

INSPECTION REPORT

DYSON PERRINS CE HIGH SCHOOL
MALVERN

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique Reference Number: 116995

Headteacher: Mr E P T Buchanan

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 15-19 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708143

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

© Crown Copyright 1999

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

Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and the Education Act 1993, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Yates Hay Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 1WD
Telephone number:	01684 564751
Fax number:	01684 573765
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Knightley
Date of previous inspection:	October 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Anthony Beaver, Rgl		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership & management Efficiency of the school
Daljit Singh, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Malcolm Butterworth	Physical education	Accommodation
Brian Forster	Mathematics, numeracy	
Peter Gilliat	History	The Curriculum
Thelma McIntosh	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
David Morris	Art	Learning resources
Caroline Orr	Modern languages	Staffing
Patrick Orr	English, drama, literacy	
Malcolm Padmore	Design and technology Information technology	Equal opportunities
Jennifer Radford		Special educational needs
Michael Sewter	Science	
John Tomlinson	Geography	Assessment

Please note that religious education was separately inspected under Section 23 of the School Inspections Act 1996.

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd
The Old Chapel House
Pound Hill
Alresford
Hampshire
SO24 9BW

Telephone: 01962 732307

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

should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

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

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1-7
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 8-23
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 24-31
Attendance 32-34

Quality of education provided

Teaching 35-45
The curriculum and assessment 46-62
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 63-67
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 68-76
Partnership with parents and the community 77-83

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 84-93
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 94-109
The efficiency of the school 110-123

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science 124-159

Other subjects or courses 160-218

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 219

Data and indicators

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- .The school is a friendly and welcoming environment for its pupils who are known as individuals.
- .The quality of teaching is good, and much is very good.
- .Relationships between staff and pupils and between most pupils themselves are good.
- .Most pupils have good attitudes to work, want to learn and behave well.
- .There is a good range of courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form providing for all abilities.
- .The school provides well for the moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.
- .There is a good range of worthwhile extra-curricular opportunities to enlarge pupils' experience.
- .The school has good links with the local and international community.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I.Standards of teaching and learning in English at Key Stage 3 should be higher.
- II.Much accommodation is in need of maintenance and improvement.
- III.There is insufficient co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs.
- IV.Curricular co-ordination between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 2 is inadequate.
- V.Systems to identify and respond to the training needs of staff and effectively use the experience gained do not work as well as they should.
- VI.Provision for pupils' spiritual development is insufficient.
- VII.Computers are not used enough in most subjects.

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors will set out in their action plan how weaknesses identified by the inspection will be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests and at GCSE has fluctuated considerably with different year groups and in some years results have been above the national average and in others below. The percentage points score at A level has remained below average, but appropriate given the prior attainment of students. Vocational examination results are good. The school has provided more in-class adult support for pupils with special educational needs, but co-ordination of this support and use of effective individual education plans remain unsatisfactory. Legal requirements for collective worship and religious education in the sixth form have not been met. The school is now tracking pupils' progress, including that of lower attainers at Key Stage 3, and setting targets for them to achieve in national tests and examinations. This practice is helpful, but not yet successful in ensuring progress for all pupils. The quality of teaching has improved. Some monitoring has taken place. Two cycles of appraisal of staff have taken place, but arrangements are currently suspended. The school now has a suitable equal opportunities policy from which to judge good practice. Resources, including computers and the range of library books, have improved although the school's income is low. The school is working towards recognition as an Investor in People, and further involving staff in planning and decision-making. Some accommodation has been improved, particularly for technology, but lack of money prevents greater improvement. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The school has adequate capacity to enable it to improve further.

Standards in subjects

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
Key Stage 3	C	D	very high A*
GCSE examinations	B	B	well above average A
A/AS – levels	D	n/a	above average B
			average C
			below average D
			well below average E
			very low E*

**Similar schools are those which contain a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools containing pupils of similar backgrounds. There is no national data with which to compare similar schools at A level.*

Pupils' results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were average in comparison with all schools, nationally. Results were below average in comparison with similar schools. Pupils' performance was average in mathematics and science and below average in English, which had lower results than in the previous three years, when results were close to the average for both boys and girls.

Achievement in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was much higher than in 1998. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C and five or more grades A* to G was above average compared with all schools and with similar schools. Students entered for more subjects, and the overall percentage points score was much higher than in previous years.

The percentage points score of students attaining two or more A level subjects was below average in 1999, but generally in line with their prior attainment. Students who studied vocational subjects achieved those qualifications. At age 18, over half the students continue to higher education. Others mainly follow other educational opportunities or gain employment.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	art, modern foreign languages, design and technology	English
Years 10-11	Good	physical education, science	*
Sixth form	Good	art, physical education, science	*
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 95% of lessons. In 41% it was good, and very good or excellent in a further 22%. The unsatisfactory teaching was mainly because it was insufficiently matched to pupils' needs in English.

**No subject was considered to be ineffectively taught at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form.*

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. Most students' enjoy school and want to learn. They usually behave well. Older students accept responsibility for others and exercise this well.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.
Ethos*	Good. The school has a positive ethos. Pupils generally want to do well. Relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves are good. Teachers work hard to enable pupils to do their best.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory. Each individual pupil is encouraged and given the opportunity to improve her or his qualifications. Finance available is used well. Senior and middle management has not been sufficiently decisive in promoting school improvement in some areas.
Curriculum	Good. Broad range of courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for a school of this size. Extra-curricular opportunities are good. Better continuity is required between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.
Pupils with special educational needs	More support assistants are now employed. Co-ordination of support is insufficient. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are not shared enough across the staff.
Spiritual**, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is inadequate. Moral, social and cultural provision is good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Some weaknesses. Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced. Some improvements in accommodation, particularly in technology, but some areas are shabby and require maintenance. Class sizes are too large for the size of some rooms. More books and computers now make provision adequate.
Value for money	Satisfactory. Standards of attainment fluctuate year-on-year and over time, achievement is average. Progress in lessons observed is good. Teaching is good. The school's funding per pupil is low but used well.

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

***Provision for pupils' spiritual development enables them to develop a sense of curiosity through reflection on their own and others' lives and beliefs, their environment and the human condition. It relies on teachers receiving and valuing pupils' ideas across the whole curriculum, for example, in literature, art, music, history and religious education. Acts of collective worship play a particular part.*

The parents' views of the school

What <i>most</i> parents like about the school	What <i>some</i> parents are not happy about
<p>VIII.They are confident to talk to teachers about problems concerning their children. IX.Parents consider the school helps their children to achieve good standards of work. X.It provides good opportunities for extra-curricular activities. XI.Their children like going to school. XII.They consider they are well informed about the progress their children make.</p>	<p>XIII.Some think behaviour is not good. XIV.Their complaints are not well handled. XV.Homework does not support their children's learning enough.</p>

Inspectors agree that the school is friendly and welcoming. Staff are concerned that pupils do their best. Pupils have the opportunity to extend their learning through a good range of extra-curricular activities, and most enjoy attending school. Parents are generally well informed about their children's progress, but inspectors agree with those who would prefer to receive annual reports before the final week of the summer term. Behaviour is generally good, but some individuals misbehave. The school is receptive to complaints, but cannot always resolve these. Homework is often used well to extend learning.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve the quality of education and standards further, the school should:

- XVI. Improve standards of teaching and learning in English at Key Stage 3, by tighter and more detailed monitoring of classroom practice by senior management and head of department, and evaluate the extent to which improvement occurs.
(See paragraphs 12, 18, 23, 37, 45, 126, 128, 130, 131)
- XVII. Further co-ordinate support for pupils with special educational needs, by informing all relevant staff of the specific targets to be achieved by each pupil and regular review of these targets. Ensure that the work of in-class adult support is closely co-ordinated with knowledge of the curriculum and teachers' planning of lessons. Provide training for all staff to achieve these ends, and consistently monitor and evaluate improvement. (This was partly a key issue of the previous inspection.)
(See paragraphs 17, 23, 41, 61, 62, 75, 76, 88, 96, 120, 123)
- XVIII. Extend opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual experience by identifying its place in learning in all subjects, and writing this requirement into all subjects' schemes of work for staff to follow.
(See paragraphs 63, 67, 107, 142)
- XIX. Ensure that systems to identify and respond to the training needs of school and staff are effective by implementing school policy, dates and deadlines for training.
(See paragraphs 99, 100)
- XX. Improve curricular links between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 by recognising developments at Key Stage 2 within schemes of work and adapting these where necessary to ensure good continuity in pupils' learning.
(See paragraphs 51, 54, 82, 83)

- XXI. Seek additional sources of finance to improve accommodation and the range of learning resources by exploring all means to this end.
(See paragraphs 102, 105)
- XXII. Ensure more use is made of computers across the curriculum by requiring their use in all schemes of work. Ensure that change occurs by regular monitoring of practice.
(See paragraphs 20, 23, 41, 117, 192, 195)

SUBSIDIARY ISSUES

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

- XXIII. Meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. Ensure that parents are informed in the school prospectus of the right to withdraw their children from religious education.
(See paragraphs 63, 91)
- XXIV. Ensure that matters affecting health and safety referred to in this report are addressed.
(See paragraphs 102, 103, 106, 165)
- XXV. Make full use of the much-improved library as a resource for learning.
(See paragraphs 89, 109, 118, 123, 133)
- XXVI. Monitor and analyse results by gender across the school to determine why boys in some word-centred subjects in some years achieve significantly lower results than girls at GCSE, and take appropriate action.
(See paragraphs 10, 12, 14, 23, 128, 131, 196, 204)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Dyson Perrins C of E High School is a comprehensive school of average size, located in Malvern, Worcestershire. It provides education for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years from 20 primary schools situated in Malvern and the surrounding locality, almost as far as Worcester City. A considerable number of pupils travel to school by bus. There are 793 pupils on roll, of whom 95 are in the sixth form.
2. When pupils enter the school at age 11, their attainment spans the full range of ability. There is some difference in the attainment on entry of some years. On entry, Year 13 were a year group containing considerably fewer higher attainers than is usual for the school. Over the school, 22% of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, mainly because of learning difficulties. Eighteen students have statements of special educational need, considerably more than when the school was inspected five years ago.
3. Most of the 93 sixth form students follow A level courses. Some take GNVQ advanced and intermediate courses.
4. Pupils have a wide range of social backgrounds. The ward nearest to the school from which many pupils come is generally socially advantaged. Some other areas from which pupils come are much less advantaged, with mixtures of local authority housing and

private housing. More than one in ten pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, a proportion below the national average.

5. Very few students are from ethnic minorities.

6. The school has recently changed its status from special agreement to voluntary aided. It remains a school that holds to the religion of the Church of England in denominational teaching and collective worship.

7. The school aims to encourage and maintain Christian principles. It seeks to maintain a happy and caring ethos where courtesy, tolerance, self-discipline and fairness are encouraged, and differences of gender, race, colour, religion and ability are recognised and respected. It intends that pupils realise their talents through a broad curriculum, extra-curricular activities and excellent teaching. It aims for pupils to respect proper authority and their environment in which staff, pupils, parents and governors co-operate to achieve the school's aims. Its current priorities are to gain recognition as an Investor in People, improve planning further, review the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and further monitor lessons to achieve improvement in teaching and learning. Its targets indicate more pupils expected to achieve higher grades at GCSE and other examinations.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	63	62	125

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	25	38	37
	Girls	45	45	35
	Total	70	83	72
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	56(68)	66(66)	58(67)
	National	73(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	18(39)	38(40)	18(30)
	National	35(35)	37(36)	24(27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	28	34	39
	Girls	45	45	37
	Total	73	79	76
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	58(66)	63(72)	61(63)
	National	56(62)	62(64)	58(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	33(32)	32(46)	31(34)
	National	24(30)	36(37)	28(30)

1

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	69	64	133

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	29	66	66
	Girls	39	61	61
	Total	68	127	127
Percentage achieving Standard specified	School	51(35)	95(85)	95(92)
	National	48(45)	88(90)	94(95)

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	47	30	77

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.0 (17.2)	14.5 (16.7)	14.3(16.9)	1.6 (3.0)	4.0 (2.5)	2.9 (2.5)
National	n/a	n/a	17.6(17.6)	n/a	n/a	3.0 (17.6)

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

	Number	% Success Rate
School	7 (18)	57 (83)
National		73

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) Missed through absence for the latest Complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8
	National comparative data	9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.7
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	54
Permanent	5

²

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

³

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

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	22
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

**Please note: throughout the report, students' levels of attainment are judged at the end of Key Stage 3, at the end of Key Stage 4, and at the end of A level and GNVQ courses. Comparisons are drawn with all schools nationally, and with similar schools. The latter are those containing a similar proportion of students entitled to free meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator of the relative social advantage or disadvantage of students in different schools. No national comparison with similar schools is available for A level or GNVQ.*

8. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average for all years. There is some variation between year groups, as shown by Key Stage 2 national test data, spelling and reading tests. However, the differences are not great, and usually pupils' results in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science, are similar. The profile of attainment of the 1999 intake is slightly above that of the previous two years, as indicated by the careful measurement undertaken by the school of Key Stage 2 national test data. The ability of the intake spans the full ability range, but it contains a considerable number of lower attainers. Twenty-two per cent of pupils across the school are named on the register of special educational needs, mainly because of learning difficulties. Eighteen pupils have statements of special need, mainly for difficulties in learning. At the time of the previous inspection five years ago, six pupils had statements of special need. Students' entry to the sixth form at age 16 is on the basis of their potential to manage the courses at A level and GNVQ which they pursue. The school allows students to follow A level courses on the basis of modest GCSE results in some cases. However, these students usually complete their courses and achieve qualifications at an appropriate level from the courses that they follow.

9. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is average in comparison with all schools nationally. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attained average results overall, as shown by the average points score achieved per pupil. Results were below average in comparison with similar schools. (**Please see note above.*) Pupils' attainment was average in mathematics and science, and below average in English, despite the school's appeal and the remarking of test papers in English, as a result of which the National Curriculum levels awarded to 50 pupils were increased, and targets set for English were not met. In the previous three years, English results in the national tests have been close to the average for both boys and girls. However, English results were behind those achieved in mathematics and science in 1999 and 1998. Overall in 1998, Key Stage 3 test results were collectively above the average of all schools, and average with similar schools. In 1999 and in 1998, girls were ahead of boys in English and mathematics, and boys were ahead in science. However, the differences in performance in comparison with what boys and girls achieve nationally are relatively small at this key stage.

10. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is average overall. In GCSE examinations in 1999, pupils achieved an above average percentage points score, much higher than in previous years, partly because they studied more subjects for the examination than in previous years. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C and five or more grades A* to G was above average compared with all schools and with similar schools. The school's results were slightly below set targets. The achievement of GCSE A* and A grades was average with that of all schools. Attainment at GCSE has fluctuated since the previous inspection, but the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C has usually been above the national average except in

1998, when pupils' attainment was below average. The average points score in 1998 was below average and well below the average of similar schools. However, this was an exceptional year group, much smaller than usual, having a lower profile of attainment on entry than is usually the case for the school. Boys' and girls' results are usually close to the national averages for the respective genders. However, in word-centred subjects, for example English and modern foreign languages, girls outperformed boys to an extent beyond the difference that applies nationally. This was the situation in 1999.

11. At age 18, students' attainment is usually below the national average at A level. The average points score achieved per student entered for two or more A levels is below average. This applies in all years since the previous inspection. The proportion of A level grades A and B achieved is usually below average, and the proportion of grades A to E achieved is usually broadly average. Generally, students achieve results at A level in line with evidence of their prior attainment and the targets set for them. Attainment in GNVQ advanced and intermediate examinations fluctuate year-on-year because the numbers of students involved are often low. Results are usually in line with national standards.

12. In English, judged by evidence of test and examination results and of the inspection, pupils' attainment is below average at the end of Key Stage 3, and average at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Girls outperform boys at GCSE beyond the difference that applies nationally. Pupils' standards of speaking and listening are generally good. They read competently, but few read widely at Key Stages 3 or 4. Standards of writing are below those of the other key skills. Much written work is accurate, although lower attainers make many spelling mistakes. The range of pupils' writing improves considerably at Key Stage 4 and becomes good for many pupils. The English department teaches drama throughout the school, and standards in drama are a little below those expected nationally. GCSE results were below average in 1999, but the few candidates for A level theatre studies usually pass the examination. In mathematics, pupils' attainment is average at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form. Geometry, statistics and data analysis are managed competently. Lower attainers have difficulty achieving well enough in algebra. The presentation of some pupils' work is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. In science, pupils' attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the topics that they study, and manage practical work well. However, they lack adequate experience of forming and testing hypotheses for themselves.

13. Attainment in art is average at Key Stage 3. Pupils have satisfactory skills and understanding of technical vocabulary. At Key Stage 4, their attainment at GCSE in 1999 was broadly average, but in lessons observed, attainment is currently above average in the range of media used and in their knowledge of vocabulary, artists and styles. Attainment in the sixth form is average. Pupils attain the nationally expected level in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 3, where they gain satisfactory standards in using a range of skills and processes. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average, and they develop effective design-and-making abilities. In the sixth form, attainment is average. Students manage research well and have good practical skills. In geography, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the nationally expected level. In the sixth form, it is average. It is above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Boys achieve more highly than girls at this key stage, contrary to the national trend at GCSE. Pupils use maps competently, although lower attainers have difficulty locating places. All make good use of fieldwork. In history, pupils' attainment is at the expected level at the end of Key Stage 3, and above average at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils have good knowledge and increasing understanding, and use evidence well to extend their view of the past. In information technology, attainment is at the expected level at the end of Key Stage 3. In the GCSE

information technology short course taken for the first time in 1999, pupils attained below average results. Currently in lessons, work is of an average standard. Standards in information technology at the end of the A level computing course and use of information technology in GNVQ courses are above average, overall.

14. In modern foreign languages, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with that expected nationally. At Key Stage 4 girls at GCSE, in some years, outperform boys to a greater extent than is the case nationally in the results they achieve. In the sixth form, attainment is average. Skills of speaking, listening and writing in the foreign language improve particularly at Key Stage 4. In music, attainment is at the expected level at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the performing arts course in the sixth form. Attainment is above average at Key Stage 4. Pupils' listening, composing and performing skills are usually good. Attainment in physical education at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the level expected nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, attainment is above average. Pupils develop good skills in sports and games at Key Stage 3, and good standards are achieved all aspects of the subject, including GCSE and A level examinations.

15. In vocational courses in the sixth form, attainment is in line with that achieved nationally. At both advanced and intermediate level GNVQ, students gain knowledge of the relevant vocational area and increasing competence and confidence in using necessary skills. In some years, for example in 1998, examination results were above average. In GCSE business studies at Key Stage 4, attainment is below average. In child development, attainment at GCSE is below average, but in line with pupils' prior attainment. In other A level courses, small numbers of students usually attain average standards. Examination results are sometimes above average, as in A level psychology in 1999.

16. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Their rate of progress becomes good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form as a result of good teaching and the commitment of teachers to pupils. The positive attitudes of most pupils support their progress well. Judged over time, pupils enter the school with average attainment. They make satisfactory progress in mathematics and science during Key Stage 3, resulting in average national test results in 1999, and above average results in 1998, in these subjects. However, progress in English is unsatisfactory during Key Stage 3, resulting in below average national test results in the subject in 1999. At Key Stage 4, the trend in the average points achieved per pupil at GCSE has declined slightly between 1994 and 1998. However, the average points score per pupil increased substantially in 1999, and progress observed in lessons during the inspection was good overall. In the sixth form, students attain results in line with their prior attainment and, overall, progress is good.

17. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. However, progress in lessons is not always as good as it should be because teachers are not aware of the specific targets to be achieved by each pupil. The work of in-class adult support is not always well coordinated with the curriculum and teachers' planning of lessons.

18. In English, progress is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, particularly in writing. Progress becomes good at Key Stage 4, particularly for girls. It remains good in the sixth form, where teachers give very good close support to the students who follow A level courses. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory throughout the school. However, the system of grouping pupils at Key Stage 3 results in classes of much wider ability than would be the case were class groups to be determined by mathematical ability across each year group of the key stage. This is unhelpful to progress in mathematics. Little space in some

classrooms, resulting from the numbers of pupils in some classes at Key Stage 4, makes physical difficulties for teachers in trying to give individual pupils the help they need. Progress in science is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils are well challenged by teachers and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills.

19. In design and technology, pupils make good progress throughout the school in all strands of the subject. They develop their practical skills particularly well. Pupils' progress in geography is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and this becomes good at Key Stage 4 where experienced and enthusiastic teachers have such high expectations of them. Progress in the sixth form is satisfactory. In history, pupils' satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 becomes good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils use evidence increasingly well and good teaching and their own positive attitudes ensure good progress is sustained.

20. In information technology, progress is satisfactory on the courses specifically for information technology at both key stages. In the sixth form, students develop their skills appropriately on their GNVQ courses, and those following the A level computing course progress well. However, progress in the use of information technology at both key stages by other subjects is unsatisfactory. Use of computers is not required by the school to be included in subjects' schemes of work, and access to computers is restricted because of the courses in information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4.

21. Pupils' progress in modern foreign languages is satisfactory overall. They make good progress in lessons at Key Stage 3 because of good teaching. Curricular time allocated to the subjects is low by national comparison, with the result that progress over time is not more than satisfactory because pupils have insufficient opportunity to practise essential skills. In music, pupils' progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, but only those who play instruments develop good skills in reading music fluently. At Key Stage 4, progress is good in performing, listening and composing. In the sixth form performing arts course, students make satisfactory progress in understanding this art form - that is relatively new to some of them. In physical education, progress is good throughout the school. Pupils develop their skills and understanding of games well, and progress to achieve good results on GCSE and A level courses.

22. In vocational courses at GCSE, progress in business studies is just satisfactory overall. In child development currently in lessons, progress is good as a result of good teaching. Progress in the sixth form in GNVQ courses is good, and students are developing the competencies required to attain successful outcomes because of well-organised courses and good teaching. In other A level courses, students' progress is satisfactory, and attainment is in line with their prior attainment.

23. Since the previous inspection, attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests has fluctuated, but in recent years, pupils' attainment in mathematics and science has been higher than that in English, and results in this subject should be higher. Results in GCSE and A level examinations have also varied year-on-year. In 1999, GCSE results were much better than in 1998, and the average points score achieved per student was higher than at any time since the previous inspection. Girls significantly out perform boys in word-centred subjects at GCSE. Results at A level have remained below average since the previous inspection, but students achieve appropriate results on the basis of their prior attainment. GNVQ results in the sixth form are at least in line with national results and sometime above these. Attainment and progress in modern foreign languages have improved as a result of good teaching, but the allocation of curricular time prevents progress from being better. Computers are not used enough in all subjects, but standards in the courses specifically for

information technology are average, and above this in the sixth form. In general, lower attainers now make adequate progress in learning, a key issue of the previous inspection. However, pupils with special educational needs could make better progress if the work of adult in-class support assistants was better co-ordinated, and teachers were more informed of the targets to be achieved by these pupils.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

24. Pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour, relationships and personal development are good.

25. Most pupils in lessons across both key stages and in the sixth form approach their learning constructively. They sustain concentration well, and listen to their teachers and to each other. However, in some English and geography lessons some low attaining pupils tend to lose concentration and this adversely affects their learning and behaviour. These pupils rely heavily on teachers for pace and direction, especially at Key Stage 3. In most lessons teaching is interesting and challenging and pupils are motivated and pose interesting questions. They enjoy their learning. Pupils use initiative in many lessons and this enhances learning and supports their confidence and self-esteem.

26. Most pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work; they behave well and make clear gains in self-confidence and organising skills as they move through the school. They benefit from the care and commitment of the staff who support them.

27. Good standards of behaviour are evident, both inside and outside the classroom. Most pupils are polite to their teachers, listen attentively and show respect for authority. Their good behaviour is conducive to learning and progress. Most incidents of inappropriate behaviour are outside the classroom. Small minorities of pupils are noisy, some are boisterous and others display silly immature behaviour, which is sometimes apparent in the dining hall and library. Behaviour in the playground is usually good and during the inspection there were no apparent signs of bullying or other types of aggressive behaviour. However, a very small minority of parents, some Year 7 and 8 pupils and staff acknowledge that bullying is sometimes a problem for some individuals in the school community. Staff deal with the few incidents of bullying, usually to the satisfaction of pupils and parents. Incidents of pupils' fixed term exclusion from school are above average and have risen in the last three years.

28. Relationships between pupils and teachers are constructive and purposeful. They support a warm and friendly learning atmosphere, especially in the classroom. There are good working relationships between pupils, and they work well together in pairs and small groups. Pupils exchange ideas and information in a constructive and purposeful manner. This supports their progress and personal development well. Friendships are evident across gender and racial boundaries, as well as in respective gender groups.

29. During the inspection many pupils were noticeably polite, respectful and were eager to present the school in a positive light. Their attitudes make for a positive learning environment in which tolerance and mutual respect are apparent.

30. Pupils' personal development is good. They serve the school in many ways, for example as prefects, school librarians and form captains. They enhance their linguistic and social skills through work experience in the community. Most students enjoy their work experience and value the opportunities to serve the school and wider community as

responsible citizens.

31. Since the last report fixed term exclusions have risen, but pupils' behaviour, relationships and the opportunities for personal development remain consistently good.

Attendance

32. Pupils' rates of attendance are satisfactory and unauthorised absence is below the national average. Staff, particularly heads of year and most form tutors work diligently to investigate absences and encourage high levels of attendance and good timekeeping. The vast majority of pupils arrive on time for registration and lessons. A small minority occasionally arrive late for lessons and this sometimes disrupts the learning of others.

33. All form tutors take registers at prescribed times, but occasionally some form tutors do not fully observe the correct procedures for recording absences and therefore fail to comply fully with the school's requirements.

34. The school has continued to maintain satisfactory levels of attendance since the last report and at times achieved good levels of attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

35. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, it is particularly strong with more than one lesson in every three of good or very good quality. At Key Stage 3, half the lessons observed were of this quality. Five per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. None were of poor quality. The main reason for the unsatisfactory teaching was that work was not matched closely enough to the needs of pupils in English. The management of pupils was not satisfactory in a few cases. Highly effective teaching of very good quality was observed in art, design and technology and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, the most effective teaching was in physical education and science. In the sixth form, the most effective teaching was in art, physical education and science. Some teaching of English at Key Stage 3 was not as effective as it should be in ensuring pupils' progress.

36. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is a marked feature of work in the sixth form. Elsewhere it is good. It is used effectively to help pupils to extend their understanding of the subject. In a Year 10 lesson on energy transfer in science, the teacher's knowledge of the topic enabled pupils to discuss aspects of the subject in an informed way, deepening their understanding. Teachers of French and German use those languages extensively in class, helping pupils to be more effective and confident users themselves. Their own knowledge and skills enable teachers to demonstrate techniques well to their classes, furthering pupils' understanding. For example, in an art lesson for Year 13, the teacher's demonstration of technique enabled the students to extend their understanding of the work of the artist, Georgia O'Keefe. In physical education, teachers' skilful demonstrations of techniques in basketball and badminton in Years 10 and 11 help pupils to develop their own skills and understanding.

37. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are good. This applies at both

key stages and in the sixth form. There is good challenge for pupils in most lessons. In a very good lesson for Year 8 in English, in which pupils composed a newspaper report from different sources following the reading of a *Christmas Carol*, the variety of activities - whole class discussion, role play and small group-work - engaged and challenged them very well. In modern foreign languages, the teacher of a low attaining class in Year 9 working on a letter for a trip abroad, enabled all pupils to work to their maximum level, providing very good individual support and encouragement. A Year 9 lesson based on work on an army-pack about the Brecon Beacons provided considerable challenge for the pupils who were enthused by this work. There is often good scope for pupils to work independently. However, in some lessons, there is insufficient matching of work to the range of pupils' abilities, as in some English lessons at Key Stage 3.

38. Planning of lessons is generally good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Lessons usually involve a well-thought-out series of activities that take pupils through a sequence of steps to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Good planning in a German lesson for a high attaining class in Year 9 included many activities and culminated in very good feedback to pupils. A very good GNVQ Year 12 lesson on health related fitness was well planned, enabling the teacher to help students manage an experiment for themselves and undertake further planned activities with confidence. However, in some lessons, objectives for lessons are not made clear enough to pupils and they remain unsure of the purpose of the work that the teacher has planned, as occasionally in geography.

39. Teachers use a good range of methods in classes at both key stages and in the sixth form. They give clear expositions to their classes, as in mathematics with Year 7 on patterns and number-sequences, maintaining pupils' interest in the work. Good organisation and variety of work is managed well in science, for example in the range of activities pursued in a Year 11 science lesson on teeth. Effective questioning is used to extend pupils' understanding, as in a Year 11 physical education lesson on doubles play in badminton, where the teacher's technical questioning helped pupils to understand more clearly, and make good progress. Teachers employ a good range of methods in modern foreign languages, with mime, gesture, role-play and repetition effectively used. The teacher of a Year 7 French lesson used a song to help pupils' recall words in the foreign language. Methods used in a lunchtime Year 10 German lesson for pupils taking two foreign languages provided very good stimulus to learning and a very good sense of purpose. In this lesson, learning was fun. Individual help and support for pupils by teachers is a marked feature of many lessons.

40. Pupils of all ages are well managed by teachers because relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject in many lessons and this conveys itself to pupils who respond well. This is a strong feature of lessons in physical education, where there are very few non-participants, because most pupils want to learn and participate with enthusiasm. Teachers generally have good discipline and manage classes of differently designated abilities well. A Year 9 French class of lower attainers was very well managed and challenged, making very good progress. However, occasionally teachers do not control some pupils well enough, and this makes the rate of progress of the class unsatisfactory.

41. Teachers usually use lesson time and resources effectively. Most lessons in modern foreign languages run at a good pace, with plenty of variety of activity. A teacher of a Year 7 music lesson in which keyboards were used, balanced the use of time well between individual work and whole-class activities. Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows in mathematics in the sixth form. Resources are generally used well, although there are

shortages in some subjects. However, use of library books in a Year 7 English lesson was not exploited well enough. Pupils lacked records of their reading, and there was inadequate analysis of the books they chose to read in the lesson. Teachers do not enable their pupils to use computers enough in most subjects, although they are used appropriately in lessons specifically for information technology. Use of non-teaching adult support provided for pupils with special educational needs is not sufficiently well integrated into lessons in general. There is insufficient co-ordination between teachers and assistants who are not usually provided with the scheme of work or details of forthcoming lessons so that they can prepare work and anticipate difficulties.

42. Assessment of pupils is generally effective at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers are usually well aware of pupils' standards and know what targets are appropriate to provide good challenge for them to achieve. They give good oral advice to pupils in history and geography on how they might improve their work, but written comment to support this in pupils' books is sometimes lacking. In physical education, teachers enable pupils to practise self-assessment of their performances. For example, Year 7 pupils in a lesson on basketball were helped to assess their performances and did so well. At A level, teachers help students to understand how the position of observers in games is essential to accurate assessment of performance.

43. Teachers usually use homework effectively. The way homework is used in practice extends learning beyond the classroom well for most pupils. Homework in science, for example, is usually well-thought-out and extend pupils' learning effectively. However, in some low-attaining classes, homework is not used enough, as for example, in a low-attaining class in Year 7 in English.

44. Pupils with special educational needs are taught within mainstream classes. Their needs are met through setting arrangements and individual support in the classroom. In addition, pupils who have been identified as needing particular help are withdrawn for specialised teaching. Where teachers adapt their teaching styles and learning materials to meet the requirements of pupils with special educational needs, they enable pupils to make satisfactory progress. However, it is often the case that a lack of careful pre-lesson planning results in inefficient use of the in-class adult support that is available.

45. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved. Then 16% of lessons were unsatisfactory and 54% were considered of good or very good quality. Now, the percentage of unsatisfactory lessons taught is five, and 64% of lessons are of good or better quality. The quality of teaching remains a little better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. In the previous inspection, no good teaching was observed in French. Now teaching in French is good overall, and it is one of the most effectively taught subjects at Key Stage 3. Teachers' knowledge and understanding in modern foreign languages and humanities were inadequate in the previous inspection, but now these are strengths of teaching in these subjects. The good features of teaching identified in the previous inspection continue to be apparent. However, the matching of work closely to pupils' needs is still not universally achieved, as in some English lessons at Key Stage 3, including some for lower attainers.

The curriculum and assessment

46. At Key Stage 3, the school provides a satisfactory broad and balanced curriculum. This includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social education. Information technology and drama extend the range of experience for pupils and are taught as separate subjects in each year of the key stage. About half the

pupils are taught a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9, but the periods allocated are not enough for pupils to make more than barely satisfactory progress in both languages. Although skills in how to use the library are introduced through English from Year 7, the library skills course in Year 9, as part of a rotational arrangement with art and drama, is not linked to work in other subjects.

47. At Key Stage 4 the school makes good curricular provision that fully meets statutory requirements. For example, all pupils undertake full GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, and a modern foreign language, and short GCSE courses in information technology and religious education. Pupils take two further examination courses and are able to choose from a wide range of subjects. The school is also prepared, thanks to the willingness and enthusiasm of teachers, to make provision, where appropriate, for extra GCSE courses in out-of-lesson time.

48. In the sixth form, the school provides a good choice of subjects. These include 19 A level courses and four GNVQ programmes. Almost all students have opportunities for physical education and games and there is provision for students to retake English and mathematics at GCSE to improve their grades. The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form.

49. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Usual practice is to group pupils by attainment, although setting arrangements at Key Stage 3 do not closely define pupils' abilities for particular subjects which share common classes. Many groups contain pupils with a wide range of attainment and teaching does not always take enough account of this, which reduces some pupils' chances of making good progress. Arrangements for grouping pupils are effective at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, although teaching Year 12 and Year 13 students together in modern foreign languages hinders progress in some aspects of their work.

50. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils on the register of special educational needs and older pupils benefit from being able to take vocational courses in addition to a good range of other subjects.

51. Good planning by departments ensures that pupils build effectively on their previous work as they go through the school. However, although there are links with some of its many partner primary schools, departmental schemes of work do not take sufficient account of what pupils have learned from the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Good links with further and higher educational institutions help to promote a smooth transition from school to college.

52. All pupils, including those in the sixth form, have a weekly tutorial lesson providing a course of personal and social education. The programme is well planned and includes sex education and drugs prevention. The school makes good provision for careers education and guidance. Relevant topics are covered in the tutorial programme and all pupils undertake one week's work experience in Year 11. The careers base provides good resources to help with individual career-planning. Pupils have easy access to careers guidance through the school's careers officer, who is much liked and respected.

53. A good programme of extra-curricular clubs and activities enhances the curriculum. Pupils have good opportunities in sport and the performing arts. All teachers in the physical education department contribute to extra-curricular sport. Over 300 pupils regularly play for school teams. Some pupils play for county teams. They are able to go on a wide variety of educational visits and to gain residential experience. For example, pupils have the

opportunity to visit the First World War battlefields and the Normandy beaches, greatly helping their understanding of work in history. Since 1997, the school has been involved in a Comenius project with schools in Berlin, Madrid, Sicily and La Reunion. This has widened pupils' horizons and promoted understanding of other countries well.

54. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. It has increased teaching time by one hour a week and successfully introduced a modern foreign language and design and technology for all pupils at Key Stage 4. However, the time for two foreign languages at Key Stage 3 is insufficient. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved, although the co-ordination of support for these pupils is inadequate. The school has not yet made provision for religious education in the sixth form, a key issue of the previous inspection. More recognition of pupils' curricular experience at Key Stage 2 is needed within the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure good continuity in learning.

55. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory overall. They are good in science, design and technology and information technology. The use of assessment to improve curricular planning across the school is unsatisfactory overall, but in some subjects for example physical education, it is used effectively for this purpose. A comprehensive assessment policy is in place. This is revised regularly. It has clear aims and detailed objectives. The policy sets the focus firmly on building up a picture of pupils' achievements to help advance their learning. There is detailed guidance for teachers on what assessments need to be made and how they should be recorded. Teachers are usually accurate in their assessment of pupils' attainment.

56. A marking policy is in place, but this is less helpful and its requirements are not consistently applied across all departments. For example, marking in English does not relate to National Curriculum levels. Not all teachers make helpful comments to indicate how improvements can be made in all subjects. There is no overall system of marking in mathematics.

1.The school has devised a modification to the levels of the National Curriculum, dividing these into ten points. This refinement is detailed, inferring objectivity and fine grading that are not always possible. The use of concepts from the main National Curriculum levels is not well established with pupils, and this prevents them from having a clear idea of how their work is assessed and how they might improve. In some subjects, for example geography, portfolios of graded work are kept to help to establish standards and provide useful guidance to teachers.

58. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' work, although the policy does not make unit tests and end of year examinations a requirement at Key Stage 3. This situation is not rigorous enough to ensure that all departments make satisfactory arrangements for the assessment of pupils. In other years, the system is satisfactory, especially where the demands of examining boards provide clear structures. Assessment of vocational courses is good and clearly follows GNVQ requirements.

59. The school uses assessment information for grouping of pupils at Key Stage 3. Key Stage 2 data and reading tests are used to do this. The classes which result provide some support for teachers in modifying material for different ability groups, but can create individual problems when pupils are misplaced for particular subjects. It is a rigid system and movement of pupils between classes of different ability because they make good progress in a particular subject is limited.

60. Target-setting is used to help pupils raise their attainment. This is well developed, for example, in music, physical education, English at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and is improving in modern foreign languages and science. Data for tracking pupils' progress is in place at Key Stage 3 and is now increasingly used to indicate the levels to be achieved in end of Key Stage 3 national tests. Most subjects do not make enough use of assessments for planning future work, for example, in linking revision to prior assessment information. Management does not require reviews of departmental schemes of work, based on assessments. Examination results are analysed in most subjects but not all departments analyse their results by gender and few, outside the core subjects, keep records of base-line data of their option groups from which to judge pupils' potential. This limits the use of value-added data.

61. There are well-established systems for identifying pupils in need of extra help. The arrangements for monitoring the progress of pupils with statements of special educational need have improved since the last report, and good use is made of the evaluative comments of subject teachers, support staff, parents and pupils themselves in the reviews of progress. However, individual education plans are not yet in place for all the pupils who need them. Therefore it is not possible to evaluate how well the curriculum meets the specific needs of individual pupils.

62. Since the last inspection there have been some improvements in the collection of assessment information. Assessment and reporting of information technology are now good. Systems have been improved in music and modern foreign languages. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs now meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, individual education plans are not available on a day-to-day basis to teachers, and subject departments do not contribute to the formulation of the plans for individual pupils. Responsibilities for the assessment system are now clearer and appear in the staff handbook, but not in job descriptions or in the assessment policy. The monitoring of the system is still not yet rigorous enough to ensure full consistency across the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

63. The school's provision for spiritual development is not satisfactory. Statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship are not met, although pupils have a weekly assembly based on the teaching of Christian principles. Pupils meet with heads of year on one other occasion each week for assemblies which have a strong moral message but no overt spiritual content. In tutorial time, no provision is made for spiritual development. There is little identification of opportunities for spiritual development within subject documentation and, except in art and physical education including dance, where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own and other pupils' work, opportunities for raising pupils' awareness and opportunities for reflection are frequently missed. Religious education is still not taught in the sixth form. However, an assembly for Remembrance Day was an effective opportunity for pupils to reflect on the sacrifice made by the fallen of the two World Wars. The school's gardens provide areas of calm around the school, and plaques erected in memory of former pupils, are treated with respect.

64. The school's provision for moral education is good. Many staff provide excellent role models for pupils. Moral issues are discussed in many subjects. The new GCSE short course in religious education in Years 9, 10 and 11 on Christian perspectives and Islam effectively permits pupils to consider the different attitudes to important human issues. Within the religious education syllabus, provision is made for pupils to discuss moral issues such as racism, ageism, war and peace, abortion and euthanasia. In other subjects, there

is evidence of pupils being encouraged to regard the views of other people with respect. In history, pupils study the effects of Nazism in Germany. In geography, they have opportunities to consider the problem of preserving rainforests and of help for people in the less developed parts of the world, by aid or trade. The personal, social and health education course properly includes sex education and drugs abuse and considers these matters in an appropriate moral context. Students in the sixth form are encouraged to support pupils with special educational needs and to help in local primary schools as part of their citizenship course, which is also taught in both history and in personal and social education. Courses in peer counselling have enabled pupils at all ages to support pupils who feel they are the victims of bullying. Younger pupils have opportunity to act as librarians and are also responsible for maintaining the newly refurbished main library in good order. Pupils choose and raise funds for a good number of charitable causes during the year.

65. There is good provision for pupils' social development. A wide range of musical and sporting activities takes place on a regular basis enabling pupils of different ages and talents to mix and work together. There are three concerts each year, and a larger scale musical or dramatic production is staged annually, enabling pupils to work and perform together in a joint enterprise. The modern languages department arranges exchange visits and day-trips to France, and there are some contacts between pen friends with Malvern's twin-town. Some group-work takes place across the curriculum, for example in drama, music and in mathematics providing opportunity for pupils to work together to solve problems. Visits to places of interest locally are less frequent, but plans are in hand for a whole-school visit to the millennium dome. From time to time pupils are given the opportunity to organise inter-form competitions and the present Year 11 is creating its own millennium collection of memorabilia.

66. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. In English, this is developed through the study of literature and, in art and music, works by established artists and composers are discussed. Recently the school played host to an artist in residence. Pupils exhibit their art- work in the local library. Provision for multicultural education has improved greatly since the last inspection. The school's policy appears in documentation in all subjects. The Comenius programme involves pupils in joint projects with Germany, Spain, Sicily and La Reunion, using Internet and e-mail to make contact. In religious education, they visit places of worship of other faiths. Pupils study the dance and learn the sounds of the music of Africa, India and Java. In mathematics they learn about the numerical systems of the ancient traditions of Egypt, Rome and China and the intricacies of patterns devised by Celtic people. Geography courses provide opportunities to look at the life of people in Brazil and Japan, and to study life in Cairo. The problems of immigrants in different countries are discussed. However, visits to ethnic community groups and visits by representatives of such groups to the school are rare.

67. Since the previous inspection, much work has been done to improve the main library, which was then considered to lack multicultural texts. As a result of a grant from the Friends' Association, the library has been refitted. Efforts have been made to reduce out-of-date stock and there is good representation of contemporary writers, including a number of black women authors. The school is aware that more remains to be done when funds permit. Provision for pupils' spiritual development, as distinct from their religious development, is unsatisfactory. Moral, social and cultural development is good.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

68. Pastoral provision in the school provides satisfactory levels of care, support and

guidance for all members of the school community. Staff at all levels appropriately address the concerns of pupils. They provide sound levels of individual support and guidance through registration periods, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. They create an environment that is conducive to learning and the progress of pupils. There are sound methods for monitoring pupil's individual progress and personal development. The information is used constructively to celebrate pupils' achievements, to ensure their regular attendance and to achieve good standards of behaviour.

69. Policies for ensuring good behaviour and discipline are implemented in a fair and purposeful manner. Most pupils feel confident about reporting incidents of bullying and other types of anti-social behaviour to heads of year and their form tutors, and enjoy a purposeful and trusting relationship with their subject teachers. However, a very small minority of pupils at Key Stage 3 do not always feel confident about approaching their form tutors about their concerns.

70. Attendance policy and practice enable staff to provide appropriate levels of support and guidance. Arrangements ensure that the vast majority of pupils attend regularly, enjoy coming to school and observe appropriate levels of timekeeping. All absences are monitored and investigated and appropriate action is taken as necessary. The existing arrangements enable the school to achieve satisfactory levels of attendance.

71. The personal and social education programme provides a solid base for ensuring that pupils are provided with information and guidance. It enables them to make informed choices about health, sex, relationships and an awareness of the dangers of drugs in a context of moral and family values.

72. Careers education forms an integral part of personal and social education provision. It is implemented satisfactorily and ensures that pupils are adequately informed about opportunities in the sixth form, in higher education and for training and employment.

73. Existing provision for child protection has been temporarily unsatisfactory. The continued absence of a senior member of staff requires that changes need to be made to this area of responsibility. The school is taking immediate action to provide training for the designated teacher and improve the existing provision to ensure fully the safety and well-being of the school community.

74. Arrangements for health and safety are sound. However, practice needs to be reviewed. For example, the kiln in the art room does not meet with safety standards and upstairs classrooms in the sixth form block do not have an external fire exit.

75. Improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the co-ordination of that provision was a key issue in the previous inspection report. Although staff are generally aware of the range of pupils' learning difficulties, it still remains so. This is because insufficient progress has been made in the development and effective use of pupils' individual education plans. Although the plans contain general targets for improvement in behaviour, attitudes, and basic literacy and numeracy skills, they lack precise short-term targets and they are not easily accessible to subject teachers. As a consequence, the work of teachers and support staff is not sufficiently well co-ordinated and this adversely affects pupils' progress. However, there is regular interchange of information between support staff, representatives from the different faculties and pastoral staff, and good liaison between the school and the local support services.

76. Since the last inspection most aspects of support for pupils' welfare and guidance

remain satisfactory. Pastoral provision continues to provide a sound support for the school community. However, revision of procedures for child protection is required and some health and safety matters need attention. Further co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs is required.

Partnership with parents and the community

77. The school has a good partnership with parents. The level of communication between home and school is purposeful and constructive. Most parents appreciate the efforts of teachers who ensure they obtain necessary information. The good quality half-termly newsletter, the annual report from governors, the sixth form prospectus, as well as the home-school agreement all provide useful purposeful information for parents. Regular parents' evenings, homework planners and the pupils' annual reports complement these channels of communication. These enable parents to assess their child's progress and attainment well. However, at present, there are no opportunities for parents to discuss concerns arising from their child's annual report with teachers immediately after receiving it at the end of the summer term. Parents would prefer to receive the report earlier than the final week of the summer term and inspectors agree with this view. The school prospectus does not include a statement to inform parents about their right to withdraw their child from religious education as required. Overall existing channels of communication are effective and the majority of parents value their relationship with the school.

78. The school actively encourages parents to support the learning of their child. Most parents support aspects of the school's work. For example, they support school productions, residential visits to Europe, sports events and the work of the Friends Association. A small but committed group of parents run the association and raise substantial funds for the school. They organise social events such as the Christmas fair. These events provide parents with an opportunity to visit the school and the funds are used to purchase learning materials and equipment.

79. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents regularly attend reviews of their children's progress. They help their children at home, and they are pleased with the way in which their children are supported and integrated within the life of the school. Well established links with local primary schools ensure a regular exchange of information so that pupils are helped to make a smooth transition into secondary school life. There are effective partnerships with the careers service and the local colleges so that, when they leave school, pupils with special educational needs are able to benefit from courses that are designed to meet their requirements.

80. The schools' links with the community are good. It sustains constructive and purposeful links with both local and international communities. These are a significant strength of the school. A number of departments in the school exploit their links with industry and commerce. Year 11 work experience complements links with employers and the opportunity for extended learning and enables students to make informed choices about the world of work and training. Residential visits to Europe, particularly the Comenius project, provide extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their linguistic skills and understanding of other customs and traditions. They also celebrate the opportunity of being good Europeans. The school also supports multicultural links and learning, through links with communities holding other faiths. There are visits to the mosque, Sikh temple and cathedral.

81. Good links exist between the school and further and higher education

establishments. These links provide effective opportunities for students to extend their learning and supports the continuity and progression of their learning.

82. There are satisfactory pastoral links between partner primary schools and the high school. The headteacher and other staff visit primary schools and Year 6 pupils and parents are invited to the high school to meet staff and gain an understanding of how learning is organised. This complements the Year 6 induction programme, which provides opportunities for new pupils to learn new routines, meet their teachers and form tutors, as well as to experience lessons. These visits support the smooth transition of most Year 6 pupils, as well as developing curriculum links between Key Stages 2 and 3. However, curricular links are not fully exploited.

83. Since the last inspection, the school has sustained good links with parents and the local and wider community. The school's Friends Association continues to be an active fund-raiser. However, further recognition of curricular links with primary schools is needed.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

84. Governors, headteacher, senior and middle management provide sound leadership. The ethos of the school is good. Morale is high. There is a commitment to high standards. This attitude is reflected across the whole staff and most pupils respond positively. In general, parents are very supportive of the work of the school. Many adults connected with the school are parents of current pupils, or their children have previously attended the school. Relationships among staff and pupils and among pupils themselves are good and support learning and achievement well. The denominational-religious status of the school is not an overt feature of its day-to-day life, but there is underlying warmth and friendliness apparent in relationships across the school community. The school's appropriate equal opportunities policy enables it to judge its standards and activities adequately. Parents appreciate the very strong commitment to encourage older pupils to undertake courses which they find challenging. Most do well, and sixth formers for example generally achieve results at least in line with their prior attainment. Governors, senior management and all staff want to improve accommodation and learning resources but are hampered, to a greater extent than is the case nationally, by lack of money, partly caused by the unusual circumstances of the school's status.

85. Governors support senior management and the school well. They give their time generously to the school and provide good professional expertise for their well-run committees, covering all main areas. Governors contribute effectively to monitoring standards of work in departments, and have acted as visitors, observing lessons, entering into discussion with subject leaders and learning about the strengths and weaknesses of what is provided for pupils. They plan to provide an on-going link with each department. They also monitor progress towards the targets that they set, by receiving reports from the headteacher of standards achieved in examinations and national tests.

86. Senior management comprises headteacher and two deputy headteachers. However, one deputy is absent for reasons of health and adjustment to covering all areas of responsibility is in process. The headteacher works closely with governors and attends all governors' meetings, including all committees. Senior management is caring and intends standards to be good. Headteacher and deputies monitor standards of teaching and learning in some departments, and support improvement with professional discussion with teachers, following their observations of lessons to help raise standards of teaching.

However, monitoring has not extended to all areas where there is evidence that standards are below what they should be, as in English at Key Stage 3, and senior management has not always ensured that necessary improvement has taken place. The lack of co-ordination of support in the provision for pupils with special educational needs, although recognised by senior management, has not been effectively addressed. Senior management ensures that job descriptions are in place for teachers, but not for all staff. However, this need is recognised as a published target to be achieved.

87. The management of heads of subject departments and heads of year is, generally, of good quality. Some heads of department monitor standards effectively, and achieve a good level of consistency in the quality of teaching, marking of pupils' work and standards of learning. There is much energy and enthusiasm in the leadership of some subjects from both recently appointed and long-serving heads of departments. Most departmental schemes of work are comprehensive and provide effective guidance for the work of teachers, although Key Stage 2 links and spiritual provision are not usually included. Heads of departments set high standards. Although such high standards are a marked feature of work in English at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, there is a need to raise standards at Key Stage 3 in the subject.

88. School management supports the requirements of pupils with special educational needs well. The two governors with responsibility for special educational needs bring experience and enthusiasm to their duties. The special educational needs coordinator works hard to ensure that daily routines run smoothly. Relationships within the department are good. Statutory requirements in respect of pupils with statements of special educational needs are now met. Links exist between co-ordinator and subject departments through regular meetings with nominated departmental staff. However, students' individual education plans are insufficiently informative in defining pupils' needs, and the targets to be achieved in some cases. Individual education plans lack short-term targets to be amended or restated as a result of regular review of each pupil's progress. Adult in-class support assistants for pupils with statements of special educational need work hard, but their work is not well enough co-ordinated, and they lack schemes of work and details of future work for the classes that they attend in order to support individual pupils. Their work is not co-ordinated closely enough with that of teachers in some cases. Training requirements for teachers and in-class adult supporters in how they can best function together to meet the widest range of pupils' needs have not been adequately identified or managed.

89. Whole-school development planning has improved. Issues identified for development are appropriate. Success criteria are usually clear, but not in all cases as, for example, in judging outcomes of changes to the house and prefect systems. Cost implications are usually identified. However, the time-scale identified is usually only for one year and should be longer, despite the uncertainty of levels of future funding. Some departmental plans recognise whole-school priorities, as well as those matters specific to the department, in many cases. However, developments are restricted to a single year perspective, and some departmental plans do not identify costs, success criteria or deadlines. Some concerns, although recognised within the department, are not included in planning. For example, the underachievement of boys in word-centred subjects is not included in the relevant departmental plans.

90. The day-to-day organisation and administration of the school are competently managed. However, senior management is in some difficulty given the absence of a deputy headteacher.

91. The governors meet most statutory requirements. However, the requirement for a

daily act of collective worship and the provision of religious education in the sixth form are not met. Parents are not informed in the school prospectus of their right to withdraw their children from religious education.

92. Overall, governors, senior and middle management have sound capacity to take the school forward. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. However, stronger action to address perceived areas of weakness is required in some areas, for example in the standards of teaching and work in English at Key Stage 3 and in some aspects of the co-ordination of special education needs.

93. Since the previous inspection, job descriptions are now in place for teachers, but not for all other staff. Policies are in place, but there is no policy for the curriculum. There is more monitoring of standards of teaching and learning than at the time of the previous inspection, but effective action to remedy weaknesses has not always been implemented.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

94. The provision of staff is satisfactory overall. There are sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. Where teachers have to teach outside their own specialism, as in English and information technology, they are experienced teachers and well supported by the head of department. There is a relatively large number of teachers in senior positions who have long experience at the school. While this makes for stability, it also constrains new thinking and developments within departments.

95. The number of support staff is satisfactory, except in science where there are inadequate hours allocated for the work involved. Similarly in the library there is insufficient support. The number of support assistants for pupils with special educational needs is adequate, but in some cases the assistants need further training to ensure that they give maximum help to pupils at all times.

96. Staff who are responsible for pupils' special educational needs have a strong commitment to the well-being of their pupils, and this has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to work, and also on their personal development. Pupils receive a satisfactory level of support, but the work of support staff is not always sufficiently well co-ordinated with teachers' planning of lessons, and teachers have not had enough training in adapting their teaching styles and lesson materials to meet the different needs of their pupils and evaluating improvement.

97. The school has a part-time matron who gives valuable support to pupils. It is well served by its administrative and caretaking staff, who make important and valuable contributions to the smooth running of the school.

98. Technicians give good support. A team of three well-qualified and experienced people provide high quality technical support in science. However, technician time is insufficient given the range of courses. Not all support staff have job descriptions yet, although this is a requirement for the Investors in People submission, which is in process. Support staff do, however, have access to training and a representative is now present at governors' meetings.

99. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are unsatisfactory. The school development plan gives very clear targets and deadlines for improvements in the monitoring of appraisal procedures and of ways of linking staff training with school priorities, because these two areas were included in a key issue at the last inspection. The

school has not yet completed the initial work to make these much-needed improvements. Procedures for keeping clear records and monitoring and evaluating the training that teachers participate in should be priorities for development, but are not yet in place. Appraisal of teachers has run for two cycles, but currently procedures are in abeyance, awaiting government guidelines. Personal reviews and interviews in line with Investors of People recommendations have been operational as a substitute for appraisal in some departments. No newly-qualified teachers have joined the school this year. Induction for teachers new to the school is satisfactory, but it has been less formal this year than is normally the case, because of a deputy headteacher's absence. Induction for students in Initial Teacher Training is good, and students appreciate the help and support given by their school mentors.

100. Since the previous inspection, staff continue to be suitably experienced and well qualified. Non-specialist teaching is no longer a difficulty. The quality of support, technical and administrative staff continues to be good. Professional development and training of staff remains unsatisfactory and appraisal is inoperative.

101. Despite considerable improvements, some accommodation has unsatisfactory features. Overall accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught, but there are considerable weaknesses. The roof of the design and technology building has been replaced. Accommodation for the food technology department is of very good quality and physical education has a newly decorated and furnished teaching room. These facilities are good and conducive to the attainment of high standards. A central outdoor quadrangle between the buildings has been carefully set up as a recreational area for pupils. It is imaginatively designed and functions well. There is a pleasant garden and extensive, well-maintained playing fields. Fencing around the school fields has been largely replaced, thus improving security.

102. However, there are problems with leaking roofs, making some teaching areas depressing, notably in the mathematics and science block and the sixth form centre. These areas contain damaged interior ceilings and in some cases there is considerable risk of damage to equipment. The sixth form centre is in a poor state of repair and decoration, despite the valiant self-help provided by students themselves. This block has only one exit, a flight of centrally located stairs, from the upper floor and there is no external fire escape. This represents a health and safety risk. Many toilets are in poor condition, as are the changing rooms in the physical education department. However, overall the standard of cleaning is good and there is little litter, partly because of the diligence of caretaking staff. Many footpaths around the buildings are in a poor state of repair. They have uneven surfaces and present a health and safety risk. Outside, the buildings require redecoration. Many classrooms are scarcely big enough to accommodate the classes that have to use them. This has an adverse effect on pupils' progress, because it is physically difficult for teachers to reach pupils in some rooms to give them the individual help that they need. This is particularly acute in science in practical work. Nearly all departments are short of storage space.

103. The laboratories for science are generally well-designed and attractive and the group of eight, including the rural science unit, preparation, storage and work areas, contains suitable teaching areas. The fabric of the building is in a poor state of repair and, for example, floor tiles, windows and some plasterwork need urgent attention, as the school is well aware. Some larger sized classes are not easily accommodated in these rooms and practical activity with large groups in cramped conditions has a higher risk assessment.

104. Accommodation for special educational needs has improved since the previous

inspection, when the situation was unsatisfactory. There is now an adequate base for special needs.

105. Since the previous inspection, some significant improvements to the accommodation have taken place, particularly in food technology. However, rooms used for some lessons are too small for the classes using them. Music remains in unsatisfactory accommodation. The governors have plans for improvement, but lack of money is a barrier to greater improvement.

106. Overall, the provision of learning resources is just satisfactory. However, there are shortages of textbooks in mathematics at Key Stage 4, in English in the sixth form and in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3. Art lacks drying racks, a cage for the kiln, an extractor fan in the printing area and blackout in a specialist room. Music lacks sufficient tuned percussion instruments. Drama is short of lighting and sound equipment. Much scientific apparatus is old. Computer provision is inadequate in subject areas, but good in the computers rooms and main library. Access to new computers is limited, notably for mathematics and English departments. Good use is made of resources beyond the school to extend pupils' learning and experience, for example visits to First World War battlefields and sites of Second World War D-Day landings.

107. The library is split between main school and sixth form. The fiction stock includes many good and popular titles but also many that need expunging. There are many pertinent recent additions to stock, including a range of multicultural fiction. The library is a good resource and has been refurbished by the efforts of the Friends' Association. It is being competently reorganised and a computerised issue system is being introduced. However, library books are not yet used enough.

108. Learning resources for pupils with special educational needs have improved since the previous inspection, when they were then a cause for concern.

109. A key issue in the previous inspection was to improve resources for learning, especially in the library so as to include the work of other cultures. Adequate provision for information technology in all subjects was required. Significant improvements have taken place with regard to these concerns. However, some difficulties concerning adequate access to, and use of, computers remain. The library has much improved, but numbers of books on loan are low. However, overall, learning resources are adequate for the school's curricular needs.

The efficiency of the school

110. Income per pupil is very low. As the school's status is voluntary aided, governors have responsibility to contribute towards costs of improvement and maintenance of accommodation from a budget well below that of the average of maintained schools in the local authority. Recent adjustments to the criteria by which money is allocated by the local authority on the basis of size of school have further reduced the school's income. However, despite its status as a voluntary aided, denominational school of the Church of England, the Church provides no income. Although the school's status enables governors to apply for funds from central sources to improve accommodation, the very low income per pupil it receives gives little scope for such applications. However, the school has been efficient and successful in making bids for improvements to accommodation. For example, accommodation for food technology has greatly improved and is of high quality. Despite its very low income, the school manages its budget very well and it has avoided a deficit. Voluntary contributions from families and the vigorous fund-raising efforts of the Friends

Association are very helpful, as for example, in the substantial improvements made to refurbishing the library and greatly improving the number and quality of books available. The school effectively raises additional funds by extensive lettings.

111. Governors have good professional expertise. They oversee financial decisions and determine priorities for spending with the headteacher. They understand well the school's situation and the financial implications for their future freedom of action if any further changes in its status were to occur.

112. Financial planning is satisfactory. Numbers of pupils in one year group, which is now Year 13, have been lower than other years, reducing income significantly. Effective planning has enabled the school to retain much of its usual range of courses for pupils in this smaller than average cohort. However, this has resulted in costs of sixth form provision for Year 13 rising above the income it commands, with some consequences for reduced spending in other years. Nevertheless, the unusual situation has been managed well and the curriculum for both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form has remained very broad for a school of this size. There are no arrangements for joint provision of minority courses in the sixth form with other institutions so as to reduce costs. However, planning is largely over one year, and low income makes longer-term planning even more necessary if the highest priorities are to be achieved.

113. Teachers are generally used well. The average number of pupils per teacher is above the national average, and some classes are large for the size of rooms available. Teachers' expertise and qualifications are deployed effectively to the benefit of pupils. The timetable produces classes of different levels of ability from Year 7 onwards, but in some cases, the range of ability is still too wide for pupils to make the progress which they could, for example in mathematics. Pupils of similar aptitude and interest in some subjects, for example in music, are placed in different classes because of compromises arising from requirements of the timetable in allocating pupils to classes which are timetabled to be taught together for different subjects. These pupils do not benefit from learning together. Although some classes are small in the sixth form, the quality of work is good and students learn together and with their teachers well. However, in modern foreign languages, Years 12 and 13 are taught together and although progress is satisfactory, teaching of the years separately would enable them to make better progress. This concern is less acute in other subjects in which both years are taught together.

114. Although funding for staff training is used appropriately, the system through which staff training operates should be more effectively managed.

115. Technicians provide a very effective service to subject departments. Administrative staff are efficient and very helpful to parents and visitors. The remarkably high quality of work of the diligent and responsible caretaking staff ensures that the school is clean, largely free of litter and a good environment for learning. Cleaning is efficient.

116. Allocation of funds to departments for spending on learning resources is managed by the headteacher. This ensures tight control of this aspect of spending. Although he intends allocations to be fair, they are made largely on the basis of proportions given in previous years, with some additional money to support curriculum development. All spending decisions are not necessarily fully linked to departmental development planning, therefore. Spending by departments is not analysed for cost effectiveness in some areas. The allocation of funds through a faculty system, for example in humanities, excludes the heads of individual departments involved from making their own claims. However, overall, learning resources allocated to departments are used well.

117. Although the provision of computers has improved and pupils have satisfactory access during lessons specifically for information technology, use of computers in other subjects is insufficient.

118. The library is divided between two sites. Books allocated to the sixth form are not available to the lower school. There are plans to centralise these resources. The main school library has been refurnished and many new books provided. The teacher in charge and the library assistant are efficient in ensuring that the stock is up-to-date. The introduction of a more efficient computerised borrowing system is well advanced. The library is a good resource, but relatively few books are on loan from the main school library and there is little evidence of any borrowing from the sixth form library. More pupils require active encouragement to borrow more books so that reading skills can be further supported.

119. Accommodation is used well. Rooms are grouped in suites for use of departments, enabling teachers and other staff to communicate effectively, share resources and ensure good departmental co-ordination.

120. The funds provided by the local education authority to support pupils with statements of special educational needs are effectively used in support of designated pupils. School funding for special educational needs is used efficiently to promote pupils' progress in the provision of general classroom support, lunchtime reading support sessions and learning resources. However, support staff are not always used efficiently enough and the information technology programme for processing documentation on pupils' progress is not yet working effectively.

121. Financial control is good. Information provided for governors and senior management is appropriate. Procedures are efficient. School day-to-day administration is generally good.

122. The value for money which the school gives is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved. Despite a very low income, the school enables a good quality of learning to take place in classes where progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. However, attainment is average overall.

123. Since the previous inspection, in general, the school continues to make effective use of staff and resources. Financial control and procedures continue to be managed competently by headteacher and governors. In most cases, resources are used to support learning well. Better planning of in-class adult support for pupils with special educational needs and greater use of the library are required.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

124. The inspection of English was made difficult by the absence of the head of department and one other teacher during the week of the inspection.

125. Results in the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3 have varied since the last inspection. From 1996 to 1998, they were close to the averages for all schools and for similar schools. In 1999, they were below average, and below the school's results in mathematics and science. Results in GCSE English have remained fairly constant, slightly above the average for all schools and close to the average for similar schools. Girls have usually outperformed boys by a considerable margin. Results in GCSE English literature have been higher, but not all pupils take the subject. GCSE English results compare satisfactorily with those in other subjects. At A level, English results have matched national averages and have represented good progress when compared with the same pupils' earlier GCSE results. A level English results compare well with those in other subjects.

126. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is average overall, with relatively little difference between boys' and girls' performance. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are below those expected nationally and not as high as they should be. The gap between boys' and girls' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national difference, and is evident in most aspects of English. Girls often take a leading role in oral work, write more neatly and at greater length, and read more widely. There are no obvious differences in breadth of vocabulary, however. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 generally do less well than they should. Almost all the lowest attainers can read simple texts at a superficial level. Across the attainment range, standards are higher in spoken English, listening and reading than they are in writing.

127. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are at least in line with the national average, and sometimes higher. In Year 11, most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the fiction and non-fiction texts they have studied, including Shakespeare. They cope with a range of vocabulary, and the highest attainers can understand and use figurative language well. As at Key Stage 3, however, few pupils read widely. Most Key Stage 4 pupils draft and re-draft written work appropriately. Their re-drafting often involves genuine improvements to the work, whereas at Key Stage 3 it is frequently little more than copying and as such often a waste of time. Most pupils have satisfactory handwriting skills, although boys in particular do not always apply them. The range of writing at Key Stage 4 is good. The highest attainers understand paragraphing and show satisfactory variety in sentence length and structure. Standards of spelling and punctuation are satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, many high attainers have difficulty in using the possessive apostrophe correctly, and the lowest attainers often leave out necessary punctuation. Spelling is generally accurate, although even the highest attainers have continuing difficulty over unstressed vowels (in words such as 'definite') and in knowing when to double consonants. The lowest attainers frequently make spelling mistakes that are difficult to categorise. Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Most pupils listen carefully, and hear. Almost all can use Standard English correctly. A minority of the higher attainers can speak at length, adapting style successfully to suit the occasion. In most areas, girls outperform boys and the difference is greater than the national difference. The strengths at Key Stage 4 are built on in the sixth form. Students cope well with the demands of A level, although there is relatively little outstanding work.

128. Progress by the majority during Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, particularly in writing. Girls make better progress than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in reading and speaking, though not in writing and listening. Many low attainers do not learn to listen with sufficient attention, and most do not develop the confidence they need in writing. Progress by all pupils improves during Key Stage 4 and is good overall, although the weaker pupils do not all overcome continuing difficulties to the extent that they should. The difference between girls' and boys' progress is accentuated. Progress during Years 12 and 13 is good. Sixth form students benefit from the teachers' close attention to their work.

129. Most pupils respond positively in lessons. Most work well individually or in groups, although lower attainers often find it difficult to concentrate throughout the hour-long lessons, and a small minority tend to misbehave unless firmly controlled. Most pupils answer questions willingly and join in discussion, the girls very often taking the lead in this regard.

130. The teaching is satisfactory overall, although it varies widely in quality and is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Teaching was good in half the lessons seen. At both key stages, the teaching is better in higher-attaining than lower-attaining classes. At Key Stage 3, the teaching is unsatisfactory in a significant minority of lessons, when the work is not well matched to pupils' needs. Class management is mostly good, although there are exceptions, particularly with low-attaining groups. Expectations of pupils are appropriate at Key Stage 4, high in the sixth form, but often too low at Key Stage 3. The range of teaching methods and organisational strategies is satisfactory in most lessons. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in particular, there is some very good use of group and class discussion and there are imaginative approaches to the teaching of class readers and poetry. One widespread weakness restricts the quality of pupils' learning. This is a failure to set clear objectives for pupils' learning in each lesson, and to evaluate the extent to which these objectives are reached. Marking of written work is varied in quality, and is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Too much marking is no more than bland encouragement. At Key Stage 3, pupils are rarely told what they need to do to improve. In one class, for example, very little work has been marked since September. Pupils' reading is not monitored consistently at Key Stage 3. Homework varies in quality. Too much consists of finishing off work started in class.

131. Since the previous inspection, this subject has been conscientiously managed at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Girls are achieving considerably higher results than boys at GCSE, latterly beyond the national difference. There is insufficient monitoring of teachers' work, particularly at Key Stage 3. Much has been done since the last inspection to improve the quality of provision in English, but continuing weaknesses require early attention.

57. *Spoken English, writing and reading across the curriculum*

132. At the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of average and high-attaining pupils speak clearly and fluently. Girls are often more articulate than boys. High-attaining pupils in Year 11 gave some very good extended answers, for example in history during a presentation on aspects of Nazi policy. Many sixth formers can argue persuasively and clearly. By contrast, low-attaining pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 often lack the vocabulary and confidence to speak at length. Listening is generally well developed from early on at Key Stage 3. There are, nevertheless, a few classes at both key stages, for example in music and English, where listening is unsatisfactory unless control is very firm. As a result mainly of lack of

appropriate opportunities, critical listening is not as good as it should be. Overall, progress in speaking and listening is at least satisfactory and often good.

133. At Key Stage 4, almost all pupils can cope at a superficial level with the reading demands of the curriculum. Nevertheless, low attainers lack confidence and do not read as a matter of course. Some make many errors. Most average and high attainers read aloud competently. Many sixth formers use books and other texts effectively as sources of information, argument and opinion. Very few, however, read widely beyond the texts they are required to read. In the main school, although sources are well used in history and some geography classes, research and retrieval skills are not strong and the library is very little used as a support for learning. Despite these weaknesses, and the fact that reading is not taught with any consistency outside English, most average and high-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in learning to read critically and to draw inferences from what they read.

134. Standards of writing are lower than standards of reading and spoken English. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils can write at length, although only the older, more able pupils construct coherent, analytical arguments. The highest attainers write fluently in a variety of styles. The lowest attainers still lack confidence and do not enjoy writing. Information technology is often used well to improve the quality and appearance of written work. Presentation is good when teachers expect it, although better among girls than boys. Standards of spelling and punctuation vary and are often not as good as they should be, with unnecessary errors occurring even in the work of high-attaining sixth formers. Overall, progress in writing is broadly satisfactory.

57. *Drama*

135. Drama is taught as a separate subject from English throughout the school. The teachers are, however, almost all members of the English department.

136. Overall, GCSE drama results have been below national averages since the last inspection, but comparisons with national figures and with other subjects in the school are unreliable because of the relatively small numbers taking the subject. A level theatre studies results, for the very small numbers of students involved, have been mainly below national figures.

137. Pupils enter the school with very little previous experience of drama. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations in some, although not all, aspects of the subject. During the key stage, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in learning to work together in groups to plan and rehearse presentations, and in learning to make simple evaluations of each other's work. Many also learn to project their voices effectively, partly because they often have to work in a large school hall. They make less progress in developing a range of other skills for performance, and in learning to use dramatic skills effectively to convey feelings. To judge by standards in Year 10, where drama is an optional subject, pupils make unsatisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 in developing a sense of audience. Their use of gesture, facial expression and their sense of space are below expectations for their age group. They also develop less well than might be expected in self-confidence and self-discipline. Key Stage 4 pupils do not have a wide enough knowledge of dramatic terminology.

138. Partly because of the weaknesses at Key Stage 3, pupils do not reach standards as high as they should by the time they take GCSE. At the time of the last inspection, weaknesses in progression and continuity at Key Stage 3 were identified as an area for

attention. The weaknesses persist, and the reduction of time for drama in Year 9 has made the problem worse. The allocation of time to drama in Years 7 and 8 is generous and pupils should make good progress in these years. At A level, students take performing arts, combining drama with dance and music. Students in Year 12 are making good progress and are highly committed to the work. They are on course to achieve satisfactory A level results. No Year 13 lessons were seen.

139. Pupils' attitudes to drama are mostly good. Most follow instructions carefully and listen to the teacher and to one another. They do not, however, have a sufficiently clear understanding of the purposes of educational drama. Several at Key Stage 3, when asked what drama was for, struggled for an answer and mentioned such matters as learning how to act in front of an audience. When pressed further, some recognised the importance of educational drama for the development of self-esteem and the ability to express oneself confidently and clearly. Such perceptions need to be more widespread if pupils are to respond intelligently to the provision made for them.

140. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but varies widely in effectiveness and does not support consistent progress in the different aspects of the curriculum for drama at Key Stages 3 and 4. During the inspection it was not possible to see all teachers of the subject, but a full range of classes was observed.

141. Teachers are enthusiastic and able to transmit their enthusiasm to pupils. Most maintain consistently good standards of class discipline. They provide a good range of activities in lessons. However, they tend to be too ambitious with the younger age groups. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has been thoroughly revised since the last inspection, but does not incorporate a step-by-step approach to the development of dramatic skills and understanding of dramatic concepts. In consequence, learning objectives for lessons tend to be far too vague and pupils make less progress than they should in the fundamental aspects of drama. Most lessons move at a brisk pace, although there are exceptions at both key stages where pupils have too much time for preparation including, in a few cases, unnecessary "dressing up". In the one unsatisfactory lesson, time was wasted in this way. In most lessons, insufficient attention is given to the development of pupils' language through drama. Work is not linked with sufficient precision to the programmes of study and learning objectives of National Curriculum English. Teaching in the sixth form is good.

142. Drama makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and cultural development through ambitious and well-managed school productions. However, the potential contribution to other aspects of pupils' development, including the spiritual dimension, has not been explored. The drama handbook contains no policy for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

143. As at the time of the last inspection, Key Stage 3 pupils experience only a narrow range of dramatic techniques, and their understanding of dramatic concepts is underdeveloped. Pupils throughout the age range are still given plenty of opportunities to work independently, but do not receive sufficiently clear guidance or deadlines in doing so. Resources have improved in some respects, but the accommodation retains its unsatisfactory features.

Mathematics

144. At the end of Key Stage 3, performance in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 was marginally above the national average for all schools, but below the average for similar schools. In recent years, results have usually been above the national average. At the end

of Key Stage 4, results in GCSE at grades A* to C in 1998 were slightly below the national average and in 1999 were at the national average. Results have fluctuated in recent years from well below to slightly above average. At A level, results have consistently matched the national averages for the last three years in grades A to E but generally were below these averages for grades A and B. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at all key stages. Subject results are average in comparison with other departments in the school.

145. Overall, standards in mathematics are average at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Basic number bonds are secure. The department's numeracy policy ensures that these bonds are reinforced by regular in-class mental testing, and by activities such as a board game using primes and square numbers in a lesson on number patterns in Year 7. There is no over-reliance on calculators. In lessons observed, pupils handle geometry well, illustrated by a good lesson in Year 8, where there was good recall of the angle-properties of lines and triangles. Algebra causes problems for the lowest attainers and their understanding is limited. Investigative work is handled well and pupils manage well-thought-out projects across both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Statistics and data analysis are secure and pupils use graphs with understanding. Presentation is of very variable quality and some is unsatisfactory. This is an area that the department would do well to address. Students following A level are achieving average standards in lessons.

146. Progress is satisfactory across both key stages. However, it is restricted at Key Stage 3 by the rigid system for grouping pupils in place in Years 7 and 8. This badly restricts opportunity to move pupils into higher or lower ability groups and results in classes containing a relatively wide spread of mathematical ability. This hampers progress by the demands made on teachers to provide work suitably adapted to the full range of pupils' attainment. The shortfall in suitable texts in Years 10 and 11 restricts progress at Key Stage 4. Large class sizes and the resultant cramped classrooms at both key stages also cause problems for teachers trying to move about to help individuals. There is a lack of computers within the department itself and although National Curriculum content for mathematics is successfully taught on computers outside the department, there is a need for computers to be immediately accessible to provide breadth to the teaching methods available to staff. However, the department works hard to overcome these difficulties and satisfactory progress is sustained. Lower attaining pupils have the benefit of comparatively small classes and good levels of in-class support. They make satisfactory progress as shown by their success at GCSE in the range of grades A* to G, consistently matching national standards. Pupils with special educational needs progress at a rate in line with that of other pupils.

147. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They use the language of mathematics confidently. When their work is challenging and interesting, they maintain enthusiasm, including low attainers with special educational needs. Pupils are courteous and respectful to visitors. They have opportunities to excel and do so in competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge, Mathemagic at Techniquet in Cardiff and a mathematics club for Years 7 and 8. Enthusiastic mathematicians participate well in these.

148. Overall teaching is good. It is better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All lessons seen were at least satisfactory with over 60% good or very good. Teachers plan lessons well. These proceed at a good pace. They miss few opportunities to relate work to real-life situations or to involve pupils. They choose suitable tasks and learning objectives and provide appropriate challenges. Teachers obviously care for their pupils, want them to succeed and show a sensitive understanding of their difficulties. Sixth form teaching is informed and detailed, although lacking in pace. Teachers give freely of their time to provide additional revision classes after school to speed pupils' progress and run a thriving mathematics club for Years 7 and 8. They use questioning well, but pupils' responses are rarely analysed enough to provide an insight into possible misunderstandings. Lessons are well timed and homework used effectively to consolidate and extend classwork. Teachers mark work thoroughly. Assessment procedures are secure, but pupils' National Curriculum levels of work are not recorded except at the end of Key Stage 3. The scheme of work is not fully geared to the National Curriculum, but action

to address this is in hand by the new head of department. There are no monitoring procedures, to ensure consistent quality of teaching and learning, in place within the department. The department lacks an office as a base in order to centralise administration. This is a committed department, although under-resourced, which is teaching well, strongly led, and producing positive progress in mathematics under difficult circumstances.

149. Since the last inspection, standards at both key stages have been sustained. Sixth form students still achieve fewer A and B grades in A level examinations than nationally, with the exception of 1998. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and there is no evidence of lessons being pitched at too low a level. The scheme of work remains in need of review, but this is in hand.

Numeracy across the curriculum

150. Standards in the use of numeracy in the school are satisfactory. Good use is made of mental work in lessons, particularly in mathematics, to reinforce and consolidate identified areas of concern. There is a numeracy policy in place so that practice in use of number can be co-ordinated across the curriculum. There is no undue reliance on calculators.

151. Mathematical techniques such as tabulation, graphical representation and manipulation of formulae are used well in other areas of the curriculum, for example in geography and design and technology. They are particularly used well in science, in cooling curves and graphs showing the relationship of time and distance. Numeracy is mainly advanced through mathematics where pupils make satisfactory progress in all aspects, although lower attainers find difficulty with algebra.

Science

152. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is close to the national average. In national tests in 1999, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels are in line with the national average. With minor variation, these proportions have remained fairly stable and pupils' performance in science has been close to or above the national average for the previous four years. In comparison with similar schools, attainment at National Curriculum level 5 and above is close to the average, although at level 6 and above pupils' results are below average. In relation to other subjects, science sits above English and level with mathematics.

153. At Key Stage 4 attainment is above average. Approximately three quarters of pupils study double science, and the remainder follow the equivalent single science course in combination with either rural science or electronics, for the same amount of time. In 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C in double award science was above the national average, whereas during the previous three years it has fluctuated around the national average. With the exception of the 1997 cohort, there is no clear difference in the attainment of girls and boys in achieving GCSE A* to C grades, and the pattern in recent years is very similar to the national trend where girls have usually attained marginally better than boys. The proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades A* to C in single science in 1999 was close to the national averages for both girls and boys in this subject. Prior to this recent success, a very small proportion of pupils attained passes in this range. At A level, the proportion of students attaining grades A and B and A to E, in separate sciences in 1999 was below the national average. Over recent years there has been major variation in the proportion of students attaining pass grades. Relatively small numbers affect results. A level science, especially physics, is not a popular choice for girls.

Results in science compare well with those in other subjects.

154. Attainment in lessons is average at Key Stage 3 and occasionally above this. This is shown by pupils in Year 9 with their work on the reactions of metals with water and acid, and similarly with pupils studying electrical safety in Year 8. Attainment in lessons is above average at Key Stage 4, where pupils in Year 11 study the structure and function of teeth and their important role in pre-digested preparation of food. Pupils also attain good standards in lessons in rural science and electronics. In sixth form lessons, students are currently attaining above average standards as a result of good teaching and their own positive attitudes.

155. Progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This applies to pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs. Where progress is good, pupils are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This was demonstrated very well in Year 7 where a group of pupils with a wide range of attainment showed good progress in their understanding and categorisation of living and non-living things. Similarly, others in Year 8 made very good progress in their planning of an investigation into the factors most likely to affect the strength of an electromagnet. However, at Key Stage 3 especially, on a daily basis, there is insufficient opportunity for progress in open-ended problem-solving, for making and testing hypotheses and for developing the skills of planning and investigation, prediction and evaluation. The quality of apparatus and equipment is generally poor and much is old and wearing out and, on occasion, there is insufficient quantity of basic apparatus available to support effective learning and an appropriate level of practical problem-solving. Pupils in Year 10 made good progress and enjoy their practical work on the mechanism of convection. They presented their work with confidence and spoke and listened well. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, older pupils show good progress in their understanding of food tests and of the changing values of potential difference in various parts of parallel and series circuits, and in electronics. At Key Stage 4, pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with other pupils. A level students made good progress in a lesson on the cathode ray oscilloscope and others with their understanding of types of chemical reaction.

156. Pupils are well behaved and relationships are good. Many take pride in their work and books are generally looked after well. They are keen, willing and attentive and approach work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment. They engage well with new knowledge, skills and processes. This was illustrated well during a Year 10 practical lesson on the skin, where low attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, responded well and made good progress. Similarly, Year 8 pupils working together were fully engaged with electromagnets. Pupils enjoy practical work in science. They work well together and with good concentration.

157. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good. There are examples across both key stages and in the sixth form, of very good practice. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding, particularly within their own specialist area of the subject, and use it to organise and prepare lessons effectively. Teachers' expectations are high for most pupils, and in many lessons they make intended outcomes clear to pupils. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. Whole-class questioning is used effectively. The pace of lessons is generally good. A range of teaching and learning methods is used. Homework is well thought out, relevant and clearly extends learning. Assessment is properly organised and effective, especially in lessons where the teacher can give immediate feedback, such as a Year 11 test on the alimentary canal. There are routines and regular opportunities taken for assessment, such

as end-of-unit tests, and the outcome of practical investigations. Pupils' books and other work are regularly marked, often with praise and supportive and helpful comment. There is a move towards ensuring more consistency between modules and between teachers in different science subjects. Scores and levels are sometimes used to generate long-term individual targets, but are not yet routinely used by teachers to plan the next stage of learning.

158. Although teachers are rapidly developing skills of using computers in science and administration, there remains a serious shortfall of information technology in pupils' day-to-day experience in science. Teachers do not engage pupils enough in relevant investigative, problem-solving activity, especially at Key Stage 3. Teachers provide extra-curricular activities for pupils, including a range of local field-trips and visits as diverse as to the sewage and water works, a poultry farm, the three counties showground, a nuclear power station and a local study of the River Leaddon. Long-standing links with university conferences and local industry are useful and additional resources and helpful to students.

159. Since the last inspection, the department has carried out a number of significant changes. There is an improved awareness of children with special educational needs, and the department has developed a range of methods to support these pupils. New and revised schemes of work are in place and there is improved provision of textbooks and other resources. Initially as a response to the perceived unequal attainment of girls and boys, pilot work with gender-based groups was introduced for some groups at Key Stage 4, although the need for this kind of arrangement has now ceased. Good subject leadership and frequent discussion with colleagues has led to greater understanding of effective teaching and the sharing of good practice. Letters to parents describing pupils' good work is helping towards better communication. The general appearance of laboratories and preparation areas has improved with pupils' work of good quality on display and, despite the crumbling fabric, they present a clean, and reasonably attractive environment. Overall, science has changed for the better, and pupils enjoy it as a popular and successful subject.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

160. With the single exception of 1998, GCSE results, including those of 1999, have been above average in attainment of grades A* to C and A* to G. Pupils' results usually compare well with those in their other subjects. At A level, all students have achieved a pass grade since the previous inspection, and attainment of grades A and B is usually at the national average, although small numbers in some years do not make national comparisons valid. In 1999, achievement of A and B grades was higher than in 1998 and all students obtained results at grade D and above. All six students entered for intermediate GNVQ art and design in 1999 were successful.

161. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the nationally expected level. In lessons, Year 9 pupils make imaginative response to a theme using pastel effectively, and show satisfactory skill in observational drawing and a reasonable grasp of perspective. They have a good understanding of art vocabulary, and some knowledge of art history, for example of Michelangelo and surrealism. They critically appraise their own and others' work using correct terminology. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average in lessons seen. Year 11 students reveal good artistic skills in a range of media in two and three-dimensions. Their projects are supported by written accounts showing a good knowledge of art vocabulary, artists and styles. They fully understand the GCSE criteria on which their

work is judged and the need to meet deadlines. Attainment in the sixth form is average. Year 13 students show satisfactory practical skills in lessons. For example, they use pen and wash technique, pencil tonal studies and use of water colour on a large and small scale, with good quantities of work achieved. Students have researched a number of sculptors such as Brancusi and Henry Moore and produced satisfactory articles about them. They understand the nature of clay and produce good clay heads of people they know. They have a satisfactory understanding of head measurements and the relationship of the features to each other.

162. Pupils' progress over Key Stage 3 is very good. Year 8 pupils make very good progress developing their constructions of hats and extending and consolidating their art vocabulary. Year 7 pupils make very good progress developing their drawings to scale, using viewfinders effectively. High, average and low-attaining pupils make similarly very good progress. All groups of pupils progress as well as others of similar prior attainment including those with special educational needs. Pupils are very well taught, and are well-behaved, major factors in the achievement of such very good progress. Pupils' progress over Key Stage 4 is good. In a Year 10 class, almost half of whom were students with special educational needs, high, average and low attaining students made good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of expressionism and progressing their drawings and paintings on the theme of *tension*. Students' progress in the sixth form is very good. Year 12 students make very good progress developing their understanding of natural forms and the work of Georgia O'Keefe. They experience lithography, using antique stones and the splendid Furnival press to realise their designs. They make very good gains in knowledge and understanding of graphic art by this and other means, such as etching and silk-screen printing.

163. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good at all ages. There is a good take up for the subject for GCSE, A level and GNVQ intermediate or advanced levels. Pupils are interested, concentrate well and develop good study habits as they progress through the school. Behaviour is good. The subject makes a good contribution to all aspects of pupils' development.

164. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4, and very good in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good, covering a wide range of art-skills, including ceramics, sculpture, and graphics in addition to painting and drawing. For example, a Year 12 lesson included a very good demonstration of how to enlarge a section of a flower, using a viewfinder, with very good use of descriptive language emphasising key features. Appropriate reference was made to a relevant artist. Students subsequently developed pastel images of high quality in the appropriate style, making very good progress and producing impressive work, completed in the time available. Planning, methods and organisational strategies are very good. For example, a Year 7 lesson succeeded well because the teacher had gone to great pains to ensure that the aim of the lesson was perfectly understood and the materials needed were conveniently to hand. Effective routines for distributing these and settling down to work were in place. Pupils are well managed and time and resources are used efficiently. The department is well led with good documentation and collaborative planning, and a clear direction for the subject.

165. Since the previous inspection, with the exception of GCSE outcomes in 1998, satisfactory standards and progress have been maintained and the standards of teaching have remained high. The length of lessons, however, has diminished and class sizes have grown. Resources have been constrained so that the department lacks drying racks, a cage for the kiln, ventilation for the printing area, and a blacked-out room suitable for

showing projected images to support students' critical studies, from slides or videos. The use of computers is still insufficient.

Design and technology

166. Results across the range of design and technology GCSE examinations in 1999 were mostly above average. Over recent years, results have usually been above average, with the exception of 1998, when results were below average. At A level, results are usually above average at grades A to E, but below this at grades A and B. Subjects' results usually compare well with others in the school.

167. At Key Stage 3, pupils achieve standards that are in line with national expectations. By the end the key stage, they demonstrate that they have acquired satisfactory knowledge of a range of processes, tools and equipment when they design and make garden tools. They use appropriate methods to model their designs in order to ensure fitness for the intended purpose. They demonstrate sound practical skills, for example when working to develop a snack bar for healthy foods, or when applying colour to fabric. Pupils in all areas use sketching and drawing effectively to communicate their designs. They successfully evaluate their products.

168. At Key Stage 4, attainment is average overall. In lessons observed, standards were sometimes higher. Pupils are confident and skilful makers who generate a good range of ideas for their designs. In resistant materials, they produce clear design-briefs and use their working drawings effectively to realise their projects. Pupils taking automotive studies demonstrate good research skills when they explore existing products such as different types of seat belts. Pupils working in systems and control communicate their ideas well and incorporate a good range of considerations as they set out the progress of their work in their folders. Pupils in textiles use brainstorming techniques well to research ideas. Their folders feature good, clear analyses of their briefs. Some pupils use information technology well to present the findings of the survey. In food technology, pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of general and specific nutritional needs in their written work. In graphic products, pupils do not make extensive use of information technology, but folders show a sound mastery of a range of graphical techniques, for example in a car promotion project.

169. Students in Year 13 attain above average standards. They have good research skills that they use well to develop challenging projects. Their design briefs are suitably concise and their analysis of situations is full and informative. Their practical skills are sound and they communicate their ideas well in graphical form.

170. Progress is good at both key stages and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress especially in the development of a good range of practical skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when they have the benefit of focused support from classroom assistants. Pupils make good progress in gaining an awareness of issues of health and safety in all materials-areas. They make good progress too in their knowledge and use of a good range of tools and equipment. Year 10 pupils make sound progress in developing ways of classifying fabrics through testing. Food technologists in that year make good progress developing their working practices. In graphics products, pupils learn to apply a range of graphical techniques well. In systems and control, pupils make sound progress in their understanding of forging and casting when they watch an expert demonstration by their teacher. Sixth form students make good progress in graphical communication and in developing their understanding of areas such as corrosion.

171. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Sixth form courses are popular. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and during introductions and expert demonstrations. They develop their capacity for personal study well, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, when they undertake research for their subjects. They show good attitudes when they clear up after practical lessons. They have good relationships with their classmates and their teachers. Pupils show good initiative in following personal interests in the projects they choose at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Many pupils return after school to carry on with their projects.

172. Teaching is good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They give very effective introductions to lessons, ensuring that pupils know exactly what they have to do. They support individuals well during practical lessons and offer good feedback that has a positive effect on progress. They have high expectations of their pupils. This is especially evident when they encourage them to develop their personal interests in the choice of projects in the examination courses. The teachers comprise a very good team that is well led. Planning is good both for lessons and for the wide range of courses offered. Preparation is very good and the food and resistant materials departments benefit from very effective technical and administrative assistance.

173. Since the previous inspection, standards have remained at least average, and above this in the sixth form. Pupils' attitudes and the standards of teaching have remained good. Support staff continue to give good assistance. Storage problems for artefacts have been overcome by skilled photography, ensuring a good record of work completed.

Geography

174. An above average proportion of pupils achieved GCSE grades A* to C in 1998 and 1999. In 1998 and 1999 all pupils achieved a grade. Over the last four years, there has been a steady rise in GCSE results above the national increase. The performance of girls at GCSE grades A* to C has been in line with national averages for girls, but for the last three years has been below the school average because, contrary to the national pattern, boys perform better than girls. At the end of the sixth form, attainment is average. In 1998, A level results at grades A and B were twice the national average, although at grades A to E results were below average. In 1999, there were no students with grades A and B but all students obtained a grade. Entries are small with less than ten students per year. Overall, results in the subject compare well with those in other subjects.

175. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment of pupils is at the nationally expected level matching teachers' assessments in 1999. High attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 have good locational knowledge and are able to name many places and key features on National Curriculum reference maps. Most of these pupils can use Ordnance Survey maps with confidence and make good use of vertical photographs and satellite images to evaluate landscapes and physical processes. Low attainers have considerable difficulty locating places but use technical terms, for example condensation and evaporation, when describing the water cycle. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is above average. Pupils are able to carry out geographical enquiries with the guidance of staff and make good use of their visit to Cheddar to evaluate the impact of tourism on sensitive areas. They handle graphs and numerical data well. Attainment on the A level course is average. Many students in the sixth form have well developed local knowledge that they put to good use when considering the development of settlement.

176. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils arrive in Year 7 from a variety of schools and with no consistent geographical education. The department tests pupils on entry to try to establish a base-line against which to judge attainment. All pupils make gains in subject knowledge and this is constantly reinforced. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good as a result of a well-planned course taught by experienced and committed teachers. At both key stages, the progress of high attainers is good and this is helped by the arrangements for grouping of pupils at Key Stage 3. These allow some modification of teaching methods and learning materials. High expectations of teachers also encourage learning. The progress of low attainers is satisfactory but the large class sizes do not help them to make better progress. For example, the lowest attaining class in Year 9 has 24 pupils, and three support assistants for pupils with special educational needs are also present. Movement round the room for the teacher is restricted. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Sometimes they are supported in the classroom but this is not consistent and there is no planned strategy to deal with their individual needs. Progress in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students develop analytical skills and are provided with plenty of opportunities to handle data and a variety of information sources. They make detailed notes and develop their understanding to greater depth by the use of much up-to-date material.

177. In almost all classes pupils are well behaved and sensible and show a good approach to their work. They arrive on time, well equipped and waste no time in settling to their studies. This contributes to their progress. Most pupils concentrate well and show interest in their work. Many are able to talk about appropriate current events, for example the earthquake in Turkey, the floods in France and the development of supermarkets and fast-food outlets in Malvern. Their attitudes are influenced by the enthusiastic and professional approach of teachers. The lowest ability class in Year 9 finds concentration difficult and their immature approach hampers progress.

178. Teaching is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and one in ten lessons was very good. Teachers are good geographers and show a great love of and commitment to the subject that is transmitted to the pupils. They are able to extend the knowledge of pupils and relate theoretical work to local examples. Year 12 and 13 students respond very well to teachers and show enthusiasm for work on regional development, volunteering many examples from their own local experiences. Pupils are expected to work hard, give of their best and respond well. It is clear that teachers are proud of the success of past pupils and these are displayed as encouragement to present pupils. The staff are experienced and are clear about what they are teaching, but do not always make the objectives of the lesson explicit to pupils and rarely check learning at the end of each lesson. The arrangements for grouping by ability are useful to teaching, although because this is outside the control of the department, some pupils are misplaced and this is unhelpful to progress. Classes contain pupils with a wide range of geographical ability and teachers need to give more attention to planning for the individual needs of some pupils. Teachers use many methods to retain interest. The use of overhead projectors, video clips and a variety of published materials all help to provide a stimulating environment that encourages learning. However, there is insufficient use of information technology and the lack of suitable, accessible equipment is preventing the department providing a comprehensive modern approach to the teaching of geography. Many pupils at Key Stage 3 are not aware of their National Curriculum levels, and these are not used with pupils to promote understanding. The department has made good use of a collection of examples of pupils' work at different levels, in order to aid assessment of work at the end of Key Stage 3. This material could be used more with pupils. Marking at Key Stage 3 is not consistent and few exercise books contain sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their grades. The development of geographical vocabulary and its regular testing at Key Stage 4 is good.

Sixth form students gain considerable benefit from the lesson on how to mark examination essays.

179. This is a good well-led department, and since the last inspection there has been a steady improvement in GCSE results which are above average. The department has maintained a good standard of teaching. Areas for further attention are the provision of information technology at both key stages and in the sixth form and greater attention to the individual needs of low attaining pupils. A more tightly focussed development plan linked to the training needs of staff is required to ensure continued progress of all pupils.

History

180. GCSE results at grades A* to C were above national averages in 1996 and 1997. In 1998, they were below average but improved slightly in 1999. GCSE results at grades A* to G have usually been above national averages. Numbers taking the subject at A level have varied from between four and twelve students over the last four years, when results at grades A or B have either been above or broadly in line with national averages, with almost all students obtaining a pass grade. Results overall usually compare well with those in other subjects.

181. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the nationally expected level. This is reflected in teachers' assessments for the last three years. Pupils have a sound, and often good, knowledge and understanding of major events and changes in the periods they have studied. Year 9 pupils, for example, have some understanding of the implications of the Industrial Revolution and its impact on working conditions. They work well with sources of evidence and are beginning to understand why historians represent people such as Mary Tudor in different ways. Higher attaining pupils usually write well but middle and lower attaining pupils often have difficulty in producing accurate and sustained historical writing.

182. At Key Stage 4, attainment in Year 11 classes is above the national average. Most pupils are mastering the content of the course effectively, and have a good understanding of underlying issues, such as the effect of Hitler's policies on Germany during the 1930s. Pupils extract and use information from historical sources successfully, and many pupils produce well structured, analytical writing. In the sixth form, the attainment of the very small Year 13 group is above the national average. Students have a good grasp of international relations since 1945, and are able to make effective links between different parts of their studies.

183. Pupils' progress over Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. They extend their knowledge and understanding of different periods and develop relevant skills, especially in their use of sources of evidence. Pupils with special educational needs in mixed teaching groups usually make the same progress as other pupils, but sometimes they make less progress because they have difficulty in completing tasks set for the whole class. Pupils' progress over Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. Their use of sources and their historical writing improve, due mainly to effective teaching and positive pupil attitudes.

184. Pupils' response to history is good. They are well motivated and enjoy the subject. High levels of concentration and sensible behaviour help pupils to make good progress in lessons. Positive attitudes and appropriate skills also enable pupils to work independently and undertake projects and personal studies. Pupils' enthusiasm for history is greatly stimulated by visits to the First World War battlefields and to the Normandy beaches.

185. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and

is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than it is at Key Stage 3. Teachers know their subject well and are keen to extend pupils' historical thinking. They use a good range of methods, and teachers' explanations and questioning are particular strengths. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the English Civil War the teacher's questions and clarifications extended pupils' understanding of the causes of the war very effectively. Staff use group-work well, but on some occasions this method leads to difficulties due to the small size of one of the history rooms, because of the problem of pupils and teacher moving about. Planning of lessons is well based, although sometimes objectives of lessons are not specific enough for pupils to appreciate the overall direction of the work. Teachers use resources well, especially video material. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, a brief video sequence on life in the Roman Army gained the interest of a lower attaining group and helped to increase their understanding of the topic. Teachers give good advice to pupils in class on how they can improve but do not always give enough specific guidance when marking pupils' written work.

186. Since the last inspection, good improvement has taken place and this well-led department is in a strong position to undertake further development. The quality of teaching has improved and the range of learning resources has increased. Schemes of work now contain more guidance. Access to the school's computer facilities is limited but the use of CD ROMs and word processing in history has improved since the last inspection.

Information technology

187. Results in the GCSE information systems short course, taken for the first time in the school in 1999, were below average and below those in pupils' other subjects. The department has identified the likely causes for these results and has altered its planning to secure future improvement. A small number of A level computing students achieved results which were above the national average in 1998. Larger numbers exceeded that result in 1999, at both the A and B and A to E grades. A level results usually compare well with those in students' other subjects.

188. At Key Stage 3, pupils attain standards which are at the level expected nationally. All pupils follow a well planned course that covers all the aspects required by the National Curriculum orders for information technology. Pupils satisfactorily develop their word processing skills when they write about an enjoyable day out. They use a spell checker competently and can lay their work out to make it attractive to an intended audience, for example while working with poems they are studying in English. They satisfactorily master the creation of databases and how to get information from them. Pupils understand the need for accuracy when they enter information into applications. They gain basic terms associated with spreadsheets and successfully develop their use of them when they enter figures and formulae to model the information. Pupils use basic programming language successfully to control the movement of a pointer on the computer screen. They make good use of construction kits to control mechanisms with instructions that they enter into a computer.

189. At Key Stage 4, attainment is average overall. This is the standard currently in lessons. All Key Stage 4 pupils undertake a GCSE information technology short course that covers all statutory requirements for the subject. Pupils build effectively on the basic skills acquired in the preceding key stage. They satisfactorily reinforce and extend their word-processing and desktop publishing skills. For example, they produce booklets that show a satisfactory understanding of how to make their work attractive to others. Their work with databases is satisfactory. They can frame complex queries and they are aware of a number of contexts in which databases are used in the world about them. Pupils' satisfactorily

manage modelling, using figures they enter into spreadsheets. In a robotics and control module, they acquire a sound practical understanding of ways in which sensors can detect changes in their environment and ways in which computers can be used to control mechanisms.

190. Sixth form students studying GNVQ courses acquire sound standards in information technology using a good range of software. They make good use of software graphics to develop images in their art and design course. They successfully acquire skills to develop expert systems using spreadsheet software. A level computing students achieve standards equal to those which apply nationally. They have an understanding of a number of computer languages and have developed satisfactory standards in systems analysis and design. They successfully apply their knowledge and understanding when they create drugs-awareness information or language tutorials that utilise a range of media.

191. Progress made by pupils is satisfactory at all ages. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3 when they receive individual support from teachers and in some cases from classroom assistants. Year 7 pupils make satisfactory progress developing skills to correct and amend information on screen. They make sound progress in acquiring keyboards skills, but they would benefit from more opportunity to practise them. Year 8 pupils make good progress in developing their use of spreadsheets to record income and expenditure of pocket money. Year 10 pupils progress satisfactorily in learning how to develop procedures to control the opening and closing of a model bridge with light sensors and electrically powered mechanisms. The progress of some pupils is adversely affected when the teacher is drawn away from the support of learning to deal with individual persistent behavioural problems. The progress of GNVQ students is satisfactory and often better. They consolidate and develop a good range of information technology skills when they use them regularly in their projects. Year 12 A level computing students make satisfactory progress overall. Their progress is good in lessons in which they gain knowledge and understanding of aspects of data management.

192. Progress in information technology in other subjects is mainly unsatisfactory. Some departments provide work using computers, reinforcing and extending the skills pupils gain in lessons specifically for information technology. However, this use of computers is very restricted and has an adverse effect on the progress pupils make in developing and applying their skills in different contexts. There is no scheme of work in the school to co-ordinate and promote information technology across all subjects. The limited availability of computers of sufficient quality makes the provision of information technology across the curriculum more difficult.

193. Overall, pupils respond well in lessons for information technology. The interest level is good. In the courses provided, concentration is usually good. Pupils make good use of the opportunities that the curriculum provides. Some sixth formers spend a good deal of their free time in private study using computers. Behaviour is generally good, but when teaching is not strong enough, some pupils disrupt lessons. Pupils are polite to visitors and respond well to questions, advice and instruction. They help each other when problems arise.

194. Teaching is mainly satisfactory and some is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form it is good. Teachers and technical staff have a good level of subject and technical knowledge between them. They have appropriate expectations of how well pupils can perform and plan their work accordingly. Teachers use encouragement well to motivate pupils. They set tasks with clear and suitably concise introduction and give good expert demonstrations to introduce new topics. Lessons generally feature a good allowance of

time working on machines. Teachers use this time effectively to support individuals and to maintain the pace of their work. Teaching was only unsatisfactory on an occasion when the teacher's attention was diverted from this good level of support to deal with the misbehaviour of a few individuals. Relationships are generally productive. Teachers are generally sympathetic and show a good understanding of the need for pupils to learn through practical experience. They cover the curriculum well. Challenge in the sixth form is often very good. In GNVQ key skills lessons for information technology, teaching is well supported by good quality support resource-booklets. In these lessons, the enthusiastic approach of the teacher motivates students very well. Students are introduced to a wider than normal range of software and this provides them with good opportunities in advancing their own work. A level teaching features clear expositions and good use of time. Students benefit from good subject knowledge and are given feedback of high quality as work on projects progresses. Assessment is generally sound.

195. Since the previous inspection, a short GCSE course has been introduced for all pupils and it is not possible, therefore, to compare standards with those of 1994. Pupils remain well motivated. The application and use of information technology across the curriculum remains underdeveloped.

Modern languages

196. Since the last inspection, GCSE examination results at grades A* to C have fluctuated, reaching a peak in 1997 when they were well above national averages. In this year, the entry was of a relatively small number of average and higher-attaining pupils. With a change in examination syllabus in 1998 and a rise in the number of pupils entered from the whole attainment range, results worsened. During this time, there was much absence of teachers. In 1999, French results were just above national averages. German results were well above. In 1998, examination performance in modern languages was above that in several other subjects. The gap between girls' and boys' performance has grown considerably since 1997. Girls now outperform boys beyond the difference that applies nationally. In recent years the number of students on A level courses has been too small for valid comparisons with national averages. In 1998, one student gained a C grade and another an E grade. In 1999, one student gained an A grade and another an E grade. These results were in line with the same students' performance in other A level subjects.

197. At Key Stage 3, observation of pupils in lessons and scrutiny of their exercise books show that attainment is just in line with national expectations. This level of attainment is slightly above the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. Throughout the key stage, most pupils listen carefully to the teacher and follow instructions well in the foreign language. They are less confident when listening to tapes. Most pupils are confident in speaking, because they have sufficient practice on a regular basis. In a few classes, however, where chorus work and practice in pronunciation are inadequate, or have been absent in the past, pupils' pronunciation is hesitant and unsure. There is little time for an extra reading scheme, but one Year 8 class of higher attainers in German can read a short passage made up by the teacher with understanding and pleasure. A good variety of writing activities is done by most pupils and in several lessons seen, great attention was paid to the skills of handwriting and presentation. Over the key stage, higher attaining pupils do not develop the ability to write longer accounts and descriptions of, for example, their families and school, as well as might be expected. Approximately half the pupils in Years 8 and 9 take German as a second foreign language. They make a good start, but with only one lesson a week, much time has to be taken up with revision of work already covered. Nevertheless, many pupils make surprisingly good progress and are genuinely enthused by the language.

198. At Key Stage 4, attainment continues in line with the national average. By this time, higher attaining pupils have caught up on their writing skills and, particularly in German, they develop good control of tenses. They can write good accounts and letters within the demands of the modular course. Average and lower attainers need much more support from the teacher for these assessment-tasks. Pupils' performance in speaking is enhanced at the beginning of Year 10 when they produce a tape about themselves. Lower attainers have much difficulty in retaining vocabulary over time, but they perform satisfactorily on the course leading to a certificate of achievement. All pupils learn to use dictionaries sensibly to support their reading.

199. In the sixth form, numbers for French and German at A level are low, and there are consequently some joint Year 12 and 13 lessons. Teachers work very hard to provide materials for all students in these classes. The most talented students write and express their opinions accurately and with care. Other students are much more hesitant in speaking, because they have less time working with teachers at their own level than is the expected national norm. There are no foreign language assistants to help students develop their speaking skills independently of teachers. Nevertheless, Year 12 students make satisfactory progress overall, and Year 13 students make good progress, once they have reached a stage of language acquisition where they can work more independently.

200. During Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in individual lessons, because of good, careful teaching. Over time, progress is only satisfactory, because the total allocation of lesson time is relatively low in national terms. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, generally make good progress, because they receive extra time in French in Years 8 and 9 and good teaching. Pupils understand what they are doing and are kept hard at work in lessons. During Key Stage 4, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. Higher attainers make good progress, particularly in written work. Pupils in German make good progress from the relatively low base they reach at the end of Key Stage 3.

201. Pupils are interested in the languages they learn and generally behave well and often very well in lessons. They mostly take an active part in partner-work and, at Key Stage 3, enjoy the songs, language games and class questionnaires which all feature at times in lessons. One Year 7 class learnt their colours in French by singing about a rainbow and in a group of Year 9 lower attainers, pupils described a picture of a topsy-turvy house enthusiastically to their partners. Sixth formers take up the opportunity of doing work experience in France and good numbers of pupils go on trips and exchanges to France and Germany.

202. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Nearly half the lessons seen were very good, a third were satisfactory and the remainder were good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the languages they teach and generally use the foreign language consistently well in the classroom. All teachers however, do not always follow the best practice in chorus work, drills and pronunciation-practice to the same extent. Planning is good and teachers make sure that there are enough different activities to keep pupils interested and busy during lessons. These are relatively long for young language-learners, especially the lower attainers. Teachers mostly expect and obtain high standards of behaviour and involvement from pupils of all levels of ability. Teachers use the overhead projector well, often with their own well designed materials. Some teachers describe the aims to be achieved carefully at the beginning of each lesson and take time to evaluate achievement at the end.

203. The new head of department has already gained the co-operation of the team and

begun the co-ordination of all aspects of management very successfully. The discussion and sharing of good practice, monitoring of teaching and written work and re-writing of schemes of work have correctly been early priorities for development. Inadequate time is provided for two foreign languages at Key Stage 3 and for the jointly taught sixth form courses, especially in German. A good start has been made on revising assessment schemes to raise standards further.

204. Since the last inspection, the department has started to teach a foreign language to all pupils throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and examination results have declined as a result of the increase in numbers taking the courses. The gap between boys' and girls' GCSE performance is marked. The attainment of lower attainers at Key Stage 3 has improved, as have oral skills overall.

57. **Music**

205. Results in GCSE and at A level are well above the national average. Standards compare well with those in other subjects.

206. Standards of attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. In performing, most pupils learn to play basic chord sequences and go on to create accompaniment patterns for simple folk songs. However, higher attaining pupils do not attain at a level in line with their abilities. For instance, those pupils who are capable of playing simple keyboard parts fluently, too rarely have the opportunity to develop their technique further. In composing, where most topics depend on using keyboards, pupils produce successful arrangements of the music that they learn. They can play the chord scheme for 12-bar blues successfully. They are familiar with the elements of music, but they do not readily employ this knowledge to develop their ideas. Their ability to experiment, select sound and control structure in free composition is unsatisfactory. The noise-filled conditions in which most pupils have to work inhibit the development of critical listening and limit opportunities for pupils to work together in groups to explore sound and organise their ideas. Pupils listen well and correctly use some technical terms to describe music they hear, but their descriptive vocabulary is underdeveloped. They sing accurately and in the correct range, but are diffident about projecting the sound.

207. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. Higher attaining pupils confidently use computer techniques to produce imaginative work and lower attaining pupils, with help, are able to follow guidelines to create properly structured pieces. Pupils know that by selecting appropriate scales for their compositions they can create different moods. They listen carefully, readily discuss their work using appropriate technical language, and are prepared to refine outcomes. Performing is good. Pupils play confidently and with a sense of style. Attainment of the few pupils who continue with music as an A level course is at the expected level, in lessons.

208. Progress overall at Key Stage 3 is just satisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 make good progress in combining a range of skills, co-ordinating reading with playing, musical memory and aural perception. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with others. There is good progress in ensemble work and in the development of musical memory, but few pupils, other than those learning instruments, acquire better than basic reading skills in music or develop fluency. Progress in composing diatonic pieces is satisfactory, but where pupils have to experiment and make decisions, progress is unsatisfactory. This is because of the excessively noisy conditions in which pupils cannot distinguish different timbres, textures or levels of dynamics. The progress of higher attaining pupils is unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory nature of accommodation for music,

noted in the last inspection, continues to restrict activities and depresses standards of attainment and progress at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress, both in experimenting and organising sound in composing and in developing listening skills, and become confident performers. Students in the sixth form performing arts course are making sound progress in understanding concepts of this art form that is unfamiliar to many of them.

209. Attitudes to music are satisfactory, but sometimes inconsistent at Key Stage 3. They are good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Most pupils are co-operative and concentrate well both in whole class sessions and in independent work. They become restless when there is insufficient variety of activity or when the challenge is too low. They listen well to each other and to the teacher, and most treat each other's efforts with respect. Some younger boys display immature attitudes at Key Stage 3.

1. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and lessons often have a number of very good features particularly at Key Stage 4. Well-prepared appropriate content is taught in a positive and systematic manner. The computer is imaginatively used to provide backing tracks for pupils' keyboard work. Good questioning, which consolidates pupils' understanding, encourages them to think beyond the obvious. On-going assessment ensures that essential knowledge is properly established. In one lesson at Key Stage 4, well-judged intervention helped pupils to produce clear ideas and make decisions with increased confidence. In some lessons, expectations are too low and tasks do not satisfactorily challenge more able musicians. There is insufficient variety within lessons and the inflexible control of the pace of activities does not allow adequate time for pupils to develop their skills and ideas. There are no strategies to reduce the excessive noise in crowded classrooms created by all keyboards playing simultaneously, in spite of the resulting high levels of stress for both staff and pupils. Management of the department is satisfactory. However, the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 does not give sufficient attention to progression and the balance between composing and performing is uneven. Good day-to-day assessment enables teachers to adapt activities to pupils' needs.

211. Because of financial constraints there are very few opportunities for pupils to have contact with musicians from other cultures and the department is aware of the need to develop this area of the curriculum. The department continues to provide a wide range of musical activities for its pupils. Each year, over one hundred take part in concerts, and a large-scale musical is produced regularly.

212. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment are at least at the expected levels. At Key Stage 4 and above, this is reflected in good GCSE and A level results. The quality of teaching has improved.

Physical education

213. Results in the 1999 and 1998 GCSE examination are above the national average in attainment of grades A* to C and A* to G grades. At A level in 1997 and 1999, results were above average at grades A and B and A to E. There were no candidates in 1998. Results compare well with those taken by pupils in their other subjects.

214. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is usually at the nationally expected level and sometimes above this, in lessons seen. Where it is above average in basketball, most pupils show well-developed ball skills and an ability to screen the ball successfully from opponents by controlling it with either hand. Boys and girls cope successfully with the demands of practices and small-sided games in basketball. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is

above average. In lessons at Key Stage 4, attainment is regularly above average. Skills are well developed in hockey, badminton and basketball. In badminton a few boys have very good skills and are able to sustain very good rallies, exhibiting the full range of shots, including cleverly dropped shots. Pupils with special educational needs attain particularly well at basketball. In dance, pupils show awareness of the need for tension in movement and also plan and choreograph their sequences well. In the sixth form, standards are above average. Students write well and contribute very successfully to discussion. Written work shows good variety and, in general, is well presented with much of it word processed. Students access a range of sources for information including CD ROMs and the Internet successfully.

215. Progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils progress well in basketball, particularly in shooting skills and in consolidation of other basic techniques such as dribbling and passing. At Key Stage 4, skills in games show marked development and students apply skills and strategies well in game-situations, particularly in badminton and basketball. Students' written and oral work shows good progress throughout the GCSE course and this is greatly helped by teachers' encouraging students to plan and evaluate work. The department provides excellent resources for revision to prepare students for examinations. These include essential content and how to plan a programme of revision successfully. Progress at A level is equally good, again helped by imaginative teaching. A designated room for teaching of the subject is very helpful in raising standards for examination courses. This provides very good resources for students to use. Further use of the Internet will enhance this already good facility. The department has a good supply of CD ROMs and videotapes which it uses to support pupils' progress well.

216. Pupils' behaviour is good and often very good at both key stages. It is always very good in the sixth form. Students are well motivated and participate in lessons with enjoyment. Relationships between students and between students and teachers are good. Pupils work very well together when required. This enhances both practical and theoretical work. Concentration is good.

217. Teaching is good and often very good. It is never less than satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives which are nearly always shared with students. Specialist-trained teachers use their good subject knowledge to support pupils' progress very well in lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and praise students well when their efforts merit it. This supports good relationships. Lessons proceed with pace and purpose. They are delivered in line with current good practice, particularly in games, where methods are designed to encourage all pupils to have maximum participation. Consistent use of varied teaching styles ensures that students plan and evaluate their work regularly. Teachers provide good opportunities for extra-curricular sport. All members of the department participate. Over 300 pupils regularly play for school teams and individual pupils represent the county in teams.

218. Since the previous inspection, assessment procedures have been improved. More time has been given to gymnastics and dance. A good range of extra-curricular activities continues to be provided, and taken up by pupils.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

219. The inspection team consisted of thirteen inspectors who spent 132 hours observing 168 lessons. Registration, assemblies and extra-curricular activities were also observed. Thirty planned discussions were held with teaching and support staff and also with governors. Inspectors studied, in depth, the work of a representative sample of six students of higher, middle and lower attainment from each year group, and a sample of the work of range of students with special educational needs. Planned discussions were held with all these students. Discussions, both formal and informal, were held with many more. The considerable amount of documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection was analysed. The registered inspector and the lay inspector held a meeting with parents before the inspection, and the team considered the responses to a questionnaire, some with accompanying written responses, from 197 parents.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	793	18	174	82

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	44.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week	171

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.7
--	------

Average teaching group size:	KS3	26
	KS4	23

Financial data

Financial year:	1998-9
-----------------	--------

	£
Total Income	1644141
Total Expenditure	1686006
Expenditure per pupil	2147
Balance brought forward from previous year	86788
Balance carried forward to next year	44923

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:
Number of questionnaires returned:

793
197

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	17.4	67.4	12.1	3.2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37.1	49.5	7.7	4.1	1.5
The school handles complaints from parents well	15.3	51.4	21.9	8.2	3.3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20.2	55.4	15	8.3	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	25.3	57.4	9.5	6.8	1.1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	29.8	57.6	9.4	2.6	0.5
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	30.4	56.7	7.7	4.1	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	21.4	59.2	9.2	7.7	2.6
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	23.6	47.6	22	5.8	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18.4	55.8	14.7	8.4	2.6
My child(ren) like(s) school	36	46.2	9.6	4.1	4.1

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents had concerns about results in national tests in English at Key Stage 3 and the quality of pupils' work in this subject at this stage. There is concern among some that the school's income is low. Some expressed concerns individually shown in the responses to the questionnaire above.

In general, parents express strong support for the school. They see it as a friendly, welcoming and caring institution with a positive ethos.

The inspection team considered issues raised by parents from the questionnaire, from written comment and from the meeting. The team's findings are given in the report.

The inspection team found the views of parents very helpful and informative in assisting the inspection process.