

INSPECTION REPORT

The Priory School

Shrewsbury

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique Reference Number: 123562

Headteacher: Mrs S M Johnes

Reporting inspector: Mr Ross Maden

2793

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 December 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Longden Road Shrewsbury Shropshire SY3 9EE
Telephone number:	01743 343769
Fax number:	01743 360658
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Knight
Date of previous inspection:	9 -13 January 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Ross Maden, Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress; Teaching; Leadership and management; Efficiency
Sylvia Daintrey, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; Partnership with parents and the community
Alan Brewerton	Science	
Allan Paver	Geography	Curriculum
Roy Pitcher	Religious education Special educational needs	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Miles Robottom	History Business Studies	
Bernard Mason	English	
David Saunders	Modern foreign languages	Assessment
Eric Deeson	Design and technology Information technology	
Alan Giles	Physical education	Staffing
Bob Hartman	Mathematics	
Thelma McIntosh	Music; Equal opportunities	Resources
Eileen Metcalfe	Art	Accommodation

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
51 St Andrew's Road
Cambridge
CB4 1EQ

01223 587500

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

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
- The quality of teaching provided by dedicated teachers
- The behaviour of pupils and the management of behaviour
- Attendance and the promotion of good attendance
- The use of the library to promote independent learning
- The quality of pastoral care
- Personal development, especially opportunities for moral and social development
- The school's ethos

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Below-average attainment for information and communications technology
- II. Timetabling arrangements and the length of the school day
- III. Providing a daily act of collective worship
- IV. The quality of reports for parents
- V. The quality of school development planning and financial planning

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection week are to be tackled. This plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made satisfactory progress on most of the key issues arising from the last inspection report. There has been moderate progress in broadening the range of teaching to meet the different needs of pupils. There is good use of the library to provide independent learning opportunities for pupils. There have been some improvements, including governor involvement, in evaluating the work of the school, especially by heads of departments. However, there is still no long-term development plan and financial resources are not targeted to meet school priorities. There is now sufficient religious education taught at Key Stage 4. The quality of assemblies is good but not all pupils are receiving a daily act of collective worship. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory. There has been some progress in ensuring that all subjects use information and communications technology to support learning. The quality of personal and social education is no longer a weakness. Most of the health and safety issues identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled. Given the response to tackling the key issues from the previous report, and given the quality of management within the school, there are good systems in place to continue the school's improvement.

Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-C at GCSE has increased from 63 per cent in 1993 to 67 per cent in 1999, figures which are well above the national averages. The number of pupils has increased from 638 to 733 and the school remains popular with parents. Attendance rates remain very good and the number of exclusions remains static over the period since the last inspection. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching. In 1995, teaching was sound or better in 87 per cent of lessons. This has improved to 99 per cent in 1999.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

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

Results in Key Stage 3 tests are well above average for English, mathematics and science. Results in the GCSE examinations are well above average, for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C, and five or more grades A*-G. The strongest subjects at GCSE in 1999 were English, science, history, geography, French, child development, business studies, design and technology and physical education.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art, history and science	Information and communications technology and personal and social education
Years 10-11	Good	Art, geography, history and music	Information and communication technology and modern foreign languages
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It is at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons across the age range. Teaching is good in three-quarters of lessons and very good or excellent in nearly a quarter of lessons. Only one per cent of lessons was judged to be unsatisfactory. Most year groups receive similar proportions of good and very good teaching. Nearly a third of lessons in Year 7 were judged to be excellent or very good. There is good or satisfactory teaching across all subjects. The good quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the good progress that pupils make in the school.

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

• **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour in the majority of lessons and around the school is very good. The number of exclusions continues to be well below the national average.
Attendance	Attendance is very good and both authorised and unauthorised absences are well below the national average.
Ethos*	The ethos is very good. Pupils have good attitudes towards their work. The quality of relationships is very good and there is a commitment to high standards.
Leadership and management	The headteacher provides decisive leadership and the quality of middle management is mainly very good.
Curriculum	The curriculum at both key stages is satisfactory, except for information and communications technology. There are weaknesses in the timetable arrangements which affect pupils' progress.
Pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is good and they make good progress towards meeting their individual targets.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social education. Provision for cultural development is good and spiritual development is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Pupils are well served by teaching and non-teaching staff. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.
Value for money	The school provides good value for money

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

• **The parents' views of the school**

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
VI. The school achieves good standards of work VII. The amount of homework the school sets VIII. The good behaviour of pupils in the school IX. The values and attitudes in the school	X. They do not have a clear understanding of what is XI. The school does not encourage parents to play an

The parents' responses to the questionnaire indicate that most parents are satisfied with the work of the school. The inspectors' judgements support the views of parents. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. Comments in the annual reports to parents are too general and imprecise when describing the standards achieved by pupils in subjects. The Parents' Association is active in raising valuable funds for the school, most recently towards a new minibus. The school has not used the Parents' Association in a wider role to explore ways in which the support of parents could be developed further.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve the standards achieved and the quality of education provided, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

XII. Raise attainment in information and communications technology by:

- XIII. ensuring that all pupils receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum requirements for information and communications technology;
(paragraphs 37, 119 -127)
- XIV. continuing to improve the access for all subjects in using information and communications technology;
(paragraph 124)
- XV. reducing the number of occasions when pupils have to share computers;

paragraph 121)

XVI.Improve the quality of the timetable arrangements by:

XVII.increasing the basic length of lessons from 35 minutes;
(*paragraph 40*)

XVIII. avoiding double lessons
being timetabled either side of break or lunchtimes;
(*paragraph 40*)

XIX. increasing the length of the lunch break to enable all pupils to eat their lunch comfortably and take part in extra-curricular activities at this time;
(*paragraph 40*)

XX.ensuring that all tutor group time is used effectively;
(*paragraph 41*)

XXI. ensuring that lessons, especially for modern foreign languages, are timetabled evenly throughout the week;
(*paragraph 40*)

XXII.reducing the number of classes taught by more than one teacher.
(*paragraph 40*)

XXIII.Improve the quality of reports to parents by:

XXIV. meeting statutory requirements for the reporting of information and communications technology;
(*paragraph 67*)

XXV.providing more detail on pupils' attainments in subjects and identifying targets to raise performance.

paragraph 67)

XXVI.Improve the quality of school development planning by:

XXVII. identifying priorities over a longer period than a single year;
(*paragraph 75*)

XXVIII. ensuring that financial resources within the school are targeted to meet the identified priorities;
(*paragraph 83*)

XXIX.Meet the legal requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
(*paragraph 74*)

In addition to the key issues identified above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion within the action plan. They are included in paragraphs:

XXX.The level of challenge for higher attaining pupils in English, science and music (*94, 115, 171*); provision of pre-vocational courses (*39*); personal and social education (*58*); preparing pupils for living in a multi-cultural society (*53*); roles and responsibilities of the senior management team (*70*); accommodation for design and technology and physical education (*81*); the role of governors in implementing curriculum policies (*72*); lockers for pupils (*63*) and physical education (*174-179*).

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. The Priory School is a comprehensive school, educating boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. There are 733 pupils (404 girls and 329 boys). The school has increased its popularity since the last inspection from 638 pupils at that time. There are 97 pupils on the school's special educational needs register which is broadly in line for a school of this size. Thirty-one pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs and the school makes special provision for pupils with physical disabilities. When pupils enter the school their attainment is above the national averages. There are many high attaining pupils within the school. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
2. The school is located in the Meole-Brace ward of Shrewsbury and draws the majority of pupils from the wards of Quarry and Copthorne. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is in line with the national average but all these pupils are fluent English speakers. The proportion of adults with higher education is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils from households of a high social class.
3. The aim of the school is: ' to create a harmonious, orderly environment in which staff and pupils will be able to work together to develop their interests, and the pupils will be encouraged to achieve the highest level of academic attainment and personal development of which they are capable.'
4. The school has the following priorities in its development plan to meet this aim:
 - To address needs of pupils of differing abilities, especially in mixed ability groups at Key Stage 3;
 - To ensure that department curriculum strategies are in place, especially in Year 11;
 - To continue developments for information and communications technology.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	53	86	139

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	37	43	43
	Girls	67	69	69
	Total	104	112	112
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (88)	81 (78)	81 (81)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	42 (72)	60 (46)	48 (45)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	33 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	39	39	44
	Girls	73	71	65
	Total	112	110	109
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	81 (73)	79 (93)	78 (69)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	52 (38)	58 (52)	43 (44)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	70	63	133

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	39	67	68
	Girls	50	62	62
	Total	89	129	130
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	67 (64)	97 (95)	98 (96)
	National	46 (44)	91 (90)	96 (95)

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	5.7
	National comparative data	8.6
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.1
	National comparative data	1.1

2

2

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	4
Permanent	2

2

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	23
Satisfactory or better	99
Less than satisfactory	1

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

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

2 **Attainment and progress**

1. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1998 and 1999, was well above the average in English, mathematics and science. The proportion reaching Level 6 and above in 1998 and 1999 was well above in all three subjects. When the results for the period from 1996 to 1998 are taken into account, the performance of pupils has been well above the national averages. When compared with that of schools of a similar type the school's performance is well above average. The performance of boys over the last three years is well above that of boys nationally for English and science and above for mathematics. The performance of girls in all three subjects is well above that of girls nationally.
2. Taking into account the standards indicated by National Curriculum tests, the scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons the inspectors' judgements are that standards by the end of Key Stage 3 in history and art are well above average. Most subjects are above national averages. However, standards in modern foreign languages and physical education are in line with national averages. Information and communications technology standards are below the national average.
3. In the 1999 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C was 67 per cent, which was well above the national average of 46 per cent. The proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A*-G in 1999 was 97 per cent, which was well above the national average of 91 per cent. When all the results are taken into account, between 1996 and 1998, the average performance at GCSE was well above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and above the national average for those gaining five grades A*-G. Over the same period girls' results and boys' results were well above the national average. In 1999 there was a significant improvement in the average points score per pupil, which reversed the downward trend over the previous four years at a time when the national trend was rising. There are several factors to account for this improvement, which include a change in the number of subjects taken by pupils, the number of pupils entered for non-GCSE courses and the effective targeting of underachieving pupils. When compared with schools of a similar type, the school's performance is well above that of those schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.
4. Results in GCSE examinations in 1998 were well above average for English, mathematics, science, design and technology, French, geography, history and home economics. They were above average for art, business studies and English literature. In comparison with their performance in other subjects, pupils did well in design and technology, geography, history and home economics. They did less well in English language and literature, mathematics and science. Results in GCSE examinations in 1999 were well above the national averages in English, science, history, geography, physical education, French, child development, art, business studies and design and technology. They were above the national averages in all other subjects except for German, where results were below the national average. In addition, a small number of pupils, for whom GCSE examinations were inappropriate, were entered for basic tests and certificate of achievement examinations. Most of these pupils passed their courses with merits or distinction.
5. Taking into account results from GCSE examinations, the scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observation, the inspectors' judgements are that standards, by the end of Key Stage 4, in business studies, geography, history, art and religious education are well above national averages. They are above in English, mathematics, science, music and design and technology. They are in line with national averages for modern foreign languages and below in information and communications technology.

6. In response to the previous report, pupils are given opportunities across most subject areas of the curriculum to talk clearly and fluently; the vast majority can present clearly reasoned arguments in standard English when required. They show courtesy and a sense of responsibility when talking to visiting adults. Most pupils at both key stages speak confidently in class on topics that interest them, and listen with understanding. Standards in reading are good across the curriculum with most pupils able to pay close attention to the meaning of a range of texts; the library is a popular well-used learning resource. In response to the previous report, pupils in most subjects write clearly for different purposes and audiences; handwriting is legible and in the cursive style. Although most pupils' writing is reasonably accurate, for example, in English, history, music and art, not all departments pay equally close attention to improving pupils' clarity of thought and accuracy of expression in their written tasks. The English and the special needs departments are, in response to the previous report, preparing strategies to promote literacy across school life.
7. The standard of numeracy is good and is a result of the work by the mathematics department. It has worked with Year 7 form tutors allowing them to devote some tutorial time each week to effective numeracy skills practice. This has involved collecting activities and resources for each form and an element of training by the department – this has had a positive impact. There is a school numeracy policy, which has been drawn up after consultation with other subjects. The head of department meets other heads of departments in order to monitor their use of mathematics.
8. Pupils in all year groups have the opportunity to apply numeracy skills in a number of subjects, and in doing so they demonstrate good levels of accuracy. In science, pupils apply their number skills, including mental arithmetic effectively. They can read digital meters, construct and analyse bar charts, draw lines of best fit, use capacity and time measuring, and show good graphical skills applied in many contexts. In geography and history, pupils develop data-handling skills effectively, both for drawing charts and graphs and for analysing the results, particularly in Key Stage 4. In geography, higher attaining pupils use statistical techniques such as Spearman rank correlation confidently. In design and technology pupils develop their geometrical, measurement and drawing skills. There is evidence of further numeracy experience in religious education, information and communications technology and physical education.
9. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment above the national average. There are many higher attaining pupils, especially girls, within the school. The proportion of pupils entering the school who have special educational needs, especially boys, is in line with the average for a school of this size. The setting of pupils by ability creates some teaching groups that consist predominantly of girls or boys. There is no evidence to suggest that this gender imbalance within teaching groups has an impact on standards of attainment.
10. The school sets appropriately high targets for examination results at Key Stage 4. The governing body, in conjunction with the Local Education Authority, have agreed appropriate targets for the Year 2000. However, the governing body has not published these targets within their annual report to parents. At GCSE, the targets include 64 per cent of pupils gaining five grades A*-C; 97 per cent gaining five grades A*-G and an average total points score of 47. In 1999, the target set for the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-C was 63 per cent a target which the school exceeded by 4 per cent. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*-C, five grades A*-G and one grade A*-G at GCSE has remained consistent over the last five years.
11. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to develop considerable expertise in evaluating the progress of individuals and groups of pupils within the school. Increasing use is made of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 data to monitor progress and there are detailed evaluations at both department and school level. There is a significant use of data for targeting under-achieving pupils in Key Stage 4 and there are many effective strategies in place to increase the proportion of GCSE grades A*-C and in challenging the most able pupils. In reports to parents, teachers do not identify targets to help pupils raise their attainment or the strategies to meet these targets.

12. Pupils make good progress in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, pupils make very good progress in art. They make good progress in all other subjects except for modern foreign languages and physical education, where progress is satisfactory, and in information and communications technology, where progress is unsatisfactory, for two main reasons. The structure for the teaching across all subjects does not allow pupils to develop their information and communications technology skills systematically and progress is further restricted by pupils having to share computers.
13. In Key Stage 4, pupils make very good progress in geography, history and art. They make good progress in all other subjects except for design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education where progress is satisfactory. Progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory because, in addition to the weaknesses identified at Key Stage 3, not all pupils are receiving their full entitlement to the National Curriculum requirements for this subject.
14. Although the progress of the majority of pupils is usually good or very good, the progress of girls is more pronounced than that of boys, with a greater proportion of girls gaining places in the higher attaining sets. At Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils consolidate their understanding of the basic competencies. Those with English as their second language do well at both key stages. Although the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 build on their earlier good progress, a small minority of higher attainers are not always fulfilling their potential in some English, science and music lessons.
15. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The progress of pupils on the special educational needs register at Key Stage 3 is particularly good and virtually every pupil leaves the school with a GCSE qualification. Throughout the school the attainment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in relation to their capabilities. They make good progress towards their individual targets. A significant number of pupils make sufficient progress in learning to continue their education with reduced levels of support.
19. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
16. Attitudes to learning are consistently good throughout the school. They have improved since the last inspection, especially at Key Stage 3 and in personal and social education lessons. Attitudes are good or better in over three-quarters of lessons and very good or excellent in a quarter of lessons. Pupils are now considerably involved in evaluating their learning and in setting targets. They continue to enjoy most of the work that is set and they concentrate well. In English, pupils enjoy discussing ideas about attitudes to love in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and are ready to give extended answers. In art, pupils are very keen and diligent and pay good attention throughout the double lessons. In geography, Year 11 pupils were highly motivated to analyse how they can improve on their mock examination results. In religious education, Key Stage 4 pupils show a positive commitment to their compulsory GCSE short course. Pupils' ability to take responsibility for their learning, for example, by using the library or by undertaking research, has a positive impact on standards in English, geography, history, art, music and business studies. Where attitudes are satisfactory rather than good, this is often because of a lack of opportunity to work collaboratively, as in design and technology, or to take the initiative in learning, as in science. On the rare occasion when attitudes are unsatisfactory, this is directly related to the silly behaviour of small groups of pupils, mainly boys but also girls, in a few physical education, modern foreign languages and science lessons.
17. Behaviour in the majority of lessons and around the school is very good. Parents are very pleased with standards of behaviour and the purposeful working atmosphere in the school. The number of exclusions continues to be low and well below the national average. Pupils' self-discipline and good respect for property enables them to be allowed very good access to equipment and books including text-books.
18. Relationships in the school are also very good. An outstanding feature is the way in which pupils with physical disabilities are treated by their peers which ensures that they are fully integrated into lessons and the life of the school. There is very little bullying although there are some pranks with pupils' bags. Pupils with special educational needs generally maintain their motivation. Very few become disaffected

with school.

19. The personal development of pupils is very good and a major strength of the school. Pupils respond very positively to the wide range of opportunities available to contribute to school life and develop into confident, mature, caring young people. From Year 7 onwards, pupils organise their own fund-raising efforts in aid of local and national charities. They help in the library and in the learning support department. They are strongly involved in the Duke of Edinburgh bronze award scheme and in sport, music, art and drama activities, many of which are part of the house system, which is led and organised by Key Stage 4 pupils. They take positions of responsibility at all levels of the school, up to the head boys and girls who chair the school council, run events such as the harvest festival, and act as ambassadors for the school. Pupils have access to classrooms both before and after school and during break and lunchtimes.

23. **Attendance**

20. Attendance is very good. This has a very positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Attendance rates in all year groups are consistently well above the national average and have been maintained at high levels since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities, also have very good attendance. Both authorised and unauthorised absence rates are well below the national average. The very few pupils in Year 11 and Year 7 who find regular attendance difficult, mainly because of medical problems, are offered some form of part-time education, either at the school or elsewhere.

21. Punctuality is good. Most pupils arrive in time for the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Pupils move briskly between the majority of lessons.

25. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

25. **Teaching**

22. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It is at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons across the age range. Teaching is good in three-quarters of lessons and very good or excellent in nearly a quarter of lessons. Most year groups receive similar proportions of good and very good teaching. Nearly a third of lessons in Year 7 were judged to be excellent or very good. The good quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the good progress that pupils make in the school.
23. At Key Stage 3, teaching is very good in art and history and good in all other subjects, except for geography and information and communications technology where teaching is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 teaching is very good in art and history. It is good in all other subjects, except for information and communications technology and modern foreign languages in which teaching is satisfactory.
24. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. In several subjects, particularly in art, geography and music the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject inspires pupils to be imaginative and confident. There is a skilful use in business studies of relating classwork to real life contexts. In science, teachers' knowledge is skilfully used to adjust the pace in lessons and maintain pupils' interest. Clear explanations are given in mathematics lessons to enable pupils to understand the tasks set. There is a high degree of competence by non-specialists in teaching religious education and science, but not all tutors are confident when teaching personal and social education. Not all teachers in design and technology clearly demonstrate to pupils the relationship between the design and production processes.

25. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory. In art, geography, modern foreign languages and history expectations are high and often very high. In mathematics and history the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils is a strength, with demanding tasks being set. However, in English and science there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. In music, expectations are very high but on occasions some higher attaining pupils are not fully challenged. In physical education, expectations are not high enough to raise standards.
26. Teachers use a good variety of teaching methods and their classroom organisation is good. In English lessons teachers are skilful in drawing out what pupils know and understand. In mathematics, the best lessons start or end with short, snappy numeracy or revision activities. Religious education lessons contain a good variety of teaching methods. In science and design and technology, good use is made of challenging and probing questions. Occasionally, in some English and science lessons, there is too much teacher direction for the lesson and few opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.
27. All teachers have very good skills in the management of pupils. This is a clear strength of the teaching across all subjects. A quiet but firm discipline is often achieved with apparent ease. Only on rare occasions, at Key Stage 4, in modern foreign languages were teachers unable to cope satisfactorily with the challenges posed by lower attaining and disaffected pupils.
28. Teachers make good use of the limited resources they have to support teaching. Many subjects are making good use of the well-equipped library to support independent learning. Most subjects have made good progress since the last inspection in using information and communications technology to support learning. However, some subjects, including history, science and mathematics have limited access to computers. There is always a brisk pace to lessons in design and technology, history and religious education, and in most subjects time is well-used; but teaching time is lost and pupils' progress restricted, especially in science and music, when double lessons are split by lunchtimes and morning breaks. Pupils' progress is also restricted in some science lessons when classes are split between two teachers.
29. Pupils' work is usually well-marked. The best marking indicates what pupils need to do to improve their own performance. In history marking is consistent with written comments that indicate to pupils how their work can be improved. Marking of work in English and art is constructive and involves pupils in assessing their own work. There is good diagnostic marking in science but few written comments to pupils on how their work can be improved. Marking of work in mathematics is accompanied by positive comments, although in some cases there is little evidence to show that pupils respond to written comments. Physical education teachers are not sharing assessment judgements with pupils. In all subjects, most work is marked regularly but one set of science books had not been marked for one year.
30. The quality of homework is mainly good. Most parents are happy about the levels and type of homework set. Most subjects, especially science and design and technology, use homework to extend or consolidate classwork. However, in some modern foreign languages classes, homework is not always used to extend work completed in lessons.
31. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good at both key stages. It is particularly good in the small English groups when precise targets and the variety of teaching methods are used effectively. Support teachers make valuable contributions to the quality of teaching when they are fully involved in the lessons. The increasing use of Individual Education Plans and good assessment procedures is improving teaching. Teachers take account of the information given to them about pupils on the special educational needs register. In the best lessons, class teachers plan and work closely with support teachers and support assistants. Some highly skilled teaching of pupils with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) is particularly effective.
32. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection, 87 per

cent of lessons were judged satisfactory or better. This has improved to 99 per cent. Consistently good teaching, which was found in Key Stage 3, has now been extended to Key Stage 4. The teaching of personal and social education is no longer a weakness and is now satisfactory. Unsatisfactory teaching from part-time or non-specialist teachers is no longer a weakness. Tasks not being matched to meet the needs of pupils and too much teacher direction can still be found but are no longer the major weaknesses that were identified in the last report.

36. **The curriculum and assessment**

33. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broadly based and balanced, apart from failing to meet the National Curriculum requirements for information and communications technology. There is no time allocated to the discrete teaching of information and communications technology in the timetable, except for a short module as part of personal and social education in Year 7. The school has chosen to teach the Programmes of Study through other subjects of the curriculum. Departments are using information and communications technology effectively to support teaching and learning in their subjects but they are ineffective in teaching and developing pupils' information and technology skills.
34. The curriculum meets all other statutory requirements to teach the National Curriculum, religious education and sex education. Parents are well-informed about the curriculum and some exercise their rights to withdraw pupils from parts of it and in these circumstances suitable alternative provision is made.
35. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is effective within a limited range. All pupils must take a full course in modern foreign languages in addition to other compulsory, subjects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school has retained a humanities subject as compulsory even though it is no longer obliged to do so. Pupils can study a rational combination of nine different full GCSE courses and two half GCSE courses - (religious education which is compulsory, and physical education, which is optional). Choice of arts subjects is restricted with art and music limited to one alternative option choice against a second humanities subject. Drama is no longer offered as a GCSE option. There is an opportunity to take GCSE Latin as an additional language. Certificates of achievement are offered in nine separate subjects for lower attaining pupils. It is not possible for pupils to move between certificate and GCSE classes. The combination of subjects allows the majority of pupils a wide choice of entry into post-16 education, which is the preferred destination for the overwhelming majority of pupils. The school has decided not to offer pre-vocational courses as alternatives for those pupils for whom a full range of GCSE courses is inappropriate.
36. The time spent in lessons is less than in 90 per cent of schools nationally. It is below the DfEE recommendation of 24 hours for Key Stage 3 and well below the 25 hours recommended for Key Stage 4. The allocation of teaching time to subjects is satisfactory at both key stages, although that allocated to physical education is below that which is normally allocated nationally, and at Key Stage 4, the time allocation restricts the rate of progress for those pupils following the GCSE half-course. The construction of the school's timetable creates additional difficulties. The basic length of lessons at 35 minutes is too short; for example, in science, experiments have to be rushed and the time available does not allow some pupils to understand fully the purpose of the experiment. Other subjects, such as drama have insufficient time for productive activity. Most teaching time is allocated in double lessons of 70 minutes which is often too long for some younger pupils and for the lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 to sustain their concentration. Many double lessons are interrupted by either break or lunchtime and the pace of lessons is often adversely affected by the break. In music, these breaks often interrupt composition tasks, and because instruments have to be left out during the break, access to the room is denied to the tutor group. The distribution of time during the week to modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory because the lessons are often so close together that on occasions there are six days between the last lesson of one week and the next lesson of the following. The allocation of triple periods is too long for physical education. The short lunchtime of 40 minutes is insufficient for pupils to eat their lunch comfortably, and restricts the opportunities for extra-curricular activities, which in the main are held after school. A further weakness created by the timetable is when science classes are split

between two teachers. On these occasions pupils' progress is adversely affected.

37. There are wide variations in the use of tutorial time in the mornings. Some tutors make good use of the time to extend the teaching of personal and social education. However, in some tutor groups the time is squandered in unproductive activity.
38. Since the previous inspection there has been very good progress in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Not only is the Code of Practice securely in place but the provisions are fully integrated into an inclusive school policy. Pupils with special educational needs, including those whose needs are physical, have access to the whole curriculum with the single exception that there is yet no lift to one music room. The school recognises this problem and plans are in place for this to be rectified. The governors' special needs committee is active and committed. However there is no governors' curriculum committee to monitor the implementation of curriculum policies and to advise the full governing body on future developments. This is, as yet, unchanged since the last inspection.
39. Curriculum planning within departments is consistently good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of work are well produced within a matrix of school policies, which inform and enhance subject planning and which enable teachers to prepare their lessons effectively.
40. Curriculum continuity and progression are good. There are regular meetings between the primary feeder schools and heads of department, as well as with the headteacher. Progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is secure and effective and the school claims 95 per cent accuracy for pupils' first choice of subjects at Key Stage 4. Links between the school and providers of post-16 education are strong. Former pupils of the school talk to Year 11 pupils about the available courses. Careers education and guidance is satisfactory. However, not all pupils receive individual careers interviews from the careers' adviser as a result of the refocusing of priorities within the careers service.
41. The school has made significant progress in improving the quality of personal and social education and recognises that further work is still needed. Special timetable arrangements ensure that the subject is taught by all tutors at the same time every week. The Local Education Authority has provided good support for the personal and social education co-ordinator. Good support is provided by year heads for group tutors. Whilst there is a good use of outside speakers there still remains a lack of consistent good quality teaching and learning during personal and social education lessons. Drugs and sex education are provided effectively within personal and social education courses.
42. The curriculum is enriched by the range of extra-classroom activities, including sporting and musical activities. Over 700 pupils take part regularly, and many pupils take part in more than one activity. The breadth of educational experiences for pupils is enhanced by a good variety of educational visits, locally, regionally, nationally and overseas.
43. Assessment procedures and arrangements for the monitoring of pupils' attainment are good throughout the school. A brief whole-school assessment policy relies for its implementation on the work of individual departments. Similarly, in the absence of a whole-school marking policy, departments have autonomy in this respect. Much good practice is evident. Most work is regularly and satisfactorily marked.
44. The school has at its disposal a considerable and growing body of data. From primary schools the school receives substantial information, particularly the results of Key Stage 2 tests. This record is regularly updated with the results of standardised tests, Key Stage 3 results, and teacher assessments across the curriculum. By the time pupils reach Key Stage 4 this data is used effectively to inform curriculum choice, setting arrangements and, in individual cases, the targeting of pupils who are at risk of serious under-achievement. Such pupils are then mentored throughout Year 11, with mock examination results used to improve performance all round.

45. The procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs are good. At the end of Key Stage 2, National Curriculum data, together with locally administered tests, are used to identify pupils who might benefit from additional support. Individual Education Plans are prepared in accordance with the code of practice and are generally used effectively, although there is some inconsistency of practice. Annual reviews of pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs are properly documented. All the tasks connected with the assessment of special educational needs are conducted in a thoroughly professional way and on a team basis.

49. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

46. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Although there is no coherent school policy, this aspect of the curriculum and teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Awareness of human love and development was well illustrated in studies of *Twelfth Night*. In music, art and history, a sensitivity to other people's spiritual beliefs was exemplified in pupils lessons and work. In particular, religious education has proceeded beyond teaching religious knowledge to creating an awareness of the values and beliefs that motivate followers of the main world faiths. This was illustrated in lessons about the Passover, religious attitudes to the environment, and the Christian and Muslim views of God. Collective worship still fails to meet statutory requirements. Some assemblies are very effective, but they tend to be rushed at the conclusion and do not allow time for reflection on the issues which have been discussed. There is a record of the year and school assemblies but no requirement for a spiritual element during the tutor group time.

47. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is a pervading ethos, which emphasises a positive moral code. All pupils not only know right from wrong but also what their responsibilities are to one another and those in the wider community. The teachers are good role models who highlight the positive value of good moral actions and responsibility. Pupils are courteous, discuss targets and listen to other pupils. They respond well and know that they are in a moral community where they are expected to act responsibly. In music, for example, time is well used, instruments are handled with care, pupils attend rehearsals regularly and work together well.

48. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school has been designated as a centre for physically handicapped pupils. This is a positive step because able-bodied pupils learn to live with and care for them with appropriate dignity without undermining their independence. Throughout their school career pupils have ample opportunities to take responsibilities. From Year 7, pupils have a degree of involvement with the School Council, which is organised by older pupils and which the headteacher attends by invitation. This system was influential when the school-home contract was formulated. Some older pupils are trained to act as 'buddies' for younger pupils who have difficulties with their reading skills. Also some senior pupils gain organisational experience by working with the school's site manager. The pupils are frequently involved in raising money for charities and also in social activities. At the end of each term pupils are awarded a prize for being 'the pupil of the Year group'. At Easter a pupil is designated as the one who has done most for the school community. Neither of these attainments is related to pupils' academic achievements. There is a wide range of extra curricular activities. Not only are there sporting, drama and music clubs but also 'Challenge Plus' activities are being developed for more able pupils. Additionally, there is a range of subject-orientated homework clubs. Pupils who have special educational needs benefit greatly from a homework club. A three-day residential course is held at Craven Arms in Year 7, and French and German residential visits add to the social experiences of pupils. In some subjects such as English, religious education, French, history, art and mathematics, pupils are being increasingly involved in working in pairs and groups when appropriate.

49. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils draw upon their local and wider cultural traditions to enrich their understanding of others. This involves local and regional field work in geography, visits to religious centres, such as mosques, and to theatres in English. There was a 'language awareness day' at which twenty-four languages were represented. Musical activities include participation in the Shropshire Youth Orchestra and a visit by the local army band. These and other activities are generally quite impressive. At present, however, there is no provision in the school that

promotes an awareness of the diverse demands which the pupils will face when living in a multicultural society.

50. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in developments for the personal and social education course.

54. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

51. The school's provision for the support, guidance and welfare of its pupils is very good. It is much appreciated by parents and is a strength of the school. It has a very positive effect on the standards which pupils of all abilities achieve and the individual progress they make. It has improved in many respects since the last inspection.

52. There is good liaison with primary schools, which enables pupils to transfer to Year 7 successfully. A very effective pastoral system is run by heads of year and form tutors who move up the school with their groups and so provide continuity of care. Year teams monitor the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' academic and personal progress very well through a good range of formal and informal mechanisms and close contact with departments. Particularly effective monitoring takes place in Key Stage 4, where data is used to identify pupils at risk of under-achievement, and strategies, such as mentoring or after-school clinics, are devised to help pupils fulfil their potential. A good feature in Year 7 is the introduction of pupils' progress files, which help pupils to track and evaluate their own academic and personal progress, with the aim of building up to the Record of Achievement in Year 11. The school has appropriately identified the need to stretch the most able pupils and has started developing activities, such as the recent 'Challenge Plus' day in association with other local secondary schools.

53. The special needs co-ordinator is efficient and has the necessary links with parents, who are rapidly gaining confidence in the school's ability to meet the requirements of pupils who have special educational needs. All of the requirements of the Code of Practice are met and organised competently.

54. At the last inspection, the delivery of personal and social education lessons by form tutors was a weakness and a key issue for the school to address. The school has made satisfactory progress in improving personal and social education provision. It has introduced a dedicated weekly slot on the timetable for a personal and social education lesson of adequate time. The personal and social education co-ordinator has developed a well-planned programme of appropriate topics, including health and sex education. The programme is monitored and evaluated by the co-ordinator and the year teams. All lessons seen in the inspection were at least satisfactory and some were good. However, some of the material used lacks challenge for the pupils. The school is aware that more needs to be done to update the content of the programme and to use the developments in the secondary school curriculum to further enhance the status of personal and social education for both teachers and pupils.

55. The provision of careers guidance has also improved since the last inspection. There is now a coherent programme of careers education from Year 8 onwards, supplemented by a good range of information in the library. Pupils are guided well as they make their choices at 14 and 16; for example, student representatives from the two main post-16 colleges came to talk to Year 11 pupils in their personal and social education lesson.

56. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective. There is a well-established rewards and sanctions system which is respected by pupils. The rare incidents of bullying are taken very seriously. Parents value the supervision on the school gate at the end of the day. The school is taking very good steps, by working closely with the Local Education Authority's behaviour support staff, to review and update its policies and practice in the light of the latest DfEE guidance on social inclusion.

57. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are excellent. High expectations of regular attendance and punctuality pervade the school community. The school works very closely with the Education Welfare Officer and parents to monitor attendance and to help those few pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. The school introduced a computerised registration system this term and is already making very good use of it to monitor patterns of absence and lateness even more thoroughly.
58. Arrangements for child protection are good. There is very good awareness by staff of the issues involved and helpful support is provided by the Education Welfare Officer and school nurse. The designated teacher has received appropriate training and documentation is now in place.
59. Measures to ensure pupils' welfare are very good. Facilities for dealing with pupils' medical needs are of a high standard. There are five fully-trained first aiders who provide an excellent service to the school. Visits to the medical room are recorded and monitored very carefully. The school nurse provides valuable individual support to staff and pupils at a weekly drop-in session and also contributes to the personal and social education programme. Some parents and pupils express a concern at the lack of lockers, which leads to difficulties over the management of bags during the school day.
60. The school's systems for promoting the health and safety of pupils are sound. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Good use is made of the Local Education Authority's services to check on equipment and premises. Most staff and governors have a good awareness of their responsibilities but the governors' health and safety sub-committee has not met for a year. The school has made some progress in addressing the health and safety concerns identified in the last inspection. Some issues require capital expenditure, which is a responsibility of the Local Education Authority such as the major changes to the provision of accommodation for physical education and to the design and use of the front car parking area. With the rise in numbers of pupils on roll, there are now further pressures on specialist accommodation which results in potential risks to the health and safety of pupils in the science, design and technology and music areas.

64.

Partnership with parents and the community

61. The school's partnership with parents and the community is satisfactory. It has a positive effect on pupils' standards of achievement and personal development. Although satisfactory with some good features, it is not quite as strong as at the last inspection.
62. The main strength of the partnership is parental support for the school and for their children's learning at home. Parents are pleased with the school's standards and arrangements for homework. They make a significant impact on pupils' attainment by keeping an eye on homework and allowing their home computers to be used for school work. They take a good level of interest in their children's progress and support the pupils well when they make choices at 14 and 16. They uphold the school's expectations on behaviour and attendance. They provide very good support for activities in sport and music. They play a major role on the governing body. The Parents' Association is active in raising valuable funds for the school, most recently towards a new minibus. Some parents feel that they are not encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. The school does request help from time to time, but with little response. It has done some good work in developing the home-school agreement with parent representatives. However, it has not used the Parents' Association in a wider role to explore ways in which the support of parents could be exploited further.
63. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. A good range of information is given to new parents, and this is supplemented by frequent information in letters about visits, events and examination requirements. Consultation evenings are held at regular intervals when parents can discuss their children's progress and find out about option choices. A small minority of parents would like more information about the curriculum. Annual reports on pupils' progress provide very good opportunities for pupils to evaluate the work they have done in the past year. However, teachers' comments are too

general and imprecise when describing the standards achieved by the pupils in the strands of the subject and what they need to do to improve. Reports do not meet statutory requirements as they lack details about standards and progress in information and communications technology. The governors' annual report gives useful information about most of the required aspects of school life but omitted to include the school's targets for 1999/2000.

64. There is sound enrichment of the school's work and curriculum through links with the community. A strength is the range of local visits and visitors which extend opportunities for learning and personal development in subjects such as design and technology, history, art, music, business studies and personal and social education. Links with local sports facilities and coaches significantly enhance the provision in physical education. Good liaison with primary schools and local colleges has a positive effect on transfer arrangements. Pupils make good contributions to the local community through their extensive charity work and the voluntary service undertaken as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. In partnership with Shropshire Training and Enterprise Council, careers service and parents, the school is able to provide an effective two-week work experience programme for all Year 10 pupils. However, the school has few links with business and industry that set teaching in a work-related context and provide challenging vocational experiences for pupils.

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

68. **Leadership and management**

65. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The headteacher, governors and senior management team are committed to raising standards and expectations. They fulfil the school's aim 'to create a harmonious, orderly environment in which staff and pupils will be able to work together to develop their interests, and the pupils will be encouraged to achieve the highest level of academic attainment and personal development of which they are capable.' There is a very good ethos within the school and most pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided to achieve high standards.
66. The headteacher has served the school with distinction for 23 years. She was the headteacher at the time the school changed from being an all-girls grammar school to becoming a mixed comprehensive school. During that time she has provided the school with decisive leadership. The headteacher retires at the end of the current academic year and she should be justifiably proud of the school's achievements during her time at the school. She is ably supported by three very experienced deputy headteachers. It is unusual for a school of this size to have three deputy headteachers; however, there are no senior teacher posts within the school. The allocation of responsibilities to members of the senior management team is appropriate. Each deputy head has pastoral and academic oversight for specific year groups. They provide good support for heads of year and are pivotal in ensuring high standards of behaviour in and around the school. It is justified to have a member of the senior management team with oversight of Key Stage 4, but it is less obvious why responsibilities for Key Stage 3 are split between two senior staff. Members of the senior management team have a considerable depth of knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Since the last inspection, their role in evaluating the work of the school has improved but there is a lack of documentation to indicate that the changes that have been made in the school are directly linked to systematic evaluation.
67. The quality of middle management in providing effective pastoral and curriculum leadership is mainly very good. Specific roles for the management of information and communications technology are unclear. There is some good practice in monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning by most heads of department. Special educational needs are well managed and the special needs co-ordinator is providing very good leadership to a very effective team of teachers. All statutory requirements for special educational needs are met.
68. The governors are knowledgeable and support the school. Many are parents of pupils or former pupils of

the school. Membership of the governing body has lacked consistency over the years as was reported in the last inspection. The governing body is kept well-informed by the headteacher and by presentations from teachers with specific areas of responsibility. They are in a good position to evaluate the work of the school. Much of the work of the governing body is dealt with in one of the two major committees - personnel and finance. The governing body does not have a curriculum committee. The linking of individual governors to specific departments was identified as being variable in quality at the time of the last inspection. This still remains the case, but there are some excellent examples of good practice within the school and some individual governors give considerable time and effort in carrying out these duties. The leadership provided by the governing body is not a major strength and they rely upon the headteacher to provide the school with leadership.

69. The school's ethos is very good. In both school and departmental documents there is a clear commitment to achieving high standards. Relationships within the school, especially between pupils, are very good. There is a high level of respect for most teachers from their pupils. Pupils appreciate the dedication and support which teachers and non-teachers provide to enable them to succeed.
70. Statutory requirements are not being met in certain areas. Pupils are not receiving their entitlement to information and communications technology at both key stages and their levels of attainment are not being reported to parents. The requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not being met.
71. There are three main priorities within the hand-written School Development Plan: to address the needs of pupils of differing abilities especially within mixed ability groups at Key Stage 3; to ensure that departmental curriculum strategies are in place, especially in Year 11; to continue development for information and communications technology. For each priority there are appropriate success criteria, timescales, identification of resources and monitoring and evaluation strategies. The quality of department planning, a weakness in the last inspection report, reflects effectively the school's priorities. However, less effective is the influence from department planning in helping to shape the school's priorities. Further weaknesses in the school development planning process are that priorities are not identified over a longer period of time than twelve months, and financial resources within the school are not targeted to meet the priorities identified in the School Development Plan.
72. The school has made satisfactory progress on most of the key issues arising from the last inspection report. There has been moderate progress in broadening the range of teaching to meet the different needs of pupils. There is good use of the library to provide independent learning opportunities for pupils. There have been some improvements, including involving governors, in evaluating the work of the school, especially by heads of departments. However, there is still no long-term development plan. There is now sufficient religious education taught at Key Stage 4. The quality of assemblies is good but not all pupils are receiving a daily act of collective worship. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory. There has been some progress in ensuring that all subjects use information and communications technology to support learning. The quality of personal and social education is no longer a weakness. Most of the health and safety issues identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled effectively.
73. Given the response to tackling the key issues from the previous report, and given the quality of management within the school, there are good systems in place to continue the school's improvement.
77. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**
74. There are sufficient teachers to meet the curriculum needs of the school and there is a very good match between teaching responsibility and qualifications. The proportion of the budget spent on teachers is high compared with national averages; this reflects the many experienced staff in the school. The school has growing pupil numbers and part-time teaching appointments have been recently made to create more manageable pupil-teacher ratios. These new appointments complement the present staffing

strengths. Present induction procedures for newly-qualified members of staff more than meet DfEE expectations. However, this is a new system for the school and day-to-day procedures and expectations are not always sufficiently conveyed to relevant staff.

75. Present spending on support staff is in line with national averages and there is a good match of qualifications and experiences to the various curriculum demands. In-class support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and peripatetic support in music ensures good take-up rates for instrumental tuition. There is a present shortfall in technical support for science and information technology. A senior teacher, who gives up considerable time to fulfil the role, covers the latter.
76. The school has established appraisal systems in place, which are not presently operative but under review in the light of forthcoming legislation. Training for staff development is satisfactory. Heads of department consider the developmental needs of staff, and teachers who attend courses feed-back effectively to their colleagues. The school makes effective use of Local Education Authority advisory staff but there is still an unevenness of take-up across departments as identified in the last inspection.
77. The school occupies a pleasant site and provides an attractive environment for learning. The number of pupils in the school has grown steadily over the past ten years and this has put a strain on accommodation. The school has had continually to increase its accommodation to meet the demands of pupil numbers. A new block consisting of a library and six classrooms was completed in 1998. At present the accommodation is satisfactory for the number of pupils in the school but there are some shortcomings. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. The rooms are too far apart. Cumbersome equipment has to be moved regularly from one room to the dining hall some distance away when classes are too large for the designated room. Spaces for group work in music are limited. There are not enough laboratories for science. In design and technology, the furniture is old and unhygienic in food areas and there are too few refrigerators. The rooms are not fully supplied with warning floor strips around machines. In information and communications technology, the tables with machines are not at the correct height and the worktops are insufficient in depth. In physical education, there is satisfactory accommodation outdoors. The school has the use of an off-site sports centre. However, indoor accommodation is inadequate. There is a small gymnasium and the school hall is used, but these are only suitable for gymnastics. This severely restricts the breadth of performance. It is also totally inadequate during inclement weather. In English, there are problems with regard to storage. Resources, including books, are housed in various rooms. The English rooms are dispersed over two floors and this dispersal hinders efficiency. There is inadequate accommodation for performing arts. There is a shortage of storage space in general, but teachers make efficient use of what is available. The inside of the building is well-maintained and attractive. The vast number of pupils' paintings displayed throughout the building greatly enhances the appearance of the interior. On the outside of the building, there are some areas of rotting wood and leaking roofs that require repair and maintenance.
78. Resources for learning are adequate in most subjects. The shortfalls identified in the last inspection in mathematics, religious education and music have been made good but serious shortages remain in design and technology, which has insufficient text and reference books, and an inadequate number of sewing machines. The ratio of computers to pupils is low, and access to computers in many subjects is restricted. In information and communication technology, available worksheets and textbooks are insufficient and inappropriate, and in English and geography there are barely sufficient textbooks. In religious education, although there are sufficient textbooks, many are becoming out-of-date. The school's new library is well used, and there is on-going review of titles to ensure that current stock supports teaching and learning in all departments. In addition, there are very good monitoring systems that provide information on pupils' borrowing and reading habits. Very good use is made of the schools library service to provide departments with books for use in topic work and independent research. Pupils are taught library skills, and those pupils who act as helpers in the library are given a training course. The school enhances the curriculum by a programme of visits to historic buildings, galleries, exhibitions, theatres and residential visits both in this country and in Europe.

82. The efficiency of the school

79. Expenditure patterns are regularly monitored by senior staff and the governing body but there has been little systematic evaluation of expenditure patterns and the planned budget reflects the historical allocations of previous years. There is little long-term planning and the setting of the annual budget plan is not targeted to meeting the priorities identified in the School Development Plan and therefore the quality of financial planning is unsatisfactory. Expenditure at departmental level is targeted effectively towards meeting development plan priorities.
80. The school has a total income of over £1.5 million. The income and expenditure per pupil is just below the national average. At the start of the current financial year there was a small amount of £13,000 carried forward. The proportion of the budget dedicated to learning resources is well below the national figures and has been for several years. Expenditure patterns are broadly in line with other similar schools. Some costs are high; for example, teaching costs reflect the proportion of very experienced teachers at the school.
81. Within the total income for the school there is a specific budget for supporting pupils with special educational needs. Taking into account the income, very effective use is made of additional teaching and support staff to support these pupils. Additional grants for professional development are used effectively to support requests from individual teachers. Less well-developed is the targeting of professional development to reflect the priorities of school and department planning.
82. Satisfactory use is made of teaching and support staff. Staffing costs represent over four fifths of the total budget. This is above the national average, although the pupil-teacher ratio is broadly average. The proportion of time spent by teachers with pupils is in line with the national figures.
83. There is a satisfactory use made of the accommodation and learning resources. The limited resources are used effectively. The school has made significant investments in new technologies but the current ratio of pupils to computers is nearly twice the national average. Spending on the library is adequate and the opportunities to use the library for independent learning are good.
84. Financial control and administration is good. The last auditor's report, undated, identified no major issues. The governing body accepted the report and the minor recommendations have been implemented. At the time of the last inspection, several weaknesses were identified. The partial computerisation of finances is no longer a weakness and there is now some planning for contingencies. However, many of the efficiency issues identified in the last inspection report still remain weaknesses. There is still no effective long-term planning. Resources are still allocated on an historical basis and there is little evaluation of financial effectiveness.
85. According to its level of income and in terms of the quality of education provided and the educational standards achieved, the school provides good value for money.

89. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

89. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

89. **English**

86. Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was well above the national average and well above those of similar schools. However, a smaller proportion of pupils achieved at Level 5 and above than in the previous year when results were very good - a long-term staff illness was a contributory factor. In 1998, pupils' results in the English tests are above those they achieve in mathematics and match the results in science. GCSE results in English in 1999 were (as in 1998) above national expectations and matched those of similar schools. However, the number of top grades was small with a significantly larger proportion of girls attaining grades A*-C. The very small percentage of pupils for whom GCSE was not appropriate gained Certificates of Achievement in English at the higher levels.

87. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher and middle attaining pupils are proficient in their speaking and those with special needs are steadily becoming more fluent. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher attainers use language more pointedly to express ideas, for example, during interesting exchanges on *Macbeth*. Most middle and lower attainers are developing a wider vocabulary when heard, for example, in lively discussion on the complexities of Shakespeare's *King Henry V*. The vast majority make appropriate use of standard English on more formal occasions and when speaking to adults. Pupils at both key stages learn good intonation in their drama lessons. Although school drama clubs are popular, the study of drama is no longer offered as an option at GCSE.

88. Higher attainers at both key stages read with discrimination and value the quality of their reading. The vast majority of middle attainers at both key stages are proficient in their reading, although some, in particular a minority of boys at Key Stage 4, are not always sufficiently precise in their interpretation. Sensitive assistance from support staff enables those with special needs at both key stages to gain sufficient understanding of a range of texts to join mainstream groups. Those with English as a second language accelerate their rate of achievement at both key stages. Middle and lower achievers at both key stages, together with those with special needs, concentrate upon clearer enunciation when reading aloud; higher attaining pupils develop an easier expression appropriate to the purpose of the text. Emphasis is given at Key Stage 3 to the weekly library lessons. The library is well used; the habits of reading for enjoyment and information are well established.

89. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils write fluently for a variety of purposes. Middle attaining pupils write with increasing clarity about things they know well, although with occasional lapses in sentence structure, spelling and punctuation. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs write with reasonable competence on precisely defined tasks but some, particularly, a minority of boys, are hindered by some weaknesses in syntax, spelling and punctuation. Handwriting is legible and, in response to the previous report, is generally in a cursive hand. Pupils at both key stages, for whom English is an additional language write with fluency. At the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils produce convincing writing on a range of topics. Middle attaining pupils, whilst able to organise their thoughts in the earlier stages of composition, do not always observe the rules of accuracy throughout their work. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs also experience difficulty in handling wider concepts in their extended writing. In response to the previous report, pupils at both key stages write for a wider range of audience and revise their texts before completing final drafts. Many pupils use word processing skills to produce homework. Good wall displays of pupils' writing, for example, a little collection entitled *Poetry in Science*, are testimony to pupils' interest. There is a need, however, for all subject departments to give constant attention to the accuracy of their pupils' writing.

90. Although the progress of the majority is usually good or very good, the progress of girls is more pronounced than that of boys, with a greater proportion of girls gaining places in the higher attaining sets. At Key Stage 3, most pupils consolidate their understanding of the basic competencies and become more confident in their speaking, more fluent in their reading and more accurate in their writing. Those

with English as their second language do well at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Although the majority of pupils, at Key Stage 4, build on their earlier good progress, a small number of higher attaining pupils do not always fulfil their potential, and a small number of lower attaining pupils, mainly boys, do not accelerate their rate of progress.

91. Attitudes to learning at both key stages are mainly good or very good, although a small number of boys, at the end of Key Stage 4, are not always willing to realise their full potential. Most pupils, at both key stages, show a sense of responsibility in their studies. They work well collaboratively, for example, in drama and discussion lessons, or concentrate well on their own; they support of one another in class discussion and the majority take pride in their work and want to do well. Most pupils of all levels at both key stages show sufficient concentration in their listening to respond appropriately and sensitively to instruction and discussion.
92. Teaching is good across both key stages. The best learning occurs when teaching is both drawing out what pupils know as well as instilling knowledge; less success is achieved when learning becomes teacher-dominated and when some high attainers are occasionally insufficiently challenged. Management of pupils is good and expectations usually realistic. Teachers know their subject well and motivate their pupils. The quality of learning support for those with special needs is good. In response to the previous report, teaching ensures that pupils write for wider audiences, and that tasks reflect the attainment of the vast majority of pupils. Homework extends classroom tasks, although there is no specific homework timetable. Teachers are constructive in their marking and, in response to the previous report, involve pupils closely in assessing work and setting targets. The department is managed efficiently and the head of department also runs the successful library, which is well used by all departments and represents a strength within the school. The department, for example, through theatre visits as well as through classroom discussion on moral issues, makes an effective contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The English teachers create a productive ethos for learning.
93. In response to the issue identified in the previous report, pupils are now given opportunities across most subject areas of the curriculum to talk clearly and fluently. The majority of pupils can present clearly reasoned arguments in standard English when required. They show courtesy and a sense of responsibility when talking to visiting adults. Most pupils at both key stages speak confidently in class on topics that interest them, and listen with understanding. Standards in reading are good across the curriculum with most pupils able to pay close attention to the meaning of a range of texts; the library is a popular well-used learning resource. In response to the previous report, pupils in most subjects write clearly for different purposes and audiences; handwriting is legible and in the cursive style. Most departments, are still not making systematic use of information and communications technology for such purposes. Although most pupils' writing is reasonably accurate, for example, in English, history, music and art, not all departments pay equally close attention to improving pupils' clarity of thought and accuracy of expression in their written tasks. The English and the special needs departments are, in response to the previous report, preparing strategies to promote literacy across the curriculum.

97. **Mathematics**

94. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, and at the end of Key Stage 4, is well above the level expected nationally at the ages of 14 and 16. Performance in the 1998 National Curriculum tests, at the end of Key Stage 3, is well above the national average, and is above average in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In the 1999 tests, performance was well above the national average both for all schools nationally and for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The difference between the performance of girls and boys before 1999 is against the national trend – girls achieving slightly higher levels of attainment. The figures for the 1999 National Curriculum Key Stage 3 tests show no significant differences in attainment between girls and boys. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, over the last four years, measured in terms of average National Curriculum levels, shows a consistent, steady upward trend, at a rate greater than the national one. In 1998 pupils' results in mathematics are lower than in English and science.
95. By the end of Key Stage 3, lower attaining pupils are secure in their basic number facts and are also able

to use a calculator appropriately when needed. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to compare the lengths of words in two different books. They make very good progress with this task, due to the efforts of the classroom teacher and support staff. Middle attaining Year 9 pupils are able to find for themselves the connection between the scale factor of enlargement and the scale factor of area enlargement. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils are able to solve simultaneous equations using trial and improvement and to progress to solving similar equations using graphical methods.

96. The proportion of pupils achieving A* - C grades, in the 1998 GCSE examinations, is above the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C is well above average. Girls and boys' relative performances follow the national trend, but with girls' attainment levels greater than boys to a greater extent than is seen nationally. The higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are able to investigate the maximum volume of a box subject to certain constraints. They employ a number of techniques involving using spreadsheets and graphing software. Lower attaining Year 11 pupils are able to use algebra to describe, with a measure of success, simple number patterns, and to make simple hypotheses about number patterns. Middle and lower attaining Year 10 pupils confidently use the four operations of number with a mixture of positive and negative numbers.
97. The test and examination results do not quite mirror the standards of attainment, at the end of each key stage, observed during the inspection. The evidence of pupils' work, together with lesson observations, points to a level of attainment above national expectations, rather than 'very much' above. The discrepancy is accounted for by an increase in attainment just prior to examinations. The time of the inspection - six months prior to testing - is also a contributory factor.
98. The attainment of pupils on entering at Year 7, based on their Key Stage 2 levels, is above the national average. Pupils make good progress over both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. This is a result of the effective use of support teachers and to setting in mathematics, which ensures that these pupils receive realistic levels of challenge in the tasks set for them.
99. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject, give their full attention to the task in hand, and are able to persevere with a task. They are willing to listen to others and help one another when the need arises - both inside and outside the classroom. Levels of concentration are high and pupils show an interest in their work. They listen attentively and are eager to answer questions. This good attitude to work and eagerness to do well promotes good progress. Relations with teachers are good. There is no graffiti, scribbling on exercise books or de-facing of display work. Pupils take a pride in their work and handle equipment responsibly.
100. The quality of teaching is good at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. It is never less than satisfactory. In 70 per cent of lessons it is good or better, and in almost 15 per cent it is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and give clear explanations. Relationships with pupils are good and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. All the teachers are specialist teachers and are aware of the pupils' common misconceptions; for example: wrongly assuming that parallelograms have lines of symmetry or that $3x^2$ represents '3x all squared'. Teachers know who the pupils with special educational needs are in their groups, appreciate their particular needs, and provide work matched to their attainment level. There is a useful collection of materials providing challenging work for the higher attaining pupils. The best lessons begin or end with a short snappy numeracy or revision activity. The lessons proper start with the learning aims of the lesson being explained in appropriate language to the class, continue with several different activities, and end with a brief recap of the content covered and progress made. The quality of homework set is good. It builds on classwork and is set and marked regularly. Marking is usually accompanied by positive comments, though in some cases there is little evidence that instructions written in pupils' exercise books are acted upon.
101. The department comprises a dedicated team of teachers. It has good, positive and effective leadership. Relationships are good and there is a firm commitment to raise standards, for example, revision classes are held after school, examination results are carefully analysed in great depth (in order to pin-point

insecure learning), and the different syllabi are evaluated for their impact on results.

102. Pupils' books and marking are examined on a year by year basis. Common standards are agreed upon at these departmental meetings, which has proved effective as teachers' assessments are very much in line with the National Curriculum test results. However, the formal monitoring of marking and teaching is underdeveloped. Formal assessment of pupils, over the full range of attainment targets, is carried out each half-term. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 are unaware of their attainment against National Curriculum levels.
103. The department has sufficient text book provision – no pupils need to share texts. Although resources are adequate, access to computers is unsatisfactory. The department has a strong desire (and the necessary skills) to use information and communications technology to a greater extent but has practical difficulties booking the computer room to a sufficient extent. The learning resource centre has a stock of mathematics books, comprising of GCSE revision, puzzles and problem-solving and advanced books. Pupils are encouraged to make use of these and the GCSE revision CD-ROMs.
104. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the schemes of work. The more efficient and effective use of support staff is much in evidence. Pupils' experience of investigative work has increased since the last inspection, as has the provision of text books.
105. The standard of numeracy is good and is a result of the work by the department. It has worked with Year 7 form tutors, allowing them to devote some tutorial time each week to effective numeracy skills practice. This has involved collecting activities and resources for each form and an element of training by the department – this has made a positive impact. There is a school numeracy policy, which has been drawn up after consultation with other subjects. The head of department meets other heads of departments in order to monitor their use of mathematics.
106. Pupils in all year groups have the opportunity to apply numeracy skills in a number of subjects, and in doing so they demonstrate good levels of accuracy. In science, pupils apply their number skills, including mental arithmetic effectively. They can read digital meters, construct and analyse bar charts, draw lines of best fit, use capacity and time measuring, and show good graphical skills applied in many contexts. In geography and history, pupils develop data handling skills effectively, both for drawing charts and graphs and for analysing the results, particularly in Key Stage 4. In geography, higher attaining pupils confidently use statistical techniques such as Spearman rank correlation. In design and technology, pupils develop their geometrical, measurement and drawing skills. There is evidence of further numeracy experience in religious education, information technology and physical education.
110. **Science**
107. Results in Key Stage 3 assessments in 1999 are well above the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or above and are also well above the national average for those attaining Levels 6 and 7. The results are well above average when compared with other similar schools. The attainment of girls is significantly higher than that of boys. Results follow the national trend since the last inspection. In 1999, Level 5 results are similar to those for 1998 but Level 6 results are above. Results are better than those for mathematics and similar to those for English. While this is an improvement since the previous report, insofar as higher attaining pupils are now entered for higher level papers, there is evidence that, with greater challenge, some pupils could attain even higher levels. The number of pupils obtaining grades A* - C at GCSE in science is well above the national average. The attainment of girls at GCSE is higher than that of boys. Science results are better than those for mathematics but not as good as those for English. Results exceeded the department's target in 1999. This represents good added value between the key stages.
108. Inspection evidence from pupils currently in Key Stages 3 and 4 shows that attainment is generally above the national average for three of the four Attainment Targets. For example, Year 9 higher

attaining pupils could explain the differences between dominant and recessive genes and use a particle model to explain how heat is transferred through a medium. Lower attaining pupils were less confident with these explanations but could explain food webs and the pyramid of numbers. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 could explain confidently the 'lock and key' mechanism that results in enzymatic proteins behaving as reaction specific organic catalysts and lower attaining pupils are secure in their understanding of gaseous exchange in the lungs. Attainment in the fourth Attainment Target, that which includes chemistry, while generally matching national averages, is below that of the other Attainment Targets. Both knowledge and understanding in chemistry is less secure, particularly with middle and lower attaining pupils. For example, some middle attaining pupils in Year 11 had difficulty in explaining the reactions between acids and metals or acids and carbonates. While attainment in investigative science is consistent with other Attainment Targets, there is little evidence of planning and evaluation in investigations, which are otherwise well-integrated into the normal scheme of laboratory work.

109. Progress is good in both key stages. In Key Stage 3 there is evidence of progression in each attainment target, irrespective of gender or background. In nearly all lessons progress is at least satisfactory and in some it is good or very good. Progress is best in lessons where all pupils are challenged, where teachers have high expectations, and where pupils are excited by the work they do. Progress throughout Key Stage 4 is at least satisfactory in all attainment targets. In nearly all lessons, progress is at least satisfactory and in most it is good. Pupils are making progress which parallels their level of attainment. There is no evidence that progress depends upon background or gender. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when supported by special needs teachers or assistants.
110. Across both key stages attitudes and behaviour are good or very good, although a few pupils require firm management at times. High attainers, in particular, show high levels of concentration, are eager to carry out tasks, work hard and often continue with tasks without further direction. Low attainers, however, work better in a well-structured environment. Where classroom management is good there are good relationships with the teacher and good relationships between pupils, who are prepared to co-operate and help one another. Pupils show respect for one another, speak openly and with confidence, and most clearly enjoy being in lessons. Most pupils take pride in their work and are careful with their presentation. No racial or gender issues were observed.
111. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons observed. In nearly two thirds of lessons teaching is good, and in a further quarter of lessons teaching is very good. However, some teaching is over-directed and pupils have too few opportunities to develop their own independent learning. This was an issue highlighted in the last report. Teachers demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding, which is used effectively to adjust lesson pace and to maintain the interests of pupils. In the best lessons challenging and adroit questioning is used to aid progress and understanding. Expectations are high in lessons which are good or better. In lessons where expectations are not as high as they might be, there is evidence of lower attainment and progress is slower. Lesson preparation is good. However, even though lesson objectives are explained to children, they are not always understood. Work in some lessons does not always match the differing abilities of pupils, particularly the most able who need further challenge if they are to achieve the highest levels and grades. Marking in Key Stages 3 and 4 is usually consistent with the marking policy and good diagnostic comments are frequently made. This is an improvement since the previous report. Nevertheless, the quality of marking is inconsistent and comments do not always indicate what pupils might do to develop their understanding. Homework in all years is generally used to extend or consolidate classwork.
112. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have the opportunity to experience a wide variety of science topics. The curriculum generally provides equal access and opportunity for all pupils. However, when double lessons are split by the timing of the lunch break, there is a lack of continuity and pupils' progress is restricted. There is evidence of reduced continuity and progress in some Year 7 and Year 8 classes that are taught by different teachers at different times during the week. The use of computer technology to support teaching and to enhance progress has improved very little since the last inspection. While sensors are being used for a few data logging exercises, there is too little software and computers are too few and too old for them to be used effectively to enhance attainment and progress. In

both key stages, planning for continuity and progression is satisfactory. Even though procedures for assessment are well established, its use to identify progress and to improve attainment effectively has yet to be fully established. Assessment provides for the identification of pupils who underachieve in Year 11, but this should now be extended to both key stages in order that additional help and support can be provided for all underachieving pupils at the earliest opportunity. Assessment, as an aid to planning the curriculum, has yet to be used to its full effect.

113. There are good displays of the work of individual pupils in classrooms and around the science department. Pupils relate positively to one another and are willing to help their peers make progress. Opportunities for pupils to develop their own learning skills are provided through homework, but there is little evidence of such opportunities being provided within lessons. The department provides help and support to pupils who are identified as underachieving or who ask for additional help. Teachers give freely of their time in the well-attended 'Rocket Club' and in the department's evening clinics. Even though parents are regularly informed about attainment and progress through the school's reporting system, reports need to be more focused regarding levels of attainment and targets.
114. Leadership in the department is good. The department is ably led by a head of department who is enthusiastic and who provides a strong and positive ethos. The number of teachers is adequate and all teachers are well-qualified and appropriately experienced. Technical support within the department, however, is inadequate. Schemes of work are being improved and many improvements that need to be made have been identified and feature in the departmental development plan. The plan is financially costed, meaningful and manageable, but targets and success criteria need to be more focused. Departmental planning has improved since the last report. Regular minuted departmental meetings take place, which consider progress and strategies for improvement, and direct observation is used to monitor teaching. However, the monitoring of day-to-day assessment and marking needs to be further developed. All statutory requirements are met. Accommodation, both in terms of number and size of laboratories, is inadequate and reduces the effective delivery of the curriculum. In some laboratories, overcrowding has reached the extent that practical work presents a safety hazard. Apart from ensuring that gas cylinders are kept separately, there are no health and safety issues. The funding provided for books and equipment is well below average. The provision of books is satisfactory but the provision of scientific equipment is barely adequate and the provision of computer hardware and software is poor. Urgent consideration should be given to improving computer software, increasing the number of appropriate computers and to replacing those which are out of date. Departmental finances are managed efficiently and expenditure is properly monitored. Resources and accommodation are used effectively. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

118. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

Information and communications technology

1. The school's strategy to teaching information and communications technology is based on all subjects using information and communications technology to support teaching and learning and pupils' entitlements to the requirements of the National Curriculum being taught through subjects. Therefore, there is almost no specific teaching of the subject and there are few timetabled lessons for teaching information and communications technology. The school has made significant progress in recent years in ensuring that subjects use information and communications technology. However, as yet, pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to the National Curriculum requirements at either key stage.
2. The attainment of pupils, at both Key Stages 3 and 4, is well below the national expectations for pupils of these ages. Throughout the school a few learners are extremely adept at using information and communication technology; for example, a few pupils are very capable at word processing and a few produce excellent documents by suitably selecting text and illustrations from CD-ROMs and from the Internet, editing these, and combining them meaningfully. Almost all learners are confident in working with 'windows', files and the mouse and can produce a word-processed page. However, even by the end of Key Stage 4, only a minority are fluent word processor users able to produce a page of mixed text and

graphics in columns. For example, word processing speeds are low, and there is widespread use of inappropriate fonts and special effects, as well as of using the <RETURN> key presses to start new lines and the space-bar to lay text out as a table. By the end of Key Stage 4 very few pupils are fluent users of spreadsheets, graphics programs, database management software, or sensing and control systems; also, throughout the school, their use of CD-ROMs and the Internet is as yet generally indiscriminate.

3. The progress pupils make in this subject, including those with special educational needs, at both key stages is unsatisfactory. The structure for the teaching of information and communications technology does not enable pupils to develop their skills in a systematic way. At Key Stage 4, many pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to the National Curriculum requirements for this subject and this limits their progress. Pupils often have to share computers during lessons and this restricts the rate of progress they can make.
4. Many pupils show much interest in the use of computers and communications, in general and for their school work. There is a high demand from pupils for access to computers at lunchtimes and after school. Often a teacher will suggest that they consider using information and communications technology for homework - and quite often a significant proportion of the class do so (usually at home, but sometimes using the school's facilities). There is some very good practice, with some pupils taking enormous care to produce high quality and appropriate material. When pupils have to share computers there is often frustration which on occasion leads to a lack of concentration. On these occasions, pupils work well co-operatively; however, little use is made of the often considerable, expertise that some pupils have to help and assist other pupils.
5. The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory. There was only one specific information and communication technology lesson during the inspection week, though the use of information and communication technology was observed in ten other subject lessons. In these lessons, the main strength is providing pupils with opportunities to use information and communications technology as a tool for their work rather than in developing pupils' information and communications technology skills.
6. The school's strategy of almost entirely using subjects to provide pupils with the expected knowledge, skills and understanding, is the main reason why the school does not as yet meet National Curriculum requirements in information and communication technology. However, this strategy has successfully encouraged almost all subjects to use information and communication technology effectively to support teaching and learning. The analysis of room bookings for the specialised computer rooms, over the previous 15 months, shows design and technology, modern languages, humanities, mathematics, and science to be the main users. The inspection team found generally good use of information and communication technology in art, business studies, design and technology, geography, and music.
7. The system for assessment of the learners' attainments in information and communications technology is time-consuming, but not comprehensive, precise or accurate. Print-outs of pupils' work cannot show how crude or sophisticated their techniques are. Reporting to parents does not take place.
8. The current strategy requires extremely careful and thorough co-ordination. The level of planning; the implementation of those plans; the evaluation of their outcomes (with modification as required), and the monitoring of and support for what is happening, require great detail. The information and communications technology co-ordinator has made very good progress in working with other departments. Two other staff share some of the management role, and while this has a number of strengths there are some weaknesses in the overall co-ordination of the subject.
9. The school's learning network is growing quickly and is very well designed; both factors are due to hard work on the part of individual teachers and make this aspect of the subject a strength. A further strength is the well-designed Internet access, which is already encouraging some good thoughtful work by teachers and pupils. However, although significant progress has been made since the last inspection in the level of resourcing, there are weaknesses. The number of computers for a school of this size is about

half the national average. The range of appropriate software is limited. There is no room equipped with sufficient computers to prevent pupils sharing. With the exception of the library, there is very cramped accommodation for pupils using computers.

127. **Religious education**

10. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the levels expected by the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the level expected for pupils aged 16. The proportion of candidates gaining good grades in the GCSE short course is well above national averages. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 show by school examination results that their level of understanding is good. They closely follow six major themes across the three years. Their understanding of religious symbols, festivals, worship, holy places, religious messengers and messages and rites of passage is such that they can compare ideas from the major world faiths. They can develop well-argued answers to problematic issues ranging from the nature of God, different religious world views and moral questions about selfishness, greed and the natural environment. They are not merely acquiring bodies of knowledge, but are also developing skills, such as exploring religious beliefs through artefacts, creative presentations and religious skills. These were seen to be used at an appropriate level in Year 9 pupils' written accounts and display work. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have gained a coherent knowledge of Christianity and Islam by studying the key beliefs and responses to ultimate questions. This is well prepared for by work from Key Stage 3.
11. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3, and this is continued throughout Key Stage 4. The higher attaining pupils grasp basic philosophical ideas such as the nature of God and religious interpretations of creation and morality. Pupils enjoy learning about the Hindu festival of Divali and reflecting on the universal symbol of light and other festivities. This becomes more demanding in the Year 8 study of the Passover where certain moral and religious problems concerning freedom are introduced. In Year 9, the pupils debate their moral rights to develop and exploit the environment. This growing complexity and rigorous thinking is notable when pupils' work is reviewed over the previous three years. Pupils with special educational needs show that they develop a worthwhile basic knowledge and make good progress.
12. Pupils' attitudes are good and on occasions very good. Pupils pay close attention and work productively when in groups. When Year 8 designed a range of games to reinforce their understanding of Hindu religious ideas, the quality of the groupwork was good. Year 9 groups organised themselves into debating groups with moderate success. A very good level of discussion was evident in Year 8 concerning the ten plagues in Egypt. Equally significant were the detailed personal studies from Year 9 and Year 10 about problems of religious interpretation and stewardship of the environment. These varied activities all demanded sustained concentration and a positive attitude to work which was shown to be maintained across both key stages.
13. The quality of teaching is consistently good, and often very good, even though three of the four teachers are non-specialists. Their success is due to the excellent leadership provided by the head of department. She has worked closely with the Shropshire's religious education adviser and kept herself updated. She also vigorously prepares work and supports her colleagues efficiently. By doing so the lessons have similar characteristics but all are of a good standard. The head of department has high expectations of pupils and her enthusiasm and professional skills, ensure that the lessons are productive and worthwhile. On occasions, oral explanations were rather long. A good range of resources has been acquired in recent years which allows a wide range of methods to be used. The range of artefacts, books and videos support the effective use of groupwork in lessons. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. In mixed ability classes pupils with special educational needs respond satisfactorily.
14. There is an effective marking system at the end of each unit of work. The whole process of assessment, including pupil self-assessment, is at a very early stage of development. Some information and

communications technology is used as a means of word processing but generally the potential uses are underdeveloped. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection and all pupils at Key Stage 4 now study religious education in the form of a 'short' GCSE course, which is proving to be successful.

132. **Art**

15. Pupils' attainment at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4, is well above the levels expected nationally at age 14 and 16. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can draw confidently in perspective, having acquired good skills in formal lessons in point perspective beginning in Year 7. This work is related to studies of Renaissance art and architecture. In Year 8, pupils can make an interesting range of Cubist-style faces in clay, drawing on their studies of a number of artists such as Picasso and Cezanne. They understand how to paint these models so that the three-dimensional effects are highlighted. In Year 9 pupils can research Victorian art and design in detail and produce a range of products suitable for sale in a shop. These products include picture and mirror frames, caskets, bowls and also screen-print designs. Pupils use the work of William Morris and other Victorian designers to gain inspiration. Three-dimensional work in clay is very good. There is also very good work in modelling in card, papier mache and fabric. GCSE results in art have been well above the national average in the higher A* - C grades over the past three years. There have been no grades lower than D in the past three years, and in 1999 all pupils achieved the higher grades A* - C. Attainment in the present Year 11 coursework exceeds these levels with a higher than average percentage of pupils on course to achieve the A* grade and all on course to achieve A* - C grades. All pupils have good portfolios of work, with final presentations of a very high standard. The majority have done up to twelve preparatory sketches, drawings and paintings on their present chosen themes. These show very good research skills and highly imaginative approaches, all individual in style and subject matter. All pupils have a good understanding of composition and very good skills in drawing and painting, including the use of texture. Work in silk-screen printing using photo-stencilling techniques is impressive with regard to design and finely finished detail. No Year 10 lessons were observed, but work done to date shows a similar high level of achievement with regard to composition and the use of line, tone and texture.
16. Progress is very good in both key stages. All units of work are structured in a progressive way so that pupils build systematically on their skills of drawing, painting and design from Year 7 onwards, helped by good formal teaching of techniques. Almost every project starts with direct observation, so the basics are reinforced and strengthened. Pupils respond well to the creative and imaginative suggestions of their teachers.
17. Research skills are well-developed in Key Stage 3 and are similar skills to those needed in GCSE, so pupils learn the developmental process from the beginning. In Year 9, pupils are taught to make notes on the development of their work at each stage and this helps them to focus on their own progress. This practice is a good preparation for GCSE studies where pupils note how and why they have developed a particular aspect of their design. Progress is supported by close studies of the work of relevant artists. The most impressive aspect of progress is that all pupils, including pupils on the special educational needs register, are confident and imaginative and achieve at least average levels of attainment, and a majority achieve a high standard of work. The high levels of attainment and the very good progress are the direct result of very good and at times excellent teaching, both of the whole class and of individuals.
18. Pupils take a keen interest in this subject in both key stages. There are good take-up rates for art at GCSE level, although the subject is now offered in one option block only. Pupils develop a good capacity for personal study. They are expected to show initiative and to take responsibility for their own work and they do this to a high level. They research well to gain ideas. They sustain concentration and behave well in class and can be trusted to get equipment and resources as they are required.
19. Teaching is very good in both key stages. Teaching is characterised by enthusiasm for the subject and a determination to see the pupils succeed at a high level. Teachers have very good knowledge and expertise in the subject. They teach the basic skills and techniques to a high level from Year 7 onwards.

Units of work are well-structured in a series of coherent lessons. Teachers have good skills in class-management and organisation. A quiet but firm discipline is achieved with apparent ease. Teachers are successful in inspiring their pupils to be imaginative and confident. They guide and help them to research each topic in good depth. All pupils get individual help in the course of each lesson. The art teachers generate extra resources for research and learning by borrowing extensively and directly from the schools library service. Assessment is ongoing in all lessons. It is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. It is done formally and in detail at the end of each topic or unit of work. Pupils are involved in self-assessment and are aware of the elements of their work that will be assessed. Formal teaching of point perspective in Year 7 gives pupils a good basis for understanding perspective generally in later work. Formal teaching in ceramics, including giving pupils an understanding of the properties of clay and the firing process, enables them to avoid pitfalls and to make quick and efficient progress. Pupils are taught how to research a topic from Year 7 onwards, beginning with the Renaissance classical period. They are taught how to do preparatory sketches to explore a wide range of aspects of each period studied, such as Cubism in Year 8 and Victorian art and design in Year 9.

20. The department is well managed and teachers work well as a team. Art has a high profile in this school. There are extensive exhibitions of pupils' high quality work throughout the school that enhance the environment very significantly. All the positive features mentioned in the previous inspection report have been maintained and the few shortcomings rectified. Pupils are now successful in relating their own work to that of other artists and are able to assess their own achievement successfully. Assessment is well used as a means of informing pupils and teachers of individual progress with projects. There is an extension of three-dimensional work from clay into modelling and light sculpture. The range of reference material is extended to reflect the cultural mix and influence of society.

138. **Design and technology**

21. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A*-C grades in design and technology is above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils attain high standards in the areas of design and technology they have studied - food technology, resistant materials technology and textiles technology. For example, they can correctly name a number of tools or utensils and generally indicate when to use which one. Their skills in using these tools to make well-finished products are generally above national norms. In this context, metalworking skills are a particular strength, for example, in the disassembly of scones. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils can use at least some terms related to the design process appropriately, although most pupils have little idea of the design process as a whole or understanding of how it relates to technology. In almost all Key Stage 3 lessons, pupils' attainments were at least in line with expectations for pupils of this age and many pupils' attainments were well above these expectations. High levels of attainment are also a characteristic of most of the work seen in books and folders.
22. By the end of Key Stage 4, where pupils are studying either food technology, graphics or resistant materials technology, their attainment is similarly above national norms. A few have reached a very high level of mastery of their chosen area and can produce, for instance, professional quality wooden furniture and printed designs. Most pupils strive to achieve high quality products. However, pupils' grasp of the principles, philosophy, nature, and processes of design and technology itself is weak - even those whose coursework folders are very good cannot say why the pages are in the order they are or what evaluation really means to a designer.
23. Pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, they are developing their knowledge and skills rapidly in a number of contexts, while in Key Stage 4 they are consolidating the knowledge and skills and learning less rapidly. In all lessons seen in Key Stage 3, progress was at least satisfactory and mostly good or very good. At Key Stage 4, progress was always at least satisfactory and often good. The progress of lower attaining pupils at both key stages is good.
24. Pupils show a keen interest in design and technology. Pupils' attitudes to work are in most cases positive. Their response in the Key Stage 3 lessons seen was always satisfactory and mostly it was better than that. In nearly all Key Stage 4 lessons the learners' response was satisfactory; and here, a few are

extremely enthusiastic and produce a lot of extra work. In only one lesson was poor behaviour a problem; the teacher changed the plan and dealt effectively with this.

25. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department. In all lessons it was at least satisfactory and in most lessons it was good or very good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. The application of what is taught in lessons to real-life contexts, especially in business studies, in Key Stage 4, is a particular strength. There is a good variety of activities in lessons and most lessons have a good pace to them. Lessons are introduced well, with a good use of probing questions. Especially at Key Stage 3, there is frequent, helpful and consistent assessment. There are often good or very good homework tasks, which extend class work and challenge pupils. There is a good match of activities to meet the needs of individual pupils. However, the knowledge and understanding of the principles of design and technology as reflected in lessons is poor. There are some weaknesses in lesson planning, with the absence of learning objectives for each lesson and of evaluation at the end of lessons to check on pupils' knowledge and understanding.
26. The department is moving towards becoming a fully unified design and technology department with its own corporate image and fully shared style, philosophy, resources, and approach. There are many strengths in departmental management - such as delegation systems development and implementation, monitoring of what goes on, and consultation. A major factor in the remaining historical divide within design and technology is a geographical divide - the two resistant materials rooms are part of an excellent suite, but are some distance from the two food/textiles rooms. Most rooms, including the two art rooms used for Key Stage 4 graphics, are too small for almost all the classes that use them, often hazardously so. All four rooms have major weaknesses in their layout (meaning that teachers and some learners cannot see one another properly, and the acoustics are often poor). The department has no central resource/study area. The supply of learning resources and of specialist equipment is unsatisfactory; for example, there are few text books and reference books, a shortage of sewing machines and computers, and a lack of specialist equipment for numerical control and vacuum forming.
27. Since the last inspection there has been progress in a number of areas. Attainment levels have improved. There is an increased variety of teaching methods and frequent matching of activities to meet the specific needs of pupils.

145. **Geography**

28. Attainment in geography is good at the end of Key Stage 3, and is very good at the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment estimated by teachers is well above the national average and has improved over the last three years. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys but the gap is closing. The highest attaining pupils reach Level 7, average pupils achieve a good Level 5 or a low Level 6, and lower attaining pupils work at Level 3 and some Level 4.
29. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment at GCSE is well above national averages. In 1999, the results for both boys and girls were well above the national average points score, as was the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C. Results have been consistently high for the last three years. Boys and girls attain better at geography than they do in most of their other subjects and in 1998, geography was the best performing department in school at GCSE.
30. Partly because the school continues to offer a compulsory humanities option at the beginning of Key Stage 4, the numbers who choose to study geography are high. Some lower attaining pupils begin a Certificate of Achievement at the beginning of Key Stage 4: it is not possible to move between this set and the GCSE groups.
31. Progress over time is good: it accelerates across Key Stage 3, particularly amongst the higher attaining sets; about one pupil in five attains Level 7 at the end of the key stage. Teachers are working skilfully to identify and support higher attaining pupils in order to reach even higher levels. Average attaining pupils achieve well above what is expected of them nationally and lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Year 9 pupils examine changes in the life

style of the Masai tribe in Kenya, using information technology, and the higher attaining pupils consider the ethical issues involved in these changes to human activity and the environment, brought about by extending the national parks to accommodate the growing tourist trade.

32. Progress at Key Stage 4 is very good: boys and girls add good value to their prior attainment. The course is well linked to GCSE criteria and excellent use of data from accumulated assessment builds the confidence of the Year 11 sets and shows them exactly what they can do to improve. Average attaining pupils in Year 10 gain well in confidence as they use their prior knowledge to make decisions about choosing the site of a settlement. Lower attaining pupils on the Certificate of Achievement course make good progress as they talk about their good knowledge of earthquakes in accurate vocabulary.
33. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. They are confident, occasionally a little over-confident, open and eager learners, who arrive on time with their equipment. Pupils co-operate well with their teachers to make progress, mostly meeting their teachers' high expectations. Where boys and girls in Key Stage 3 lessons are paired, the behaviour and progress of boys improves; all pupils become good, and often very good learners. They are good observers of visual stimuli and analyse and use well information from text, photographs, diagrams and tables. There is respect for the property of others and significant relationships of liking and trust between them and their teachers.
34. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In one lesson in four at Key Stage 4, the teaching is excellent or very good and the rest is good; teaching is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen at either key stage. Teachers are good, enthusiastic geographers. Materials and pupils are well managed. Teaching is effective for its purpose. Expectations of pupils are high.
35. Teaching is stimulating, of interest, and requires pupils to think and to use information to make decisions and solve problems. A wide range of writing styles is promoted and pupils' mathematical skills are soundly exploited. The well-balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3 prepares pupils to experience fieldwork and geographical enquiries before they are used for examinations at the next stage, except that not all pupils in Year 9 experience fieldwork. Teachers meet their statutory obligation to teach part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum through the medium of information technology.
36. The department is efficiently managed; leadership is effective and the direction is clear. The full-time team work well together, with shared standards. The schemes of work are thorough and well set within school policies: this allows teachers to plan their work well. The number of text books is sufficient to teach a curriculum but the range is too narrow to offer sufficient breadth of case studies. Assessment is a strength of the department, except that the very good advice given to pupils orally in lessons about how to improve work is not reflected in the written reports to parents. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

154. **History**

37. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is well above the levels expected nationally at age 14 and 16. At the end of Key Stage 3, girls are well above average, and are achieving higher than boys, as measured in National Curriculum assessments. By the end of Key Stage 4, both boys and girls are achieving results in the GCSE that are well above the national average for similar schools, and which are also well above the school average.
38. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are able to understand and interpret historical material and have well-developed skills in evaluating sources. One Year 7 class was able to argue very well for and against the Emperor Nero, having first looked at conflicting documents about him. A Year 8 class was able to question the accepted version of the Gunpowder Plot by re-examining detailed texts about the events. In Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils are fully stretched by challenging teaching, whilst middle to lower ability pupils achieve better than could be expected as a result of very good teacher support and well designed materials to suit their needs.

39. By the end of Key Stage 4, results are in line with the very high grades reported in the previous inspection. Boys have made very good progress and achieve more of the higher grades. Higher attaining pupils show a very good grasp of historical evidence. They can write extensively, sometimes with an emotional response, as one group who wrote with feeling about trench life in World War One. On the other hand, a class of lower attaining pupils, five of whom had statements, were able to understand the main features of Roman medicine, learning the key points, as they received good support from two assistants.
40. Progress is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Pupils acquire historical skills and knowledge related to the National Curriculum key elements. They show very good command of chronology, can understand past societies such as Norman and Tudor Britain, can analyse historical documents and can write very good interpretations of their findings. From Year 7 onwards, they are introduced to working in pairs or groups on investigations, which grow in complexity until they can work fully independently by Year 10. One Year 7 class used information and communications technology effectively to produce a wall display on the murder of Julius Caesar, while a Year 9 class was able to work in groups to produce valid arguments for and against slavery, revealing high levels of oral understanding of the issues. Lower attaining pupils make good progress in their written work as a result of very good provision of well designed materials. In some classes, progress is restricted when pupils have insufficient time to complete tasks because of the short single lesson.
41. Pupils' attitudes to learning are a major contributory factor in both progress and attainment. Pupils are punctual, very well-behaved, and settle down quickly to work. There is a good ethos for learning. They respond particularly well when given the chance to work collaboratively in pairs or groups. Their speaking skills are good, and they can speak well at length when there is an opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion. Many take great pride in their workbooks and in wall displays, showing great creativity.
42. Teaching is very good in seven out of ten lessons and good in the rest. Teachers are all very well-qualified, most with considerable experience. Since the previous inspection, inconsistencies of approach have been eliminated. A major strength of the teaching is the way it challenges the higher attaining pupils and encourages higher standards from the lower attaining pupils. Very demanding tasks are set which require pupils to think for themselves. Most lessons are brisk and purposeful, well-planned to use various methods such as discussion, group work and individual enquiry. Pupils' reading is a marked feature of teaching, either from their own work or from documents. Teachers use very consistent marking systems, which indicate how work can be improved.
43. The department is very well led and the curriculum is very well organised and monitored. This results in a consistency of teaching, using very good resources, which contributes to progress. Although the department has responded well, since the previous inspection, in integrating information and communication technology, more could be achieved by providing easier access to computers within the classroom. Very high standards of attainment have been maintained since the previous inspection.

161. **Modern foreign languages**

44. On entry to the school, pupils start a foreign language, French and German in alternate years. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment levels are in line with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils readily volunteer short answers in the target language and understand foreign speech over a narrow range of topics, home, school, sport, etc. They are more diffident in making spontaneous foreign language utterances themselves. In the best instances, pupils produce good extended writing using past, present and future tenses with a degree of facility. Pupils who start their second foreign language, including Latin, in Year 8 make rapid strides. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils show attainment in the four major skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing) which matches national expectations. In groups containing a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, predominantly boys, there is correspondingly low attainment.

45. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils in 1999 gaining GCSE grades A*- C in French was significantly above the national average but below for German. Groups aiming for the higher grades at GCSE are preparing well for the exam. They respond well to oral work and, in the modern languages, write extended passages in the language. These groups, however, are largely dominated by girls. In lower attaining groups, where boys form the majority, standards are poor, with very little attempt to use the language, poor pronunciation and little progress. In the period since the last inspection, GCSE results in the first foreign language have broadly matched those in the core subjects, English, maths and science, within the school, and have been in line with national averages. There have, however, been year-on-year fluctuations in results. Girls produce much better results than boys. GCSE results in the second modern language and in Latin have been consistently good, although there is a relative absence of the very highest grades.
46. Progress is satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and within lessons these pupils often show enthusiasm and good short-term progress, but longer-term progress is hampered by poor retention. Progress is restricted by the over-long double lessons and the timetable for the teaching of modern foreign languages means that some classes have to wait six days between the end of one lesson and the start of the next.
47. Pupils arrive on time and equipped and ready to work. Within the lesson, they show interest in the subject, though often passively, and conduct paired and individual work well. There is a good take-up of the second language at Key Stage 4. Exceptions to this good attitude were seen in two Year 11 lower attaining groups, whose apathy or poor behaviour affected the rate of progress.
48. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. The majority of teaching in languages is good or even very good. Teachers show satisfactory knowledge of their subjects and of the techniques for teaching them, and make good use of the target language. They use the foreign language well and consistently as the main vehicle of communication in the lesson. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge the higher attaining pupils and lower attaining pupils to give of their best. Planning is good. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, the weakness stemmed from the inability to cope with the challenges posed by lower attaining pupils and disaffected pupils in Key Stage 4. Tasks set for homework are not always seen as an extension of the teaching.
49. The department is conscientiously led, is aware of current developments in the subject, and fully meets statutory requirements. The department has adequate resources. All pupils have text books to take home. Good use is made of the school's information and communications technology resources to support learning. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

167. **Music**

50. Attainment in music at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected level. Pupils of average attainment compose imaginatively, developing ideas from earlier knowledge. Several pupils in Year 9 incorporated features of the blues scale to introduce interest to variations on a nursery rhyme tune, and some higher attaining pupils, without direction, imitated the timpani figure used in Mahler's *Second Symphony* as an introduction. The intricacy of work by some pupils of higher attainment demonstrates their confidence in developing and extending ideas. Pupils in Year 8 use a variety of composing devices to create sea-shanties, appropriately matching melody to harmony; and in Year 7, pupils readily use layering techniques to produce lively, imaginative pieces which they perform with enthusiasm and very good instrumental control. Most pupils read uncomplicated staff notation and simple rhythms accurately. Their listening skills are well developed, both in ensemble work and as an audience. Pupils could identify features of two different versions of Frere Jacques, and explain the different moods created, although their use of subject language was limited. They learn songs quickly and sing in tune but at times the tone is poorly projected. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are above average, and recent GCSE results, reflecting the pattern of previous years, are well

above the national average. Particular strengths are in performing. Most pupils play at a level which exceeds the requirements of the examination. Their general musicianship is well-developed, as shown in a Year 11 lesson where, within the space of a single lesson, pupils prepared ensembles from previously unseen music and worked together to refine the outcomes to present good standards of performing. Individually, higher attaining pupils play expressively and flexibly. Standards of composing are good. Higher attaining pupils compose attractive, well-organised, properly structured pieces, which are harmonically secure but lack any sense of experimentation. Pupils of average attainment, working within a limited range of harmony and instrumentation, use techniques they have learned confidently to create musically secure, well-balanced pieces.

51. The progress of both boys and girls in both key stages is good. Several pupils play instruments. Younger pupils develop musical perception, rhythmic control and the ability to maintain independent parts in an ensemble. Pupils of average attainment learn to co-ordinate left and right hands in keyboard work and many develop sufficient dexterity to be able to perform their own compositions convincingly. In Year 9, where pupils have fewer opportunities to discuss ideas with one another, the rate of progress is slower. Progress across the key stages is very good. Pupils in Year 10 quickly learn to compose interesting, lively pieces. However, in Year 11, pupils tend to consolidate techniques learned earlier, experiment less, and progress, while still good, is slower. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good and sometimes very good progress. In Year 7, these pupils play with great intensity and sensitivity, and in Year 9 they have developed sufficient rhythmic accuracy and co-ordination to maintain independent 'ostinati'.
52. Pupils have positive attitudes to music and most clearly enjoy their lessons. They arrive promptly, settle quickly, co-operate well with one another, control instrumental sound properly, and concentrate well when given time to work independently. They persist in completing their work and higher attaining pupils refine their ideas readily. They perform in class willingly. However, many listen too passively to one another's performances.
53. The quality of teaching in both key stages is almost always good. Relationships are good, and lessons are well planned and delivered with infectious enthusiasm. Demonstration, particularly of different vocal techniques, is good. As a result of excellent communication in teaching an African call and response song, pupils were able to appreciate the exuberance of the African musical culture. Curriculum planning shows a clear understanding of how pupils develop their musical abilities, and assessment is used to encourage pupils, to chart their progress and to inform further planning. Expectations are very high, although occasionally the achievements of middle attaining pupils are not fully recognised. The content of most lessons is well-adapted to individual pupils' capabilities, but a few higher attaining pupils are still not sufficiently challenged. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their use of technical language and to exercise musical judgement. Much of the repertoire of the keyboard course lacks contemporary appeal and lessons devoted entirely to this activity lack pace. Effective teaching is frustrated by the large number of lessons split over break and lunchtime, which seriously interrupt continuity of thought, damaging composing activities in particular. The quality of teaching by the eight visiting instrumental staff is good.
54. The department is efficiently managed and all aspects of the National Curriculum are included. However, the allocation of time for world music is limited and the provision for information and communication technology is too low for effective delivery. The department's development plan has no strategies for financial planning for large items of equipment. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which involve over one hundred pupils in regular rehearsals, and concerts and other musical events take place throughout the year, both in school and in the wider community.
55. Since the previous inspection the department has maintained good standards of attainment. The accommodation remains unsatisfactory. Rooms are too far apart, and larger classes have to be taught in the dining hall. Cumbersome equipment has to be carried considerable distances, significantly reducing the time available for teaching and adversely affecting the progress of pupils having lessons under these conditions. Technical help for maintaining equipment is still inadequate.

173. **Physical education**

56. There were no Year 9 lessons during the inspector's time at the school and a judgement on standards at the end of Key Stage 3 is not possible. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations. A mixed Year 11 group maintain satisfactory levels of aerobic fitness and acquire relevant step patterns and rhythmic movement. A similar group in the year has sound hand and eye co-ordination skills when playing squash, but a lack of previous experience in this game restricts further achievements. Overall, standards are satisfactory when compared with schools of similar intakes. Present levels of attainment are similar to those indicated in the previous inspection, with a slight increase in standards of attainment at Key Stage 4. However, there is under-achievement in the acquisition of the relevant advanced game techniques at this stage. This is due to a lack of continuity and progression in the curriculum from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Small numbers of pupils take the short GCSE physical education course. The number gaining grades A*-C in the 1998 examination is well above the national average and almost double the results of 1998. Pupils' understanding of the principles of health-related fitness is below that expected nationally at both key stages.
57. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. In netball, they make good progress when they systematically attack organised zone defences. Their general play and skills in developing strategies, techniques and tactics relevant to the full game are sound. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in gymnastics; the majority have poor tension and control in movement and balance and are unfamiliar with the conventions of controlled sequences. Lessons lack systematic practices and refined sequences on floor and apparatus. Pupils make satisfactory progress in a range of Key Stage 4 options. Squash, aerobics and judo have appropriately structured schemes of work, but attainment at the higher National Curriculum levels is not achieved because of a lack of continuity from activities experienced in earlier years. When this happens, as in a GCSE hockey lesson, pupils make very good progress in refining techniques, performing consistently at higher levels and acting as coaches and umpires. Pupils with special needs receive appropriately relevant and structured tasks and they make good progress.
58. The overall response by pupils to physical education is good. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning, they respond to the tasks set, willingly and enthusiastically. There are good levels of participation in lessons and these are carried over into extra-curricular activities. Pupils present themselves appropriately for lessons. Teacher-pupil relationships are generally good. In Year 7 and 8 gymnastics lessons there are many examples of boys' poor behaviour, and their lack of self-control and immaturity contribute to poor standards. Independent learning skills are not fully developed, hampered by inflexible lesson organisation, which does not focus on the need for pupils to be involved in planning, performing and evaluating their performance.
59. The quality of teaching is good. In the majority of lessons, teachers give good explanations and their questioning encourages pupils' participation. They have good subject knowledge, but at Key Stage 4 inconsistently use this expertise to give clear and relevant targets for improvement. Teachers have good management skills, lessons are orderly and appropriately paced and focused. Planning for lessons considers the variety of needs of all pupils and has appropriate learning objectives. This is an improvement on the last inspection. An example of this was seen in the team teaching arrangement for netball. Pupils are given tasks appropriate to their levels of ability and organised into a very good range of conditioned games. Present curriculum planning and organisation is not addressing the needs for gymnastics. Although teaching of the Programmes of Study is satisfactory expectations are not sufficiently high to raise standards and produce an acceptable ethos for the work. Specialist coaching standards in aerobics and judo are good. Teachers are not currently sharing assessment judgements with pupils and informing them of progress in line with National Curriculum criteria. This omission is also reflected in reports for parents, which lack information of pupils' achievements and next-stage targets.
60. Present curriculum organisation does not consistently involve all pupils in health-promoting activity and the department has made poor progress in redressing this imbalance. Recent curriculum additions have improved the balance offered at Key Stage 4. However, the present imbalance in curriculum content and

below national average time allocation across the two stages, reduces the effectiveness of continuity and progression in pupils' learning. This is a major reason for the department's inability to raise standards since the last inspection. The indoor accommodation for a school of this size is unsatisfactory and greatly reduces the effectiveness and range of options offered. This problem is further compounded in wet weather when the games programme effectively stops.

61. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. A lack of a structure within the department to support and monitor teaching and curriculum development has reduced the effectiveness to react to the recommendations made. Within the department's development plan there is no clearly defined rationale for a relevant physical education curriculum to meet National Curriculum requirements.

179. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

179. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

62. The inspection consisted of 13 inspectors. During the four days of the inspection, and a total of 47 inspector days, 186 lessons were observed. There were several observations of extra-curricular activities, assemblies and 25 visits to registration periods. All full-time and most part-time teachers were seen teaching at least once, and most several times. Forty-six planned meetings were held with members of staff and there was a meeting with members of the governing body.
63. All the available written work in each subject of a sample of six pupils from each year group was inspected. Planned discussions were held with these pupils and informal discussions were held with many more. A total of 142 hours was spent observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their work.
64. Documentation provided by the school was analysed, both before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 42 parents; 282 parents completed a questionnaire giving their views on the school. Meetings were held with a headteacher of a local primary school, the careers officer and the Education Welfare Officer. Additional written evidence was submitted by the sixth form college, several primary schools and from the local training and enterprise council.

65. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

183. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y11	733	31	97	41

183. **Teachers and classes**

183. **Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	43.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.01

183. **Education support staff (Y7 - Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	210.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.5
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	23
	KS4	21

183. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998- 1999
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	£
Total Income	1,578,261
Total Expenditure	1,5888,262
Expenditure per pupil	2,292
Balance brought forward from previous year	23,630
Balance carried forward to next year	13,629

184. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1400
Number of questionnaires returned:	282

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	12	63	14	11	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	24	59	11	5	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	10	45	37	5	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	14	60	17	6	3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	20	62	12	5	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	30	61	6	1	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	28	56	12	3	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	20	67	7	6	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	30	55	12	3	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	32	56	12	1	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	26	58	10	4	2