

INSPECTION REPORT

Redruth Community School
Redruth

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique Reference Number: 112054

Headteacher: J E D Shears

Reporting inspector: W J Powell

Dates of inspection: 15-19 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708067

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms S Stenson-Smythe
Date of previous inspection:	October 1994

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W J Powell, Registered Inspector	Vocational subjects	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Efficiency Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
M Bebo, Lay Inspector		
P Buzzing	English	
P Richardson	English as additional language Mathematics	Curriculum
J Dutton	Equality of opportunity	
B Handley	Science Design and technology Information technology Modern foreign languages	
A King	History	Learning resources
F Shuffle-Botham	Geography	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
I Stuart	Religious education	Staffing
J Adey	Art	Accommodation
R Eaton	Music	Assessment
R Moyle	Physical education	
G Ingram	Special educational needs	

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TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

In most areas, pupils enter secondary schools at age 11 and go into Year 7 which, with Years 8 and 9, makes up **Key Stage 3**. At the end of this key stage, at age 14, pupils take national tests in English, mathematics and science. The other National Curriculum subjects are design and technology, information technology, modern languages, history, geography, art, music and physical education. Schools must also teach religious education to pupils of all ages. Teachers make their own assessments of the pupils' attainments in all National Curriculum subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are in **Key Stage 4** of their education, at the end of which, at age 16, they may be entered for examination in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**) or for vocational courses, including those of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) and the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Students in Years 12 and 13 are in the sixth form, and may follow courses in the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**), Advanced Supplementary level (**AS**), GNVQ or other vocational qualifications. The school's results in tests and examinations are evaluated against both the relevant averages for all maintained schools nationally, and against those of schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils of all levels of ability achieve test and examination results that are better than would be expected from their earlier attainments.
- In comparison with similar schools, test and examination results have improved in 1999 to well above average levels at Key Stage 3 and very high (in the top five per cent) at GCSE.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress
- The overall quality of teaching is very good, and promotes good standards of work.
- The curriculum is very good in meeting the needs of the pupils served by the school.
- The support, guidance and welfare provisions, including careers education, are very good.
- The headteacher and governors give very good leadership to the school, which provides very good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Although standards in information technology are good at Key Stage 3, the present arrangements for the subject do not guarantee that this continues to be so for all pupils at Key Stage 4.
- II. There are aspects of the personal development of pupils that could be strengthened, especially those concerned with spiritual development.
- III. Whilst management overall is good, important paperwork in some areas lags behind practices.

Overall, the school's many and considerable strengths outweigh the few areas of relative weakness seen. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Overall, the school has made good progress since 1994 although some areas of the key issues from the previous inspection remain to be tackled. The biggest change has been in the results obtained by the school, particularly in terms of the improved value that it adds over time. Since 1994, development planning has improved in many respects, but many plans still lack a sufficiently long-term view. However, the allocation of funding now matches planning priorities, and there is a very detailed long-term financial plan. The reporting system has been improved by the introduction of interim reports, but the main annual report has been over-simplified. The school has made major improvements to its provisions for information technology, but the present arrangements for the subject at Key Stage 4 do not assure that all areas of the syllabus are being covered. The school still does not meet the statutory requirements for collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. The high levels of reserve funds have been reduced in a planned manner to cushion the impact of a period of falling school rolls. The school has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve in future.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999 (1998):

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		Key
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
Key Stage 3 Test	C (D)	A (B)	<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>

GCSE Examinations	B (C)	A* (A)	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
A/AS – levels	D (D)	n/a	<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the mean points gained per pupil is in line with the national average for all schools but is well above that for similar schools. The mean points per pupil is in line with the relevant national averages for all schools in English, mathematics and science; it is well above the average for similar schools in all three subjects. These figures represent a substantial improvement since 1998, but especially so in English, where both the 1998 national and similar school figures were well below average. In terms of value added, pupils at all levels of ability are achieving higher levels of success than would be predicted from their attainments when they entered the school. There are no marked differences between the attainments of boys and girls.

• At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the mean points obtained per pupil at GCSE is above average for all schools, and high – in the top five per cent nationally – in relation to that for similar schools. The proportions of pupils gaining at least grade C in English and mathematics are above the average for all schools; that for science is average. In comparison with similar schools, the English and science results are well above average, whilst that for mathematics is high – in the top five per cent nationally. In 1998, the last year for which detailed data are available, pupils tended to do significantly better in chemistry, drama, French, geography, physics and religious education than in the other subjects that those pupils took. Pupils did significantly less well in art, design and technology, English language and English literature, although the 1999 results in the last three subjects indicate a marked improvement. Analyses of value added show that pupils across the ability range, boys and girls alike, achieve higher results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 than would have been expected from their test results two years earlier.

• At the end of the sixth form, the average points obtained by students in 1999 is below average; girls' results fell slightly from 1998. In 1998, the mean points score obtained was also below average. In part, this picture reflects the school's relatively open access sixth form entry policy. However, the pupils concerned tended to obtain better examination results than would have been predicted from their earlier GCSE scores.

Quality of teaching			
	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics, information technology, religious education, design and technology.	Art*, music*
Years 10-11	Very good	English, mathematics, religious education, design and technology, modern languages	Information technology*
Sixth form	Very good	Mathematics, information technology, art, physical education.	n/a
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

*Teaching in these areas is satisfactory, but could be improved.

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 31 per cent. Only one per cent of teaching - three lessons - was unsatisfactory. No lesson was poor or very poor. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, backed by very good expectations of what the pupils should achieve, and supported by a good use of assessment information. As a result, pupils make better progress than usual.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good in lessons and around the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Some parents are condoning absence. The split site does not have a major effect on punctuality
Ethos*	Excellent. The whole school community is committed to high standards in its work.
Leadership and management	Good overall. The headteacher and governors provide very good leadership and have a clear vision for improvement. Departmental management is more variable. Policies and procedures need updating.
Curriculum	Very good overall. A major strength is the provision of alternative pathways for learning between 14 and 18.
Pupils with special educational needs	Curriculum provision is good; they make good progress at Key Stage 3 and very good progress at Key Stage 4.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development; good for social and moral. No firm direction for this area means that there are many missed opportunities.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory. Staffing is good, with excellent professional development. The former grammar school buildings provide an unsatisfactory learning environment.
Value for money	Very good.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- IV. The standards that the school achieves.
- V. The quality of information that parents receive about their children's progress at the school.
- VI. The climate of approachability within the school
- VII. The school's high expectations of homework
- VIII. The school's wide range of extra-curricular activities

What some parents are not happy about

- IX. The behaviour of some pupils
- X. The excessive amount of homework that the school

The overall level of parents' satisfaction with the school is markedly higher than usual, and the levels of concern expressed are correspondingly smaller than is normally the case. Most of the relatively few parents who were unhappy about homework felt that the school expected too much of pupils. Inspectors do not share this view. Nor did they feel that there were significant behaviour problems.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The governors and senior managers of the school should note the following points when they prepare their action plan following the inspection:

- a. Improve standards in information technology at Key Stage 4 for all pupils, taking particular note of:
 - i. the need to ensure that all subjects of the curriculum identify suitable opportunities for pupils to use information technology within their own schemes of work;
 - ii. the need to audit these proposed provisions to ensure that they provide an appropriately broad coverage of the information technology requirements of the National Curriculum;
 - iii. the need to review actual outcomes to ensure that the work done by pupils meets requirements; and
 - iv. the ease of access that subjects have to computers. (14, 35, 59, 112, 115, 139)

- b. Provide greater whole-school direction for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils by means of:
 - i. preparing a suitable policy to guide provisions, and to give an indication of implementation;
 - ii. ensuring that all subjects of the curriculum identify suitable opportunities within schemes of work to promote the personal development of pupils, particularly in spiritual terms; and
 - iii. provide a suitable course for religious education in the sixth form that meets the needs of the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus. (36, 46-50, 118)

- c. Develop more systematic approaches to the monitoring of plans and policies, with particular reference to:
 - i. ensuring that job descriptions are brought up to date;
 - ii. providing suitably detailed policies to guide the school's work, especially in terms of equality of opportunity, marking and the development of numeracy across the curriculum; and
 - iii, making sure that such documents are reviewed on a regular basis.
(42, 56, 89, 96, 97, 100, 108, 145, 151)

(The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs in the report)

In addition to the above, the points raised in the following paragraphs should also be noted when drawing up the action plan:

- Curriculum time for physical education at Key Stage 4 (16, 35, 37, 59, 163)
- Maintaining improvements in art and in history (124-128, 141-146)
- Ensuring a longer-term view in development planning (58)
- Annual reports to parents (61)

INTRODUCTION

- **Characteristics of the school**
1. Redruth Community School is a split-site comprehensive technology college for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. With 1449 pupils, it is large compared to comprehensive schools nationally. The most recent intake was oversubscribed. Pupils come to the school from some 14 primary schools in the town and the surrounding rural area. The attainments of the pupils on entry to the school vary significantly from year-to-year and, whilst the most recent intake shows broadly average attainments, the overall pattern is below average. However, the range of attainment at entry is a wide one, and the school admits pupils from the whole ability range, including very able pupils. There are 238 pupils (16.4 per cent) on the school's register of special educational needs, of whom 87 (6.0 per cent) have Statements of Special Educational Need; this is above the national figure.
 2. The area served by the school is markedly more disadvantaged than average. There are 315 pupils (21.7 per cent) who are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Redruth is a town of some 20,000 people and, although once a prosperous mining and manufacturing centre, its industrial base has dwindled in recent years, causing considerable economic and social hardship. Unemployment is double the national figure, but male unemployment is far higher; female employment is often part-time, unskilled and low paid. Average earnings in the area are low by national standards.
 3. The school's aims, which are to be realised with the full support of parents, local industry and the community, are that:
 - Governors, staff and pupils will work towards creating an environment in which everyone is encouraged to achieve their full potential regardless of gender, ability, physical ability, ethnic origin or social background, thereby respecting the diversity found in differences.
 - The school will provide its pupils with an education that is broad and balanced, with a focus on the scientific and technological, so as to adequately prepare them for a rapidly changing world. Pupils should have an awareness of the world of work that they will be entering, and a feeling of pride in themselves, family, school and community. Pupils should have every opportunity to develop self-esteem and provide hope and optimism so that they can become valued members of society.
 - All pupils will be encouraged: to develop a sense of responsibility and tolerance to others; have high expectations of themselves and their school; and participate fully in all aspects of school life, thereby developing their personal qualities.
1. In the recent past, the school's priorities for development have been set within a vision of a school in which, within three years, technology permeates the whole of its work. The school is seeking to achieve this end through a continuous process of school improvement with four main themes.
 - Greater involvement: of pupils and parents; through better attendance; and increased responsibility and activities.
 - Creating a successful classroom culture through positive schooling, behaviour management, ensuring high standards and whole-school consistency.
 - Enhancing learning through new strategies, accelerated learning, excitement and stimulus, and out of class study.
 - Monitoring the school's work by self-evaluation, visits and reviews, enhanced tutoring, better use of data, and target setting.The school is seeking to support these developments by: seeking suitable finance to move onto one site; enhancing professional development; enhancing the community dimension of its Technology College status; and seeking a key role within the successful Education Action

Zone bid in the area.

The over-riding intention of the school is summed up in the headteacher's wish that pupils feel that "It's cool to achieve".

5. As a Technology College, the school has chosen to focus on the development of technology across the curriculum as a means to improve performance and to enhance the local economy. The key objectives for the current phase of this work are:
- Promoting a technological culture through the school
 - Improving performance in the key areas of technology, science and mathematics.
 - Undertaking a capital project that extends provision for information technology, science and design and technology.
 - Developing vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form,
 - Extending the partnership between the school and the world of work, paying particular note of the needs of the local business community, and recognising the current skills shortage in the Redruth area.
 - Enhancing the business studies environment in the school.
 - Using opportunities in languages to promote the international dimension.

· **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	118	124	242

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	58	69	64
	Girls	95	73	65
	Total	153	142	129
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	63 (48)	59 (55)	54 (52)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30 (17)	35 (38)	18 (24)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	43	71	63
	Girls	99	77	68
	Total	142	148	131
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	59 (55)	61 (56)	54 (54)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	29 (21)	37 (39)	23 (28)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	120	106	226

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	48	106	116
	Girls	54	98	102
	Total	102	204	218
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	47 (46)	90 (86)	98 (95)
	National	46 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0 (18)	0 (22)
National		n/a

.....

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

Attainment in the Sixth Form ⁴

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	28	32	60

Average A/AS points score

per candidate

School
National

For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent

Male	Female	All
16.8 (16.8)	14.6 (16.6)	15.6 (16.7)
n/a	n/a	(17.6)

For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent

Male	Female	All
0 (4.0)	0 (0)	2 (2.0)
n/a	n/a	n/a (2.8)

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

	Number	% Success rate
School	19	70
National		70

.....

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	8.6
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.7
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

2

2 Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	27
	Permanent	2

2 Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	31
	Satisfactory or better	99
	Less than satisfactory	1

2 **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

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

2 **Attainment and progress**

6. Overall, the picture of attainment at entry is below average, but the attainments of pupils at the age of 11 vary significantly from year-to-year. For example, whilst the pupils in the present Year 7 have broadly average attainments, those in the present Year 8 entered school with well below average results in the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 in primary schools. There are also marked differences from year-to-year in the relative attainments of boys and girls. Variability is also seen in the results of other tests that the school administers when pupils join the school, in terms of both overall attainments and those in literacy and numeracy.
7. Since the last inspection, there has been steady improvement in the results obtained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. Over the three years 1996 to 1998, the mean level achieved by pupils in the national tests taken at the age of 14 has been below the national average, mainly because of below, or well below, results in English. In contrast, the 1999 figures show a mean result overall that is now in line with the average for all maintained schools, and is well above that for similar schools. In 1999, the English results improved substantially and are now in line with the average for all schools and well above that for similar schools, as are the results in mathematics and science.
8. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils aged 16 have also gained improved results since the last inspection, with a rising trend in the average points achieved per pupil at GCSE between 1996 and 1999. In 1999, the mean GCSE points score is now above the average for all maintained schools, and very high - in the top five per cent - when compared to that for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or better in 1999 is in line with the national average and above that for similar schools. The proportion gaining at least one grade G is in line with the national average, and well above that for similar schools, showing the positive effects of the school's support for its least able pupils. These figures represent a significant improvement on the previous year. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the school's results in English and mathematics are above the averages for all schools; that for science is average. When compared to the figures for similar schools, Redruth achieves results that are well above average in English and science, and very high - in the top five per cent nationally - in mathematics. There are no marked differences overall between the relative attainments of boys and girls. In the other subjects examined, the proportions of pupils gaining at least grade C are significantly above average in English literature, design and technology subjects, information technology, French, and the full GCSE in religious education. Results are significantly below average in single award science, Spanish, history, art and physical education. All pupils entered for the office studies award in 1999 achieved a pass, an above average result. At the time of the inspection, no data were available on the relative standings of individual pupils' results in the 1999 examination. In 1998, pupils tended to do better in science, drama, French, geography and religious education than in the other subjects that they took. They tended to do less well in art, English and design and technology; improved results in the latter two subjects in 1999 mean that this relative underperformance is no longer likely to be the case.

9. At the end of the sixth form, the average points obtained per student in 1999 is below average, and girls performed slightly less well than boys overall. The 1998 results were also below average, but with little difference between the number of points gained by boys and girls. The attainments of students following GNVQ courses are above average in terms of the proportion of them achieving higher levels of award. The numbers taking individual A-level and other courses at this level are too small to allow reliable statistical comparison with national figures. In part, the below average results achieved by sixth formers reflect the school's policy of admitting students whose GCSE grades are markedly lower than those seen in many other schools. Thus whilst the school's overall pass rate at A-level is above average, there are fewer students at higher grades.
10. In work seen during the inspection, attainments overall are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and above expectation for the end of Key Stage 4. Given the below average attainments of pupils when they enter the school, this represents good progress over time.
11. In English, attainments are in line with expectations for the end of Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and above expectation for the end of Key Stage 4. The school has been aware of the weak literacy skills of pupils when they enter the school, and the work being done to promote effective literacy during Key Stage 3 is a major factor in the good progress that pupils make across the curriculum as a whole. The school has been successful in raising literacy skills amongst boys. A key factor in this is that the school has promoted effective speaking and listening skills across the curriculum as precursors to raising standards in reading and writing. As a result, most pupils at Key Stage 3 are confident speakers and attentive listeners who reach above expected standards by the end of the key stage. Reading and writing skills develop steadily, and are in line with expected levels overall for the end of Key Stage 3, although some lower attainers still have problems with spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Higher attainers at this level write with a wide vocabulary and in a good range of styles. The good foundations for literacy laid at Key Stage 3 are built upon at Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of reading, speaking and listening are above expected levels, and writing is in line with expectations. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs progress well to achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainments, thanks to the extra support that they receive in lessons and the specialist teaching provided in withdrawal sessions.
12. Standards in work seen in mathematics are in line with expectations for the ends of Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and above expectation for the end of Key Stage 4. There are no marked differences between the attainments of boys and girls at any level. At Key Stage 3, attainment is below expectation in using and applying mathematics, but in line in algebra, number work and handling data; attainments are above expected levels at Key Stage 3 in shape, space and measure. At Key Stage 4, all areas of the course are at least in line with expectations, but number and using and applying mathematics are relatively weak areas. However, some work in areas such as statistics is of high quality. Amongst sixth formers, some relatively basic concepts are not secure, even though more advanced work is understood and applied well. Basic numeracy in the school is sound, but limited in many subjects by the lack of a co-ordinated approach to development; there is no policy for promoting numeracy across the curriculum as a whole. Amongst GNVQ students, attainments in application of number are below expectation because this area of work is not sufficiently well integrated into teaching and learning assignments.

13. Attainments in science are in line with expectations for the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4, and of the sixth form. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain at similar levels in all three sciences, and practical skills are developed effectively thanks to good teaching. Pupils at this level are also adept at making predictions and writing up their observations. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils of all abilities continue to develop their scientific skills, and those studying science in the sixth form acquire effective higher order skills of analysis and evaluation, as well as becoming more independent learners.
14. In information technology, the impact of the school's Technology College status is starting to be felt in most years. At Key Stage 3, work seen is well above expectation for the end of the key stage. Pupils use a wide range of applications in a confident way, and this is starting to benefit work in other subjects of the curriculum, for example English. The introduction of the *Successmaker* individual learning programme is also helping to develop the pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy, and to provide valuable information for teachers in these areas. At Key Stage 4, there are marked differences in attainment levels between Year 10 and Year 11. In the former, attainments are in line with expectations for those pupils following a general computer literacy course, and above expectation for those on the GCSE course. In Year 11, however, only those following the GCSE course in the subject show above expected levels of attainment. Elsewhere, there is no certainty that pupils are receiving appropriate opportunities to maintain and develop their competence across the curriculum as a whole. In part, this reflects problems of access, whilst in some cases it reflects inadequate planning of the use of computers into specialist subject lessons. Attainments in the sixth form are well above expectations for those on the A-level course, but somewhat below expectations for the key skills component of GNVQ courses; here, the range of coverage is relatively narrow.
15. Standards in work seen in religious education are above expected levels for the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. However, there is no provision for the subject, as required, within the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, the pupils develop a sensitive approach to issues raised, as when expressing their thoughts through poetry, itself a good example of how literacy skills are promoted across the curriculum. At Key Stage 4, pupils demonstrate deepening understanding of wider moral and religious issues. At both key stages, pupils demonstrate considerable confidence in oral work.
16. In other subjects, attainments are above expectations at all levels in the work seen in physical education, the result of challenging teaching for all abilities, and in design and technology, where effective teaching is supported by the increasingly beneficial use of computers. However, the breadth of attainments in physical education is limited by the short amount of time allocated to the subject at Key Stage 4, which prevents full coverage of the Programmes of Study. Attainments are above expectations at Key Stage 4 in geography, where pupils build upon the strong foundations of writing that are laid at Key Stage 3 when writing coursework. Attainments at Key Stage 4 are also above expected levels in modern languages, where effective teaching through the previous years has provided pupils with the confidence to speak and write with grammatical accuracy. With the exception of art at Key Stage 3, attainments elsewhere are in line with expected levels. The below expected attainments in art at Key Stage 3 reflect shortcomings in knowledge and understanding; work in investigating and making is broadly as expected, although the narrow range of media studied in earlier years limits attainments. Improvements are already under way to deal with this problem, and pupils in Year 7 are now working at levels that more closely match the national picture.

17. The progress that pupils make is judged in relation both to the rate of improvements in attainment that occur over time, and to the gains in knowledge, skills and understanding that are seen within lessons. Over time, progress is good at all levels of the school. This is seen clearly from the 1999 GCSE examination results, where a group of pupils entering the school with below average attainments achieved average results by the end of Key Stage 3, and above average grades by the time they finished Key Stage 4. The headteacher is now making impressive use of national data on how value is added over time. His own analyses for 1999 show that pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve results that are, overall, substantially better than would be expected from their prior attainments. Indeed, the gains in attainment over time shown in the school's 1999 GCSE results are well above average in terms of the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C in English, mathematics and science, and that gaining at least five passes at C or above. Although the overall A-level results are below average, they none the less demonstrate above expected value added for the pupils concerned, many of whom entered the sixth form with lower grades than are usually seen. This is a reflection of the wide-ranging pathways that are available through the curriculum offered. For example, a student with only one GCSE pass at grade C or better was able to obtain distinction level standard after a one-year GNVQ Intermediate level course, and is now producing work of distinction standard in the Advanced award. This represents progress of a high order, and is by no means an isolated case.
18. Observations of lessons show that progress over the shorter term is also good overall at all levels, and amongst pupils of all abilities. This is the result of the breadth and depth of effective teaching within the school. In the best cases, it also reflects the fact that pupils have a clear picture of the targets that they should be aiming towards in many subjects. For example, in English lessons, pupils take an active part in assessing their own work, using the descriptors of the National Curriculum and, as a result, know what they have to do to achieve higher outcomes. In the best cases, this is backed by detailed yet supportive marking that explains how work can be improved in future. There is no common pattern in the five lessons where progress was unsatisfactory. In all five, many pupils did make at least sound progress, but significant numbers did not make the gains expected in knowledge and, particularly, in understanding. In one case, over-expectation lay at the heart of limited progress; in another, under-expectation of the higher attainers was at issue. In two cases, progress was limited by the pupils' own responses; in spite of sound teaching, they did not identify sufficiently with the work. These cases are very much the exceptions; progress is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons, and very good or excellent in 29 per cent of cases.
19. At all levels, progress is good because teachers have good expectations of what should be achieved. This is seen, for example, in the effective use of question and answer work in vocational subjects to draw out greater detail from students of all abilities; the teachers are not satisfied with the first answer, but use open-ended questioning to deepen the students' understanding of their work. The grouping arrangements used can also have a positive effect on progress, as in mathematics, where setting from the start of Year 7 ensures that the lowest attainers receive high levels of support. Progress amongst the middle ranking GCSE mathematics pupils is also enhanced through the provision of after-school support sessions. Many pupils benefit from the open access centre to further their work with computers, whilst paired reading sessions also help to promote the development of literacy.
20. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3, and very good progress at Key Stage 4. In some cases, those pupils with special educational needs

make better progress than their lower attaining peers who do not have special needs, for example in terms of GCSE performance. This reflects the very effective way that learning support assistants are deployed to specific faculties. The pupils make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans; this is clear because the targets are regularly met and re-written to provide a suitable and continuing challenge.

2 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

21. Pupils respond well in lessons. Response is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons and is good, very good or excellent in 79 per cent of them. There is a close association between the pupils' response in lessons and the quality of teaching; examples of good response occur across the ability range in both key stages and in the sixth form. Overall, response rises steadily from Key Stage 3 to the sixth form. The school has successfully maintained the high standards of response that pupils showed in the last inspection. The response of pupils with special educational needs is good at all levels. Such pupils show an interest in their work and are able to sustain concentration with minimal supervision; they settle to tasks well. They show maturity, for example when they develop their own strategies to questions, such as in mental mathematics, when they share their approaches with the group. Pupils with special educational needs behave well in lessons and around the school.
22. Pupils of all ages have good attitudes towards their studies. They arrive in lessons prepared to work, settle quickly and apply themselves well to the task in hand. They show good interest in their lessons, concentrate well and are keen to learn and to improve. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other's answers, and this enhances their learning. They are confident to ask questions to clarify their understanding. Most pupils are keen to answer questions without fuss, put forward ideas and readily contribute to class discussions. A good example was seen in a Year 12 history lesson, when students were highly involved in a discussion of the political effects of the First World War. The majority of pupils increasingly develop their capacity for personal study as they move through the school.
23. The pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. The rare cases of occasional unsatisfactory behaviour, mainly in Key Stage 3, tend to occur when teaching is less secure, for instance when classroom management is weaker. Behaviour around the two sites is also good, which helps to maintain an orderly and secure environment that is conducive to learning and personal development. Pupils are trustworthy and are able to work sensibly without direct teacher supervision, such as in the open access computer centre at lunchtimes. Courtesy is a real feature and pupils are friendly, helpful and polite to each other, to staff and to visitors. The pupils show respect for property; for example, expensive computer equipment and delicate science apparatus are handled carefully. There are almost no graffiti, but some litter is dropped, especially on the field. Pupils respect and follow the school's code of conduct. There was no bullying or harassment observed during the inspection. The pupils report that any minor incidents that occur are generally handled well by staff. The level of exclusions for the previous academic year is below average for a school of this type, which is a reflection of the school's efforts to support pupils and resolve problems without resorting to this sanction. All cases were handled appropriately.
24. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults. Communication with

staff is warm and good natured and there is a high level of mutual respect. Pupils are supportive of each other. Several examples were observed of them spontaneously congratulating each other when they got an answer correct, or did something interesting, such as speaking at length in Spanish without notes at the front of the class after just a relatively short time of learning the language. They work co-operatively in small group and paired activities when required, sharing ideas and helping each other to solve problems, for example when carrying out practical work in science. Hearing impaired pupils and others with special educational needs are well integrated into classes.

25. Overall, the personal development of pupils is good. When given the opportunity, they are willing to take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning. A good example was seen in a Year 11 science lesson, when pupils were holding a public enquiry into limestone quarrying. Those in the chair were able to control the open questioning well, despite the debate becoming quite heated. Pupils show respect for each other's feelings, values and beliefs. For instance, in religious education lessons, pupils make thoughtful and sensitive contributions; a particularly good example was seen in a Key Stage 3 lesson, when pupils talked about their rights and responsibilities without embarrassment. Pupils from all year groups responded well as they showed initiative and responsibility in promoting their school at the Year 6 open evening held during the inspection. There are, however, only limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for jobs around the school on a regular basis. Nonetheless, sixth form students apply themselves diligently and respond well, for instance, when helping pupils in Years 7 and 8 to improve their literacy skills through paired reading, or participating in community service, such as helping in primary schools. A significant number of pupils enhance their personal development by their enjoyment and participation in the performing arts, particularly drama.

2 **Attendance**

26. Attendance levels at the school for the last academic year are satisfactory and have been maintained since the last inspection. They are broadly in line with the national average. Rates of unauthorised absence are below the national average, although there is concern that some parents condone absence by pupils. There is some evidence of internal truancy, but the school and external agencies work closely together to minimise it. Records of some Year 11 pupils in particular show attendance rates which are below 90 per cent. The school is very well aware of each pupil's circumstances and is able to identify suitable reasons for this. The option to do link courses at a local college is helping to alleviate the problem. Given the nature of the split site, the pupils' punctuality to classes is satisfactory overall. Punctuality to school in the mornings is also mostly satisfactory, although there are some persistent offenders, often amongst lower attaining pupils. Lessons generally achieve a prompt and efficient start so that little teaching time is lost.

2 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

2 **Teaching**

27. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and is a major factor in the good progress that the pupils make during their time at the school. Teaching is at least sound in 99 per

cent of lessons; it is good or better in 73 per cent of cases and very good or excellent in 31 per cent. Teaching is good overall at Key Stage 3, and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; in the latter, no lesson was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching, already good at the time of the last inspection, has improved further, particularly at Key Stage 4. The weaknesses noted in 1994 are no longer evident. Only three lessons, each in a different subject, showed unsatisfactory teaching; no lesson was poor or very poor. In one lesson in Year 9, the pace of work was slow and the tasks undemanding; as a result, the pupils became bored and restless, and progress became unsatisfactory. In two lessons in Years 7 and 10, progress suffered because the teachers did not take sufficient steps to curtail idle chatter. The proportion of teaching that is very good or excellent is particularly high in mathematics, design and technology, information technology, modern languages, history and art. Overall, there is a close match between the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make during lessons.

28. The teachers have very good knowledge of their subject material. In the relatively few lessons that are taught by non-specialists, there is no negative impact on standards because staff development needs have been identified well and met appropriately. A good example is the high level of computer literacy amongst staff, who have taken qualifications in the subject as part of their professional development. The school is particularly strong in evaluating the effects of training on work in the classroom. The impact of good knowledge can be seen in English. Here, staff communicate their very real enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. More importantly, they know how to develop the pupils' literacy skills. This is a major factor in unlocking the potential of pupils in all subjects. The careful work done in English at Key Stage 3, building on speaking and listening as a preliminary to developing reading and writing, underpins the blossoming of progress in many subjects at Key Stage 4. The ethos of the school emphasises very good expectations of both work and behaviour. Only rarely are there examples of pupils of all abilities not being sufficiently stretched. Mathematics and vocational subjects offer good examples of how warm-up questioning at the start of lessons is used to raise the pace of learning in what follows; teachers insist on precision and use questioning effectively to stretch pupils of all abilities. In physical education, pupils often attain at higher than expected levels because their teachers expect them to improve, and back this with clear guidance on evaluation and performance. Although most modern languages teaching sets high demands, and thus achieves good progress, isolated lessons do not require enough of higher attainers in particular; this is also a feature of some work in music.
29. The quality of teachers' planning is good overall. Lessons contain a good range of activities that allow progress to be maintained through the one-hour periods. Particularly good examples were seen in religious education and geography. Here, activities were well matched to the range of abilities within the group; in geography in particular, these were backed by high quality and specially prepared learning resources. In design and technology, planning is a team effort, with teachers drawing upon the wide range of expertise within the department and culminating in clear learning intentions being identified. Homework arrangements are good, and in some cases, these help to compensate for limited curriculum time and so maintain progress. The use of research or written tasks for homework in information technology reflects sensitivity to the low levels of home computer ownership in the area. The management of pupils is very good; there are only isolated cases where progress suffers because behaviour is not managed well, usually involving accepting too high a level of background chatter. The use of time is also very good. The pace of learning is only rarely allowed to drop. Very occasionally, the pace demanded is too high. When this happens, understanding is not

always secure, or the teacher answers questions that have been posed rather than waiting for the pupils to do so.

30. Perhaps the biggest factor in adding value over time is the use of assessment to set clear goals for learning. For example, in the best modern languages teaching, the teachers set clear objectives at the start of each lesson, and then take care to assess continually the progress that pupils are making, providing full feedback as they do so. In some lessons, the language of National Curriculum attainment descriptors is used to provide the focus for activities. For example, in information technology, there is often clear guidance as to what is required to move to the next level. As in most subjects, this is backed by very detailed records of what the pupils have achieved, so that progress can be continually monitored and targets adjusted. It is a lack of this focus on National Curriculum targets that has limited attainments and progress in history in the past; arrangements are now in hand to reflect the good practice seen elsewhere. At subject level, relatively little use has yet been made of national data on value added to help in setting targets for improvement. Marking in many subjects contains supportive comments that detail how a pupil should improve in future work, although there are some examples of more cursory marking, or using a confusing variety of marking systems.
31. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement about teaching in the sixth form. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their pupils, and of the subjects that they teach. Tasks are well matched to the pupils' abilities and the learning support assistants are deployed well. Clear advice and instructions are given and questions are used well. There is an appropriate use of subject specific language in both literacy and numeracy lessons. In one in three Key Stage 4 lessons, teaching is very good. There are high expectations and very good pupil management. Plenary sessions are used very well. Where pupils with special educational needs are taught in mainstream classes, the teaching is good with effective use of support staff. There is, however, a lack of matching task to ability level with the same activity sometimes being provided for all pupils. This is partly because the targets in individual education plans are not always well known to teachers.

2 **The curriculum and assessment**

2 *The Curriculum*

32. The curriculum is very good overall and has the potential to be excellent. The school's priorities and strategic objectives are those of a Technology College, but this focus on scientific and technological areas of learning has yet to be rooted firmly across all subjects. The school has responded positively to the issues raised in the previous inspection.
33. The quality of curriculum planning is very good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Strategic planning is excellent, as seen from the pathways for pupils between 14 and 18, which provide for pupils of all needs and abilities. Links with feeder primary schools are very good and facilitate continuity of learning, as do subject schemes of work which, although of variable quality, are good overall. Links with further and higher education are good. All legally required policies are in place, although a whole school numeracy policy has yet to be developed; this limits the impact of numeracy across the curriculum.

Homework arrangements are appropriate. The timetable of 25 periods per week is well constructed, but in its present form is bursting at the seams. The only way that personal and social education can be fitted into the timetable is by suspending other lessons on a rolling programme for one period on 25 days a year. These arrangements are not ideal. However, the personal and social education programme covers all required aspects of health and sex education, and drugs awareness, in an effective manner. Other examples of the timetable undermining curriculum balance include lack of time for physical education at Key Stage 4, the different allocation of time to the humanities from year-to-year, and the relatively low amount of time provided for Part One GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4. Further to this, the new sixth form curriculum from September 2000 will make demands on the timetable which it may not be able to meet.

34. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum to the pupils' needs at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, are very good. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum fully satisfies statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and sex education. Pupils also study a course in drama and in personal and social education. French is the first foreign language in Year 7 and Spanish is introduced in Year 8. A small group of pupils study only one language in Year 8 to enable them to concentrate on their basic literacy skills. In Year 9, an even smaller number of pupils are disapplied from studying any foreign language to enable them to concentrate even more on their basic literacy. Information technology is systematically taught as a discrete subject throughout the key stage. Grouping arrangements are good and provide effectively for the needs of all pupils.
35. At Key Stage 4, all pupils continue to study English, mathematics, science, religious education, sex education, and personal and social education. In line with the school's commitment to technology, all pupils also study design and technology, as well as a course in information technology in Year 10. All pupils study at least one modern language; German is introduced as a fresh start for pupils who found French and Spanish difficult at Key Stage 3. Provision for options is very good because pupils may follow one of three distinct curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4. One allows pupils to study a core of four GCSE subjects and a further option, plus NVQ units on a link course with Cornwall College. A second route allows other pupils to study seven GCSE subjects, a further option, plus a Part One GNVQ Intermediate course. The third pathway enables pupils to study up to ten GCSE subjects. Very able pupils can take GCSE examinations early; for example, some Year 11 pupils are now studying A-level mathematics after gaining a GCSE A* grade in Year 10. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not fully satisfy statutory requirements since the delivery of the required Programmes of Study cannot be assured in physical education or in information technology in Year 11. Grouping arrangements are very good.
36. In the sixth form, a wide range of courses is offered to meet the needs of students of all abilities and most interests and aspirations. As a result, the school is able to admit pupils of lower attainments than is usually the case. Courses available include 17 A-level choices and a wide range of GNVQ courses at Intermediate and Advanced levels. Grouping arrangements are very good overall, but the joint teaching of GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced students in health and social care is not good practice. Whilst many teaching groups are small, the sixth form is economically sound overall; costs are balanced and in line with the allocated budget. In spite of the lower than usual attainments at entry to the sixth form, drop out rates are low; this reflects careful career planning and the appropriateness of the provisions. The sixth form personal and social education programme has good breadth, whilst Young Enterprise activities are popular

and successful. All students are offered physical education and some do community service as an alternative. In spite of the many strengths, the curriculum does not satisfy statutory requirements fully since a course in religious education is not provided.

37. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are good at all levels. The school's aims and objectives reflect its commitment to equal opportunities. However, the school's equal opportunities policy is underdeveloped and does not give adequate guidelines to staff. Actual provision is very good at all levels, and contributes positively to the progress that pupils make. The curriculum and grouping arrangements are of high quality, although timetabling restricts the curriculum in some areas, causing imbalance and minor equal access issues. For example, not all pupils have the same access to information technology in Year 11. Pupils at Key Stage 4 do not have the same amount of time for physical education or GNVQ courses as do pupils at most other schools. The school monitors pupils' achievements effectively by sex and attainment, but does not do so by background and ethnicity.
38. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good at all levels, being both broad and balanced. There is full equality of access and opportunity for pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress overall. The very good pupil tracking used in the learning support department ensures that there is good continuity and progression of learning. There are effective systems in place to assess pupils' attainments, particularly in literacy. These assessments are used to inform curriculum planning. They do, however, have a narrow focus and the individual education plans that use this data are not used as effectively throughout the school as they could be. Although the special needs team does circulate these to all faculties, and they are well known to the learning support assistants, the use made of these by the faculties is variable. For example, the humanities faculty stores them in the faculty office so that they are not working documents. In contrast, the mathematics faculty adapts them very well to meet the mathematical needs of the pupils, and this makes a positive contribution to their progress.
39. The school's arrangements for careers education, including work experience, are very good, and have been recognised in the award of Investors in Careers status. Careers education is delivered effectively by trained tutors within the personal and social education programme from Year 7, with further contributions, as required, from the head of careers and the careers service.
40. Extra curricular provision, including sport, is good. A wide range of activities is on offer and large numbers of pupils are involved, even though the lunchtime is short. For example, up to 100 pupils attend the drama club, up to 50 the art club, and the same number the after-school mathematics classes. There is open access to computers and these are heavily used throughout the day. In addition to clubs the curriculum is enhanced by mathematical puzzles and challenges, technology projects, science projects, paired reading with sixth formers and visits and exchanges. There are whole school trips abroad and school productions. The quality and range of sports activities is very good and more than 600 pupils are involved in fixtures and clubs.

2 *Assessment*

41. Overall, the school's assessment arrangements are good. The quality of assessment and

recording procedures is good at all levels. The school has a clear statement of its general principles for assessment. All faculties are expected to have an assessment policy with clear guidelines for staff on marking and the associated procedures. From this, most faculties have developed good procedures which form an integral part of their schemes of work, and many teachers have developed purposeful schemes based on these. As a result, most departments have written end of unit tasks, assessed in accordance with the National Curriculum and examination criteria. This evidence enables teachers to make accurate assessments when reporting end of key stage levels or predicting examination results. English, geography and design and technology are examples of very good practice. All these areas keep very thorough records. Assessment in art, history and religious education has some shortcomings as it is not sufficiently well related to specific criteria and is only of limited use in guiding curriculum planning.

42. The marking policy is effective in most faculties, but some use a variety of marks, letter grades and National Curriculum levels that confuse some pupils and parents. Pupils' books are marked regularly and most pupils understand their grades. In many subjects, for example geography and modern foreign languages, marking often helps pupils to see how they could improve. In some subjects, these pointers are used as targets which pupils record in their exercise books. However, target setting for individual pupils has not yet been adopted by all subjects.
43. The school makes good use of assessment information at all levels. For example, it has assembled a valuable collection of data on the attainment of pupils when they join the school, which is built up over time to give a wide-ranging summary of their progress. There are detailed analyses of external examination results, and the information gained is used to provide targets for departments and pupils. Departments benefit from the comparison of their pupils' examination performance with results obtained in other subjects. Good knowledge of how pupils have performed in GCSE in relation to predictions helps guide new sixth form students onto A-level or GNVQ courses. The headteacher is making very effective use of national value added information to assess the school's effectiveness, although this is not, as yet, a common feature at departmental level. Most departments use the assessment information they have acquired to make adjustments to their curriculum planning. For example, in English, the Key Stage 2 assessments for Year 7 result in specific targets being set. Assessment data in science is scrutinised and schemes of work are reviewed annually. Teachers in physical education write notes within their record books, ensuring that curriculum planning is continuously revised. Monitoring procedures are undertaken effectively by the senior management team, heads of faculty and year heads. Supportive in-service training is given to heads of faculty when the need arises. Interim profiles, work reviews and work monitoring across the school ensure that pupils' progress is regularly reviewed.
44. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in improving assessment procedures. By building on good practice, the experience gained in interpreting data, and developing monitoring procedures, senior managers have ensured greater consistency across and within faculties. The school has successfully addressed most of the issues raised in the previous report. Policies and marking procedures now relate better to National Curriculum levels, in most subjects.

2 *Special educational needs assessment*

45. The school's assessment systems for special educational needs are based narrowly on

literacy. The school screens all pupils on entry, using appropriate standardised tests; the faculty uses this information to determine whether the pupils should be placed on the special needs register. No account is taken of abilities in numeracy; this is a relative weakness. A pupil's reading age is the main factor in deciding whether to place a pupil on the register. In addition to these whole school assessments, members of the special needs faculty carry out a series of supplementary reading and vocabulary tests that have a more diagnostic purpose; tests for dyslexia are also carried out. This information is used to guide planning for pupils who are withdrawn from one course of study in a modern foreign language for additional literacy input. Assessments undertaken in the feeder primary schools, as well as those carried out by the learning support service, are also used by the special needs team to help determine whether or not a pupil entering the school should be placed on the special needs register. Assessments are carried out annually and are effective in both monitoring the progress of pupils' literacy skills, and in measuring their attainment in reading. The school has very good tracking systems in place and uses these very effectively to monitor pupils' progress overall.

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

46. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The previous report described the school as having a positive and supportive ethos, characterised by good relationships at all levels, and a commitment to encourage individual success and a sense of pride in the school. It noted that the school was a well-ordered community which promoted self-esteem and mutual respect. All these features remain real strengths of the school. However, in other respects, the school has made relatively little progress. Provision for collective worship falls short of statutory requirements. Despite much good work in many areas, there is no overall policy to guide the school's provisions for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is the poorer as a result. There are missed opportunities because provision depends too much on individual initiatives, and pupils sometimes pick up mixed messages about the school's values. For example, displays of pupils' artwork around the school help to convey the idea that there is more to life than humdrum every day living. Yet, in the West building, a few yards from the spiritually uplifting corridors of the art department, pupils find that the fine entrance, entrance hall and staircase of the old grammar school building are dirty and neglected with peeling paint and rotten doors. The war memorials there are also neglected, and new wiring is insensitively left exposed near the memorials. This sad and depressing scene contrasts strongly with the many good aspects of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
47. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Religious education makes a very good contribution with opportunities for expression through guided fantasies, such as a journey to a garden to consider the beauty of nature, through poetry, or to reflect about the wonder of creation from different perspectives. Other good examples occur in English, drama and history. A classic moment of deepening insights and self-knowledge occurred in an A-level mathematics class; there was a dawning of understanding as students began to see the inverse relationship between integration and differentiation, thereby beginning to appreciate the fundamental theory of calculus. However, examples as good as these are rare across the curriculum generally, and there is no concerted thrust on spiritual development; opportunities are missed in many subject areas. Assemblies are good occasions. Those observed during the inspection did contain a short act of collective worship, but the spiritual dimension was not strong. Visitors from specifically religious backgrounds do sometimes take assemblies, and moral values are

promoted effectively. However, administrative and pastoral matters also take time from assemblies. With pupils only attending one assembly a week, the limited time restricts their potential for developing a corporate identity or for bringing a coherent approach to collective worship and spiritual awareness. The nature of the split site and limitations of space are the reasons given by the school for non-compliance with statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

48. Provision for the pupils' moral development is good. Adults are good role models, and no cases of inappropriate use of authority were seen during the inspection; there is a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are trusted and respected, and have reasonable access to the buildings outside lesson times. There is an emphasis on moral issues in many assemblies, and good contributions to moral issues are found in many subject areas and in the programme for personal and social education. For example, moral issues in contemporary society are a major theme of Year 11 work in religious education. Many moral issues are discussed in history, including the morality of war, the slave trade and the treatment of Native Americans. Moral issues are also prominent in geography and some parts of science courses.
49. Provision for social development is also good. As well as much positive group work in lessons, the tutor groups containing pupils from several year groups also promote social interaction. Drama and the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities provide opportunities for co-operation, to take responsibility and show initiative, and for social development generally. Although provision for social development is good across the curriculum, there are fewer opportunities than in many schools for pupils to take responsibility. There is no school council; whilst a small number of sixth formers are prefects, their profile is low, although they are very good ambassadors for the school and represent the school at school events and outside the school. Some sixth formers help with paired reading, community service, and show initiative through schemes such as Young Enterprise. Other pupils are librarians and sports captains, and there is a citizenship module in the personal and social education course. Whilst social relationships are strong, the promotion of positive citizenship is not emphasised; senior pupils have fewer opportunities than their contemporaries in other schools.
50. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are some notable features, including, for example, the carol service when the Methodist Church is filled to capacity. There can be few other schools where the music of Mozart or Charpentier plays in the corridor through the day. The school is involved in the *Comenius* project which links three schools in Celtic Europe in various cultural activities. Redruth co-ordinates work with schools in Brittany and Galicia. In subject areas, work often has a firm cultural slant, especially in history, geography and religious education. Texts in English come from a range of cultures, and drama contributes significantly to the cultural life of the school. There are, however, weaknesses; for example, visits to galleries such as the nearby Tate are not common outside the sixth form. Although there have been multi-cultural days, which have included Cornish culture, little guidance is given to teachers about promoting the multi-cultural nature of Britain at the end of the 20th Century. There is scope to develop further opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of other cultures in order to prepare them more fully for life in a diverse society.

51. The school places great importance on caring for the individual in personal and intellectual terms; it provides very good support and guidance for all pupils, particularly so in terms of monitoring their academic development. This enhances the quality of life in school and has a positive impact on standards. The school has successfully improved on the already high standards identified during the last inspection. In particular, it has adopted into its procedures an appropriate child protection policy which follows county guidelines.
52. The pastoral care system is very well organised. Staff know and value all pupils and often give willingly of their time to support them; pupils and parents appreciate the support given. Apart from Year 7 and the sixth form, tutor groups are organised into mixed ages; parents see this arrangement as a strength of the school. The primary responsibility rests appropriately with form tutors who are well supported in their work by the guidance team consisting of senior tutors and heads of key stages, and overseen by a deputy head. Good co-ordination takes place both informally and through regular pastoral team meetings. The senior management team, including the headteacher, also play a major role in the support and guidance offered to pupils through, for example, regular work reviews.
53. Pupils entering Year 7 have a caring introduction into school through the very well organised induction programme and they settle easily. The school has very good relationships with external support agencies, and these contribute positively to the standards pupils achieve and to the pastoral provision of the school. For instance, the Youth Affairs Officer has recently assisted in a successful drugs awareness presentation for parents and staff.
54. There are very good whole school systems for monitoring the academic progress and personal development of pupils using a wide range of strategies. For example, in the tutor period at the end of each day, time is generally well used to instil positive working ways, to offer support with homework and to monitor the progress of pupils through regular individual interviews. The senior management team and members of the guidance staff carry out regular work reviews. For instance, all Year 7 pupils are seen individually in the spring term by a member of the senior management team to review their work and discuss how they have settled into school. A considerable pupil database is built up and all faculties are provided with regularly updated sheets on pupils to track progress and set targets. There are effective systems in place to reward good progress and to support pupils who are not achieving what they should.
55. Arrangements for personal and social education are good. All pupils participate in an effective programme that is taught by specialist teams and includes appropriate coverage of citizenship, health, sex and careers education. The timing of each module is carefully considered to best meet the needs of pupils. Several outside specialists contribute to the provision in a positive manner. Careers education is very good and is an integral part of the work related curriculum faculty. The school is very committed to this area of its work, as shown in the detailed policy which was put together by parents, governors, staff and a sixth form student, and is concerned with the future development of the whole community. Support from the careers service is very good. The school has won an Investors in Careers award. There is a very carefully structured programme of guided options for pupils in Key Stage 4 to ensure that subjects studied are well matched to the pupils' educational and personal needs. Pupils are very well informed about the range of post-16 opportunities available to them. Higher education guidance for students in the

sixth form is also very good.

56. The school has very good measures to promote discipline and good behaviour. The behaviour policy has been updated following much consultation and discussion with staff and pupils. There is a clear code of conduct that stresses positive expectations. The school places a high emphasis on the celebration of effort and achievement through its reward systems and presentation evenings. For example, readership awards are presented in Key Stage 3 to acknowledge the achievement of children with learning difficulties who have made good progress with reading skills. Discipline is supported by a classroom code with clear steps and sanctions to ensure consistency, which is very well monitored both by the guidance team and the headteacher and ensures support both for pupils and staff. Parents and pupils do not consider bullying an issue in school. Pupils are happy to tell staff of any minor incident and are confident that the matter will be handled appropriately.
57. Arrangements for promoting regular attendance and punctuality are good. The attendance secretary checks absences each day; any cause for concern is followed up quickly where possible. Weekly print outs of registers are scrutinised by senior pastoral staff. Punctuality is monitored and appropriate action is taken to redress persistent late arrival at school or lessons. There are very good relationships with the education welfare officer, who visits key stage co-ordinators weekly. The school's procedures to combat internal truancy are mostly effective. There is a new innovative system of awards to promote good attendance. The school is very supportive of pupils who have a prolonged period of absence.
58. There are very good systems in place to promote the well-being of the pupils. Arrangements for child protection are good. All staff have a copy of the policy and are well aware of the correct procedures to follow. There is a designated teacher to deal with incidents as appropriate. Regular contact is maintained with the support agencies. The school has very good arrangements for promoting the health and safety of pupils through safe working practices. Regular risk assessments are carried out and in faculty areas such as science, design and technology and physical education detailed risk assessments are incorporated into each lesson plan. There are excellent arrangements in the case of fire. Fire alarms are conscientiously checked on a weekly basis and there are very clear instructions for both pupils and staff in the event of a fire. There are well developed systems for dealing with accidents and illness. During the inspection, the potential health and safety risks of the uneven flooring and the disused temporary classroom on the West site were noted. The school has already raised defect reports appropriately.

2 **Partnership with parents and the community**

59. The overall good links which the school enjoys contribute positively to the pupils' learning, social development and understanding of the world outside school. The effective links identified in the previous inspection have further improved, particularly links with businesses, in part through the school's Technology College status. Of those parents who returned questionnaires or made written comments, the overall level of parents' satisfaction with the school is markedly higher than usual.
60. The parents' involvement in the school and with their children's work at home is good. They feel welcome and find it easy to make appointments to see staff. The school takes

parents' concerns seriously. Some parents offer their expertise to help in school, for instance as qualified referees for sports matches or with paired reading. The school works hard to encourage parents to become more involved in the life of the school. For example, as a result of a recent governors' questionnaire, a drugs and alcohol information evening was held which was well appreciated by parents. Targeted reading workshops are held to enable parents to understand how they can best help their child with reading difficulties. Parents and pupils in Key Stage 3 have opportunities to learn computer skills together. Most parents sign their children's planners each week; these provide a useful dialogue between home and school. Parents are appropriately invited to attend, and contribute to, half-termly reviews of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs, and are kept well informed of developments concerning their children. They are invited to the annual reviews for statemented pupils, as required. Parents are very supportive of events involving their children, such as productions and presentation evenings, as well as information evenings. A Year 6 open evening held during the inspection was very well attended both by prospective and current parents.

61. Overall, the quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Day-to-day information is good and parents comment that it is frequent, useful and timely. Curriculum information is satisfactory. There are some useful booklets in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, but very little information in Key Stage 3, especially as there is no course content contained in the annual reports. Pastoral information is good; parents are informed about any aspect of their child's personal development. The prospectus is well produced, although there are minor omissions in the annual governors' report. Good opportunities are provided for parents to discuss their child's progress through formal and informal meetings, as well as information evenings at the appropriate time in their school career. The school provides regular information for parents about their children's progress. Parents receive two interim reports a year, which give a brief indication of how pupils are performing and a full annual report. The full report now gives parents information in a way that is easier to understand. However, there is insufficient detail for parents in relation to attainment and progress, strengths and weaknesses, and targets for improvement. Reports tend to focus more on attitudes towards work than on standards.

62. The school enjoys very good links with the community it serves. It welcomes a range of visitors from the community into classes and pupils make a number of visits into the local area, although the frequency and amount vary between faculties. Vocational education, in particular, makes excellent use of the community; for example the local hospital and nursing homes are well used by Key Stage 4 pupils studying GNVQ advanced health and social care. Other faculties, such as design and technology, also make good use of the community; for instance A-level students used a local mill in their brief to design a climbing centre for Cornwall. Through its work related faculty, the school has developed excellent links with local businesses and this is a strength of the school. There are links with a wide range of industries and businesses, from major national firms to much smaller companies. They were very generous in their support of the school through sponsorship for the Technology College bid. Pupils studying vocational subjects benefit greatly from these excellent links, although they are not always used widely in some other faculties; for instance there are few examples of links being used in science. Local companies are particularly supportive of the very good work experience programme for all pupils in Year 10 and very much appreciate the on-site visits by staff to further strengthen the liaison. All sixth form students also undertake work experience, either weekly as an integral part of their course or for a

week's placement in Year 12, which is often career related. Through the school's very good links with the Education Business Partnership, pupils and staff are involved in a number of initiatives. For example, 40 Year 11 pupils recently participated in a very successful demonstration project aimed at developing pupils' key skills through work related learning, and involving business mentors. There is a strong teacher placement programme in industry. Pupils also take part in various business related enrichment activities, for example local business advisers are currently working with three Young Enterprise groups in Year 12.

63. There are very good links with the feeder primary schools, which facilitate transfer arrangements. Curriculum links are particularly strong in information technology and physical education, where primary pupils use the school's computers and swimming pool weekly. For the past two years, the school has run a literacy summer school for targeted primary pupils transferring to school. There are good links with a local special school which enhance pupils' social and personal development, for example Key Stage 4 design and technology pupils made educational toys. Very good links exist with the on-site nursery which Key Stage 4 pupils studying GNVQ health and social care visit for project work and work experience. There are close links with the local college of further education; for instance some pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend vocational link courses and Year 9 pupils take part in a science, engineering and technology day. There are good links with local universities, not only as part of the initial teacher training programme, but also for enrichment activities in design and technology and business studies. The school is used extensively by the community, generating a substantial income and keeps the local community in touch with the school. For example, the on-site Cornwall cricket centre of excellence provides excellent facilities for local and county teams and cricket activities in the school holidays for young people of all ages within the community. Pupils enjoy participating in some community activities. The school's annual carol service is a major community event and sixth formers, in particular, undertake community service and initiate various fundraising activities for local charities.

2 THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

2 Leadership and management

64. The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is good, and is a significant factor in improving the value that the school adds to pupils' attainments whilst they attend the school. The governors and senior managers of the school have been successful in creating, in an area of considerable economic and social deprivation, a school where, in the headteacher's words, "it's cool to achieve". The governors bring a suitable range of skills to the work of the governing body and, particularly, to the work of committees, which have suitable terms of reference. Governors with specific areas of interest take their roles seriously, and are well informed about the school's work. Governors and senior managers work well together in pursuing such key strategic initiatives as the Education Action Zone and the Private Finance Initiative bid for new buildings. Overall, the leadership vision provided by the governors and the headteacher is very good, focusing as it does on raising standards and personal expectations through technology across the curriculum. At subject level, leadership is good in most areas, although in history and art, many important improvements are only now getting under way with new leadership.

65. The support and monitoring of curriculum developments and teaching is good overall. The Technology College funding carries a requirement to link plans explicitly to expected outcomes. This approach could be used more widely in the school. Heads of faculty and subject heads are generally effective in reviewing the work of their colleagues in the classroom, and through the scrutiny of written work. Members of the senior management team monitor the work of faculties, but the specific focus of each visit is insufficiently clearly linked to key steps in the annual cycle of planning and review.
66. The school's aims are rather generalised, but those connected to Technology College activities are more sharply focused, and could serve as a useful model for the wider school aims. Overall, this is a school that runs more on the shared collective memory of a relatively stable staff rather than through detailed documentation. All required policies and procedures are in place, but there are many gaps in other areas of the school's operations. For example, there is no clear whole school policy that defines clearly what is required on marking. Subjects have developed their own policies, but these vary in both quality and the consistency of their application. Clearly, this approach works to a degree, as the steady picture of improvements in the recent past shows. But the present arrangements are not always sufficiently systematic, and thus practices that are seen to be effective in raising standards in one area, such as target setting within English, are not always being promoted more widely. The lack of a clear whole-school policy on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that many opportunities are being missed, particularly in spiritual and multi-cultural aspects. Some job descriptions are now rather dated, and lack a clear focus on the key management roles of the post holders such as longer-term strategic planning, monitoring the implementation of plans and policies, and the evaluation of outcomes. There is no systematic process for reviewing job descriptions or policies.
67. Development planning is broadly sound overall. Unusually, the overall quality of departmental plans is better than that of the over-arching school plan, which is relatively generalised and takes only a one-year view in any detail. Departmental plans also usually only take a one-year view of developments, although some, such as that for the work related faculty, do attempt to set targets within a longer term context. Department plans carry appropriate detail of success criteria, costs and staff development needs. Governors play a relatively limited role in framing the school development plan. However, the targets set are appropriate, if rather broad, and form an effective basis for the targeting of funds to needs on a year-to-year level. The school's procedures for monitoring the implementation of plans and policies, and for evaluating the outcomes of its work, lack rigour, but are broadly sound. All faculties have a member of senior management attached to them, who attends faculty meetings in order to guide planning and to steer review activities. However, their impact varies from subject to subject. Within subjects, middle managers take a more structured role in monitoring, although again there are variations.
68. The school's improvement since the last report has been good overall, particularly in terms of the rise in the attainments of the pupils and the progress that they make over time. Following the last inspection, the governors drew up an appropriate action plan to tackle the issues raised. Progress on the various targets has been broadly satisfactory, but gaps remain. The development of longer-term strategic planning systems has only been partly successful. Few plans have an explicit longer term view, although the quality of annual plans, particularly within subjects, has improved considerably. The strategic allocation of funds is now guided by a successful longer-term finance plan, as well as by

the shorter term targets of development plans. The school has modified its system of reporting to parents. The termly interim reports are a valuable improvement, but the annual reports have been over-simplified, and now provide inadequate information in terms of attainments in relation to the National Curriculum, course content and targets for improvement. Following the school's successful bid for Technology College status, there has been a sharp improvement in the impact of information technology on learning. For example, the introduction of *Successmaker* in Key Stage 3 is having very positive effects on literacy and numeracy. However, at Key Stage 4, the use of computers is not yet sufficiently embedded into the work of all subjects. Nor is there a systematic audit to ensure coverage of the Programmes of Study at this level. As a result, the school cannot be certain that it is meeting statutory requirements for information technology. The school still does not comply with statutory requirements for collective worship, and the provision of religious education in the sixth form. The high levels of reserves in the budget at the time of the last inspection have fallen in a controlled and planned manner to offset a short-term dip in pupil numbers. The school is judged to have a sound capacity to continue to make improvements in the future.

69. The school does not meet statutory requirements in terms of the provision of sufficient time to cover the Programmes of Study for physical education at Key Stage 4. Nor can it assure coverage of the National Curriculum in information technology at Key Stage 4. Arrangements for collective worship, and for the provision of religious education in the sixth form do not meet requirements. There are minor shortcomings in the content of the governors' annual report to parents.

2 **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

2 *Staffing*

70. The school's staffing is good. Teachers are well qualified for their roles and this is a major factor in ensuring that pupils make good progress. Although some staff teach outside their original specialism, the combination of suitable training, knowledge and experience ensures that subjects are well taught. The school has fewer teachers than average for its size, which means that some class sizes are larger than usual. However, this does not have any negative effects on standards and progress. Overall, the level of non-teaching staff is satisfactory and offers effective support. There is still no technical support in art and the number of administrative staff is slightly low for a large school, but there is very good in-class support for pupils with special educational needs. Learning support staff are now assigned to faculties; they are well deployed and have a very positive effect on the progress of pupils with special educational needs.
71. The school has recently been awarded Investors in People accreditation in recognition of the excellent arrangements that are in place for the professional development of all staff. Newly qualified teachers receive appropriate induction, which is also offered to other teachers new to the school. Appropriate training needs are identified through the school development plan, through working parties and from targets arising from appraisal. All subject areas contribute to the staff development plan. There are regular training sessions available in school as well as outside courses for both teaching and non-teaching staff. Take-up has been impressive; for example 90 members of staff have successfully taken a non-vocational qualification in information technology, helping to ensure that the ethos of a Technology College is widespread. The school has recently appointed an advanced skills teacher who chairs a working party on teaching and learning to ensure

that good classroom practice will be promoted more widely. Evaluation of training is thorough and linked to its effects on teaching and learning. The school has maintained an appropriate system of appraisal, although this now awaits new guidelines.

2 *Accommodation*

72. The school has sufficient accommodation to allow effective teaching of the whole curriculum; provision overall is sound. However, the site is a split one and there are major differences between the suitability and quality of the two sets of buildings. The school hopes to consolidate all its activities onto the main site, and has made a bid for funds under the Private Finance Initiative. The current programme of refurbishment of the main site will continue, developing, for example, the poor sixth form block. The school grounds are extensive and provide particularly good facilities for physical education and games, including the indoor cricket school.
73. Specialist areas in the main building are adequate. Many of them, including those for modern languages, design and technology and information technology are very good, and contribute effectively to standards. The sixth form block is bleak, offering neither a stimulating learning environment nor a comfortable social one in which pupils can relax. The drama studio floor, previously reported as a health and safety hazard, is now satisfactory. The music department accommodation, considered by the previous inspection team to be particularly inadequate, now has rooms that are adequate in size and quantity, but poor in acoustical terms.
74. The old grammar school building and the newer buildings around it provide generous space to the departments housed in them. However, these buildings are in a very poor state of repair and have deteriorated since the last inspection. The governing body has not effected its previously planned programme of improvement in view of the intention to close the site. Overall, the learning environment in this part of the school can be a dispiriting one. Corridors are drab and depressing, despite some good displays, particularly in the older parts of the building. There is no evidence that the state of these buildings adversely affects standards, but it makes the delivery of high quality education more difficult.

2 *Learning resources*

75. Resources for learning are good overall and reflect the commitment of the school to its Technology College status. Excellent resources are found in the information technology department and considerable improvement has been made since the last report. The ratio of pupils to computers at 5:1 is now markedly better than average. There is a good range of software that supports learning across the school, although there are areas where there is a deficiency. For example, in mathematics, there is a shortage of dedicated computers, and there is little available information technology equipment in art and history.
76. The cricket centre of excellence is a valuable resource for the school, both as a teaching resource and as a means of raising additional funds. The swimming pool is now covered to allow all-year use, whilst the drama studio and sports hall are valuable resources that benefit the pupils and the wider community.

77. All departments have sufficient resources for delivery of the National Curriculum, although shortages of textbooks were noted in modern languages, history and science. There has been improved library provision since the last report, although its use as a meeting venue limits its use after school by pupils. There are shortages of library books in some areas of sixth form study, notably for biology. Good resources were noted in physical education and design and technology.
78. The wider community provides a valuable resource for the school. Excellent community links enhance progress in vocational education. Drama groups visit the school for workshops and performances and there are many useful links with local organisations, enriching the pupils' experiences and providing specialist expertise. The school has formed mutually beneficial links with a local university. There is only limited use of fieldwork; cultural visits are few. The school's links with the local business community and its commitment to its Technology College status are particular strengths in support of the pupils' learning.

2 **The efficiency of the school**

79. The school has reacted positively to the points identified at the last inspection. Development plans now carry costings, and there is a clear long-term financial plan. The level of reserves has fallen in response to a planned programme during a time of falling pupil numbers. The split site continues to cause problems, but the relocation of faculties has made the use of teaching staff more efficient.
80. Overall, the efficiency of the school is good. The basic income per pupil is slightly below average, but this is enhanced by substantial financial support for pupils with special educational needs, and the additional funds generated as a result of the school's Technology College status. As a result, the total income per pupil is above average. Financial planning is very good. Governors take an active and informed interest in the school's finances through a finance committee with appropriate terms of reference. There is a very detailed long-term financial plan which enable governors and senior managers to take a strategic view on funding matters. For example, the plan identified the potential problems caused by a short-term dip in numbers in the area. This allowed funds to be set aside to avoid losing teachers until the school population returned to its usual level. The long-term finance plan is used as the basis for setting the annual budget, which is approved appropriately by the full governing body. The annual budget is allocated with due regard for costed development planning targets, and spending patterns are monitored effectively. The quality of financial administration is good. Funds allocated for special purposes, such as staff development and special educational needs are used appropriately.
81. Good use is made of teaching staff. The school spends slightly less per pupil than usual on teachers, and this is reflected in the slightly higher class sizes than usual at Key Stages 3 and 4. However, this has no adverse effects on progress. The small size of many sixth form groups is offset by larger ones in other subjects, so that overall, the costs of the sixth form match income. Most staff are well qualified for the subjects that they teach; even where non-specialists have to be deployed, the school's considerable investment in staff development ensures that standards in the classroom are not compromised. The evaluation of the impact of staff training on classroom practice is particularly impressive, and seeks to ensure that optimum value for money is obtained. Non-teaching staff are well deployed to support the pupils and teachers. The decision to link learning support staff with faculties has been a major factor in making their work

effective; the pupils that they support make good progress as a result. The closure of the special needs unit in 1996, and the policy of integration since then, have improved the progress being made by pupils with special educational needs. Overall, funds allocated to pupils with special needs, and to staff development, are used well, as are specialist funds for technological developments. Following the school's change to Technology College status, spending on learning resources has risen to above average levels, mainly through the provision of high quality computer facilities. Some fine tuning of the deployment of computers is still needed as ready access to them is not always possible. There are few shortages of books and other traditional learning resources. Overall, the school's learning resources make a significant contribution to standards. Although accommodation is satisfactory, the continuing existence of a split site, and the poor state of the former grammar school buildings, detract from what is otherwise good provision.

82. The school takes in pupils from an area that suffers well above average levels of social and economic deprivation. At entry, the pupils have below average attainments, yet by the time they finish compulsory education at 16, they achieve results that are above the average for all schools, and very high – in the top five per cent – in relation to similar schools. Behaviour is good, and the curriculum provided is very good in meeting the needs of the community served by the school. The school is successful in raising the aspirations and educational expectations of its pupils. Whilst the school receives an above average income per pupil, this is mainly the result of additional funds for pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress thanks to effective work by teachers and support staff. Overall, therefore, the school is judged to offer very good value for money.

2 **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

2 **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

2 **English**

83. The English department has improved since the previous inspection. The attainment and progress of boys have improved. Marking is more consistent across the department, and is now part of a wide range of assessment strategies, which are very good. Access to computers is now good; information technology is now having a significant effect on standards of writing. All classrooms are now of adequate size, and the bright and colourful displays of the pupils' work make positive contributions to their learning, giving them good opportunities to see what is wanted.
84. Pupils enter the school with below average attainments in English. In the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils' mean attainments are in line with the national average, and well above that for similar schools. These are significant improvements on the results of previous years. The pupils' English results are in now line with those in mathematics and science; boys' results have improved considerably. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results show that the proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C is above the national average in English Language and well above average in English literature. In English overall, the results are well above the average for similar schools. In 1999, the pupils' examination results in English were better than in most other subjects. In the 1999 A level results, all of the pupils gained A to E grades, compared to 92 per cent nationally. The proportion attaining grades A and B is in line with national figures and, over three years, results show a steadily rising trend.
85. In work seen, attainments overall are in line with national expectations for the end of Key Stage 3 and the sixth form; at the end of Key Stage 4, attainments are above expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are confident speakers, attentive listeners, and reach standards above the national expectation for these areas. Reading and writing standards are in line with expectations, but a significant minority reads at higher levels. The majority writes accurately, setting work out well. Higher attainers write with a wide range of interesting vocabulary in a variety of different styles. A minority of lower attaining pupils still has difficulties with spelling, punctuation and handwriting. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of reading, speaking and listening are above expectations. The overall standard of writing is in line with expectation. Standards in literature are higher than in language, and a minority of higher attaining pupils shows very good skills in explaining how authors and poets use particular techniques. These pupils write extensively and well, and even those of lower attainment are well versed in the techniques of how to structure their writing. Even where they find it difficult to spell accurately, their writing is well organised and purposeful. Pupils with special educational needs reach good standards relative to their prior attainments.
86. Across the curriculum as a whole, speaking and listening skills at all levels are above expectations, encouraged by the good opportunities for pupils to talk about their ideas in most subjects. Pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other, so that they develop their ideas and have plenty to say when they write. In religious education, for example, the quality of discussion is high, and pupils handle sensitive issues without

embarrassment. There is a strong emphasis on key words in science, geography, English, drama and history, and these are prominently displayed, helping to give pupils a good technical vocabulary. The Year 8 geography booklets on volcanoes use good technical language, and the pupils' drama journals help them to learn a range of terms throughout their time in the school. Evidence of effective research, including use of the Internet, is seen in some subjects, such as English and humanities. In science and some vocational subject lessons, pupils have good opportunities to read aloud. Pupils with literacy difficulties receive extra support in lessons, and in after school literacy sessions, so that they make good progress. The English department's good programme of wider reading occupies all pupils for the first ten minutes of every English lesson, and has positive effects on their reading skills. Writing skills across the curriculum are in line with expectations in Key Stage 3, and above expectations in Key Stage 4, where the solid foundations laid lower down in the school, together with the regular emphasis on literacy skills, result in improved standards. In history, the use of writing frames raises standards, and there is a strong literacy focus in English, in geography, and in science. This was seen in the very good display in one corridor on literacy in science focusing on the eclipse of the sun. Pupils produced health and safety leaflets and information pamphlets and presented them attractively, using word processing and illustrations.

87. Progress is good in English overall. It is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, both over time and during lessons, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Starting from a below average picture at entry, the good progress leads to attainment that is in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average at the end of Key Stage 4. In relation to their prior attainments, the pupils' GCSE results are well above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils have developed a range of strategies to use when they are structuring their writing. They have improved the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation from a below average level to one that consistently meets national expectations. The writing of lower attainers still contains inaccuracies, but it does improve, and these pupils benefit from being taught in groups that also contain higher attaining pupils. Though they sometimes work with study partners of similar attainment levels, class discussions and class written tasks enable them to hear and to see more challenging approaches to topics. This is also true in Key Stage 4, where the good progress continues, and the 1999 GCSE results contain examples of pupils with special educational needs, who rose to the challenge and obtained C grades in the examination. When pupils in Key Stage 3 write about texts, higher attainers progress from merely relating the main events of a plot to analysing a writer's intentions, style and techniques in some depth. This was seen, for example, in their work on *Vendetta*, a short story they studied, and in a version of the Ten Commandments in the poem *The Latest Decalogue*. These are underpinned by tables, diagrams and notes, which form the preparatory work to building up a piece of extended writing. Middle and lower attainers develop skills in paying close attention to the text. They make particularly good progress in speaking and listening. For example, pairs of Year 9 pupils were observed giving prepared talks, presenting both sides of an argument, organising their material well, using the overhead projector and video clips to illustrate their points. During Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in the accuracy of their writing, which becomes better structured, and more coherent. Higher attainers extend the range of styles they use for imaginative writing, persuasive, journalistic and analytical pieces. Middle and lower attainers make good progress and they use technical terms well. Their understanding of imagery was shown by a Year 11 class discussing Ted Hughes' poem *Hawk Roosting*, where they drew the images and explained them. Sixth form students make satisfactory progress overall over time and in lessons. They make better progress when they show initiative in their learning

and present material they have researched to the rest of the group, as they did in a revision session on *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *Room at the Top*. Students showed good knowledge of the text, using examples well to back the points they made about the characters. Information technology is used well to promote writing at all levels.

88. The pupils' responses to English are good at all levels, and this has a positive effect on their progress. The pupils' positive attitudes to improvement are very important in the good progress they make; they take note of what their teachers tell them, and try hard to improve. Pupils take pride in their work, and enjoy assessing their own performances and those of others according to National Curriculum levels. Year 8 and Year 9 classes did this most effectively when members of the classes gave talks on topics of personal interest. Behaviour is very good; this is evident not only during whole class teaching, but also in group and pair work. Pupils get down to work very quickly and they collaborate very well. Their personal development is good; they are interested in new ideas, and show sensitivity when they read of the experiences of others. Pupils show good levels of concentration in their learning, especially when they work to timed targets.
89. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is good at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers know their subject matter thoroughly, and teach with enthusiasm and a love of language. They know their pupils well, plan lessons purposefully to meet their needs, make sure pupils understand the objectives of each lesson, and explain to them the different National Curriculum levels. As a result, the pupils can set their own targets for improvement, and have a very clear idea of what they should concentrate on in order to improve. The teachers' high expectations encourage pupils of all levels of attainment to tackle challenging literature texts, to make their points clearly and to illustrate them with examples. In the sixth form, the methods used are occasionally highly dependent on the teacher giving notes to the students. Teachers in all classes organise lessons well so that pupils work on a variety of techniques to analyse poetry, for example using charts, diagrams, lists and brainstorming. As a result, the pupils have a range of preparatory work to support their writing, so that middle and lower attaining pupils tackle tasks with confidence. One teacher prepared effectively in just this way in a Year 9 lesson on Wilfrid Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est*, a poem which is often dealt with by far older pupils. Teachers often use short-term targets and switch activities frequently, using a variety of media on the same topic. There was a good example of this in the Year 11 lesson on Ted Hughes's *Hawk Roosting*, in which the pupils annotated their own copies of the poem, discussed aspects of the language, illustrated the imagery, and watched a short, highly appropriate video extract on the work. The department is developing an effective range of materials that help pupils of all attainments make progress. The teachers' management of discipline is very good, so that almost no time is wasted in keeping order, and the whole of most lessons is concentrated on moving the learning forward. Day-to-day assessment, which includes marking, is consistently good, and teachers use a range of strategies to assess the pupils' work. Homework is regularly set and makes good contributions to extending the pupils' knowledge and understanding.
90. The curriculum is good, broad and balanced, and there are good opportunities for all to attain high standards. The mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3 and sets in Key Stage 4 allow pupils to aim high. Procedures for assessment are very good overall, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, and the data are used well, so that overall, assessment makes a good contribution to the pupils' attainment and progress. The

head of department provides excellent leadership, and there is a clear, educational direction for the subject. All those with management responsibilities discharge them very well, with a clear focus on raising standards. The hard working team of committed teachers works together to raise standards and to improve provision. The department's development plan is good and its impact on progress is evident. The department makes good contributions to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but this is not codified, so that opportunities are sometimes missed to develop this aspect further. Development planning, monitoring, evaluation and the support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are very good. The department is efficient in its use of staff, accommodation and resources and the very good ethos for learning is contributing to the improvement in standards.

2 *Media Studies*

91. As well as teaching English, teachers in the department teach GCSE and A-level media studies. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in the 1999 GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average, and pupils make very good progress, given that the subject is new to them when they start in Year 10. The A level group is small, but all six students who took the examination in 1999 obtained grades A to E, with most reaching grades B and C. All pupils have good attitudes to the subject, and they work with considerable independence. Teaching is good, with the teachers effectively communicating their considerable knowledge and enthusiasm.

2 *Drama*

92. The proportions of pupils attaining grades A* to C and A* to G in the 1999 GCSE drama examination at the end of Key Stage 4 are above the relevant national averages. In the A-level examinations, all four students in 1999 attained A to E grades. Observed attainments at all stages are above expected levels. The proportion of pupils attaining above the expected level increases steadily through Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, especially in their use of characterisation to express meaning. In the GCSE classes, the pupils create believable characters, as they did in a lesson where they announced flood warnings in a contemporary reworking of the *Noah* story. Progress is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Pupils develop good skills through constant emphasis on self and peer assessment, so that they analyse their own performances and those of others. Higher attaining pupils use a wide range of techniques in their improvisations, and handle speech well. A clear sense of purpose pervades the performances of all pupils, who have positive attitudes. In the A-level classes, students reach high standards, they think carefully and critically about their work and respond with maturity. In a joint sixth form lesson, Year 13 gave carefully prepared master classes to Year 12, and the plenary session which finished the lesson showed pupils thinking analytically about their work, expressing themselves well. One student's analysis was 'I realised I talked too much, and said too little.' Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations, evident in their use of language specific to the subject, and in the quality of response that they want the pupils to give. The curriculum is very carefully planned, so that learning builds steadily on what has gone before. Assessment procedures are very good and involve the pupils well; this is a strength. Extra curricular activities are good. The drama club involves nearly a hundred pupils, sixth form students help in the running of clubs, and in rehearsals for the major school production, which takes place every two years. There are small productions each term. The department is adequately resourced, although lighting and other equipment has to be hired for examination assessments and productions.

2 **Mathematics**

93. The department has made sound progress since the previous inspection. Standards have improved steadily on most fronts. The attainments of girls, which are now similar to boys, are significantly higher than in 1994.
94. In most years, the pupils' attainments in mathematics are below average when they enter the school. The results of national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are in line with the national average for all schools and well above that for similar schools. Results have improved year on year in line with national trends. The attainments of boys and girls are similar. The results of GCSE examinations taken at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 are above the national average for all schools and very high when compared to similar schools - in the top five per cent. The proportion of girls achieving A*-C grades is significantly higher than the national figure and that achieved by boys. In 1998, boys tended to gain higher grades in their other subjects than they did in mathematics; the reverse was true for girls. The combined results of boys and girls in 1999 are significantly higher than those achieved in 1998. At the end of the sixth form, the 1999 A-level results are in line with the national average. The average A-level points gained have improved from 1994 to 1999.
95. In work seen during the inspection, the overall attainments of pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are above expectations. Attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations for 14 year olds; at the end of Key Stage 4 they are above expectation. At the end of the sixth form attainment is above expectation for students taking A-level courses but below for GNVQ students. The attainments of boys and girls are broadly similar throughout the school. Attainments across different aspects of the subject are variable. At Key Stage 3, attainment is below expectations in using and applying mathematics; in line with expectations in number, algebra and in handling data; and above expectation in shape, space and measures. For example, a bottom Year 9 set demonstrated higher than expected attainments when they chose and used the most appropriate units for measuring different distances. A top Year 9 set worked at above average levels when solving problems on Pythagoras and significant figures. At Key Stage 4, number and using and applying mathematics are relatively weaker areas, but are still in line with expectations. In some cases, pupils attain at high levels. For example, a Year 11 middle set demonstrated high attainment revising statistics, probability and equations. In the sixth form, basic algebra, such as substitution and the handling of fractions, is not always secure, even though advanced concepts and techniques are understood and applied, as when Year 13 students integrated differential equations confidently and demonstrated a good grasp of a range of A-level pure mathematical topics.
96. Basic numeracy throughout the school is satisfactory but has the potential to be better. The faculty has yet to develop and systematically deliver a basic numeracy programme from Year 7 through to Year 11 that will target and keep sharpened key mental and paper and pencil skills. Recent developments in the National Numeracy Strategy are just beginning to influence the faculty's work. Pupils demonstrate appropriate competence in the key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Pupils are, however, given few opportunities to use computers in their day-to-day work in mathematics, and judgements of their attainments in Programmes of Study requiring use of computers cannot be made. Whilst the application of number is fully integrated into Part One GNVQ courses, where attainment meets course expectations, this is not the case in the sixth form, where

application of number is not sufficiently integrated into vocational assignments.

97. A whole school numeracy policy has yet to be developed, or an audit across curricular needs and practices carried out. In consequence, mathematics is not contributing as it should to standards in other subjects and the subject is not being consolidated and developed across the curriculum. Whilst the contribution of mathematics to science, design and technology, information technology and geography is broadly satisfactory there is little evidence of the subject impacting on other areas of the curriculum. Overall, the potential of mathematics to describe, explain and predict is not being fully exploited in other subjects.
98. The overall progress made from Year 7 to Year 13 is good for pupils of all abilities, both boys and girls. Progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good because pupils benefit from favourable grouping arrangements from the start of Year 7. Pupils are setted by prior attainment, with group sizes well-matched to the level of help required. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from having a well informed and skilled teacher who has responsibility for low attainers within the faculty. Low attaining pupils are also supported by a classroom assistant who spends all her time in the mathematics faculty; this is a strength. Very able pupils are given the opportunity to take GCSE examinations early and are well provided for thereafter. Average attaining pupils make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 4. This is because the faculty runs a weekly after-school session which aims, with considerable success, to convert predicted GCSE D grades into C grades. The GCSE results in 1999 are well above average in relation to the pupils' attainments two years previously. Sixth form students taking A-level mathematics make good progress because of the high quality of A-level teaching. For example, a Year 12 group made excellent progress when, within a single lesson, they learned that integration is the inverse of differentiation and that an integral has an indefinite set of solutions. The students were completely involved in the superbly structured mathematical argument and demonstration of their teacher. He led them into a completely new concept and the dawning of their understanding was one of those moments of awe and wonder only achieved when learning is of the highest quality. Overall, progress was unsatisfactory in only two lessons. In one of these the teacher tried to do too much. In the other, GNVQ students worked at a lower level than they had achieved at GCSE because the work did not flow naturally from their vocational assignments.
99. The responses of pupils of all ages and abilities, boys and girls, are good at both key stages and in the sixth form; they are sometimes very good or excellent. Pupils are invariably interested in their mathematics, they behave well and show respect to their teachers. Pupils have good listening skills and respond positively and with enthusiasm to new ideas. Pupils work well on their own and in pairs, but are given few opportunities to work in groups, or to show initiative. At both key stages, the quality of pupils' written work can often be unsatisfactory; poor presentation leads to sloppy mathematics. The response of A-level students is very good. Students talk about their mathematics with confidence and not only respond to questions but also ask them. More pupils study mathematics in the sixth form than most other subjects; this is a measure of their interest and the status of the subject, but most of all of the reputation of the faculty's sixth form teachers.
100. Teaching overall in mathematics is good. It is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Eleven teachers teach the subject and their knowledge and understanding are good. Teaching was very good or excellent in one third of lessons

seen. In only one lesson was teaching less than satisfactory, because behaviour management skills were insecure, too much work was attempted, and not enough was consolidated. Teachers' expectations of pupils are consistently high in terms of mathematical content, but are sometimes too low in terms of the quality of written work.

The quality of lesson planning is generally good. However, teaching methods and organisational strategies can lack breadth and variety. For example, there is little evidence of pupils being involved in investigations, in research and in completing extended pieces of work. Some teachers are starting lessons with warm-up mental activities and concluding with whole class discussion about what they have learned; all pupils could benefit from these good practices. The one third of very good or excellent lessons involved pupils of all ages and abilities. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the interest and imagination of low attaining pupils was immediately captured by the teacher showing photographs taken on a recent visit to Cape Canaveral. Excellent wide ranging discussion followed involving technical language, money, insurance, discounts and distance, and this was only the introduction. Teaching just as excellent was seen in the sixth form lesson where the outstanding structure of the content led to able students understanding the basics of integration. Homework is set appropriately and the assessment of pupils' work informs teaching. Marking, however, is variable and, overall, is no better than satisfactory. Displays are of high quality, and mathematical puzzles and challenges are all around.

101. The ethos of the faculty is about providing caring mathematical education for all pupils no matter their age or attainment. However, there is potential for further improvement. Schemes of work do not, at present, detail numeracy, investigations, information technology or assessment requirements. The monitoring and support of teachers is capable of further development.

2 Science

102. Pupils enter the school with below average attainments in science. The results of national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are in line with the national average, and well above those for similar schools. Over the period from 1996 to 1998 pupils' attainments have been in line with national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results are broadly in line with the national average, but are well above average in relation to similar schools. This broadly reflects performance in other subjects and is slightly better than the results obtained in the previous year. In 1998, a group of pupils took GCSE examinations in biology, physics and chemistry. They achieved well above average results; attainments in physics and chemistry were well above those achieved in the pupils' other subjects while those in biology were in line. Pupils did not take these examinations in 1999. Lower attaining pupils are entered for single award science examinations and results are well below national standards. Some pupils also submitted work for a Certificate of Achievement in science; all pupils gained the award and most achieved a distinction grade. At the end of the Year 13, the 1998 A-level results were broadly in line with national averages. In 1999, the students' attainments in A-level chemistry and physics examinations are in line with national patterns, while those in biology are above. In 1999 all pupils gained an A-level pass in chemistry and this represents an improvement from the previous year. Results in physics and biology in 1999 are similar to those in 1998. In all tests and examinations there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
103. In work seen during the inspection, attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations for 14 year olds. Similar levels of attainment are observed in

physical, biological and chemical science. Practical skills are well developed in this key stage, owing to good teaching, and all pupils can handle a range of laboratory equipment effectively. They can make predictions and write their own experimental reports. For example, pupils in a mixed attainment class in Year 7 designed and carried out an investigation to measure the energy produced by a candle as it heats a beaker of water. Not only did they ensure that they carried out a fair test but they all repeated their measurements several times to check their findings. Some lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs have difficulty in recording their work in science. Pupils are able to display their experimental results graphically and perform appropriate calculations.

104. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainments are in line with national expectations. Most higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of the main aspects of science required at this level. Pupils are aided by their good mathematical skills and this was demonstrated when higher attaining pupils in Year 10 carried out complex calculations about energy and power in electrical circuits. Lower attaining pupils are able to draw good conclusions from their experimental work. For example, pupils in Year 11 burned a range of foods; they were able to compare the fat content in a range of foods and relate this to their own diets. Most pupils have good reading skills and this supports their learning. There are examples of poor spelling and writing in the work of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs; this limits their attainments. Pupils use computers well in science owing to the good information technology skills of their teachers and the good access they have to equipment within the faculty and the school.
105. Sixth form students attain in line with course expectations. They gain higher level skills and have ability to interpret their experimental results mathematically. This was seen in a lesson about the effect of friction and other forces on falling objects. All pupils understood the relevant theory and there was lively debate about the interpretation of experimental measurements. Most of these pupils take responsibility for their own learning.
106. Progress during Key Stages 3 and 4 is good while that in the sixth form is sound. Pupils in Key Stage 3 make good progress in lessons and also over time. Good progress is made in lessons owing to good teaching and the wide range of related tasks they are given to carry out within each lesson. For example, average and low attaining pupils made very good progress in a Year 7 lesson about variation in living organisms. They identified different characteristics from photographs a range of species of cats. Then they went on to identify similar characteristics within the same species, namely each other. High attainers made very good progress because extension work was provided. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good because in the majority of science lessons they have support staff to help them. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory in lessons, and their progress over time is good, with well above average value being added across the key stage between 1997 and 1999. Pupils make good progress in those lessons which are well structured to include a range of related activities. By way of illustration, pupils of average attainment in Year 10 made good progress in a lesson about optical fibres. In earlier lessons they had considered how light travels through transparent materials and had made experimental observations. They then watched an appropriate video. This built on their previous knowledge and they were able to identify a range of uses for optical fibres and select appropriate information to answer questions. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall but they have poor writing skills and this limits their progress. Pupils in the sixth form make good progress in lessons and satisfactory

progress over time. In a good lesson about the terminal velocity reached by objects as they fall through liquids, sixth form students made good progress. They used their knowledge of physics and their mathematical skills well to interpret their experimental measurements

107. The pupil's responses at Key Stages 3 and 4 are good; they are very good in the sixth form. Pupils have good attitudes to work. They show interest, work responsibly in small groups, particularly when carrying out practical experiments and investigations, and form good relationships. Behaviour is good in lessons and pupils handle scientific equipment safely and well. Pupils co-operate well with teachers. Low attaining pupils, including those with special education needs, also respond well. They work well with support staff. On the rare occasions when pupils become noisy, teachers take appropriate action and pupils are very quick to respond. As they become older, pupils take more responsibility for their own learning and there is good evidence for this in the sixth form. There is good support within the curriculum, as schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4 identify opportunities for private study.
108. Teaching is good at all levels, and is never less than satisfactory. In over half of the lessons, teaching is good and in a small proportion of lessons, very good. The knowledge and expertise of the teachers is good. The requirements of the National Curriculum and of sixth form courses are met. Teachers' planning is good and they provide a very good range of learning activities for the majority of pupils. This helps most pupils to gain knowledge and understanding and make good progress. There are missed opportunities for the use of special materials to help low attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the provision of a prepared table for writing down experimental results would have enabled these pupils to keep up with the rest of the class, make better progress and so gain in confidence. Teachers challenge pupils well and give them many theoretical and practical problems to solve. They use skilful questioning techniques and give praise when necessary. Marking is done regularly to a good standard, and includes constructive comments. Not all teachers use the faculty marking policy consistently; different marking systems are employed which causes confusion to pupils. A particular strength lies in the way that teachers plan and provide lessons, even for the youngest pupils, which are designed to develop higher level skills. By the time pupils reach Key Stage 4 they have the necessary skills and experience to be able to plan, carry out and analyse results within scientific investigations.
109. The head of faculty provides good leadership and management. The department has clear aims and both teaching and the pupils' work are regularly monitored. There are good procedures in place for assessing, standardising and moderating work at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, there is an effective system for collecting half termly modular test results, but this does not include assessment results for practical investigations. Use is not made of such results to provide pupils with regular information of their National Curriculum attainment levels and thus to set them individual targets. At Key Stage 3, good use is made of assessment to place pupils in appropriate sets. At Key Stage 4, good use is made of assessment for moving pupils between sets and for identifying pupils in Year 11 who need extra revision lessons. Teachers are well supported by technicians and learning support staff. Although pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have a published science homework book, they do not have a textbook to take home. This limits the revision that pupils can do to prepare for tests and examinations. The science department staff work well as a team, give good support to the head of faculty and are committed to raising standards.

110. Since the last inspection there has been a good improvement in the opportunities given to pupils to plan their own practical work, gain higher level skills and develop individual learning.

2 OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

2 Information technology

111. At the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 in the teachers' own assessments of attainments in 1998 is above average, as is that reaching Level 6. The figures for 1999 are similar. Girls' perform at a slightly higher level than boys in both cases. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results are well above the national average. In the sixth form, the A-level computing results are well above national averages, continuing a trend maintained over the last five years including a 100 per cent success rate.

112. Work seen during the inspection is well above national expectations for the end of Key Stage 3. As befits a Technology College, pupils use a wide range of applications with confidence and competence in their specialist information technology lessons. This experience contributes to good use being made of information technology in a number of subjects, but particularly so in English, design and technology and geography. The introduction of *Successmaker* as an independent learning system in Key Stage 3 information technology lessons contributes positively to the pupils' attainments in literacy and numeracy. At the end of each *Successmaker* lesson, feedback on each pupil's performance is passed to heads of faculty for monitoring. The use of the Internet and CD-ROMs for research, spreadsheets, and specialist graphics software enables pupils to go beyond text processing in their work. Pupils make extensive use of computer graphics for presentation of work, and computer control in the realisation of projects in design and technology. Boys' and girls' attainments at Key Stage 3 are similar. At Key Stage 4, attainments are broadly in line with expectations for the end of the key stage, but with more variation than at Key Stage 3 between boys and girls, and between Years 10 and 11. All pupils undertake a computer literacy course in Year 10 and standards are in line with expectations. The attainments of pupils on the GCSE information technology course are above expected levels; however, it is mainly boys who follow this course. Whilst information technology is used in a range of subjects in Year 11, there is insufficient monitoring of the coverage of the Programme of Study and therefore it cannot be assured that the National Curriculum coverage fully complies with statutory requirements. As a result, the attainments of pupils who do not follow the GCSE course cannot be judged with accuracy. Attainments seen in the sixth form are well above average. On Key Stage 4 and sixth form vocational courses, information technology is used appropriately for the presentation of information, but its use for modelling and data handling is more limited. Internet use is confident, but often uncritical. Overall standards in the key skill area are therefore below expectations at both levels. In part, this reflects the fact that information technology key skills are not well integrated into assignments.

113. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress at Key Stage 3. The primary school liaison programme operated with feeder schools ensures continuity of learning. The level of attainment is closely monitored and the progress of the younger

pupils who have benefited from this programme is higher than other pupils who did not have this input in previous years. The increased time recently given to Year 7 has enabled pupils to consolidate knowledge in information technology very well. At Key Stage 4, higher attainers, those doing information technology GCSE and those following the Year 10 computer literacy courses make very good progress. In Year 11, progress amongst those not following the GCSE is less secure. Where subjects use information technology to support the curriculum, pupils demonstrate improved learning, as in English, where the pupils access Websites for study of Chaucer, and in physical education, where the use of digital cameras enhances project work. In other areas, where little or no opportunity exists to use computers, pupils cannot make further progress in information technology in Year 11. Progress in the sixth form is very good because students are given the opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding to resolve realistic and challenging projects, such as the redesign of an office database in a local business. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress in the subject to their peers at all levels. The recently introduced vocational courses at Key Stage 4 leading to Part One GNVQ make good use of computers in contributing to the acquisition of key skills, and where appropriate, their use is related to real world contexts for example in business and manufacturing.

114. At both Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, response is very good; response is good at Key Stage 4. Pupils enjoy using computers, both in specialist lessons and across the curriculum. The improved resourcing due to the school status as a Technology College has had significant impact for pupil access. The well-equipped open access centre allows pupils to work independently before, during and after school. Pupils show interest in their work. They are able to identify opportunities for the use of information technology in a variety of contexts to enhance their work. Pupils sustain concentration and are enthusiastic to complete their work to get a hard copy; this supports their capacity for personal study. They are able to work independently and do not need continual recourse to the teacher for assistance. Behaviour is very good. The pupils demonstrate responsibility when using equipment and take care in its use. Pupils share expertise when required and take an interest in each other's work and help one another.

115. Teaching is very good overall. It is very good at both Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and sound at Key Stage 4. Teaching benefits considerably by support provided by technicians and a learning support assistant attached to the department. The professional development of the majority of staff leading to an NVQ in information technology has ensured they have sufficient knowledge and understanding to use computers effectively in their teaching. However, teaching at Key Stage 4 is less good than at other levels because there are too few examples of the use of computers to support work in other subjects. Schemes of work are appropriate in Years 7 to 10, and are overseen by the head of faculty. In Year 11, other subjects do not always highlight opportunities for information technology in lessons. In contrast, the planning of specialist information technology lessons is a strength, and has had a positive impact on standards. Teachers have high expectations both in terms of behaviour and progress. Assessment arrangements are very good at all levels. Teachers across the curriculum contribute effectively to the teachers' assessments at Key Stage 3, whilst the extensive pupil performance data system is used to set demanding targets in Years 7 to 10. Pupils are told clearly what they must do to reach the next level. In the very good lessons, tasks were carefully timed, ensuring interest and motivation. Homework is set regularly and, demonstrating sensitivity to the relative lack of home computers in the area, is often used to collect data for analysis or for written work.

116. The last report identified a need for greater use of information technology in all areas of the curriculum. However some subject areas still do not have ready access to facilities. This is a factor in the potential of information technology not being fully exploited by all subjects. A review is due to be undertaken to ensure that subjects will be able to plan the use of information technology in their work and make use of the extensive resources. The head of faculty has initiated rapid progress in the use of information technology and the outcomes are to be commended. They show clearly that the school has made great strides forward in its development of information technology across the school. However, at present, statutory requirements in Year 11 cannot be assured because of a lack of comprehensive planning and auditing systems across the other subjects of the curriculum.

2 **Religious knowledge**

117. Since the previous inspection, all pupils now follow a course in religious education at Key Stage 4, taking either the full or the short GCSE examination, or the Certificate of Achievement in religious education. From no entries at GCSE in 1997, over 150 pupils have taken either the full or short course GCSE examinations in each of the last 2 years. Results in the full course examination in both years are significantly above the national average. Pupils tend to do significantly better in religious education than in the other subjects they take. Results of those taking the short course are in line with national averages.
118. In work seen, attainment by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 is above the expectations of the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus. At Key Stage 3, whilst higher attainers are more articulate, most pupils can offer ideas and give examples of the uniqueness of human beings. Work on creation, stewardship of the earth, and imaginary journeys to a garden indicate that most pupils can think about important spiritual and moral issues at levels above what is normally expected; sometimes, sensitive thoughts are expressed through poetry, with higher attainers' vocabulary being extensive. Most have a good knowledge of Christian baptism and confirmation as well as the symbolism of ceremonies from other faiths, such as Brit Milah. Boys' written work tends to be weaker than the girls', and those with special educational needs often struggle with their writing. At Key Stage 4, the majority are able to make high quality responses to the moral and religious issues surrounding abortion, with higher attainers showing careful reasoned arguments. Literacy levels of lower attainers are less strong, but, nonetheless, sensitive views are expressed. Indeed, at both key stages, oral attainment is high, with most pupils speaking with confidence in discussions or when making presentations. There is no religious education in the sixth form.
119. Progress is very good at both key stages. At Key Stage 4, it is never less than good and can be excellent; at Key Stage 3, it is always at least satisfactory. In one Key Stage 3 lesson, the teacher took the pupils' thinking forward by successfully building on their ideas, and enabled very good progress to take place in a lesson looking at particular characteristics of animals and humans. Similarly, in a lesson on imagery, by the end of the lesson, the majority of pupils developed a real appreciation of the concept of a parable. However, in one lesson, though the quality of some activities meant that overall progress was satisfactory, progress was lessened by an undercurrent of chatter and inattention. At Key Stage 4, there was excellent progress in one lesson about Jewish customs; this was related to the excellent teaching which, with the progressive introduction of artefacts and first class explanations, built up pupils' understanding. In

all lessons and over time, the rate of progress is similar for pupils of all abilities.

120. The pupils' responses at both key stages are very good. They can be excellent at Key Stage 4, and are never less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3. In one Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils talked about rights and responsibilities without embarrassment, and enjoyed the practical activities. There is very good behaviour in virtually all lessons with good humoured and positive relationships, though, in occasional lessons, there is some restlessness and silliness, which means that full attention is not always given. At Key Stage 4, behaviour is excellent, and even those who say little show interest. In one lesson, there was an excellent response with a lovely atmosphere of interest and good will, with pupils fascinated by the content of the lesson.
121. Teaching is very good overall at both key stages. It is stronger at Key Stage 4, where no teaching is less than good and some is excellent; all teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory. Very good teaching in one Key Stage 3 lesson benefited from expert knowledge in using correct terminology, and in leading a discussion on the transition from childhood to adulthood. The lively style interested and involved pupils, with well planned varied activities, including video. In another lesson, the teacher's confident understanding of religious philosophy enabled difficult ideas to be communicated to pupils, using examples which moved smoothly from the simple to the complex. However, in a different lesson, despite good features, weaknesses in class management reduced the impact of potentially good teaching. One lesson at Key Stage 4 made very good use of flashcards to stimulate a high quality discussion on abortion; this was very well handled by the teacher to ensure a balanced debate. The introduction of poems about abortion also challenged pupils' attitudes and thinking in evocative ways. Excellent teaching in another lesson again made use of expert knowledge, this time of Jewish traditions, to allow for rapid development, using pupils' responses, so that the lesson flowed seamlessly from one activity to another. There was excellent use of artefacts; with plenty of challenge and encouragement, it was sensitive teaching at its best.
122. Religious education has made good progress since the previous inspection. The achievements at Key Stage 4 have been notable. However, there is still no provision for religious education in the Sixth Form, in breach of statutory requirements. The head of subject provides a clear vision of the role and place of the subject in the curriculum, and the subject is well respected by most pupils; however, its potential for further development is restricted by the limited number of specialist teachers. With good displays, good use is made of the unattractive rooms and surrounding area; the subject succeeds in spite of its accommodation, and not because of it. Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in many ways. This includes an emphasis on encouraging pupils to reflect upon their Christian heritage and their own attitudes to God and the world, considering moral issues, and studying different world religions in their cultural contexts.

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123. The teachers' own assessments of the pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with those seen nationally; however these are not externally moderated. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results are well below the national average, as they were in 1998. Although pupils taking photography achieve higher results, overall performance at GCSE over the past four years has not improved. Pupils tend to

do significantly less well in art than in the other subjects that they take. At the end of the sixth form, the 1999 A-level results are above average. In previous years, results have been below average, but numbers are often too small to make reliable statistical comparisons.

124. In work seen during the inspection, attainments are below the national expectation for the end of Key Stage 3. However, there is variation within the key stage. Attainments seen in a Year 8 group working in mixed media and in a Year 7 group working in ceramics were in line with national expectations for this age. Pupils' work towards the first attainment target of investigating and making is mainly satisfactory, but work towards the second attainment target of knowledge and understanding is unsatisfactory. The limited range of media covered during the key stage limits attainments. Few pupils are able to use a subject specialist vocabulary, to fully evaluate their own work, or to relate the work of artists to a social, historical and cultural context. Attainments are also below expected levels for the end of Key Stage 4. However, changes have recently been made to the examination course that pupils follow in Key Stage 4. This is already having a positive effect on standards. Thus pupils in Year 10 who started the new course at the beginning of the term are producing work that is more in line with national requirements. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils select from a wider range of media and scale and are encouraged to produce more experimental and individual work. However they have insufficient knowledge about past and current movements in art to make fully informed choices. Sketchbooks are satisfactory in the sixth form but underdeveloped in Key Stage 4. Attainments are in line with expectations for the end of the sixth form. At this stage they continue to experiment with a range of materials and carry out contextual studies in greater depth. Figure drawing remains a weakness and at times there is an over reliance on secondary sources.
125. Progress seen in lessons is sound by the end Key Stage 3 and good at the end of Key Stage 4. Progress is very good in the sixth form. At all levels, pupils are beginning to improve the quality of their work as a result of the changes to provision introduced in recent months by a new head of department. However, at both Key Stage 3 and 4, expectations are still not always high enough for high attaining pupils, with the result that although their work shows promise, they are not able to achieve enough. Most pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress.
126. The pupils' response at Key Stage 3 is sound and it is good at Key Stage 4. The students' response in the sixth form is very good overall. Although a few pupils, mainly boys, have difficulty settling to work, most are able to sustain a good level of concentration in both key stage lessons. Pupils with special educational needs respond well and work with interest. Students are highly motivated in the sixth form and start to become fully independent learners. Pupils enjoy being asked about their work. Many come to the extra art classes that have recently started. Relationships are positive, behaviour is generally good and classes are well managed and orderly.
127. Teaching is sound at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers are up to date in their knowledge and expertise and are able to convey an enthusiasm for their subject. In some Key Stage 3 lessons, there is a tendency to teach only by telling pupils what to do; they are given little opportunity to evaluate their work or contribute to the lessons. Schemes of work are being revised in Key Stage 3, but need further development to ensure progress over time. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are being developed, but as yet, there are no central records to monitor individual

progress through the curriculum. A tracking system is being put in place in Key Stage 3 to help ensure consistency of provision. Assessment is good in the sixth form. Homework is given too infrequently in Key Stage 3 to help pupils make progress.

128. The department is well led. The new head of department has introduced regular meetings and staff are enthusiastic in planning for the future. The school environment is improved by an impressive display of pupils' work throughout the building. Statutory requirements are met except in the use of information technology. Since the last inspection, A-level work has improved, and the department is now on one site which partly lessens the need for technical support. Teaching is improving at Key Stage 4, and more three-dimensional work is being introduced, but the issues of low examination results, poor use of sketchbooks and a limited Key Stage 3 curriculum remain to be tackled.

2 **Design and technology**

129. The proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected Level 5 in the Teachers' Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 are well above average, as is that achieving Level 6 or above. National data for 1999 are not yet available, but the school's results are similar to those of 1998. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results for boys and girls are both above the national average. Pupils' results in graphic products are well above the national average. This maintains a continued rising trend in performance in recent years across the faculty. No student took examinations in the sixth form in 1999.

130. Work seen during the inspection is above the national expectation for the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. At the time of the last report, the presentation skills of lower attaining pupils was poor. This is no longer the case because focused teaching of graphic skill in lessons is now a formalised part of the faculty scheme of work. Pupils are also using a wider range of resources in their researches. In addition, good use is made of information technology resources to raise attainment and to give pupils confidence in presentation of their design work. Pupils make good use of computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment in their projects across both key stages. This is used for graphics, modelling and to promote the understanding of industrial manufacturing processes. This has improved attainment for all pupils. Coursework of higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 covers a range of sophisticated assignments, such as electronic locking systems. There were good examples of pupils' work seen in textiles, where pupils designed and made bags for their belongings. Many projects include aids for people with disabilities, such as alarm systems for people with special needs. Boys and girls work reaches a similar standard.

131. Boys and girls make good progress through both key stages. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow a modular programme which gives a broad and balanced programme of study across the faculty and provides a very good foundation for more advanced study at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. Projects such as the *Micromouse* controlled vehicle, door signs made in textiles, the use of computer-aided manufacturing to make pens, and pewter jewellery are all examples of high quality outcomes. Schemes of work are devised to enable all pupils to demonstrate their technological capability through designing and making. The quality of the finished work is impressive, and pupils take pride in their achievements. At Key Stage 4, pupils build on their previous knowledge and further develop their understanding of materials and processes. Tools and equipment are

used with competence and care. Lower attaining pupils are assisted by the use of templates when drawing, for example, a flow chart in textiles that improves presentation and saves time. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and benefit when learning support assistants work alongside the teacher. Middle and lower attainers demonstrate a positive attitude to work without being over reliant on the teacher. Teachers set high standards and provide a stimulating environment with impressive displays, conducive to the progress of pupils of all levels.

132. At both key stages, the pupils' responses are very good. At Key Stage 3, pupils are enthusiastic and take care when using equipment. They listen carefully to the guidance given by teachers and higher attainers work with a high degree of self-direction on projects. Pupils use their initiative if a machine is not available, and work on another related activity until it becomes free. This promotes learning, as time is used effectively and not wasted queuing. Pupils discuss their work confidently and make suggestions for improvement at the end of assignments. They take care of equipment and are trustworthy with resources. Pupils respect one another and often help each other if they are having difficulty.

133. Teaching is strength of the department, and is very good at both Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. All teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject area. Clearly stated learning intentions are planned as a team, and there is a willingness to share expertise. This has made a significant impact on faculty progress in the recent past. The workshop technician provides a valuable support for teachers in their day-to-day work. The faculty has developed a stimulating teaching programme that encourages creativity, critical thinking and imagination in pupils' work. Teachers have high expectations; the range of tasks is well matched to ability and all pupils respond to the challenge. Planning is detailed, and fully complies with the National Curriculum in promoting breadth and balance. Teaching methods vary, with good use made of exposition, question and answer work, and of demonstration. End of lesson summary is an effective common feature. Classroom organisation is carefully planned in the best lessons, particularly to enable pupils in large classes to see demonstrations. In very good lessons, pace is brisk to help sustained learning to take place. Time is well used; teachers are particularly mindful of the short breaks. Assessment strategies are clearly documented for both classroom use and long-term, including a computerised pupil data tracking facility, which is having a positive effect on standards.

134. At the time of the last report, the option choices restricted access to higher attainers. The current system provides a good range of opportunities, including vocational courses, for pupils to follow a pathway according to their needs and interests. Technology College status has had significant impact on resourcing for the faculty. Workshop equipment is well maintained, however, a guard is required for a disc sander to comply with regulations. An audit of expenditure is regularly undertaken with costing for projects calculated in advance. This keeps wastage to a minimum, reduces costs by bulk buying and therefore gives value for money. The subject is well led, and all staff are committed to driving up standards further. For example, there is a planned cycle for monitoring the work of the department by the co-ordinators, the advanced skills teacher and senior management.

2 **Geography**

135. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 and 1999 show results broadly

in line with the national average for both boys and girls; there has been a generally upward movement, especially the proportion achieving Level 7. The GCSE results in 1998 were significantly above the national average for all pupils and especially for girls, and both boys and girls tended to do significantly better in geography than in the other subjects they took. The 1999 results are lower from a smaller number of pupils, and are in line with national averages. A-level results in recent years are broadly in line with the national average, though there were a large number of high grades in 1998. At all stages, there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls, either in test and examination results, or in work seen.

136. In work seen by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectations. A real strength in the work of the majority of pupils is the range of written work of good quality. Examples include investigative enquiries into particular countries such as Brazil, newspaper features on the eruption of a volcano, guides to the European Union, and minutes of an imaginary council meeting discussing the impact of large numbers of people moving to Redruth. Such work is successfully undertaken by most pupils across the ability range. Whilst higher attainers can draw field sketches which successfully highlight key environmental issues, lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, struggle with understanding some key words, and their writing is elementary. Overall, the use of numeracy skills in maps, graphs and population statistics is in line with expectations. Most pupils can successfully access the Dartmoor National Park site on the Internet, assess its usefulness for their purposes, and send an e-mail to the Park Authority containing their thoughts. Higher attainers can design interesting postcards using images downloaded from the Website. Generally, both the quality and quantity of work using computers is above that achieved in most schools. In work seen at Key Stage 4, attainment is above expectations for the end of the key stage. Diagrams of physical features from higher attainers is a particular strength; their coursework shows a wide range of topics with good use of questionnaires and other first hand evidence. The work is well structured with good hypotheses, and presentation uses many techniques, often with computer generated diagrams and graphs. Middle attainers' work shows less individual initiative, but graphs and statistics are well analysed. The lowest attainers' work shows much endeavour, though actual attainment is limited. Work at A-level is in line with expectations for the end of the course, though some groups are working above this level, with good links made between fieldwork, case studies and theoretical models. Diagrams and statistical work are of high quality.
137. Progress is good at all stages. In individual lessons, it can be very good, and is never less than satisfactory. In one Key Stage 3 lesson, nearly all pupils made very good progress as, individually, they were given a very clear understanding of what they needed to do to improve. They drew upon well devised tasks related to their particular needs, and were very well supported by the teacher and a classroom assistant; much was accomplished across the ability range. At Key Stage 4, the positive work ethic in most classes leads to good or very good progress. Outstanding marking in some classes gives, in great detail, information about what has been done well and how to improve; this is a major factor contributing to very good progress. In the sixth form, the teacher's use of apt examples of the economic, social and environmental impact of tourism took the students' understanding forward.
138. The pupils' responses are good at all stages. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, they are always good or very good, and they are never less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Very positive responses are linked to the quality of teaching when pupils are keen to do well. Whilst behaviour is normally good, in a few classes, a minority take advantage of

opportunities to talk, spending some time off task with some silliness in paired work. At Key Stage 4, there are good relationships between pupils and teachers. In one class, pupils worked well with the minimum of supervision as the teacher moved between the classroom and the computer room; most pupils indicated their enjoyment of the subject. At A-level, students are interested and keen to do well; they are interested and stimulated by the teaching.

139. Teaching is good at all stages; all teaching at Key Stage 4 and A-level is at least good. There is some very good teaching at all stages, and no teaching is less than satisfactory. A particular strength of teaching across the subject is the very thorough and detailed assessment pattern, integrated into the teaching programme. The best marking of these assessments gives pupils a very clear idea of their attainment level and their targets for the future. In one very good Key Stage 3 lesson, the teacher used the results of an assessment as the focus of a fast flowing lesson with sharply focused and timed tasks with an emphasis on improvement. The tasks were splendidly matched to individual needs using high quality, especially prepared resources. Occasionally at Key Stage 3, insufficient control limits the effectiveness of the teaching. At all stages, teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the subject through their clear explanations, and in the logical progression which is a feature of most lessons. At Key Stage 4, a well-planned sequence of lessons on migration provided sufficient structure within each one to maintain momentum. Very good teaching at Key Stage 4 includes a wide range of activities and an excellent range of resources, many of them graded to suit different abilities. Whilst teachers generally make good use of computers, both to enhance their own teaching and to aid pupils' learning, more discrimination and guidance in the use of multi-media resources would avoid some time wasting and frustration. Very good A-level teaching is enthusiastic, moves on at the right moment, and makes good use of resources, as well as the board for diagrams and key phrases.
140. Geography has made good progress since the last inspection. The range of teaching styles and activities has increased with an increasing emphasis on investigative work. The overall curriculum is good and assessment arrangements are very good. Local fieldwork is sound and is a valuable part of the investigative work; fieldwork is strong at A-level. The subject is well led, and there is a powerful team of teachers which gives a good blend of experience and innovation; teaching is well supported by good quality learning support assistants. Teaching is now concentrated on one site, usually in spacious, well equipped rooms with very good displays. The subject is well placed to develop further.

2 **History**

141. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show results above the national averages, but these are unreliable, because of weaknesses in assessing the pupils' work. At the end of Key Stage 4, the results in the 1999 GCSE examination are below average. In previous years, they have fluctuated widely, both above and below average. There is no clear trend in results, which are broadly similar to those that pupils achieve in their other GCSE subjects, and not significantly different between boys and girls. Numbers of students sitting A-level examinations in history are too low for reliable comparison of results with national figures. Though few students achieve the highest grades, the number achieving at least a pass grade is rising.
142. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainments at the age of 14 are in line with

expectations for the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils make hypotheses about historical events in Year 8, and in doing so they display an awareness that source material can be viewed from different yet valid standpoints. Pupils are able to categorise given information and the more able students prioritise its significance for the historian. Pupils' attainments at the age of 16 are broadly in line with the expectations for the end of Key Stage 4. They are competent in handling different types of evidence, with higher attaining students able to analyse its significance and reliability. Pupils are beginning to make links between events and to hypothesise on alternative outcomes, for example, in a re-enactment of the Cuban Missile crisis. A minority of pupils have a good retention of facts and are able to respond to questions independently and support their answers with evidence. The students' attainments in the sixth form are in line with expectations for the end of their courses. Students acquire a satisfactory depth of knowledge of the periods studied, and use this knowledge to consider possible causes of events or to reflect upon their effects elsewhere. Students in Year 12 follow their own lines of argument using interpretation of evidence in support. Pupils of all ages demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. For example, the use of oral work and role play encourages confidence and fluency, whilst pupils of higher ability read with understanding and expression from Key Stage 3 onwards. Graphs and charts are generally accurately presented, although there is little evidence of information technology skills.

143. Progress is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, pupils make gains in first hand knowledge, for example of the historical site of Chysauster Iron Age village, and begin to develop the skills of research and interpretation of evidence as a result. They develop their sense of chronology by the use of time lines and by the organisation of information. Good progress is made in the development of extended writing techniques and in the preparation of response to historical questions by the use of writing frames and card sorting strategies. Progress is slower for pupils who fail to complete work and, as a result, do not build upon previous knowledge. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in their use of evidence to substantiate their statements and become increasingly confident in their use of specialist terminology. They become more able to make links between events and recognise that circumstances may contribute to immediate and also long-term developments, as in the study of the causes of the rise of Hitler. Progress is slower for students who lack concentration and, as a result, fail to build up a secure understanding of the topics covered. The written work of some lower ability students is poor but the use of structured responses supports their progress. The progress of students with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 3 where good support is available and staff are aware of their needs. At Key Stage 4 their progress is satisfactory as the use of discussion and group work supports their learning. Sixth form students make good progress as independent learners. Their skills of argument and in the analysis of evidence develops well, and higher attaining students achieve a high level of debate. Confidence in the management of extended writing develops with class planning and discussion of required content. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls across the school, but boys sometimes dominate the oral work of some groups, with girls playing a more passive role.
- 144.. The pupils' attitudes are good overall and very good in the sixth form, where students take responsibility for their learning. At all levels, pupils are quick to respond to questions and work well in groups. Pupils are generally courteous and staff are good role models in this respect treating the opinions of all with respect; they are sensitive to each other and self-esteem is high. Some isolated cases of poor behaviour was seen but the incidents were dealt with effectively.

145. The quality of teaching is good at all levels. The teachers' knowledge and understanding are good and this enables them to add colour to the lessons and to follow lines of student questioning. Lessons are well planned and imaginative teaching strategies are used including role play and the use of poetry. There are clear objectives for the lessons, shared with the pupils, and all lessons began with a review of the previous work in order to maintain continuity and reinforce learning. Most lessons are effectively structured to meet the needs of pupils of different attainments, and are appropriately challenging. Most work is marked in line with the faculty policy, although the use of National Curriculum levels to identify progress is only now being developed. There is little evidence of self-assessment, or of an awareness by pupils of the National Curriculum levels in history. Good use is made of encouragement, especially at Key Stage 3, and there is good use of diagnostic comments in the sixth form. In some areas, there is insufficient evaluation of pupils' work to inform them of strengths and weaknesses and ways they can improve.
146. The head of department has been absent for some time because of ill-health, and the acting head of history is developing systems that provide more secure assessment of attainments. These are being linked appropriately to National Curriculum targets in order to monitor progress. Without these systems in the past, secure monitoring and assessment has not taken place. The acting head of department has made a good start in reviewing the work of the department and is building up a strong team identity. There has been little use of computers as a learning tool and schemes of work do not identify where this should occur. History is not well-resourced and the lack of textbooks for homework is a weakness. The lack of historical artefacts and software, and the limited use of fieldwork, reduce opportunities for research and investigation. Since the last inspection, there has been some increased use of differentiation and an improvement in library facilities for history. There is still a need to improve the quality of marking and assessment and still insufficient access to computers.

2 **Modern foreign languages**

147. At the end of Key Stage 3, the teacher's assessments of pupils' attainments in 1999 are below average overall for both boys and girls. The 1998 assessment results are similar. At the end of Key Stage 4, the 1999 GCSE results in French are above the national average for both boys and girls; 1998 results were similar, with both boys and girls tending to achieve significantly higher grades in French than in the other subjects they took. In Spanish, the 1999 GCSE results are well below the national average. The 1998 results were higher, and broadly in line with the national figure, although pupils tended to do less well in Spanish than in their other subjects. French results have shown a rising trend over time; Spanish results have fallen since 1997 against a rising national trend. However, the Spanish results reflect the fact that most candidates are now drawn from the lower modern language sets. At the end of the sixth form, the 1998 A-level results in both languages are broadly average, as they have been over time. The 1999 results are similar.
148. In work seen during the inspection, attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the national expectation for 14 year olds. At this stage, the pupils develop a good understanding of French or Spanish spoken simply at normal speed, and higher and middle attainers confidently take part in short conversations. Low attainers respond well in mainly correct French or Spanish, often sustaining longer conversations by the end of

the key stage. Reading and writing skills are sound; good examples of creative writing, such as poems, were seen. Pupils also write confidently using computers, applying accents, and enjoy using a range of different fonts and colour to produce work of which they are proud. While the attainments of pupils with special educational needs are largely well below the national expectation, they attain the targets set for them. Given plenty of support, they understand and speak simply, and although the writing they do is mainly copied, it is careful, and largely accurate. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainments are above the expectation for 16 year-olds. At this level, higher attainers have a secure understanding of simple spoken French or Spanish, and within the demands of the course speak, read and write accurately, skilfully making use of previously learned material. They have a good knowledge of grammar, which underpins their confidence in speaking and writing. Where the teaching is of the highest quality, some pupils are developing the skill of thinking in the foreign language, as in a Year 10 top set where pupils took competent, rapid notes from a relatively complex recording of spoken French. In Spanish in particular, the pupils' confidence in speaking is such that they can sometimes launch into a sentence without having previously rehearsed the end of it. By the end of the key stage, all pupils, including most lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs, can get their message across effectively, in speaking or in writing. The lowest attaining pupils following a short school-accredited course in German understand the simple spoken and written German they have learned; they speak simply, and can conduct a simple dialogue, and although their accents and accuracy are sometimes approximate, the meaning is clear. By the end of the sixth form, attainments are in line with A-level course expectations. Students in the sixth form have good listening skills, and by the end of the A-level course understand the foreign language spoken fluently. They speak satisfactorily, but their grammatical understanding and their fluency are less secure in the open-ended discussions needed at A-level. They read competently, and communicate satisfactorily in writing. They often make use of more complex idiom and structure in their writing, but this is slower to develop in their oral work. Their essays show evidence that they can organise their ideas in an appropriately structured manner, with logical progression and some imaginative development.

149. Progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form is good, and at Key Stage 4 it is very good as a result of effective teaching. The pupils progress equally well in French and Spanish, although there is a minority of unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 in French, linked to low expectations of work and behaviour. Very good progress at Key Stage 4 is underpinned by very good teaching, not just of the foreign language, but also of study skills and examination techniques. Almost without exception, high attainers make good, and often very good progress, because their work offers challenge and their teachers have high expectations of them. In a small minority of lessons at Key Stage 3, largely in mixed ability classes, high attainers are less well served, and make limited progress because their special needs are not always catered for with the required degree of pace and challenge. A-level students develop a growing confidence and competence in dealing with a range of texts and linguistic tasks, as well as improved accuracy and precision in the use of French or Spanish. They use computers confidently to develop and refine their work. The faculty succeeds in motivating all pupils at all key stages, so that the overall progress of boys and girls is broadly similar. Pupils with special educational needs make at least good progress because assessment and individual education plans are well used so that their specific needs are well known to those who teach them. In addition, pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need are well supported in class by support assistants, who are usually involved in joint lesson planning with the teacher.

150. The pupils' responses at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form are good, and at Key Stage 4 are very good. Most pupils are fully involved in lessons, well behaved and well motivated, sustaining concentration well. There are some potentially noisy and over-exuberant classes at Key Stage 3, but these are well managed by nearly all teachers so that the pupils work sensibly. At Key Stage 4 the pupils are serious about their work, and keen to achieve highly. They work very effectively on their own and in pairs and small groups where they are mutually supportive. At all levels, attitudes to learning languages are positive amongst all pupils, including those with special educational needs, and, where this is fostered by the teachers, pupils use the foreign language for their routine needs in class, and occasionally use it spontaneously. Written work in exercise books is usually neat and careful.
151. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and very good at Key Stage 4. This is a major factor in promoting good progress. The faculty has a talented team of effective teachers, and nearly half of the teaching is very good or excellent. Teaching is marginally better in Spanish than in French, where there was a minority of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3. Teachers use the foreign language confidently as the main language of the lesson. They have good pronunciation and accents, and provide good models for their pupils. Most use the foreign language to the maximum in lessons, and require from their pupils accurate pronunciation, well presented written work and accurate and fluent recall of previous work. Most teachers set work which pupils find challenging and which makes them think and work hard. Teachers set out clear learning intentions, including the skills to be acquired, and in the best cases, learning objectives are shared explicitly with the pupils. They structure lessons carefully and ensure a balance over time of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities have the opportunity to master new language, although in some mixed ability classes at Key Stage 3, both high and low attainers would benefit from tasks matched more precisely to their specific needs. Most teachers promote a purposeful atmosphere in which it is quiet enough to hear the foreign language clearly, and so to learn effectively, although occasionally, the teacher allows a level of noise which does not make for efficient and effective foreign language learning. Most ensure that time is used productively, and that lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Progress is fostered by effective assessment, since teachers assess pupils' work continually in class, giving them helpful and encouraging feedback. Marking is less thorough, and in some pupils' books there is little comment which would help pupils towards improved performance. Homework is set regularly, and very good use is made of homework in the sixth form and at Key Stage 4, where plenty is set to compensate for reduced teaching time.
152. The faculty has made good progress since the last inspection and all major criticisms raised have been tackled. Opportunities for pupils to use computers could be planned more effectively. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The time allocation for languages is relatively generous, although there is reduced time for many classes at Key Stage 4; this has little negative impact on the pupils' progress, however, because teaching and planning are of high quality. The curriculum is enhanced by opportunities to participate in links with schools in Galicia and Brittany, study visits and exchanges, whilst sixth formers may also undertake work experience in primary schools in France or Spain. Such activities contribute significantly to the pupils' social, cultural and linguistic development. Excellent management and leadership underpin a commitment to high achievement and offer support and clear educational direction for all those who work in the faculty. There is a clear, positive ethos for learning.

153. Attainments in the teachers' own assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in recent years are in line with national patterns. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1999 are broadly in line with the national average. In 1998 they were below average in a small group, but in 1996 significantly higher. At the end of the sixth form, A-level results are broadly in line with national average although direct comparison in any given year is difficult given the small numbers of pupils in the groups. In 1999, two pupils entered both obtained a C grade and in 1997 one pupil obtained a B.
154. In work observed, attainments overall at Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations for the end of the key stage, although there are differences from year-to-year. The present Year 9 has some difficult pupils, and the year group as a whole is working at below expected levels at present. In contrast, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are successfully working at appropriate levels. Pupils in Year 7 have a good sense of pulse and rhythm and understand what a pentatonic scale is. They sing strongly, accurately and tunefully. Year 8 pupils have developed this sense of rhythm, but do not sing so easily or fluently. Throughout the key stage, pupils spend much of the lesson time playing keyboards. Only a minority plays the tunes well and easily, using an elementary true keyboard technique. In Year 9, for example, almost all pupils can play the outline of the Paganini Caprice tune, but few can tackle the full melody. Most play the chords using an automatic chord device, but few can play the notes of the chord. There is currently no Year 11 group, but pupils in Year 10 have made a good beginning to their GCSE studies. Their attainment overall is in line with expectations at this stage of the course. Pupils at Key Stage 3 do not develop their information technology skills sufficiently well. Little discussion was heard at Key Stage 3, but Key Stage 4 pupils are developing their speaking and writing skills in their music work in a sound manner. Pupils with special educational needs are attaining in line with their capabilities. There is no course in music in the sixth form.
155. Progress overall at Key Stage 3 is sound; at Key Stage 4 it is good. In Year 7, progress is good; pupils make gains in their lessons, not only in learning songs, but in actual vocal skill. This also reflects their positive attitudes and effective teaching. In Year 9, progress varies to a considerable extent with attitude and behaviour. This has an effect of progress and, in turn, on attainment. In work seen, pupils in Year 10 show that they are pursuing the GCSE course successfully, beginning to learn rapidly about intervals and rhythm at a more advanced level than in their Key Stage 3 studies. They are learning to listen more accurately and acutely. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and some of them make good progress. Those pupils achieving A-level in recent years have also made good progress in relation to their prior attainments.
156. The pupils' responses at Key Stage 3 are sound overall; at Key Stage 4 pupils respond well. Pupils in Year 7 respond well; they clearly enjoy their music-making, and take part in all the activities with some enthusiasm. They sing willingly and indeed ask to sing in their lessons. Year 8 pupils also behave well and work at and share keyboards sensibly. The present Year 9 classes show less enthusiasm; most of the girls and many of the boys show the same keenness as do pupils in Years 7 and 8. However, a number of boys do not behave well. Their concentration is poor and they do not identify with the tasks. Pupils in Year 10 have chosen music as an option and their interest is easily apparent. They work well as a group, listening sensibly to one another and the teacher.

At both key stages some pupils with special educational needs show a good response to music. Others do not identify so well with the activities and find it harder to concentrate on the work in hand.

157. Teaching is sound at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Except for some of the most difficult pupils in Year 9, pupils are satisfactorily managed. Teachers pace lessons well and achieve the stated objectives. Tasks are in line with the demands of the National Curriculum and for the most part appeal to pupils. There are extension tasks for higher attaining pupils, and alternatives for those who find the work difficult. However, teachers rarely fully harness the abilities of the most able. Teachers are well aware of the capabilities of their pupils. For example, one pupil in Year 10, clearly finding the work more difficult than other members of the group, was helped carefully and patiently and so made appropriate progress. Teachers use their keyboard skills to accompany singing and provide a good musical example. The standard of extra-curricular work also benefits in this way.
158. The curriculum is sound and in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 and with the examination syllabus at Key Stage 4. Pupils are getting a good grounding in musical skills, but the Key Stage 3 course relies heavily on keyboard work and lacks stimulating group activities. Pupils are not enticed to strive for their best work. Work at Key Stage 4 is interesting and wide-ranging. Accommodation for music, noted as particularly inadequate at the time of the last inspection, is still of poor quality although satisfactory quantity. The school has many extra curricular music groups. A carol service each year involves large number of pupils and attracts a very large congregation. A show to be produced in the spring term is already in preparation. A substantial number of pupils have instrumental lessons from visiting teachers. This work is often of high quality involving all pupils through the whole lesson producing a good standard of work. The department continues to do sound work and add to the life of the school and the community.

2 **Physical education**

159. In the teachers' own assessments of pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils reached the expected levels of attainment. The 1999 GCSE results are well below the national average. In the previous three years, results have been broadly average, and have tended to be in line with the results achieved by pupils in the other subjects that they have taken. There is no clear reason for the drop in results in 1999. The 1999 A-level passes at the higher grades are well above the national average. Small entries of A-level candidates consistently achieve results that are above those for the school as a whole.
160. In work seen, the pupils' attainments are above expectations for the ends of Key Stages 3 and the sixth form. The limited time available for most pupils at Key Stage 4 prevents full coverage of the Programmes of Study, and thus the standards that can be achieved. However, the levels of attainment in the work that is done, and in the GCSE course, are above expected levels. At Key Stage 3, most pupils understand the basic principles of attack and defence and use sound skills in game situations. In gymnastics, they take pride in their own performance and show creativity and precision. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 badminton use good technique to outmanoeuvre opponents by varying length and width, and using disguise of service. Well-structured and knowledgeable teaching contributes significantly to attainment. Lower attainers often achieve beyond

expectations due to teaching being adapted to meet their needs. They show satisfactory individual skills, but are less effective under pressure in a game. Pupils of all ability levels can judge performance effectively and plan at least basic movement patterns. At Key Stage 4, pupils undertake a well-structured health related fitness programme and their knowledge of a healthy lifestyle is well developed. Their willingness to make critical comments and their ability to judge and adjust performance ensures improvement. For example, higher attainers in a Year11 GCSE basketball class understood complex tactics and could coach a team confidently. Lower attainers generally have a satisfactory knowledge of rules and tactics, but experience difficulty in developing sound basic skills into more complex ones. In the sixth form, the students' attainments are enhanced by well-informed specialist teaching. Students have good research skills, are confident in using computers, and have above-average practical skills. In sixth form games, a badminton group showed above average levels of shot technique, footwork and tactical awareness. The attainment levels of boys and girls is similar at all ages. Pupils of all ability levels and across all key stages communicate confidently and listen well. The use of computers is limited at Key Stages 3 and 4. Lower attaining pupils of all ages sometimes experience problems in numeracy related activities. Examination candidates' written assignments are increasingly well-researched, data is analysed well and accurate summaries are made.

161. The pupils' progress is good across the attainment range, and at all ages. As pupils move through the school, they consolidate previously learned work, refine technique and develop a better understanding of tactics, rules and safety. Towards the end of Key Stage 3, boys and girls of all abilities show good gains in their knowledge of health related fitness aspects. At Key Stage 4, pupils steadily improve their ability to plan and evaluate performance. Most pupils listen and want to improve. Their progress is aided by well-planned and challenging teaching. For example, in a Year 11 basketball lesson, pupils of all attainment levels made progress beyond expectations. The teacher extended higher attainers with challenging shooting drills, and the less able by modifying equipment and simplifying rules. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and make progress in line with most others. However, their progress in GCSE theory lessons is often limited owing to a lack of learning support staff. High attaining pupils acquire learning at a very good rate, both in lessons and over time. At all levels, the pupils' response is good. They listen to instructions, co-operate well in groupwork and confidently try new skills. Take-up rates for GCSE are consistently good.
162. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Teaching is very good in almost half of lessons; this has a positive effect on progress. All teaching is undertaken by specialists, whose expectations are high. Detailed planning and good use of assessment information matches work to the pupils' needs. Opportunities for pupils to plan and judge performance are provided in most lessons. In a very good Year 8 lesson, the teacher's use of well-planned sequences of activities ensured that all pupils improved. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are given insufficient chances to plan work and judge performance. GCSE and A-level homework is set and marked appropriately. Extension work for high attainers is evident in most lessons. Non-participants in lessons are not always adequately involved in evaluation work.
163. The subject has insufficient time at Key Stage 4 to cover programmes of study in enough depth, other than through the GCSE course. Sixth form opportunities are limited, being confined to one fixed period per week; some students opt for community service instead. The team of well-qualified specialists is very effectively led and managed. Short-term planning is very good, but medium- and longer-term plans lack sufficient detail. Good

indoor facilities and well-maintained playing pitches enhance standards. Faculty and other staff provide a successful extracurricular sports programme in which over 30 per cent of all boys and girls participate. Individuals and teams perform successfully at area, county and, sometimes, at national levels. The subject makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' social and moral development. Since the last inspection, improvement has been variable. Curriculum time at Key Stage 4 is still insufficient, but independent learning opportunities now exist in most lessons. One hardcourt area remains poorly surfaced and fenced, and this hinders standards. The main school changing rooms are still inadequate for accommodating large groups.

2 **Personal and social education**

164. The school provides for personal and social education by means of suspending the usual timetable for one period in each of 25 weeks during the year on a rolling basis to minimise the impact on other subjects. This arrangement meant that relatively few lessons could be seen during the inspection.
165. The progress that pupils make is sound at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. For example, pupils in Year 7 improved their knowledge of the issues surrounding passive smoking, and higher and average attainers were able to demonstrate improved understanding in their oral and written work. In a session on bullying, pupils in Year 8 made comments of increasing depth as the lesson progressed, and the final summing up revealed the extent to which their views had changed. In work on alcohol abuse in Year 9, girls made better progress than boys because of their greater application, whereas boys and girls alike made similar gains in their work, particularly in preparing a case, in sex education in Year 10, as well as consolidating earlier work in this area. Sixth formers made good progress in various aspects of careers, in understanding how to run a company and in first aid. Pupils of all ages consolidate their skills of speaking and listening through the frequent use of discussion and, less often, role play.
166. At all levels, pupils show good responses to their courses. In part, this reflects the care taken by teachers to prepare a suitable range of resources and teaching approaches. Pupils take the subject matter seriously, and often engage in lively but informed discussion of issues raised. When required to work in groups, they do so in a mature manner, and concentrate well on the topic in hand.
167. The overall quality of teaching is good at all levels. The teachers are well briefed on the areas that they cover, and this helps to raise the status of the work in the pupils' minds. In some cases, external speakers are used to good effect, as in a sixth form first aid lesson. Teachers have similar expectations in personal and social education to those seen in other subjects. They set high standards, and make appropriate demands on the pupils; this is not seen as a less important part of their work. The features that characterise the overall standard of teaching in the school are all evident: clear objectives, good lesson planning, a suitable range of teaching styles, and effective choice of resources. Teachers are also adept at handling the rather different demands of role play, debate and discussion inherent in the course.
168. The personal and social education programme is well designed and delivered. It covers all required elements of health and sex education, as well as drugs awareness. The

method of delivery, using teachers who each work with only part of the course, ensures that the quality of what is offered is good. The course makes a significant contribution to the personal development of the pupils at all levels.

2 Vocational subjects

169. The school offers a wide range of courses. A GCSE course in business studies began in 1998, whilst Part One GNVQ courses at Intermediate level were started in September 1999 in business, health and social care, leisure and tourism, and manufacturing. There are also link courses with the local college leading to part award of appropriate NVQ subjects. In the sixth form, Intermediate GNVQ courses are provided in business and in leisure and tourism, whilst Advanced courses lead to both an A-level and a GNVQ in business, and GNVQs in leisure and tourism, and in health and social care.
170. To date, no candidates have been entered for examination at the end of Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, the pass rate in business studies at A-level in 1999 is above average, with all students gaining at least grade E. This has been the pattern since 1994, and there has been no change in performance following the introduction of a modular course two years ago. Although the proportion of students gaining higher grades at A-level is below the national pattern, the results achieved are above those expected from the students' earlier attainments. Results in 1999 in Advanced and Intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism, and Intermediate information technology and health and social care, show broadly average pass rates overall, but a greater level of success at higher award levels. This continues the trend of recent years.
171. In work seen, attainments overall within the vocational areas are broadly in line with expectations for the ends of courses at both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, with some variations between courses. At all levels, attainments in health and social care are somewhat lower than elsewhere, in part because of the unsatisfactory need for joint teaching of Intermediate and Advanced candidates. At Key Stage 4, attainments are above expected levels in GCSE groups, and in line on the Part One GNVQ courses. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of basic concepts and terminology, for example using terms such as "stakeholders" or "tertiary" with confidence. However, GCSE pupils are more adept at applying concepts to new situations. For example, when asked to provide examples, GNVQ pupils tend to cite local ones, whereas GCSE candidates take a national or international view. Overall, GNVQ pupils are better than those on the GCSE course in terms of being able to access a wide range of information sources. A strength is that the role of secondary information is understood well; pupils rarely dive immediately into survey work. In the sixth form, A-level candidates show a faster understanding of concepts than most of their GNVQ peers, and apply them more accurately. However, the skills of analysis and evaluation are less evident than usual amongst A-level students; this explains the lack of success at higher grade levels. The ability of students to select, gather and organise information is particularly impressive amongst GNVQ candidates.
172. At all ages, the key skills of communication are above expectation, as are those of application of number and information technology in the Part One courses at key Stage 4. However, in the sixth form, attainments in information technology and application of number are below expected levels for GNVQ students. This reflects the way that the subjects are taught and, in particular, the design of assignments. Communication and, to a lesser extent, information technology are integral to tasks set in the sixth form.

However, application of number is taught as a free-standing course, with only tenuous links to real vocational situations, and few opportunities built into assignments, unlike the position at key Stage 4. Students at all levels are confident speakers, unafraid to advance ideas, question and hypothesise aloud. Listening is secure; students listen well to the teacher and to each other. Little direct evidence of reading was observed, but when asked to do so, pupils at Key Stage 4 read aloud with appropriate expression. Writing is generally accurate, with some very clear and well-organised examples seen in A-level and Advanced GNVQ portfolios. Information technology work at both levels is above expectation in terms of communicating information; students use text and images well to convey their ideas. However, data handling, modelling and the wider social implications of computers are less evident. Application of number work is notably absent from most sixth formers' portfolios; numbers are not common currency except in explicitly numerate units. In general, GCSE and A-level candidates show greater numeracy than their GNVQ colleagues, for example when discussing the various kinds of float in critical path analyses.

173. At all levels, students make better progress over time than would be expected from their previous test and examination results; some at GNVQ is outstanding, because of the school's wide ranging provision of curriculum pathways to success. Students with special educational needs also progress well. Within lessons, students of all ages and abilities make good progress overall, the result of skilled teaching that raises expectations of what can be done. A common feature of the school is that students achieve at levels higher than they first thought possible. For example, well-focused questions deepen initial responses through an insistence on rigorous language. As a result, at all ages, knowledge and understanding are consolidated, and higher and middle attainers learn to apply what they have learned to new situations. The use of timed deadlines in many lessons also ensures a good pace of learning. The higher order areas of information technology show less secure progress; they are not being covered sufficiently in schemes of work, particularly in the sixth form. Nor do students grow, in general terms, in their natural use of number work, other than on the A-level programme, where this is a demanding component of the course.
174. In all cases, response is good in vocational work; response is more mechanical in application of number activities. Students clearly enjoy their work, even staying indoors at break to continue with tasks. Concentration is good, and there are many examples of successful co-operation as a result of assignment design. Conversation is only rarely not connected to the task in hand. Portfolios are generally well structured, although some lower attainers on Part One GNVQ courses still have disorganised folders.
175. The overall quality of teaching is good at all levels, and this is a major factor in the good progress that is seen in lessons and over time. In all cases, teachers have secure subject knowledge, and well understand the complexities of delivery and assessment of GNVQ. This reflects the school's incremental approach, introducing new courses on the foundations of earlier successes. Teachers have clear lesson plans, set against a background of sound schemes of work, but plans could be clearer in terms of the desired learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities. A strength of most lessons is the use of a period of wide-ranging and challenging question and answer work at the start of lessons. This sets the tone for what follows, as well as reminding students of what has gone before. The technique could be profitably used to sum up at the end of sessions. Lessons are well paced; timed deadlines are a feature of the best lessons. On occasions, however, pace is so high that teachers do not wait long enough for answers; they answer their own questions. Overall, expectations of what can be achieved are high, both within

the lesson and over time; there are constant reminders of what is needed to improve work. For example, one very good lesson focused very clearly on examination criteria. Teaching methods are generally appropriate, with good use of resources and a variety of tasks. However, some lessons are dominated by the teacher; students become relatively passive listeners. Assessment is accurate and based on good record keeping, but more use could be made of published value added data to set targets. One area for attention is the design of GNVQ assignments in the sixth form, since key skills opportunities are insufficiently well integrated, particularly in the case of application of number.

176. The vocational work of the school is led and managed well, with a clear vision. The ethos is very good, with a sharp focus on progress, backed by detailed planning and high quality staff development. The mushrooming of courses in the recent past leaves the GNVQ co-ordinator with too little time to assess the quality of work, or to monitor the work of colleagues in the classroom. The time available for Part One GNVQ courses is below average, and this is limiting key skills work. Learning resources are sound, although access to computers is sometimes a problem, particularly for GNVQ students. Excellent use is made of the wider community to bring the real world into the classroom, and to provide suitable visits. Accommodation is no more than adequate, particularly for GNVQ work, since larger rooms limit the flexibility required for group activities, and lack a vocational feel. However, the school has suitable plans for improvements in the next phase of its buildings development. Overall, the faculty provides very well for the wide range of abilities of students with whom it works.

2 **The special education needs unit**

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177. There is a unit for pupils with a statement of special educational need who have a hearing impairment. Although the five pupils concerned are on the roll of the school, the management and staffing of the unit is the responsibility of the local authority. Pupils spend most of their time in lessons in the main school, where they are well supported by qualified teachers of the hearing impaired or learning support assistants. Overall, their attainments are below average on entry and at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are often disapplied from the end of Key Stage 3 assessment in English. Most hearing impaired pupils are only entered for four GCSE examinations, although some take more. The attainments of hearing impaired pupils compare most unfavourably with those of other pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs in the school as a whole. Whereas 96 per cent of the latter obtained five or more passes at GCSE grade G or better in 1999, only one-third of those with hearing impairment did so. The pupils do, however, make broadly satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4 in lessons. Pupils show a positive attitude to their work and their response is good.

178. Unit pupils are withdrawn from mainstream classes, including English, for specialist input from teachers of the hearing impaired within the Unit. This withdrawal of the pupils from a core subject of the National Curriculum, usually to follow a more limited course of study in communicative English, does, however, restrict the breadth of curriculum on offer for those pupils affected. A range of audiological based assessments is regularly carried out and these provide good quality information in respect of the pupil's auditory functioning. There are, however, no assessments undertaken using either standardised or criterion referenced tests and there is therefore a lack of attention paid to pupils' attainments. There are 1.8 qualified teachers of the hearing impaired working in the school and three learning support assistants working 57.5 hours per week in total. This is a very good staffing ratio, which is not being

reflected in academic outcomes. Regular awareness sessions are appropriately held for mainstream staff and the learning support assistants working for the audiology service receive very good training from the teachers of the hearing impaired. Resources for the hearing impaired pupils are very good with an acoustically treated room and the provision of the appropriate hearing aid equipment. The audiology service ensures that the statutory requirements are met. Good quality individual education plans are written for the pupils and the audiology service provides a good range of fine quality information for the school and the parents of the hearing impaired pupils.

2 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

2 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

179. The school was inspected in the second half of the autumn term by a team of 13 independent inspectors, who spent a total of 60 inspector-days in the school. During the inspection, the team spent a total of 209 hours in the direct observation of the work of pupils, visiting 210 lessons, representing one in seven of those taught during the inspection week. In addition, team members observed tutorial periods and assemblies, extra-curricular activities and the general life of the school. Inspectors scrutinised a structured sample of the work of 42 pupils, and later held meetings with the pupils concerned. Team members also held formal discussions with governors, members of the school's senior and middle management, other staff with management roles, and representatives of the local community. Prior to the inspection, the Registered Inspector met with 67 parents, and examined 180 responses to a parental questionnaire, 42 written submissions from parents and a number of letters from other members of the wider community.

2 **DATA AND INDICATORS**

2 **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y13	1449	87	238	315

2 **Teachers and classes**

2 **Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	81.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.8

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

Total number of education support staff:	32
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	843

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 78.5

Average teaching group size:	KS2	n/a
	KS3	25
	KS4	23

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Financial data

Financial year: 1998/1999

£

Total Income	3,315,403
Total Expenditure	3,341,185
Expenditure per pupil	2,466
Balance brought forward from previous year	245,934
Balance carried forward to next year	220,152

2 **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1360
 Number of questionnaires returned: 180

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	24	63	10	2	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	44	51	4	1	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	32	50	14	1	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20	65	10	3	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	43	49	6	2	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	42	50	4	2	2
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	33	55	11	1	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	30	59	6	3	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	29	54	13	2	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	23	52	20	3	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	36	53	6	3	2

2 **Other issues raised by parents**

Forty-two parents made written comments about the school, of which three-quarters were supportive of the school and its work. Of the remainder, most expressed general satisfaction with the school, but raised specific points of concern over aspects of pupils' behaviour and the amount of homework that the school sets. Inspectors found that these areas were not unsatisfactory.