

INSPECTION REPORT

FRAMWELLGATE SCHOOL DURHAM

Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114309

Headteacher: Mr Austin McNamara

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan Haigh
2630

Dates of inspection: 14 February - 18 February 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	John Clark
Date of previous inspection:	6 -10 March 1995

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			Results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How does the school work in partnership with parents
Tony Barringer	Team inspector	English	
Denis Barry	Team inspector	GNVQ, Business education, Economics	
Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Art	
Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Charlotte Evers	Team inspector	History	
		Equal opportunities	
David Gaulton	Team inspector	Geography	
Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
Arthur Harvey	Team inspector	Religious education	
Sharon Mansell	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Allan Nutton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities
Jeremy Royle	Team inspector	Music and IT	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school, which is of above average size, is situated on the northern edge of the city of Durham. There is a mixture of privately owned and rented housing and pleasant open countryside nearby. The area was formerly predominantly coal mining and now is mainly service industries. There are 1322 pupils on roll, with more boys (54 per cent) than girls, aged 11 - 18, which is about the same as when the school was last inspected in March 1995. One fifth of the pupils are sixth formers and the school has one of the largest sixth forms in the county. There is an open enrolment policy at sixth form level. The school is fully comprehensive, with more than 98 per cent of pupils coming from white ethnic groups. Most pupils come from four feeder primary schools, although there are about 20 primary schools sending pupils to the school.

The intake includes a wide spread of ability with the majority of pupils being close to or above average attainment. About 13 per cent of all pupils are on the special educational needs register, and about two per cent have statements of special educational needs; these figures are below the national average. About three fifths of the latest Year 11 cohort entered the sixth form. About 40 pupils left the school to go to other sixth forms or colleges. About four-fifths of the sixth formers enter higher education.

The economic, social and demographic characteristics of the school's catchment area are a little more favourable than the national picture. A higher than average proportion of children comes from homes with adults who have received higher education. The proportion of children from high social class households is average. The number of pupils eligible for a free school meal - about five per cent - is well below the national average but is not a true reflection of the socio-economic background of pupils.

The school's central aim is 'to raise pupil achievement through effective support and monitoring in order to achieve consistency in (its) expectations of pupils and further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning'. This is amplified in the school's published vision statement and its nine aims.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is clearly effective and standards of attainment are above average and in line with what would be expected in the vast majority of subjects. The teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. The school provides good value for money and the sixth form is cost-effective.

What the school does well

- The results in national tests in mathematics and science for 14-year-olds were well above the national average and much better than those in similar schools in 1999.
- Pupils do well at GCSE in English, mathematics, science, art, business education, geography, modern foreign languages (full course) and religious education.
- The A-level results in mathematics and economics are well above average.
- Pupils do particularly well in extra-curricular music and team games.
- One fifth of the teaching is very good and almost three quarters is good or better, with particularly strong teaching in English, science and art.
- The management of pupils is a particular all-round strength of the teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The headteacher and his senior colleagues provide very good leadership, supported by a knowledgeable and competent governing body.
- Relationships at all levels are especially strong and contribute significantly to pupils' progress.
- The range of extra-curricular activities and pupils' benefits from them are very extensive.

What could be improved

- The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to G in 1999 was too low and standards in physical education at GCSE were particularly low.
- The 1999 A-level results in English, modern foreign languages and biology were below the national average.
- The standards being attained in information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in music and physical education at Key Stage 3 and in design and technology and history at Key Stage 4 are not high enough.
- The quality of teaching of information technology throughout and of music and physical education at Key Stage 3, although satisfactory, falls behind that of the other subjects.
- The monitoring of teaching and some other aspects of the school's work is not systematic or fully effective.
- There is too little use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress, guide curricular planning or raise standards of attainment.
- The procedures for child protection are unclear.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and the quality of learning suffers in art, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education from these shortcomings.
- The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual development still needs to improve. The statutory requirements for collective worship are not met. There is too little time for religious education at Key Stage 4 and none in the sixth form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1995 and has made good progress since then. The results in the national tests taken by 14-year-olds have improved and are well above the national average. The improvements in mathematics have been most significant. There has been no trend in the GCSE results, although the average points score per pupil was higher in 1999 than in 1995, and was the school's best ever, with boys doing particularly well. The physical education results have deteriorated. The 1999 A-level results were not as good as those in 1995 and the average points score per pupil has fallen but in relation to pupils' prior attainment the results are in line with expectations. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. The match of work to pupils' needs is much better now. The provision for information technology has improved but still has some way to go. The quality and use of the library are now very good and benefit from the work of the resources manager. The spiritual development of pupils is better but still needs to improve. The faculty system has been abandoned in favour of a much better and effective departmental structure. The pastoral care system is better but still is too inconsistent and the family-unit time is often not used as well as it ought to be. The statutory requirements for collective worship are still not met and time for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is insufficient although there are definite plans to remedy this in September 2000. There is still no formalised system to evaluate the effectiveness of special educational needs provision.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	A	C	C	

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science, taken by all 14-year-olds, are well above the national average overall. The results in mathematics and science are well above average and better than those in similar schools. The mathematics results have been at this level for several years. The English results are above the national average but no better than those in similar schools. The trend in results at this stage is upwards and in line with national improvements. There has been no trend in the GCSE results. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - C was well above the national average in 1999 and better than that in similar schools. The average points score per pupil in 1999 was the school's highest ever, with boys doing particularly well. Despite this score being above the national average, it was not as high as that in similar schools as a smaller proportion of pupils obtained grades A* - G than would be expected. The strongest subjects at GCSE, with results significantly above the national average, are English, mathematics, science, art, business education, geography, modern foreign languages (full course) and religious education. Physical education is a weak subject at this level with results significantly below average and standards in the GCSE short courses in design and technology and modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory. The school exceeded its targets at GCSE in 1999. The A-level results, although close to the national average, are not as good as those in 1995 and the average points score per pupil has fallen slightly. They are satisfactory, however, when the prior attainment of pupils is taken into account. There are clear strengths at this level in mathematics and economics and some weaknesses in 1999 in English, biology, history, French, German and religious education. The standards seen in lessons and pupils' work were above those in most schools by the end of Key Stage 3 in all subjects except history, information technology and music where they were in line with national averages, and in physical education where they were a little below this level. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above national expectations in all subjects except history, information technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and the GNVQ courses where they are similar to those in most schools. The standards in A-level courses are typical of sixth forms nationally in all subjects except mathematics, art, computing, music and economics where they are above average. The standards in the sixth form GNVQ courses are above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good - pupils learn with enjoyment and commitment.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good overall and often very good or excellent. The incidence of exclusions is, however, higher than in similar schools.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good - pupils are courteous, considerate and mature. The quality of relationships at all levels is very high.
Attendance	This is good - there is less than average unauthorised absence.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good and often very good except in physical education where they are only satisfactory. Pupils' personal development, although often very good, is only satisfactory in English, history and physical education.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. More than one fifth of teaching was very good and almost three-quarters was at least good. Only three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The teaching of sixth form lessons is a little better than that at the earlier stages, although the highest proportion of very good teaching (more than a quarter) was at Key Stage 4. The strongest teaching is in English, science and art. The main strength of the teaching is the way teachers manage the pupils, the sensitivity and care they show to them and the quality of relationships they establish, resulting in good learning. The work in art is especially challenging for sixth formers. The weaknesses are in the planning of lessons in music at Key Stage 3 and physical education at Key Stages 3 and 4. The assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory in music and physical education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum has good breadth and balance but there is too little time for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The extra-curricular provision and the contributions made by the community to the curriculum are very strong.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The curriculum is good at all stages. The specialist teaching is good but there is no non-teaching support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for the pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good, although the school does too little to acquaint the pupils of the cultural diversity of contemporary British society. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility at Key Stage 3. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The procedures for child protection are not clear enough. The Family-unit tutorial system has strengths in developing pupils' social skills but is less effective in monitoring pupils' progress. Bullying is not a problem.

The school works well with parents in the main. The quality of information provided for them is good but some school reports need to say more about what the pupils can do and how they can improve their work. The curriculum is of good quality and the range of extra-curricular activities is especially wide with strengths in music and competitive sports. The pupils with special educational needs have a good curriculum. All pupils have equal access to the full range of activities and special provision is made for potentially disaffected pupils in Year 10. There is a failure to meet statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and pupils do not attend a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership provided by the headteacher and his senior management colleagues is very good. They ensure clear vision and purpose for the school. The leadership in departments is mostly good. The overall management of the school is good but that in history and physical education needs to improve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are diligent, conscientious and effective. They fulfil their responsibilities well with minor exceptions in relation to the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is not good enough and more needs to be done to identify strengths and weaknesses and build on the good practice. Teaching is not monitored enough.
The strategic use of resources	This is satisfactory and financial control is very effective.

There are sufficient teachers and they are well qualified. There are no support assistants for pupils with special educational needs and the school needs more technicians. There are enough resources in most departments although more computers and library books are needed. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, being cramped and in poor repair; it adversely affects learning in modern foreign languages, art, design and technology, music and physical education. The acoustics are poor in the modern foreign languages rooms. The sports hall roof needs replacing. The laboratories need refurbishing. The dining, social, storage and administrative facilities are inadequate. The school applies the principles of best value soundly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • They consider their children progress well. • They think the teaching is good. • The school expects their children to work hard. • They feel comfortable approaching school with problems or questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework is too uneven. • One in five responding to the questionnaire feel they are not well enough informed of their child's progress. • One in five of these feel the school does not work closely enough with them.

The inspectors' judgements confirm the positive points raised by parents. The amounts of homework do vary but overall are about right and the pupils generally do not see this as a problem. Some reports are not informative enough. There is no evidence to support the other concern.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. **Note:** *Similar schools* is defined by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and this school is on the borderline between the first and second categories. Bearing in mind the socio-economic background of pupils being only a little better than the national picture, a fairer comparison is made by comparing the school's results with those in the second category of free school meals rather than the first.
2. The results in the national tests, taken by 14-year-olds in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were well above the national average overall in 1999. This has been the case for the past three years. The results in mathematics and science are well above average and much better than those in similar schools. The mathematics results have been at this level for several years. The English results are above the national average and in line with those in similar schools. The trend in results at this stage is upwards and in line with national improvements. The gap between boys' and girls' English result has been similar to that found nationally, with girls being well ahead of boys. The girls' mathematics and science results have improved more quickly than boys' and girls are now slightly ahead of boys at age 14 in both subjects.
3. Standards achieved by pupils in the core subjects by the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Pupils cover all aspects of the work with clear understanding, although they are not as good as they ought to be in presenting their findings orally in English lessons. Pupils achieve well in mathematics but many younger ones do not know their tables well enough. Many are skilful in science practical work.
4. In 1999 the teachers assessed pupils to be above the national average in geography and modern foreign languages at the end of Key Stage 3. They judged them to be average in history and information technology but below average in design and technology. The pupils are working at levels that are above expectations in all subjects at this stage with the exceptions of design and technology, history, information technology and music, where standards are similar to those in most schools, and in physical education where they are a little lower than this. Pupils are good at volleyball but weak in gymnastics. The extra-curricular music work is of a very high standard but in lessons, standards of composition are too low. Pupils are good at word-processing and using databases but not good enough in using spreadsheets in their information technology work.
5. There has been no trend in the overall GCSE results in the past few years although they have remained above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* - C was well above the national average in 1999 and better than that in similar schools. There has been a downward trend in the proportion of pupils being graded A*-G. The average points score per pupil in 1999 was, however, the school's highest ever, with boys doing particularly well. Despite this score being above the national average, it was not as high as that in similar schools as a smaller proportion of pupils obtained grades A* - G than would be expected. Eight pupils did particularly poorly, largely because of poor attendance arising from illness and lack of commitment. The school has acknowledged this problem and has planned a modified curriculum for 13 potentially disaffected Year 10 pupils this year.

6. The strongest subjects at GCSE, with results significantly above the national average, are English, mathematics, science, business studies, geography, modern foreign languages (full course) and religious education. The results in physical education are significantly below average at this level and standards in the GCSE short courses in design and technology and modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory. There are too many pupils taking the short courses in modern foreign languages. The school exceeded its sensible targets at GCSE in 1999. The targets it has set for 2000 and 2001 are realistically based on data about pupils' prior attainment.
7. The achievement of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 4 is better than national expectations in all subjects except in history, information technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education where it is similar to the national picture. Pupils' standards in design and technology are lower than those in most schools. Standards attained in the GNVQ courses by 16-year-olds are also similar to the national average although a little work in health and social care fell below the expected level. Pupils are good at drawing and painting and three-dimensional art work is a strength. Pupils' written work is not good enough in art. Pupils' design and research skills are good in design and technology but their understanding of mechanisms and use of control technology are weaknesses. Pupils are good at reading in modern foreign languages but not good enough at speaking.
8. The A-level results, although close to the national average, are not as good as those in 1995, the time of the last inspection, and the average points score per pupil has fallen slightly. They are satisfactory, however, when the prior attainment of pupils is taken into account. The sixth form is large and the range of prior attainment is extensive. There are clear strengths at this level in mathematics and economics with results well above the national average. The 1999 results in English, biology, history, French, German and religious studies were below the national average. The standards in the GNVQ courses in business, health and social care and in leisure and tourism are mainly above average.
9. Pupils achieve at least the expected levels in all their A-level subjects and GNVQ courses. Achievement in art is particularly high and that in mathematics, business, economics, history, computing, music and politics is above average. Pupils' knowledge of the theory of computing work is thorough and the extended writing in history is of a high quality. The pupils following the A-level physical education course have a thorough grasp of their work.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets that are set for them when they receive an appropriate level of support and when work is matched to their individual needs. The introduction of initiatives, such as the Paired Reading Programme, the Spelling Programme and the Movement Skills Group, are successfully contributing to the raising of standards. The quality of provision remains very good following the last inspection and the school is successfully meeting the needs of all pupils on the special needs register.
11. The standard of pupils' reading and writing is generally above average. Pupils' work is presented well with clear attention to details such as spelling and handwriting. The extended writing of sixth formers is good in history. Many pupils do not express their religious education work in writing as clearly as they should. Speaking is better than that in most schools but the quality of sixth form discussion in history is not as fluent as might be expected. Pupils speak confidently in business education. Most pupils listen well. They are interested in their lessons and attentive to their teachers and the views of fellow pupils. Pupils listen particularly well in mathematics, science and art.

12. Pupils have the numeracy skills needed to tackle their work in all subjects. Data handling features strongly in geography, and measurement and estimation are done well in science and design and technology. Information technology skills are used appropriately in the GNVQ courses but generally are used too infrequently across the curriculum. The use of information technology is weak in most other subjects and the general standards of information technology across the curriculum are too low.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently very good. Pupils are fully committed to their academic studies and to the extra-curricular activities that the school provides. They are developing a mature, responsible approach to their work, their relationships and the world around them. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work. They form good relationships with teachers as well as each other. Good attitudes and behaviour are associated with the quality of teachers' discipline and their ability to plan work at an appropriate level and to set targets that are both realistic and achievable.
14. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they find lessons interesting, because there are lots of extra-curricular activities and because they have a friendly, easy relationship with their teachers. Levels of attendance are good and there is less unauthorised absence than is found in similar schools. Punctuality, which was identified as a problem at the time of the last inspection, is now generally good, although the difficulties of the school site mean that pupils are often unavoidably late for lessons.
15. Behaviour in lessons is almost always good and not infrequently very good or excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work, keen to learn and prepared to try hard. Their concentration and effort last throughout the entire lesson, even when they find the work difficult. They are keen to participate, to answer questions and to take part in practical activities and always settle well to written tasks. Around the school, behaviour is always orderly and sensible. The number of fixed term exclusions is higher than that normally found in schools of this size and type and reflects the school's determination to allow the vast majority of well-behaved pupils to concentrate on their lessons without disruption. Exclusion procedures are only used when a pupil's behaviour reaches the stage at which all other sanctions have failed to bring about a change of attitude. Parents are always consulted and every effort is made to provide support for the pupil when a return to school is agreed.
16. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. In lessons, pupils co-operate well when they work in pairs or groups. They listen carefully and thoughtfully to the opinions and views of others and are usually able to come to a consensus after a group discussion. When they are asked to present their views during a lesson, fellow pupils always listen respectfully and appreciatively - for example, the presentations of a Year 12 class on the subject of pressure groups was well received by their peers. Pupils are also conscious of the differences in ability that exist throughout the school, and never belittle the efforts of those who may find tasks more difficult than they do themselves. The majority of pupils and parents agree that there is very little bullying and there is no evidence of sexism or racism. Pupils explain their work, offer opinions confidently, and are polite, friendly and helpful to visitors.

17. Although opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility are few, particularly at Key Stage 3, pupils willingly accept those that are available. Sixth formers make significant contributions to the life of the school by providing support for younger pupils through the anti-bullying scheme. They also help improve literacy through paired reading and offer additional help in lessons to pupils who may be struggling with their work or who have special educational needs. Pupils often initiate schemes to raise funds for deserving causes, nationally and internationally, and play a part in the local community by arranging Christmas parties for elderly people and discos for pupils in Year 6 of the feeder primary schools.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The overall quality of teaching is good. More than one fifth of teaching was very good and almost three-quarters was at least good. Only three per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The teaching in sixth form lessons, particularly in Year 13 is a little better than that at the earlier stages, although the highest proportion of very good teaching (more than a quarter) was at Key Stage 4.
19. The strongest teaching is in English, science and art. At Key Stage 3 the teaching of English and science is very good overall. The teaching in the other subjects is good except information technology, music and physical education where it is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 the teaching of science and art are very good. The teaching is good overall in all the remaining subjects except information technology where it is satisfactory. The teaching at A-level is good in all subjects except art where it is very good and information technology where it is satisfactory.
20. The main strength of the teaching is the way teachers manage the pupils, the sensitivity and care they show to them and the quality of relationships they establish, resulting in good learning. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and most make the work interesting to the pupils. There are gaps in the physical education teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum and this holds back pupils' progress. The planning of work is especially strong in English and science. Work is pitched at the right level and pupils are encouraged to make good progress. There are weaknesses in the planning in music at Key Stage 3 and in physical education. Planning is good in all other subjects.
21. Good teaching from specialist support staff, who have a secure knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn, enables the pupils who have special educational needs to make good progress. There is a high level of collaboration between support teachers and class teachers, often leading to very effective team teaching. By encouraging good levels of concentration and by challenging pupils appropriately, the teachers enable pupils to succeed. In English, mathematics, science, geography and history, subject specialists are committed to planning and teaching work that is appropriate to pupils' individual needs. However, such practice is not consistent throughout the school. There are still some teachers who do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of individual pupils' difficulties, a fact that was reported at the last inspection.
22. With the exceptions of information technology and physical education, pupils are challenged to reach high standards. In these two subjects learning is modest and pupils often fail to achieve their potential. The work in art is especially challenging for sixth formers and in science it is challenging at all stages and achievements are consequently high in these subjects.

23. The teaching methodology is mostly effective although it is sometimes too narrow or unadventurous to stimulate pupils. A wider range of approaches is needed in information technology, music and physical education in order to raise standards. There is too little practical and composition work in music and too few pupils pursue this subject beyond the age of 14. Pupils do not tackle sufficient control work in information technology, and gymnastics is an area of weakness in physical education at Key Stage 3.
24. The teachers make good use of time and educational resources in most subjects. Occasionally lessons start late because the teacher or pupils have had to make a lengthy trip across the campus. There is too little use of information technology, however, in most subjects and this holds back pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, design and technology and business education.
25. The assessment of pupils' work is generally good and it is very good in English, science and art. It is unsatisfactory in music and physical education resulting in too slow progress for many pupils. Homework is used well in the main and supports learning sensibly in most subjects, with tasks that extend pupils and link well to the classwork.
26. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound overall. There is not enough dedicated support in most subjects although pupils with reading and number problems benefit from help provided by some sixth formers. The support staff are effective in English, science, geography and history but more of this type of help is needed.
27. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was in physical education (three lessons), design and technology, history, information technology and personal and social education (one lesson each), in Years 7 to 11. The main reasons for lessons being unsatisfactory were insufficient guidance to ensure progress, methodology that failed to capture the pupils' interests and expectations that were too modest. Additionally, very occasional weak management and a poor match of tasks to pupils' needs hindered progress. A small number of large groups (34 pupils) proved difficult to organise and control because of their size.
28. The quality of pupils' learning is good at all stages and is best in Years 11 and 13. It is good in all subjects at Key Stage 3 with the exceptions of information technology, music and physical education where pupils' efforts and pace of working are often mediocre. It is mostly good at Key Stage 4 (very good in art) except for information technology and the GNVQ course in leisure and tourism where it is satisfactory. Pupils show a good level of interest in their studies and concentrate well in all lessons. They are too dependent on their teachers in information technology and modern foreign languages (short course). Learning is mostly good in the sixth form; it is very good in art but only satisfactory in design and technology.
29. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects but only modest progress in history, information technology, religious education and physical education at Key Stage 3, as there is insufficient individual support available. Their progress is unsatisfactory in the modern foreign languages short course at GCSE as there is no non-teaching support. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language (only six in total) progress well. The gifted and talented pupils benefit from being taught in sets of similar ability in the main. They make good progress in English, science, art and modern foreign languages at all stages and in history in the sixth form, information technology at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and religious education at Key Stage 3. They could do better in mathematics, especially in Year 7, as some are sometimes marking time, with repetition of previously completed work. The most able need to be challenged more in physical education also.

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

30. The curriculum is balanced and broadly based at both key stages and in the sixth form. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and there are equal opportunities for boys and girls. In Key Stage 3, pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and additionally all follow a programme of personal and social education, including lessons in sex education and drug education. From Year 8, around four-fifths of the pupils study a second foreign language.
31. In Key Stage 4, all pupils follow a common core of English, mathematics, science, information technology, physical education, religious education and personal and social education. For most pupils the core takes up 60 per cent of the time, and for the rest of the time they choose from a range of options, mostly full courses, but also some short courses leading to GCSE or GNVQ qualifications. There is insufficient time at Key Stage 4 to meet the statutory requirement to teach the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. A small number of pupils, identified as potentially disaffected - currently 13 - follow an alternative curriculum in Year 10. They study science for a shorter period of time and are dispensed from the requirement to study a modern foreign language. Instead they take part in a college-linked vocational course and the Prince's Trust Award scheme.
32. The sixth form curriculum is of good quality. A wide range of twenty-one subjects is offered at GCE A and AS levels, including law, psychology, economics, government and politics, in addition to the National Curriculum subjects previously studied. Links with other schools and colleges enable some subjects to be offered, even though they attract small numbers. Additionally, advanced GNVQ courses are offered in business education and health and social care and there is an intermediate course in leisure and tourism. Pupils also undertake a programme of supporting studies, designed to add breadth to the A-level choices, and a small group of pupils is involved in a pilot Key Skills programme. Provision for religious education does not meet legal requirements at this stage. There are opportunities for pupils to re-sit GCSE English and mathematics, as well as science and other subjects, by arrangement. The sixth form is cost effective.
33. The school has introduced a strategy to improve literacy throughout the school, but this strategy is still at an early stage and the school acknowledges there is still much to do if it is to make a major impact. There are plans to introduce a strategy to develop numeracy across the curriculum. There is a little provision for study support outside school hours. Pupils use the library extensively before and after school and in the holidays for homework and research purposes.
34. Extra-curricular provision is very good. A wide range of sporting activities is offered and there is a good take-up of these opportunities. Competitive games include football, rugby, netball, hockey and cricket. Opportunities to undertake badminton, basketball, table tennis, climbing, trampolining, gymnastics, athletics and cross-country running are also available. Some pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of musical opportunities, including a choir, brass band, orchestra and music and drama productions. The pupils' learning benefits from links with schools in other countries supported by European Union funding.
35. The school ensures equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils, and provides an appropriate alternative curriculum for the minority for whom the National Curriculum is not appropriate. There has not been any staff development work on equal opportunities for some time, and the staff working group on equal opportunities has not met for some time. The recently appointed member of the senior management team with responsibility for equal opportunities is aware of these weaknesses, and the need to deal with them.

36. Pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and to a good range of extra-curricular activities. The pilot Group Learning Plan successfully identifies strategies that teachers can adopt to give pupils better access to the curriculum. This is designed to include more able pupils. Good links have been established with a local college of further education to enable pupils with particular academic difficulties to spend half a day each week learning practical skills. This has been a carefully thought out decision taken with staff, pupils and parents, to make more positive use of pupils' time. Alternative courses leading to Certificates of Achievement are available to pupils who find GCSE courses too demanding.
37. Personal and social education is taught to all pupils within the school and its quality is good. The course focuses on health education, citizenship and careers education and guidance. The policy for sex education is under review. A drug awareness policy is in place but the content at Key Stage 4 is in need of further development. Positive use is made of outside speakers such as police officers and nurses in support of these two areas. An anti-bullying policy and a behaviour policy are constantly reinforced in the family-units by tutors. At present there is no systematic monitoring of personal and social education to ensure coverage of the planned curriculum.
38. Careers education and guidance begin in Year 7 and option choices are covered well in Year 9. At Key Stage 4 pupils have access to a small careers library, which is well organised. The LEA careers advisers offer very good support to the school and make a positive contribution in lessons. Work experience takes place in Year 11 for one week. Pupils in the sixth form are well supported in careers education and applications to university. The Business Education Partnership and the Training Enterprise Council provide additional contacts but there is a need for the school to co-ordinate these links to further opportunities for pupils.
39. The school's provision for the spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory because the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. There are some strengths in the provision, nonetheless. In English literature and religious education, pupils learn about a variety of diverse beliefs and values from different cultures. They are alerted to the non-material dimension of human beings and how beliefs and values inter-relate with behaviour. Pupils attend one collective act of worship each week in their year or house groupings. During the week of inspection, the main focus of the assemblies was Christian, but these did not include an act of worship. The school has responded to the criticism in the last inspection report by producing a worthwhile policy on the pupils' spiritual development and carrying out an audit of departmental contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
40. The provision for pupils' moral development is good and effective. Teachers help pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong behaviour. The school's code of conduct, the guidance on behaviour in lessons, the anti-bullying policy and the system of rewards and sanctions promote positive behaviour. Geography, history, modern foreign languages, personal and social education and religious education provide pupils with opportunities to explore the moral aspects of such themes as the holocaust, human relationships, the conflict of interests in land use, racism and abortion. Moral issues are also raised in drug, health and sex education and sometimes in assemblies.

41. The provision for pupils' social development is good. All subjects offer pupils opportunities to develop basic social skills. The school's 'family-unit' pastoral arrangements also contribute positively towards pupils' social development. Pupils are encouraged to cooperate well in class, on visits and in musical and sporting activities. Older pupils help younger pupils in paired reading, with the anti-bullying club and by offering some in-class support. Pupils have some opportunities for taking responsibility, such as helping to produce the school newspaper, seeking election to the Sixth Form Council, assisting in the library or showing visitors around the school. However, too few opportunities are available for them to take responsibility and show initiative, particularly at Key Stage 3. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of people in the wider community and demonstrate this by supporting the work of charities such as the Malcolm Sergeant Cancer Care, the Roald Dahl Foundation and Comic Relief. In personal and social education and religious education, pupils learn about family life and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
42. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. In art, English, history, music, religious education and in a varied range of clubs, pupils learn about British culture, past and present. They gain first hand experience of European culture by visits to France and Germany. Exchange visits with Rheinhausen and the music exchange with North Carolina enhance pupils' understanding of other cultures. Pupils have benefited from a visit by a children's author. Visits to the theatre, museums and cultural and historical venues are a feature of the curriculum. In art, history, geography and religious education pupils learn about African and native American art, life in France before the Revolution, cultural influences in relation to world population and how beliefs influence dress, food, customs, fasts and festivals. The pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary British society. The school could do more to increase pupils' appreciation of ethnic minority cultures in the community by, for example, visits to a mosque, synagogue, gurdwara or mandir.
43. The school's strong links with local businesses and professional organisations contribute positively to pupils' social and personal development as well as providing many valuable opportunities for the curriculum to be enriched. Links with industry, such as the mentoring scheme and support for Young Enterprise companies help pupils to strive for higher achievement and to develop new skills, while pupils following GNVQ courses benefit from the practical experience they gain through placements in industry, schools and old people's homes. A number of departments make good use of the local area as a curricular resource. For example, a group of pupils is helping to reclaim and develop a nearby nature reserve, while others have visited the cathedral and historic parts of the city in support of their studies in art, history, geography and religious education. Pupils benefit from fieldwork in biology, geography and history.
44. There are good links with schools across Europe. These include a three year project, which involves pupils sending e-mails, producing videos and writing to pen pals in a network of schools in other countries. Plans are in place for a project in partnership with Norway and Sweden, in which pupils will undertake a comparative environmental survey. International links are also being developed, with a planned trip to Kenya to help provide resources for a school for the deaf.
45. The University of Durham's School of Education appreciates the way trainee teachers are welcomed and helped during their placements. Some of the school's staff have helped with course development at the university and shared their expertise in curriculum committees.

46. There are strong pastoral links with the feeder primary schools, which ensure a smooth transition into the secondary phase. Year 6 pupils are involved in a range of activities alongside secondary school pupils, including the art summer school and production of the twice-yearly newspaper. Curricular links are not yet as well developed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The pastoral care of pupils is based on the 'family units' whereby tutors are responsible for a group of about 25 pupils aged 11 - 16 years. Additionally there are sixth form tutor groups. These arrangements provides a secure environment for pupils, and parents and pupils are pleased with this support. The tutors, supported by the heads of house and the head of the sixth form, know their pupils well. Pupils meet with their tutors for twenty minutes on four occasions in the week and although there is a set programme of activities, the time is not used effectively by all tutor groups. There has been little improvement in this regard since the previous inspection.
48. The range of sanctions and rewards helps promote good behaviour but attendance procedures are not tight enough as some pupils do not register prior to attending assemblies. There are few incidents of bullying in the school and those that are reported are dealt with successfully by the school. Pupils are confident that the school does what it can to eradicate these problems. Both family-unit tutors and heads of house monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Some tutors set learning targets for pupils after pupils' own self-evaluation. Little evidence of target setting was seen in most family-unit groups. Pupil planners have been recently introduced into Key Stage 4, being already in place at Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. This has helped to improve contact with parents.
49. There are no written procedures for child protection, other than the LEA guidelines, and some staff are unclear what the policy is. There is very good support from the Social Services. The school's policy for health and safety is under review and at present does not contain procedures for risk assessment throughout the school. The following issues should be attended to in addition to a number of other issues reported to the school:
- Gas cylinders at present in the preparation area should be stored outside.
 - Dust extraction /fume extraction is inadequate.
 - Electrical flexes are trailing from some ceilings.
50. The quality of both day-to-day marking and overall assessment is good. Teachers have a good understanding of National Curriculum assessment and of GCSE, A-level and GNVQ criteria, but departments use different grading systems, which causes confusion for some pupils in Key Stage 3. By contrast, pupils in Key Stage 4 report that they have a good understanding of how well they are doing. One in every five parents who responded to the questionnaire feels that they are not well informed about how well their child is doing at school.
51. A range of information, including the results of national tests, reading tests and assessments which predict likely future performance, is available to the school, but as yet too little use is made of this information. Most subjects do not base work closely enough on the levels of attainment that the pupils have already attained, when they first enter the school.

52. A wide range of statistical information is collated centrally, but the school is still at the stage of deciding how best to use some of this information. The family-unit system encourages tutors to review the progress of individual pupils half-termly, but the process is insufficiently rigorous. Knowledge of pupils' attainments is used in Year 11 and Year 13 to identify a small group of pupils who would benefit from guidance in study and examination techniques, but the school does too little to set challenging targets for pupils in other year groups. There is, however, some target setting for individual sixth formers.
53. A caring ethos is evident throughout the school and appropriate priorities have been identified for the development of special educational needs. Procedures for the identification and assessment of these pupils are clear and are understood by all staff. Individual Education Plans are in place for all pupils requiring them and teachers take an active part in monitoring pupils' progress. However, not all lesson planning takes account of pupils' individual needs. Neither does it identify how a pupil's specific targets will be met. This is due to the fact that there is still some individual resistance to planning for pupils' specific needs. The special educational needs co-ordinators bring a good depth of knowledge and understanding to their roles but a lack of support assistants often results in pupils and teachers receiving no support in subjects where it is required. Due to the high teaching workload of the co-ordinators there are too few opportunities for them to monitor the impact of teaching. Good relationships have been maintained with external support agencies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. The staff of the school work hard to create and maintain a positive partnership with parents, most of whom recognise and appreciate their efforts. A small minority of parents are less satisfied with some aspects of the school's provision. The majority are happy with the standards the school achieves and believe that their children are making good progress. They feel that the school keeps them well informed and when they have queries, find the staff welcoming and approachable. Parents are pleased with the pastoral support that the school provides and find the family-unit system particularly effective in promoting a positive ethos and sense of community. They think that pupils behave well and are learning to become mature and responsible.
55. Some parents feel that there is insufficient information about pupils' progress and that communication with teachers could be improved, for example, through more effective use of planners. A few parents think that pupils are insufficiently challenged and a number are not happy with the absence of a coherent policy on homework. The inspection found that levels of communication with parents are good and that, in most cases, planners are used effectively. In most lessons, teachers have appropriate expectations of pupils. Arrangements for consultation evenings with staff about pupils' progress are good, but school reports are variable in quality. Many concentrate on pupils' attitudes to work and give insufficient information about what they know, understand and can do, and what they need to do to improve. The school's decision not to institute a formal homework timetable sometimes leads to an uneven workload for pupils but this is not a major problem.
56. The quality of information that the school provides for parents is, on the whole, good. Written information includes attractive, well-produced prospectuses for the main school and for the sixth form, regular newsletters that keep parents up-to-date with school events. There is also a twice-yearly newspaper produced by the pupils themselves as tangible evidence of their developing skills and awareness of the world around them. In addition, the school organises carefully planned meetings for parents where they can meet teachers to discuss pupils' progress, or can find out about options available for Key Stage 4 or the sixth form. When it is appropriate, the school also arranges specific meetings to inform parents about changes to the curriculum and university entrance procedures: for example, there have been

explanations of the teaching of literacy, including how parents can help their children to learn at home. The pastoral system ensures that staff know the pupils well, so that they can respond sensitively and swiftly to individual requests for information from parents.

57. Parents are closely involved with school activities at many levels. Parent governors are well informed and committed. In spite of the demanding nature of the office, a recent vacancy for a parent governor attracted six candidates. A small group of dedicated parents runs the parent/teacher association, called *Friends of Fram*. Their well-supported activities provide opportunities for pupils, parents and staff to become involved in joint ventures, such as the annual craft fair, which are enjoyable social occasions as well as important fund-raising events that provide extra equipment for the school. Some parents support the school by working voluntarily in the library. Most parents keep track of pupils' work by checking and signing planners and sometimes use them as a means of communication. The school uses a number of strategies to find out about parents' views, including the planner, a page in the pupil's annual report for comments, formal surveys about such issues as uniform and the home-school agreement, as well as informal contacts by telephone and in person. The home-school agreement has been welcomed by the majority of parents as a positive step to ensuring that pupils benefit fully from the school's provision.
58. There are very good links with the parents of pupils who have special educational needs. Almost all are supportive of what the school is trying to achieve. Good liaison with parents enables them to be involved in setting pupils' targets as well as to be consulted about options and specialist courses. Attendance at annual reviews is almost always good. The school is in the process of developing training workshops for parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. The headteacher and his senior management team, ably supported by the governing body, give very clear direction to the school. There is a central focus on raising attainment and lessons have been learned from the thorough analysis of examination and related data. For example, the least motivated pupils in Year 10 were identified at the start of the year and a specially designed curriculum was provided for them. This is intended to raise the proportion of GCSE results in the A* - G category, an area where results have declined in recent years.
60. The headteacher is positive, non-confrontational and uses praise well to get the best out of the staff. He is prepared to take decisive action when necessary, with regard to unsatisfactory teaching, for example. His deputies and senior colleagues are very competent, committed and hardworking, with clearly defined roles which they discharge with enthusiasm. The leadership and management of subject departments are mostly good. There are, however, shortcomings in history and physical education. The heads of house and the head of sixth form are effective managers.
61. The aims of the school are clear and are largely achieved. The school intends to provide a child-centred education and is particularly successful in ensuring this. Equal opportunities are in place and pupils are valued and educated in a generally safe and secure environment. The school's planning identifies a good range of priorities. The reviewing of progress in implementing plans and policies is very thorough. There is a commitment to improvement that is shared by all staff and governors.
62. The senior staff acknowledge that there are weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching. They have a reasonable grasp of strengths and weaknesses but there is no mechanism to identify these systematically. The appraisal of teachers is currently in abeyance. There are other gaps in monitoring performance as illustrated by the unevenness in the use of tutor time, in the monitoring of attendance and in the use of assessment information.

63. There is good joint leadership of the special educational needs team and the co-ordinators complement each other well. Documentation is good, reports are well maintained and a recently updated policy is informative. There is a shared commitment between members of the department and the majority of other staff to improving the quality of experiences for pupils with special educational needs. Although good leadership ensures that there is clear educational guidance, formal monitoring procedures have still not been established to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching provision. This was identified at the last inspection. There are still areas of resistance to any initiatives. For this reason, there should be a review of in-service training provision as well as a review of the way support for pupils is targeted.
64. Provision for monitoring the support of more able pupils is still being developed. Learning resources for pupils with special educational needs are adequate and are often well deployed throughout the school. The provision of eight laptop computers for use in lessons has still not been fully effective as it is taking some time for pupils to acquire the necessary skills. A lack of software to support literacy and numeracy has been rightly identified. The learning support base is very small and there are no computers either for pupils' use or for administration purposes.
65. The governors are much more active than at the time of the last inspection. The chairman visits school most weeks and his wisdom and experience, coupled with that of the vice-chair, are rightly appreciated by the school. Governors have a realistic grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities in the main but fail to ensure that the arrangements for religious education and for collective worship meet requirements.
66. The headteacher, senior management team and governors, in consultation with staff, have identified a range of educational targets for the school and have allocated funding carefully to those areas identified as priorities in the school development plan. There is a clear understanding of the implications of spending decisions and a determination to make the best use of available resources. A thoughtful review of the school's expenditure has allowed considerable savings to be made: for example, the direct employment of cleaning staff results in savings that help substantially to offset the anticipated budget deficit. Additionally, the restructuring of the administrative and ancillary staff has led to more efficient systems, as well as enabling the school to appoint an additional information technology technician.
67. No money is spent without sensible cost comparisons to achieve best value, especially in the area of supplies and services. To supplement the school's budget, good use is made of external funding, such as the local authority loan to provide information technology equipment, and grants from organisations such as the Prince's Trust, the National Grid for Learning, the European Commission Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. On a more mundane level, pupils collect tokens for books and information technology resources that are available from commercially sponsored schemes.
68. Routine financial control and administration are very efficient and effective. The finance and administration manager has introduced improvements to systems, in accordance with the last audit report and has additional plans for further developments to increase the school's efficiency.
69. There are enough teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The pupil to teacher ratio is slightly less favourable than in most comprehensive schools and the overall time teachers spend teaching is a little below the average for similar schools. The match between qualifications and subjects taught is good and the use of non-specialists for a few religious education and law lessons is not having an adverse effect on standards. However, a lack of expertise in some teaching of information technology is holding standards down. The gender

balance in the staff is good overall although men hold most of the senior positions. There has been a high turnover of teachers over recent years because of early retirements and promotions. Presently there is some long term absence arising from ill health but in the past year there were only two occasions when a teacher absence lasted more than three consecutive days. Cover arrangements for absence are good.

70. The technical support in science is just sufficient. There is none in art and not enough in design technology. There is insufficient support in classes for pupils with special educational needs. There are adequate administration and clerical staff with extra help being recruited at busy times. These staff provide good support for the smooth running of the school.
71. The school is not operating an appraisal scheme for all teachers, which is a breach of statutory requirements. Apart from formal lesson observations of newly qualified teachers, there is no structured programme for monitoring teaching. There are effective procedures to identify the professional development needs of teachers and other staff. Much good quality training takes place on closure days to address whole school and departmental needs. Some teachers need training to make better use of information technology. The arrangements for the support and induction of newly qualified teachers are good and meet the recently introduced statutory requirements. The school takes students from two local universities for training and their presence in the school introduces new ideas and approaches in addition to providing financial benefits and support in some lessons.
72. The school is situated on a large site with separate buildings not connected by covered walkways. This results in much mud and dirt being carried indoors during inclement weather. Two of the blocks have had new roofs, one has had new doors and window frames since the last inspection but there has been little further improvement and no increase overall in the teaching spaces. Water leaks through the roof of the sports hall and the heating within it is inadequate adversely affecting the quality of learning. Similar detrimental effects occur in some modern foreign languages lessons because of poor acoustics which were identified in the last inspection. The dining areas are too small and adjacent classrooms have to be used to cope with the numbers. There are no social areas for main school pupils. Many of the science laboratories and design and technology rooms need refurbishment. There are not enough storage areas and the accommodation for clerical and administration staff is very cramped.
73. Since the last inspection the library has been transformed into an extremely well managed learning resources centre and it is used well by pupils. The stock of books has increased but shortages remain. Departments have adequate learning resources apart from information technology equipment which is lacking in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, history and physical education. There are not enough construction kits to teach mechanisms in design technology and sixth form pupils studying art do not have textbooks. There are just sufficient resources for learning in the subject departments.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. In order to sustain the current improvements and further the good quality of education provided, the governing body and senior staff should now
- (1) Improve the range and effectiveness of strategies aimed at raising the proportion of pupils obtaining at least a grade G at GCSE. (see paragraphs 5, 31, 59 of the report)
 - (2) Ensure that future A-level results in English, modern foreign languages and biology reflect the true potential of the candidates. (77, 94, 141)
 - (3) Take the necessary action to raise standards in design and technology (111), history (126), music (147, 150), physical education (155) and information technology, especially across the curriculum. (12, 69, 84, 97, 101, 108, 124, 131, 132, 145)
 - (4) Ensure that the monitoring of teaching and other aspects of the school's provision (such as that for special educational needs, attendance, the quality of reports) is more rigorous and systematic. (54, 62, 63, 93, 99, 117, 124, 131, 159, 166)
 - (5) Make better use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress. (51, 52)
 - (6) Clarify arrangements for child protection, address the health and safety issues (listed) and ensure that risk assessment takes place in all departments. (49, 108, 117)
 - (7) Improve the accommodation generally (72) by:
 - a) enhancing the acoustics in the language rooms, (145)
 - b) replacing the roof and heating system in the sports hall, (159)
 - c) refurbishing the science laboratories and design and technology rooms, (72, 96, 113, 117)
 - d) increasing space for art and music, (106, 108, 155)
 - e) improving dining, storage and administrative facilities. (72)
 - (8) Improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development by ensuring all attend a daily act of collective worship and that there is sufficient time for religious education at all stages. (31, 32, 39, 65, 167)

In addition to the above issues, the governors may consider the following less important issue for inclusion in their action plan.

- Further improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs (53, 63, 70) by:
- a) increasing the amount of support for pupils,
 - b) increasing the amount of training for staff,
 - c) targeting the funding more efficiently.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	222
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	93

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	50	25	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1056	266
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	54	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	167	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	134	98	232

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	100	99
	Girls	82	83	78
	Total	165	183	177
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71(65)	79 (60)	76 (61)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (35)	53 (36)	39 (30)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	98	90
	Girls	76	86	81
	Total	142	184	171
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (61)	80 (64)	74 (61)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (30)	41 (37)	44 (30)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	122	85	207

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	75	115	116
	Girls	53	78	83
	Total	128	193	199
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (53)	93 (95)	96 (97)
	National	46 (46)	91 (88)	96 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41 (39)
	National	38 (37)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	42	93
	National		N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	80	61

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	14.8	15.4	15.1 (19.9)	2.6	1.3	2.0 (2.5)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.1)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	28	78.6
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	4
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	3
White	1299
Any other minority ethnic group	10

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	70	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Year 7-Year 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Year 7-Year 13

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	222

Deployment of teachers: Year 7-Year 13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.5
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Average teaching group size: Year 7-Year 11

Key Stage 3	25.7
Key Stage 4	21.8

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	2,957,802
Total expenditure	3,005,456
Expenditure per pupil	2262
Balance brought forward from previous year	56,623
Balance carried forward to next year	8969

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1330
Number of questionnaires returned	222

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	45	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	56	6	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	14	5	3
The teaching is good.	29	62	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	49	17	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	43	9	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	3	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	24	52	16	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	37	47	5	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	50	10	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	45	6	3	10

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

ENGLISH

75. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above that found nationally. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999 pupils' results were above the national average. These results were in line with those of pupils in similar schools. Girls did better than boys and much better than girls nationally. The boys' results were only a little better than boys' nationally. Over the last four years performance has been well above the national average.
76. The general standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. In the GCSE in 1999 for English language, pupils' average points score was above the national average. Boys' results were further above the boys' national average than those of girls were above girls results nationally; the boys' results were a little behind the girls' results. In English literature, results were just above average with boys again doing relatively a little better than girls, compared with their respective national averages.
77. The overall standard in the sixth form meets course requirements. Results at A-level in 1999 were, however, well below average. Candidates performed poorly and uncharacteristically with almost one-third failing to achieve the pass grade. Observation of the present sixth form showed good standards of attainment, motivation and commitment.
78. The majority of pupils throughout the school listen attentively and work productively in pairs or small groups. The overall standard of speech is satisfactory but there are marked variations in quality. High-attaining pupils in Year 11 engaged in mature, intelligent and well-informed discussions about complex poems. In the sixth form, groups talked with confidence about the main characters in *Richard II*. Average-attaining pupils in Year 10, however, lacked fluency and clarity in their reading aloud from *Macbeth* and their oral responses were generally brief and hesitant. Most pupils at Key Stage 3 respond willingly to crisp and challenging questioning and defend their opinions articulately. Although the general standard of speaking is close to average, in answering questions and in group discussions, a number of pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 lacked confidence and audibility. Pupils miss the experience of drama to assist them to develop these important skills.
79. Attainment in reading is in line with that found nationally. The general standard of reading comprehension is sound and enables pupils to enjoy a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. Pupils in Year 9 read with attention and concentration during their timetabled half-hour of private reading. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make good use of the well-run library and learning resources centre but there is no timetabled opportunity during the pupils' first term in school to learn proper and effective use of this valuable resource. Pupils throughout the school respond with enthusiasm and sensitivity to the study of literature. By the end of Key Stage 3 they demonstrate sound knowledge of character, plot and themes in *Romeo and Juliet* and talk of the play with enthusiasm and appreciation. High and average-attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 show a perceptive insight into complex poems and begin to use the appropriate technical terminology of literary criticism.
80. The overall quality of written work in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is above that found nationally. The majority of pupils throughout the school present their writing carefully, with neat handwriting. By the end of Key Stage 3, some low-attaining pupils make frequent mistakes with sentence structure, the expression of ideas, spelling and punctuation. High-attaining pupils in Year 9, however, produce written assignments of high quality for a range of readerships and purposes. Much lively and entertaining work is shown in the pupils' use of persuasive language in advertisements and travel brochures. High-attaining pupils in Years

10 and 11 achieve very high standards in their writing, expressing mature judgements in well planned, accurate and carefully crafted work. Much of the best writing springs from the study of literature. Pupils in Year 11 writing on *Lord of the Flies* produced well-structured and perceptive commentary upon major themes and characters in the novel. Through the thorough and patient teaching of basic skills some low-attaining pupils produce written work of above average quality.

81. The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection and, although the 1999 Key Stage 3 and A-level results were disappointing, there has been some improvement in standards of attainment. There is better leadership and management and the ethos for learning is now very positive.
82. The quality of teaching throughout the school is never less than satisfactory and is good in almost all lessons. In over half the lessons it is very good and, on occasions, excellent. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good. They plan and prepare lessons thoroughly. Teachers are particularly careful to place lessons in context, rehearsing thoroughly the ground previously covered so that pupils know the purpose of each lesson. Tasks are explained briefly and clearly. Lessons are, in the main, conducted at a brisk pace and employ a stimulating range of language activities that result in pupils responding with interest and enthusiasm. Exercises are skilfully matched to pupils' level of attainment and appropriate materials are provided for pupils with special educational needs. Such pupils are taught with particular patience and care and they consequently make good progress and grow in confidence. Relationships are almost always positive and purposeful. Pupils respond well to rigorous questioning and to the variety of teaching approaches and methods used. Skilful use of a new film version of *Romeo and Juliet* helped, for example, low-attaining pupils in Year 9 to understand fully the tensions at the start of the play. Pupils in Year 13 were powerfully reminded of examination requirements whilst preparing an essay together. High-attaining pupils in Year 10 explored in pairs the possible staging of a scene in *Macbeth*, and showed creative and very well informed responses which was a direct result of thorough preparation of the text and the positive attitude to work stimulated by outstanding teaching.
83. The quality of behaviour is almost always good. The great majority of pupils sustain concentration well and are well motivated. They respond positively to good teaching, showing respect for the quality of preparation and planning and valuing good relationships in class. Many pupils approach their learning with obvious enjoyment. Pupils in the sixth form show maturity and commitment in their attitude to work. When talking to adults, pupils are courteous and articulate. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress. The provision for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good.
84. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Good schemes of work at Key Stage 3 ensure consistent and effective coverage of the curriculum and show a marked improvement upon practice reported during the previous inspection. Drama is not taught as a discrete subject, although some is taught in English lessons. There is a flourishing drama club, but the majority of pupils do not experience a structured course in drama. There is no equipment for information technology within the department and pupils have no access, through the subject, to central provision. The very positive ethos of the department matches closely that of the school. Staff share the same aims and expectation of high standards. The department is very well managed with a combination of vision and energy and a clear commitment to improvement.
85. The standard of pupils' reading and writing across the curriculum is generally above average. Pupils' work is presented well with clear attention to details such as spelling and handwriting. The extended writing of sixth formers is good in history. Many pupils do not express their religious education work in writing as clearly as they should. Speaking is generally better

than that in most schools but the sixth form discussion work in history is not as fluent as might be expected. Pupils speak confidently in business education. Most pupils listen well. They are interested in their lessons and attentive to their teachers and the views of fellow pupils. Pupils listen particularly well in mathematics, science and art.

MATHEMATICS

86. Standards are good throughout the school. Pupils enter the school with standard in mathematics above those expected. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 3 their attainment is well above the national average, and also well above those of similar schools. The results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above national averages. Standards have steadily improved over the last three years. They have been consistently high over this time for both boys and girls. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national averages, and better than in similar schools. The 1999 GCSE results were well above national averages. Results have been high over the last three years. Attainment in A-level courses is above average, and this is confirmed by examination results. Large proportions of pupils achieve the highest grade every year.
87. The work seen during the inspection in Key Stages 3 and 4 covers all the National Curriculum attainment targets and reflects the high standards achieved in examinations. Pupils in Year 7 know that the area of a shape is the amount of surface it has, and that area is measured in square units. In Year 8 they understand what is meant by the terms *mean*, *median*, *mode* and *range*, and use tally charts and frequency tables. Pupils in Year 9 use decimals and fractions confidently, and interpret graphs. Pupils in Year 10 find percentages by converting into fractions and recognise percentages as common fractions. Pupils in Year 11 use cumulative frequency graphs to find the quartile and inter-quartile ranges. In Year 12 pupils apply a number of algebraic techniques to simplify expressions and solve equations. In Year 13 they have a good grasp of calculus. Pupils use the appropriate formulae for arithmetic and geometric progressions and understand statistical methods well.
88. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are very good, particularly in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In all classes pupils are attentive, and they respond well to established, clear classroom routines. They behave very well in lessons. Pupils show interest in their work, and many, including the lower attaining pupils in Year 9 and Year 11, are well motivated and work hard.
89. The quality of teaching is good overall. The positive qualities of all lessons always outweigh the few negative aspects. About two in three lessons are good and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. This consistency is a strength of the subject, and is an improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is strongest in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
90. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and provide clear explanations, pitched at a suitable level for their classes. In the best lessons, effective behaviour management helps to encourage a classroom atmosphere that encourages learning, especially for the lower and average attaining pupils. Relationships are good. Most lesson planning is good, making effective use of the detailed subject plans for all classes. Teachers use individualised learning methods effectively to reinforce the skills of the lower attaining pupils; the pupils respond well in these weekly lessons. Opportunities to challenge the higher attaining pupils in Year 7 are sometimes not taken. Pupils' work in exercise books is marked well, and pupils are encouraged to carry out some self-assessments. Regular tests are used to check progress and understanding. Good attention is given to the way in which pupils present their work. Activities are carefully chosen for pupils with special educational needs, who are well supported by additional staffing, which is especially helpful when provided by a specialist mathematician. Homework is set regularly and helps reinforce learning. In the best lessons a very good pace is maintained, with questioning employed to generate discussion and

to check understanding before moving on to the next step. Teaching in the sixth form is good because tasks are chosen carefully to make sure that individual pupils progress at an appropriate rate, and pupils respond well to a shared commitment to mathematics. Time is now well used, and explanations clear.

91. Learning is generally good at Key Stage 3 and often very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, progress well. All pupils acquire a secure foundation in all aspects of mathematics, and their skills in numeracy develop well, so that they are able to use them confidently when required in other subjects, even though opportunities for this are not regularly planned for. Key factors in the good learning through the key stages are the high level of consistency in the teaching and, most significantly, the positive response of the vast majority of pupils to the subject. They come to lessons well prepared and expecting to work hard. Pupils make good progress in Years 12 and 13 largely arising from their very positive attitude to work and good relationships with their teachers.
92. Although the school has yet to formalise a strategy for developing numeracy, pupils do acquire a secure foundation in numeracy in Key Stage 3. This is reinforced in Key Stage 4, and pupils use their skills well when required in other subjects. In history pupils use graphs to make deductions about population. In modern foreign languages there is ample opportunity for the younger pupils to count, add, subtract, and tell the time. In geography pupils of all ages and attainment levels represent data graphically and interpret it from a range of sources. In information technology, appropriate use is made of numerical data when working with spreadsheets. Pupils perform required calculations accurately - for example in physical education, when they measure height and weight to find the index of body mass. In science pupils in Year 8 accurately measure and record their practical work, and process the results. In business studies, pupils accurately calculate profit and loss ratios, and analyse trading accounts.
93. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is a good balance between the different attainment targets, and practical and investigative methods are integrated well through the detailed planning, specific to each class, and are well matched to the abilities of pupils in the different groups. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The provision of resources is generally satisfactory, but ready access to information technology is unsatisfactory. Accommodation is adequate, though there is no one clearly identifiable subject area. Not all classrooms have effective displays, and in several the quality of the furniture is poor. The head of department provides good leadership. The key issue raised in the last report has been successfully addressed since there is now a more appropriate match between the content of lessons and the needs of pupils with different standards of attainment. The quality of teaching has also improved and results have continued on an upward trend. Support for teachers is good, but monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work still lacks formality.

SCIENCE

94. Standards achieved by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are significantly above national expectations. Sixth form pupils are achieving standards in line with course expectations. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for all 14-year-olds were well above the national averages and better than those in similar schools. Standards have been well above the national average for both boys and girls over the last four years and have followed the national trend. The GCSE results in 1999 were well above average with boys gaining a higher proportion of A*- C grades than girls but the proportion of girls obtaining A* or A grades was over twice the girls' national average. The proportion gaining A*- C grades was above that in similar schools. Since 1997 the results have shown a rising trend above the

national one and pupils have performed better, in comparison with national norms, than in most of their other subjects. The A-level results in 1999 were close to average in chemistry and physics, and below average in biology based on those gaining at least a grade E. In biology and physics the proportions gaining A or B grades were significantly below average. The results were broadly similar to those of 1998 overall but the proportion gaining grades A or B were lower in each subject. The 1999 AS-level results in physics were above average. A detailed analysis of the 1999 examination results revealed some under achievement particularly in biology and physics at A level. Strategies, which involved closer monitoring and extra classes after school, were introduced to address this and are meeting with much success. In the recent mock examinations almost all achieved the grade expected.

95. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels in science that are a little above average. They make good progress throughout and by the end of each of Key Stages 3 and 4 standards are above average. Pupils have a good knowledge and a secure understanding of the subject matter in each of the attainment targets. Year 9 pupils understand reflection and refraction and competently draw accurate ray diagrams. They apply their understanding very well in work on the spectrum. Most Year 11 pupils have a sound knowledge of radioactivity, a secure understanding of the digestive process and they apply their knowledge well. Higher attaining pupils understand the term *half-life* and write balanced chemical equations. Lower attainers competently planned one experiment simulating body heat loss, ensuring it was a fair test and made sensible predictions. They made accurate measurements, plotted suitable graphs and quickly learned how to interpret them. Year 7 pupils soon learn how to observe and measure accurately and record appropriately. Planning and predicting skills develop to above expected levels by the end of Year 9 and those of interpretation and evaluation are also above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils have the numeracy skills to process their experimental results and to display them in various graphical forms. Pupils increasingly use correct terminology and include relevant detail in their answers. The sixth form standards are in line with course expectations. The pupils in Year 13 physics quickly grasped work on latent heat and the chemists used their skills successfully to analyse lawn fertiliser for iron content. The Year 12 biologists showed a sound understanding of the effects of light on photosynthesis.
96. Standards of attainment, especially at Key Stage 3, have risen since the last inspection. The teaching has improved significantly and management is more aware of the need to monitor the department's strengths and weaknesses and to ensure a better working ethos, in which it has been successful. There has been no improvement in the accommodation since the last inspection and many of the laboratories are in need of refurbishment - some do not have all mains services on central benches. The department is in a strong position to sustain improvement and is planning to introduce a scheme to accelerate the development of thinking skills for the younger pupils.
97. The quality of teaching is a particular strength. It is always at least good and in half the lessons very good or excellent. Teachers know pupils extremely well and use the knowledge to skilfully question and challenge them, to tease out information and to check understanding. Occasionally questioning is not sufficiently targeted at individuals. Many teachers relate relevant personal experiences to capture interest. Lively informative exposition and much variation of activities keep pupils interested and fully engaged. The department does not have sufficient resources to enable pupils to gain enough 'hands on' experience with information technology equipment. Class management is very good throughout with pupils responding very well to the high expectations of behaviour and effort. In a lesson on human reproduction the teacher soon established an appropriate atmosphere with a calm and purposeful approach. There was much discussion and pupils confidently raised any doubts, with the teacher sensitively correcting misunderstandings. In the same lesson the good provision made for pupils with special educational needs was evident. The support teacher was well informed in advance of the content of the lesson and ensured that the particular pupils kept up with the rest of the class. This high quality support ensures that pupils with

special educational needs progress well. In other lessons teachers are well aware of the difficulties of individuals with special educational needs and give them extra help whenever possible making good use of well-prepared task sheets suitable for those pupils. Particularly gifted and talented sixth formers attend extra physics lessons after school while others have extension work provided.

98. Teachers plan lessons very well and use a variety of strategies. Practical tasks are purposeful with appropriate guidance that does not stifle opportunities for pupils to show initiative and think for themselves. Homeworks often reinforce and extend work done in class and they are marked promptly with much use made of informative comments. The good learning and progress result primarily from the high quality teaching. Pupils have very positive attitudes. They quickly settle in lessons and are extremely well behaved. They are attentive and concentrate fully on tasks. Relationships with teachers are very good giving pupils confidence to respond and put forward their ideas. Pupils work carefully and safely in practical lessons, co-operating extremely well in groups and do so without constant close supervision, yet they confidently seek extra help when required.
99. Teachers are appropriately qualified, have a good balance of experience and are deployed effectively. Some need more training to make better use of information technology. There is a clear commitment by all to high standards. The department is well led and managed by a competent and enthusiastic head of department supported by two very able subject heads. The data from the comprehensive and accurate assessment procedures is used effectively to monitor pupils' performance but there is no formal monitoring of teaching. Apart from the need for more information technology equipment the resources are just adequate. The accommodation is not satisfactory.

ART

100. The GCSE results were above the national average in 1997 and 1999, and below it in 1998. Boys performed significantly better than girls in 1999. Pupils who take short courses attained above average grades. The A-level results were above the national average over the period 1997-1999. In 1999 boys performed better than girls and well above the national average for boys.
101. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is above average overall. Their drawing skills are particularly strong. Their knowledge and understanding of artists' styles, as these apply to their own work, are above average. Pupils' competency in discussing artists' ideas and writing about them is average. In Year 9 the majority of pupils, in a higher set, were confident when designing clothes based on their study of African culture. Many pupils express their ideas clearly in discussion about their current or past work and use sketchbooks well for homework and research. Pupils in a Year 9 lower set attained average standards in skill development and knowledge of the culture studied, although their understanding of the design process and its application to their work was more limited. The infrequent use of information technology is a weakness in this key stage.
102. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment in drawing, painting, textiles and three-dimensional studies is above average. Higher attainers in Year 11 achieve well, showing good development of ideas through research and experimentation, as for example in their studies of childhood or their work in the style of Klimt or Picasso. Middle and lower attainers achieve well in one or more aspects of their work, as seen in the development of the graphic imagery of a trainer or motorbike, but are often less able to explain why they have chosen a particular way of working.

103. At the end of the sixth form, pupils' attainment is often very high. Pupils talk convincingly about the artists they have studied, as well as the relationship with their own work. Pupils in Year 13 display very good skills and an ability to use decoration effectively. Above-average attainment is evident in paintings which originate from first hand experiences gained on a recent visit to Venice, and in a vessel which reflects American Indian influences, as well as in the informed discussions comparing and contrasting the Renaissance period in Flanders and Northern Italy.
104. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are generally very responsible and sensible. They work collaboratively and support one another, particularly in the cramped ceramics room. They generally enjoy the range and variety of opportunities offered to them and their relationships with their teachers are very good.
105. Good progress has been made in implementing those issues regarding curriculum provision, raised by the last report, although time is still too little at Key Stage 3. Standards have risen and the teaching has improved since the last inspection.
106. The quality of teaching is always good and in two-thirds of lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers have complementary subject knowledge and experience. They work well as a team and use assessments effectively to track pupils' progress and inform them of their strengths and possible weaknesses. Enrichment activities such as the summer school mosaic table tops initiative, and the trips to Barcelona and Venice, for older pupils, extend understanding and give valuable opportunities for social as well as cultural education. Teachers are enthusiastic and give generously of their time. They work well to achieve good standards, in spite of the inadequacies of the accommodation and the resources. The lack of a technician is a particular weakness in the ceramics area.
107. Throughout the school pupils learn skills and gradually build up a knowledge and understanding of processes, styles and ideas as they encounter the works of artists and designers and work with a variety of materials. Pupils engage in expressive and analytical processes and have the opportunity to produce work in a range of scales. In both key stages the majority of pupils make good progress, and in the sixth form very good progress. Pupils benefit from the enrichment activities provided. These include lunchtime and after school sessions, as well as visitors to the school and trips to galleries, both in this country and abroad. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, although the multicultural element could be further developed. Pupils' literacy development is supported well through the display of key words and well-planned worksheets, but more consideration should be given to teaching methods and resource provision so that more pupils gain a deeper level of understanding of key ideas. Pupils with special educational needs progress well and gifted and talented pupils progress very well.
108. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Statutory requirements are met with the exception of the use of computers. The lack of appropriate hardware and software is limiting progress. Formal monitoring of teaching is not in place. Risk assessments have not been carried out and there is concern about the dust problems, which currently exist in the ceramics area. The accommodation is cramped particularly for large Key Stage 3 classes and this adversely affects learning. For example, pupils with special educational needs get confused when printmaking in these conditions. Storage is a major problem, with stored work encroaching on much needed workspaces. There is no extraction fan to remove dust. Pupils in the sixth form lack a discrete working area and adequate textbooks for art historical studies. Audio-visual resources are minimal.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. On entry in Year 7, pupils' experience is often limited and shallow in design and technology. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and 1998 indicated that pupils' attainments were below the national average. Girls performed better than boys although by a narrower margin in 1999 than in 1998. On the evidence of the work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment are close to average by the end of Key Stage 3 and are rising. This is because of improved teaching and the strategies introduced for much closer monitoring of pupils. Since the last inspection there have been many staffing changes and new ways of working have been introduced.
110. Key Stage 3 pupils understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and use tools safely and with reasonable accuracy, as when soldering components for a moisture sensor. In food technology standards of research skills are good, and pupils use databases to calculate nutrient content and to make decisions about developing their food products, and display results graphically. Higher attaining pupils express their ideas for designs in detail using sketches and annotated drawings. Pupils apply their knowledge from other subjects, for example information technology, mathematics and science in electronics. They have limited experience in using mechanisms in construction, or computer-aided manufacture because of a lack of suitable resources.
111. The results in the 1999 and 1998 GCSE full courses, taken by about a third of pupils were above the national average. Over the same period, the results in the GCSE short courses taken by the majority of pupils were below the national average. The school's analyses of results indicate pupils underachieved in the short courses in comparison to their other subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is below the national average largely because of the way the timetable is organised. Standards of graphical skills are good at this stage and pupils use computers appropriately to enhance their coursework - for example, to create designs for electronic circuits, or nets and logos for graphics products. Numeracy skills are good and pupils' literacy skills are well supported by suitable textbooks. The careful match of learning to targets in pupils' individual education plans enables pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory progress at both key stages, but with in-class support progress could be better.
112. The small number of students entered for the A-level examination makes national comparisons inappropriate. However, in 1999 one boy obtained a grade E, and in 1998 one girl a grade A. In the sixth form, work builds satisfactorily on GCSE experience and standards of work seen are in line with course requirements.
113. As at the last inspection standards of achievement vary considerably, suggesting little improvement since that time. However, changing syllabuses and high entry for short courses make comparison difficult. The quality of teaching has improved a little. There has been no improvement in terms of space and resources since the last inspection report.
114. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. Pupils' positive attitudes support their progress. At each stage pupils know what learning is planned, the standards expected, and exactly how their work is assessed. They take notes carefully and understand new work; they recognise their mistakes and correct them. Personal relationships are very good and pupils share tools amicably, working sensibly in small groups or alone. At Key Stage 4 especially, pupils battle to complete GCSE coursework in the single period lessons allocated, but some lose the motivation needed to reach the higher levels.

115. Teaching is generally good, and occasionally very good throughout the school. One lesson was unsatisfactory. Teachers know their specialist subjects well and plan lessons thoroughly, to ensure high standards and consistency of approach. Clear demonstrations and effective use of questions ensure that pupils understand how to achieve good standards in designing and construction. Teachers use group work appropriately to introduce variety and make efficient use of resources. Planning meets National Curriculum and examination requirements. The teaching of basic skills is good and pupils have frequent opportunities to practise and develop number, language and information technology skills. Although they are set clear targets, work is sometimes inadequately matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils. In an electronics lesson in Year 8, for example, teaching did not provide suitable support for those pupils with special educational needs in the large group, and as a result pupils fell behind in their work. Assessment is thorough and used effectively to raise achievement. Good links with parents, the local community and industry enhance teaching and learning.
116. At Key Stage 3, pupils' learn well and make satisfactory progress. The teaching concentrates on developing sound knowledge and good standards of practical skill. Pupils' progress is assessed on a regular basis. This has ensured near average standards in designing and making, particularly in the use of resistant materials. Learning is mostly good at Key Stage 4 but progress is unsatisfactory overall mainly because of the constraints of the timetable. Curricular requirements are met, but the uneven time allocation in Years 10 and 11 affects pupils' progress in gaining knowledge and understanding. Half the cohort has three single lessons per week in Year 11 and two single lessons in Year 10. The remainder has the reverse pattern, with only two single lessons per week in Year 11. A small, but significant number of higher attaining pupils (mainly boys) make unsatisfactory progress because in the single lessons allocated they lack opportunities for extended practical work and lose motivation.
117. The department is well led and teachers work hard as a team to plan and share good practice. The management of routine organisation is good, but the monitoring of teaching needs further development. Statutory requirements are met. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Fittings are old and worn, some is over thirty years old, and perimeter furniture is unhygienic in food areas. Workshops are traditional in layout, lack clean design areas, and dust and fume extraction is inadequate. The open-plan arrangement poses problems of noise and supervision in some lessons. Limited resources for mechanisms and control (CAD/CAM) restrict teaching. The storage of gas bottles is unsatisfactory. The level of technical support is too low and insufficient for efficient management of resources and support of the teaching.

GEOGRAPHY

118. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 1999 was well above the national average, as it was in the previous year, and all those entered gained at least grade G. The A-level results in 1999 were in line with the national average, as they have been over the past three years. Girls achieved better results than boys at A-level in 1999, but this is not a consistent trend. Pupils do better in this subject at both GCSE and A-level than in most of their other subjects. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, as measured by teachers' assessments, was well above the level expected nationally. Girls achieved higher standards than boys.
119. In the work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils was above that expected nationally at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, and many achieved well above average standards. At A level, the attainment of pupils is in line with the course expectations. Most pupils of all ages are achieving standards at least as high as could be expected from their earlier attainment, while many exceed expectations and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Standards of presentation of maps and diagrams are good and pupils of all ages use a range of graphs and maps well to present and find

information. In a Year 13 class, pupils used map and number skills effectively to identify the risk from hurricanes of a selection of Pacific islands and many applied their knowledge and understanding well to make recommendations on the effective allocation of resources for hurricane protection. However, some pupils in another sixth form group were insecure in their knowledge of countries on a world map. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of geographical patterns and processes, especially in relation to environmental and social issues. In a Year 8 lesson, many pupils demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the environmental effects of atmospheric pollutants from power stations and suggested a good number of ways in which pollution could be reduced. However, many pupils at Key Stage 3 do not develop their explanations in sufficient detail. Pupils in Year 11, studying the impact of water-borne diseases, showed good understanding of the causes, effects and control issues associated with the spread of malaria.

120. The great majority of pupils of all ages, including those with special educational needs, have positive attitudes to learning, and this contributes to the good progress many make in their work. Almost all pupils are attentive and listen well to teachers and to each other. Most are interested in the work and willingly volunteer to answer questions, but in a few groups, especially in the sixth form, many pupils are reluctant to contribute. A feature of many lessons is the speed with which pupils settle to tasks and complete them, and this enables them to make good progress with their work. The only exception to this pattern was provided by a few boys at Key Stage 4 who were slow to start work. Behaviour is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good, and frequently very good, and this creates a supportive atmosphere in which pupils learn effectively.
121. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The high standards reported at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been maintained, and although performance at A level appears now to be lower, it remains in line with what would be expected from pupils' earlier attainments. The good standards of learning and teaching reported then have been maintained. There are still too many rooms used for teaching the subject, especially at A level, and this adversely affects the quality of pupils' learning. Responsibilities in the department are clear and teachers work well together, so that the department has the capacity to secure further improvement.
122. The overall quality of teaching is good, and teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is good, and occasionally very good, in about two thirds of lessons. As a result, pupils of all ages, including those with special educational needs, learn well and many make good progress in developing their skills and understanding. The main strengths of the teaching are the way teachers manage pupils, their command of the subject, the planning of lessons and the quality and effective use of resources. Teachers use questions well to check and extend pupils' understanding and circulate well to monitor work in progress. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are also involved regularly in assessing their own work and in identifying areas for improvement. Work is usually marked regularly and constructively, but the frequency and content of marking are inconsistent and variable between teachers. Very effective co-operation between the class teacher and support teacher enabled the great majority of pupils in a Year 9 lesson, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress in understanding the different kinds of aid needed after a natural disaster.
123. In the most effective lessons, teachers explain the work in a clear, lively way, maintain a good pace, with a variety of activities, and make high demands on pupils through their use of questions. These characteristics were well illustrated by a Year 11 lesson in which pupils took part in a well structured and challenging series of short activities. As a result, they made very good progress in applying the skills of statistical analysis and in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different indicators of economic development, such as birth rates, car ownership and literacy levels. Occasionally, however, teaching is less effective

because a teacher talks for too long without actively involving pupils or the pace of work in the lesson is allowed to drop.

124. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a good ethos for learning in the subject and display is used well to enhance the learning environment. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Opportunities for pupils to apply skills in information technology need to be extended. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress are good, and are improving, and assessment information is used well to monitor and evaluate the department's performance. A useful start has been made on using lesson observation to monitor teaching and learning, but this is not yet sufficiently regular or systematic.

HISTORY

125. The overall standard of work, both at the beginning and end of Key Stage 3, is in line with that seen nationally. The majority of pupils achieve standards that are appropriate for their ability. This is an improvement on that reported at the last inspection. Teachers assessed their pupils as being above the national average in 1998 and 1999. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls overall, but more girls than boys reach the very top levels. The higher-attaining pupils reach standards that are in line with those seen nationally. Lower-attainers and pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards. Pupils in Key Stage 3 see and explain historical causes and effects and use an appropriate range of sources effectively for information and to make deductions about the past. They show sound knowledge and understanding of past events. Higher attainers evaluate sources effectively and successfully assess their usefulness in studying the past. Many produce extended writing of good quality.
126. Pupils taking the GCSE course reach an overall standard which is above the national average, a similar standard to that reported at the last inspection. The percentage of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in 1999 was a little above the national average. The percentage has, however, fallen since 1997, when it was well above average. The attainment of boys has remained steady over the past three years and is above the boys' national average. The attainment of girls has fallen steadily between 1997 and 1999. The percentage of those who gained A or A* grades has been below the national average for the last three years. The standard of work overall seen in Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average, although a minority showed the potential to reach the highest grades. A minority was working at standards below the national average. Pupils taking GCSE see and explain the causes of past events at a satisfactory level. They identify similarities and differences between the past and the present. In a lesson about the state of hospitals and nursing in the mid 19th century, for example, all pupils identified some aspects of the poor conditions and suggested why changes were needed. They used sources effectively to extract information and made deductions about the past.
127. Pupils' attainment at A-level is in line with that expected nationally. No pupils achieved grades A or B, however in 1999. The standard is lower than that reported at the time of the last inspection, but largely reflects the abilities of the pupils in the group. The standard of work seen was in line with the national expectation. Pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of past events, and use sources competently to form their own opinions about the past, and to challenge the views of historians. The attainment of pupils taking in the A-level government and politics course is in line with the national average. Pupils have good understanding of the political issues they study. In a lesson on recent government education policies, pupils' comments were thoughtful and articulate.

128. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is occasionally very good, and very rarely less than satisfactory. The greatest variation in the quality of teaching is in Key Stage 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge at all levels. Lessons are well planned and mostly have clear objectives. Most teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils, and work in many lessons challenges higher attainers. A lack of these opportunities in some lessons at Key Stage 3 was noted at the last inspection. Teachers expect all pupils to work hard and behave well and as a result virtually all pupils at all levels of ability respond well and try hard to achieve their best. Teachers manage their pupils well and deal effectively with potential misbehaviour. Relationships are good; the atmosphere in lessons is pleasant, but when necessary there is effective discipline. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, in a good working environment, in which all the pupils who wish to learn may do so. Although books are marked regularly, the comments at Key Stage 3 do not usually set clear enough targets for improvement. The marking of work done by those taking GCSE and A-level is usually much more helpful.
129. The department makes good use of its own staff to give extra help to lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding about the past. As a result of working in a small group apart from the rest of the class, a small group of lower-attaining pupils who were learning about evacuees in World War 2 were able to show a level of understanding which was close to the national average.
130. Teachers use an appropriate variety of approaches that stimulate pupils' interest and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a lesson on anti-Semitism the use of a time-line and a map on which pupils plotted examples of the persecution of Jews led to them gaining a clearer understanding of the extent of anti-Semitism in Europe since the 6th century. At Key Stage 4 pupils produced a pamphlet to campaign for the need for proper training for nurses and so deepened their understanding of medical conditions in the mid-19th century. A lesson in which pupils presented their own findings about pressure groups contributed effectively to developing research and communication skills among sixth form pupils taking the politics course. In a small number of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 teachers did not target pupils sufficiently to ensure that all contributed to the lesson. In some sixth form lessons a minority of pupils are passive rather than active participants, and on occasions are allowed by their teachers to remain so.
131. Although there are some strengths in the leadership and management of the department there are areas of weakness also. There has been some improvement in the development planning since the last inspection, and the realistic aims show an awareness of what needs to be done. In virtually all the lessons the strong ethos for learning in the department was clear. The lack of formal monitoring of the teaching in the department, the lack of long-term planning (apart from A-level courses), and the slow implementation of improvements, such as re-establishing links with primary schools and developing the use of information technology, are all weaknesses. There is no up-to-date information technology hardware in the department and access to centrally provided information technology, especially for use of the Internet, is not always easy, so that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use information technology for historical research. There has been a little improvement in accommodation since the last inspection.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

132. The 1999 GCSE results were well above the national average. These results are a significant improvement on previous years. The results in the GCSE short course were also well above the national average with girls achieving as well as boys. The A-level computing results were

in line with the national figure. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed standards close to the national average with no significant variation between boys and girls.

133. In lessons and work seen the overall attainment is in line with the national expectations by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are confident in word-processing. They are developing their typing skills to create text, 'cut and paste' to edit their work and they use the spell-check facility. Pupils have an understanding of a spreadsheet, using the formulas for simple mathematical calculations in a loss and profit topic. Pupils have secure knowledge of the use of a database, and access and filter the necessary information; they display their findings in graph form. Pupils use a desktop publishing program to place art images and re-adjust the size to fit a publication. Some pupils have an understanding of control technology but this element is generally under-developed. The overall attainment at Key Stage 4 is in line with the national expectation. However, the knowledge and the skills of the pupils in the full GCSE group are better. They understand the 'mail merge' facility when writing a letter. They have knowledge of control, entering the correct series of instructions to operate a 'buzzer'. Pupils' attainment in the sixth form is above average. They have good knowledge of a database and successfully adjust the application to meet the needs of their own projects. They develop a good understanding of programming using the visual basic language. Pupils are confident in using the Internet facilities and successfully search for information. The level of attainment has improved since the last inspection.
134. Pupils enter the school with varied previous experience but because of their good overall attitude they quickly begin to make progress. They enjoy working on computers and show a good level of interest. They discuss their work confidently and generally behave well. On the occasions when pupils have to share computers they are sensible and help each other. Generally pupils concentrate well during lessons and settle to work quickly. There are occasions, however, in the larger groups when it is not practical for pupils to share a computer and pupils lose interest and learning is slow. Pupils in the examination groups express concerns at the amount of time allocated to the subject, feeling under pressure to complete the work and meet the demands of the teacher in only one session a week. Pupils in the sixth form have a very mature approach to the subject, concentrate well and persevere with the complexities of learning programming language. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and progress satisfactorily. They often work with higher attaining pupils and achieve the target set for them. Extra support is provided for special needs pupils during the lunchtime session to help them to download their work from a specially designed word-processing package.
135. The quality of teaching is overall satisfactory. The teachers are mostly competent and confident and those who have good knowledge and understanding plan lessons appropriately. There are occasions when the higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers have good discipline and deal sensitively with any unacceptable behaviour. This friendly but firm approach contributes well to pupils' progress. Progress, however is occasionally slowed by the limited demonstration of the skills required. This is due to the fact that there is no overhead screen to instruct a whole group. Teachers partly overcome this by setting pupils to work quickly, giving individual instruction, but often pupils are waiting for the teacher to help them. Some teaching is less effective because the teachers' knowledge is inadequate leading to lessons that are inappropriately organised and lacking in clear objectives.
136. The department is well managed by the co-ordinator who has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. In the term and a half since being appointed he has reviewed and re-written the schemes of work. This has given teachers confidence and guidance. Although there is evidence that information technology is beginning to be used across the curriculum it is still under-used in most subjects. The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers the main elements of the National Curriculum. There is, however, an over emphasis on the learning of skills with insufficient stress being placed on the use of the computer in its wider

context. The resources are generally adequate to meet the needs of the pupils. There is confusion, however, caused by the different systems in some of the computer suites.

137. There has been some progress since the last inspection and standards of attainment have improved. To maintain improvements, it is necessary to audit staff competence and develop a programme of in-service training. Additionally the software needs upgrading and schemes of work need to promote information technology across the curriculum and to ensure that the higher attaining pupils are challenged.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

138. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate an overall level of attainment above the national average in both 1998 and 1999, and pupils currently near the end of Key Stage 3 are achieving an above average standard. Most pupils show good understanding when reading or listening to French or German, and higher-attaining pupils produce some accurate, independent writing. Pupils' attainment in speaking is satisfactory, but less good than in the other skills.
139. In 1999, the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C in full course GCSE examinations in both French and German was well above the national average, as was the proportion of those attaining grades A* or A. Pupils did significantly better in both languages than in most of their other subjects. In 1998 attainment was above average in German, and well above average in French. Around half of all pupils were entered for short course GCSE in both years, however, which is well in excess of the number entered for this course in most other schools, and this has led to significant underachievement, particularly by boys. Although pupils attained above average grades in both subjects in short course GCSE, the proportion of pupils achieving grade C or above in the year group as a whole is only average, when compared to national figures.
140. Towards the end of Key Stage 4, standards are currently average overall, but there are major differences in attainment between those doing long and those doing short courses. Higher-attaining pupils show very good understanding of both spoken and written language from a variety of sources. They use a range of appropriate language in their writing, and their work shows a good degree of accuracy. They are less good at speaking, because they have too little opportunity to practise this skill, although some pupils do speak well, with good accents. Many pupils undertaking the short course do not speak readily and write little at length; their work consists mostly of copying and gap-filling exercises. In their reading they make reasonable sense of texts for which they have been carefully prepared, but in many classes they hear too little French or German spoken in the classroom to develop their listening skills.
141. Attainment at A-level in French and German was well below the national average in 1999. In 1998, the proportion of pupils who passed the examination matched national figures, but there were fewer pupils attaining the highest grades (A and B). Towards the end of the sixth form currently standards vary widely, but are average overall. Pupils are better at understanding the foreign language than they are at producing it themselves. Reading from a wide range of sources, to extend both linguistic and cultural understanding, is well developed. Listening skills are soundly developed. Some pupils make themselves understood well in spoken French or German, but others speak much more hesitantly. Writing is good in range and appropriateness of vocabulary, but there is still room for improvement in accuracy.
142. Pupils' behaviour is good and attitudes to their work are good overall but vary from very good to unsatisfactory. In most lessons, pupils complete the work they are asked to do at a reasonable pace and contribute readily. In many lessons they develop independence through the good use of dictionaries. In some short course GCSE lessons the pace is slow, pupils'

concentration is poor and they show little interest in their work. Overall standards at each key stage are similar to those noted at the time of the last inspection. The teaching has improved.

143. Teaching is predominantly good at both key stages and in the sixth form, enabling pupils to make good progress in most lessons. Teaching was never less than satisfactory and in one in six lessons it was very good. The key features of the best lessons are very good planning with precise objectives, and high expectations of the pupils, both in the amount of work they are required to do, and in the level of understanding required. For example, in a German lesson in Year 9, the careful preparation of short interesting activities, gradually increasing in complexity, enabled pupils to make very good progress in explaining why they liked or disliked certain subjects.
144. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils' attainments, but in a few lessons do not take sufficient account of the wide range of attainment. In these lessons, pupils with special educational needs do not receive sufficient help, a situation that is not helped by the lack of support assistants in most classes. In the best lessons, however, there is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties. For example, in a French lesson in Year 9, a group of lower-attaining pupils made good progress in talking about illness, because the activities were appropriate to the pupils, the presentation was lively, and class management was good. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress at Key Stage 3 but slower progress at Key Stage 4. The gifted and talented pupils progress well at all stages. In all classes, teachers make effective use of homework to develop the work done in class or to prepare for subsequent lessons. All the teachers are competent linguists, but in some lessons unnecessarily use English for large parts of the lesson, when the foreign language would be more appropriate.
145. Most pupils undertake the study of two foreign languages from Year 8, and there are plans to extend this provision to all pupils from Year 7 next year. Few continue with two foreign languages into Key Stage 4, and groups in the sixth form are small. The department meets the statutory requirements to teach the National Curriculum, but there is insufficient use of information technology in the learning of modern languages. Resources for learning are just sufficient, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The shape of some rooms is inappropriate for easy oral interaction, and the tiled floors and bare surfaces in many rooms and the use of rooms near to dining facilities make listening to the foreign language very difficult.

MUSIC

146. In the 1999 GCSE examination all the pupils achieved grades A*-C. This is well above the national average. The numbers entered for the exam have been small in recent years. High standards have been maintained over the past three years. In the 1999 A-level examination the two pupils entered both achieved pass grades. In the AS examination the four candidates entered all achieved A or B grades, and this is well above average. There were no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Teacher assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were not carried out; therefore no comparison with national standards is available for 14-year-olds.
147. In lessons and in work seen, the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectations but with weaknesses in some areas. Pupils appraising skills are well established. They recognise different styles of music and identify instruments played. When listening to music pupils follow a musical score but some, because of the complexity of the task and a lack of knowledge, find difficulty following accurately. Pupils have sound rhythmic skills. They sing in tune with enthusiasm, adding appropriate actions to emphasise the meanings of the words but the quality is lacking. They find difficulty maintaining an

independent part during the singing of a round. Pupils have limited opportunities to compose and their creative work is below the level expected. Although pupils have written simple melodies these have not, with the exception of a march composition, been recorded in either conventional or graphic notation. Although pupils have a basic understanding of primary chords this knowledge is not used to add a chordal accompaniment to their melodies. Pupils make too little use of information technology. Too few pupils pursue a study of music beyond Key Stage 3.

148. By the end of Key Stage 4 the GCSE pupils' attainment is above the national expectations. They have good knowledge of the main historical developments, describe accurately the important elements of each period and the changes in texture and instrumentation. The majority of pupils are confident and competent instrumentalists and use their technical skills well to develop their compositions, which have shape and structure. Pupils use information technology music programs to develop their creative work, using the computer to effectively arrange their compositions for a combination of different instruments. The attainment of the pupils who play musical instruments is good and they progress well with the benefit of individual tuition and a range of extra-curricular activities.
149. The attainment of pupils in the sixth form is good. They have good technical knowledge and are developing sound aural skills. Using the correct technical language they analyse music from a range of periods, identify key modulations, recognise chords and cadence sequences and read a musical score with accuracy.
150. Pupils' overall attitudes to the subject are good. The older pupils are committed musicians, who work and concentrate well through sessions, staying on track even when not directly supervised by the teacher. They discuss their musical experiences confidently and respond well to the demands of the subject. Younger pupils however, begin lessons with enthusiasm but, because of the 'lecture style' of teaching and the lack of practical activities, combined with an over emphasis on the theory of music, they become restless and lose interest. The result of this is that progress in lessons is slow, pupils failing to make the advances in learning that their original positive interest promised. Although there is provision for the practical aspect of the subject with keyboard sessions, these activities are not always linked with overall plans to develop creative skills. Pupils comment that they enjoy the practical music making sessions when given the opportunity.
151. Little progress has been made since the last inspection; standards of attainment have been maintained and the teaching has remained similar, with deficiencies still evident at Key Stage 3. High standards in the extra-curricular activities have been maintained. These activities are well supported and pupils comment that they are proud to take part in the many concerts organised by the department.
152. The overall teaching is satisfactory, with a nearly a half at Key Stage 4 and sixth form being good. Teachers have good knowledge and use their expertise to promote pupils' understanding. They have good discipline and deal with any unacceptable behaviour quietly and efficiently. The planning of lessons, in particular at Key Stage 3, lacks a clear focus. Although the long-term plans are clear, medium term plans lack specific learning objectives and continuity. This lack of clarity in the schemes of work has been particularly noticeable during recent months with a long-term absence in the department, leading to a lack of guidance for temporary teachers and an imbalance in the work covered. The development of practical music in the department is restricted by the lack of resources, in particular tuned and untuned classroom percussion instruments, to give pupils the opportunity to explore texture and timbre. Assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is unsatisfactory. Pupils' performances and compositions are not regularly audio-recorded resulting in pupils being unable to appraise or assess their own work. Pupils with special educational needs make

satisfactory progress and achieve the targets set for them. The most competent musicians progress well.

153. The standard of the extra-curricular music in the department is very good. The choir, who recently were successful in the regional heats of the Sainsbury Choir of the Year competition, perform to a very high standard and are good ambassadors for the school; the head of department spends a great deal of time and energy to achieve these standards. The school brass band work is also of a high standard. They play confidently in a variety of styles and perform at many events in the local community.
154. The accommodation is inadequate and affecting progress. The lack of adjacent practice rooms makes supervision difficult. The temporary classroom, that is presently used as a keyboard laboratory is situated some way from the main teaching area, making the sharing of resources a problem.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. The standards achieved at GCSE in 1999 were significantly below the national average and have fallen over the past three years. However all pupils achieved a pass grade in 1999. The results at A level, which has been introduced since the last inspection, were average. In the lessons observed, standards were mainly average throughout, although in some aspects of the work they fell below this at Key Stage 3. The standard of gymnastics at Key Stage 3 is well below average and pupils are unable to roll or balance with control. Most pupils are unable to perform a sequence to the required level. Pupils have a low level of understanding of the effect of exercise on the body and lessons do not always start with a warm up. Pupils in Year 11 produce standards that are above the national average in badminton. They play the game to a high level with knowledge and understanding of tactics and strategies. The personal studies of pupils on the GCSE course are well presented and are of an above-average standard. Standards in theory work at A level are in line with those expected. Pupils' attitudes to learning are often good, and in almost half of the lessons very good. Pupils arrive enthusiastically for their lessons and when challenged in their work concentrate and work hard. Behaviour is generally very good. Pupils on the GCSE and A-level courses adopt a mature attitude to their work.
156. The department has made too little progress since the last inspection. Standards have deteriorated and teaching is not as good. The management of the department is less effective. Assessment procedures are still not satisfactory.
157. The quality of teaching is mixed, ranging from very good to poor. It is best in the sixth form and is slightly better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. More than half the teaching was good (with a little being very good) but about a fifth was less than satisfactory. All the teaching in the sixth form was at least good. Teaching is unsatisfactory when there is a low level of challenge and lesson planning does not indicate learning objectives. Tasks are not sufficiently matched to the wide range of ability in some classes and some pupils do not make the required progress. For example, pupils in Year 7 were required to perform tasks, such as headstands and backward rolls, which they were not capable of performing. Pupils in Year 10 made little progress in soccer as they were working on low level skills when they were ready for more advanced techniques. In a table tennis lesson, pupils in Year 9 could not play a backhand shot. The teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum is not secure. Lesson planning is often unsatisfactory, as it does not indicate learning objectives. Pupils' learning is at its best in volleyball at Key Stage 3. Their knowledge of the game is good and they make good progress across the key stage. At Key Stage 4 pupils make very good progress in badminton, because the teaching objectives are clear. In the A-level course pupils make very good progress in theory lessons on the psychology of sport.

158. Schemes of work are out of date and in need of review. Not all teachers follow departmental policies. The leadership in the department is satisfactory but the management of the subject is not good enough. Dance is taught for six weeks in Year 7 only and this is inadequate. The subject development planning is largely ineffective, especially with regard to improving the community links through sport and recreation. Reports to parents indicate attitude and effort but do not indicate what pupils know, understand and can do over each key stage. There is no monitoring of teaching. There are no strategies in place to raise standards at GCSE.
159. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and a large number of pupils take part. There is a high level of commitment from teachers who give their time freely. School teams are successful in most sports and a number of pupils have gained representative honours at national and regional level. Changing accommodation is inadequate in both the sports hall and the gymnasium and the roof of the sports hall is in need of replacement. A large number of lessons have not taken place throughout the year as a result of leaking water in the sports hall and this has had a detrimental effect on the quality and range of the curriculum for pupils. The heating is inadequate in the sports hall. The lack of maintenance of the all weather pitch is poor. There is no risk assessment carried out in the department.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

160. The 1999 GCSE examination results were well above the national average. The 1999 results were higher than those for 1998 and the number of pupils taking the examination had slightly increased. The standard achieved by boys has steadily improved. In the 1999 A-level examination, the proportion of pupils graded A or B was below the national average, but those graded A to E was above the national average - a similar pattern to the previous year. The number of pupils taking the examination remains too small to detect any trends.
161. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' achievement is slightly above the national expectation and at Key Stage 4 the standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with the national expectation and similar to that seen at the last inspection. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. At Key Stage 4 insufficient time is allocated to cover adequately the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus - an observation made at the last inspection.
162. At Key Stage 3 pupils have a basic knowledge of three world religions. They identify the main beliefs, objects, places and practices associated with these religions. Pupils learn about the moral values and lifestyles of their adherents. They explain the meanings of symbols. Pupils discuss issues in a mature and sensitive way, as in a Year 9 lesson on the holocaust where they listened to words of Jewish victims and began to write their own responses to this event. The written work of higher attaining pupils is often good, but some pupils produce work that is frequently too brief and sometimes incomplete. Pupils usually persevere with tasks and most acquire knowledge from a variety of sources, as in a Year 8 lesson on the Chinese New Year. Lower attaining pupils also acquire satisfactory levels of knowledge, but they often have difficulty in writing down their ideas. Key Stage 4 pupils follow a challenging programme, exploring questions of meaning and purpose - for example, the nature of suffering, love and forgiveness - but progression and pupils' interest are difficult to sustain with one lesson per fortnight. Most GCSE and A-level pupils are acquiring the necessary knowledge and understanding to be able to tackle confidently their public examinations.
163. Pupils' attitudes to work are good. In most lessons they listen to the teacher and to each other. They are interested in the work and willingly talk about it. Behaviour and relationships are usually good. Pupils respect differing viewpoints, as in a Year 11 class where they were learning about world poverty. Learning resources and displays of work are treated with care.

164. The teaching is good at all levels and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have a sound grasp of their subject, plan their lessons effectively and expect all pupils to behave well and work hard. Appropriate teaching methods are used, including effective group work, to extend pupils' understanding. A lesson on prejudice and discrimination, in which groups of pupils reflected on the theme and reported back, using role play, songs and dialogue, was successful in rousing interest and extending pupils' understanding of the feelings of those who experience discrimination. Lessons are appropriately challenging. In a Year 10 lesson on the concept of love, questioning was used effectively, expositions were clear and interesting resource material and challenging tasks were used to focus pupils' thinking. Lessons move at a brisk pace and time is generally well used, especially at Key Stage 4. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils, create a positive learning ethos and try to raise pupils' self-esteem. Homework is regularly set and carefully marked and is used to reinforce or deepen pupils' understanding. Assessment data is increasingly used in the planning of work. Target setting is at an early stage of development and needs to be extended.
165. Many pupils learn well and make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress. They steadily develop their understanding of religions and confidently use technical vocabulary. Those with special educational needs also progress satisfactorily, because teachers match tasks and worksheets to their needs and especially in class ensure the students know what to do. For a small number of pupils progress is hindered by poor motivation. The most able pupils progress well at Key Stage 3.
166. The head of department works hard, gives good leadership and manages the department well. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to the subject and to the raising of standards. The departmental development plan could be improved by having fewer objectives and concentrating on those which would have the greatest impact on standards. The lack of a formal system for monitoring teaching is a weakness. Statutory requirements are currently not met at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form as time allocated is too little for pupils' statutory entitlement to religious education to be covered - a criticism that was made at the last inspection. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at Key Stage 3, but less so at Key Stage 4 and not at all in the sixth form. This provision would be enhanced with a planned programme of visits to minority multi-ethnic centres such as a mosque, synagogue or gurdwara. Progress since the last inspection is just satisfactory.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

BUSINESS EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS

167. The school offers two GCSE business studies courses. There is one full course and another combined with technology or language to achieve a full GCSE qualification, although the two parts are taught discretely. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in the full course GCSE in 1999 was well above average. Boys' achievements were better than girls' and pupils do better in this subject than in most of their other subjects. In the combined course, the proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*- C has remained above average and consistent with 1998 results. In 1999 a greater proportion of pupils achieved top grades - 50 per cent gained a grade B or better. The trend over time in both courses has been upwards with little difference in achievement between boys and girls.
168. In the sixth form, results in A-level economics were above average in 1999, and higher than in recent years, continuing the upward trend since 1994. Girls did slightly better than boys in

achieving higher grades. Since the last inspection standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have consistently improved and have remained above the national averages.

169. The standards in lessons are higher than is normally seen. A Year 10 group understood the workings of a trading profit and loss account and a Year 11 group had a secure grasp of marketing. Year 12 have a good grasp of the workings of indirect taxation and a Year 13 group understood monopoly price discrimination. All pupils have a positive attitude to learning. In a number of lessons pupils demonstrated a flexible and co-operative attitude, embracing new knowledge confidently and reflecting perceptively on previous learning. Pupils work successfully in pairs and show little inhibition when speaking in response to questions or being invited to make short presentations to express their business knowledge. There is a high level of motivation with the majority of pupils being able to discuss freely their awareness of business principles such as competition and pricing policy.
170. Standards are higher than they were at the time of the least inspection and the quality of teaching has been maintained. The management of the subject is more effective.
171. The quality of teaching is good and occasionally very good. All teachers know their subject well and teach in a style that is direct, incisive and challenging. They use their subject knowledge to inform and stimulate their pupils. Teachers plan their work in depth and use a variety of methods: class discussion, group presentation and individual tasks. The majority of lessons seen had good pace, clear objectives and challenged pupils' thinking and understanding. For example in a Key Stage 4 lesson on marketing and distribution channels, pupils were encouraged to offer examples of the types of product and the appropriate channel of distribution. Pupils did this enthusiastically and accurately. In the sixth form teachers are skilful in their questioning and use clear examples to illustrate complex economic data. This simplifies abstract concepts such as pricing theory and taxation receipts and pupils respond well to this teaching approach of illustration and question and answer. Teachers also challenge pupils' thinking and encourage them to justify their views through discussion and debate.
172. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has a pivotal role in the curriculum owing to its dual function in combining academic and vocational subjects. The department is dynamically led. There are sound management systems in place with assessment and monitoring procedures updated and implemented. The department makes maximum use of its resources and since the last inspection has upgraded textbooks and has acquired more information technology capacity. Classrooms are visually stimulating and strongly enhance the appeal of the subjects despite accommodation being no better than adequate. Resources are sufficient to meet existing needs.

GNVQ COURSES

173. The school offers a wide and varied programme of courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4, it provides courses at Foundation and Intermediate Levels in business, in leisure and tourism and in health and social care. In the sixth form the school provides courses at Advanced and Intermediate levels in Business and in Health & Social Care and at Intermediate level in Leisure & Tourism. In 1999, the majority of pupils achieved either merit or distinction and produced portfolios of work of a very high standard when their prior attainment is considered. Similarly in GNVQ Part 1 Foundation health and social care, the majority of pupils were successful with three-quarters gaining the Part 1 award.
174. In the sixth form the majority of pupils entered gained awards. For example, in Intermediate leisure and tourism 91 per cent passed the course achieving the equivalent of four or five

GCSE Grades A*-C. The school received its first distinction grade and three pupils were awarded merit grades.

175. A minority of pupils fail to achieve all aspects of their respective courses, with assignment work remaining incomplete. Since the last inspection the provision of GNVQ courses has grown and extended to Key Stage 4. In addition more pupils are following vocational courses at Key Stage 4 but in the sixth form there is a drop in pupil numbers in Advanced business and Advanced health and social care courses.
176. Pupils have a good attitude to learning and their attainment in lessons is in line with expectations at Key Stage 4 and above this in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4, pupils offer ideas, sustain concentration and use their own experience as in a health and social care lesson which looked at social stratification. Pupils were able to discuss, comment and reflect upon the life styles of upper, middle and working classes, and observe and judge similarities and differences in these groups as a consequence of social and economic change.
177. Standards have improved since the last inspection and the teaching is better. The management of the courses is better.
178. The standard of teaching in GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is mostly good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a close and positive relationship with pupils. There is appropriate course content, good organisation of teaching material and a flexible teaching style is adopted to suit the demands of GNVQ. Teachers are comfortable in switching from a direct teaching approach to one that facilitates pupils' work. This is revealed in the confidence and trust that teachers have in pupils for them to become independent learners. There is close monitoring of pupils' progress, especially in completing assignments and this is done through a personal reviewing process, but teachers could also evaluate this progress in a group context towards the end of lessons.
179. In most lessons, teachers gave good direction to pupils, offering support and clear guidance where it was needed, but also encouraging pupils to develop their own ideas and make their own decisions. Teachers were adept at creating a purposeful learning environment. All pupils showed interest and commitment to their studies. Weaker pupils required and requested more guidance but remained on task and had pride in their achievements, which in most lessons corresponded to course standards. A small number of lessons involved the use of information technology and all pupils demonstrated a satisfactory standard of competence in word processing.
180. Pupils co-operate with each other and learn well in groups. For example, in the sixth form, in a leisure and tourism lesson, the class was split into two groups to plan a social event. Each group had specific tasks and responsibilities that they had devised and allocated. All pupils were aware of and fulfilled their duties - advising, discussing and writing up tasks. All pupils achieved this with energy and enthusiasm. All pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form were gaining experience of evaluating their own work; a minority found it difficult to assess their strengths and weaknesses but all relished the opportunity to do so.
181. The management of the courses is good and is characterised by a strong 'team ethos'. Regular meetings are held to monitor and assess the progress of pupils and to ensure compliance with course standards. The department has strong links with industry, commerce and caring organisations. Regular visits from outside agencies to school are a strong feature and pupils benefit from work experience placements. Accommodation is adequate and resources are only sufficient to meet the present pupil numbers and range of courses.