reflects the experimentation with different syllabuses. Observation of lessons suggests that the rate of success in 1999 should be sustainable with the current year 12 and 13 students.
185. Students organise their work very well and take notes effectively. They benefit in this from teacher support in their study skills. They have developed the confidence, within a mature learning environment, to discuss sociological concepts, and their responses to social phenomena, at some length. The teaching is good; it reveals clear aims for all lessons, which are shared with the class and used for the purpose of the review, and high expectations of students' abilities. Questioning is directed to individual students.

Groupwork tasks provide good opportunities for students to discuss their ideas with each other before making their confident responses to the whole class.

186. The learning environment is well-organised, with a range of display which includes students' work and other stimulating material related to the topics currently being studied. The use of information and communication technology is developing, including the use of the Internet to locate information and data. Marking is helpful in indicating what needs improving, and how this can be done. There is a good range of resources available to students both in the classroom and in the library. The teacher is successful in securing her own professional development in relation to the subject. Sociology has developed well following its introduction at the time of the last inspection.