

INSPECTION REPORT

Sir Roger Manwood's School
Sandwich
LEA area : Kent

Unique Reference Number : 118900

Headteacher : Mr C R L Morgan

Reporting inspector : Mr R P J McGregor
3525

Dates of inspection : 11-15 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708165

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Grammar (Selective)
Type of control :	County (Foundation)
Age range of pupils :	11-18
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
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Appropriate authority :	Governing body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr A J Kilbee
Date of previous inspection :	November 1994

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Mrs Vivienne Phillips, Lay Inspector		Attendance; Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Partnership with parents and the community
Mr Douglas MacIldowie	English, Drama, English as an additional language	Leadership and management
Mr Paul Metcalf	Mathematics; Equal opportunities	Assessment
Mr William Keast	–	–
Mr Vivian Harrison	Design and technology	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Dr Vivien Johnston	Information technology	
Mrs Roslyn Fox	Modern foreign languages	Curriculum
Mr John Carnaghan	Geography, History; Special educational needs	
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Mr Paul Wilson	Music, Business studies and economics	Resources
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- 34% of teaching is very good or excellent
- Attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is very high, with high standards particularly in English, French and German
- Very good leadership from the headmaster and effective governors, resulting in a school focused on achieving high standards
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are excellent
- Pupils' exceptional language and literacy skills contribute to their good progress
- Excellent provision is made for pupils' moral and social development
- The school ethos for learning ensures a very good work environment
- Excellent extra-curricular activities
- Attendance is very good
- The partnership with parents and the community is very good and helpful

Where the school has weaknesses

- Some ineffective middle managers, seen in inconsistent implementation of school policies, and some ineffective monitoring by senior managers
- Insufficient use of information technology in several subjects, resulting in lowered standards
- Curriculum time is insufficient
- Girls feel insufficiently at home in their boarding house
- Several health and safety issues need to be addressed
- A daily act of collective worship is not provided for all pupils
- Poor facilities for some aspects of design and technology restrict pupils' achievements

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

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made significant strides in dealing with the key issues stated in the inspection report of five years ago. Progress has been good, although a number of areas still require improvement - several of these are clearly targeted in the current year's development plan. Accommodation is much improved in most areas, but remains poor for some aspects of design and technology. The health and safety issues identified have been addressed; additional issues have arisen. Information technology facilities are much improved, good specific information technology lessons in Key Stage 3 have greatly improved standards, and teacher expertise has improved through school based twilight courses. Information technology is used too little in many subjects, however, as stated in the development plan for the year. This plan itself is much improved on that inspected in 1994, and is now an effective instrument for change. It is leading to better departmental management, but this remains a key focus point in the 1999-2000 plan. The headmaster inherited a situation where the school had rejected the idea of a whole school approach to assessment. He has, nevertheless, initiated a whole school policy for assessment and marking, which has resulted in substantial improvements in some subjects. This too is a focus in the current development plan. The timing of the school day has been improved; some short single periods still result in lost time. Policy statements and lines of communication are now good, but the preparation of detailed guidelines on boarders' welfare still requires attention. The school has worked to improve assemblies, for example through the reintroduction of hymn singing, but not all pupils experience a daily act of collective worship. Given the current leadership, school ethos and management approach, there is good capacity for further improvement in pupils' standards.

Standards in subjects

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

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key <i>Very high</i> A* <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E <i>very low</i> E*	
Key Stage 3 test	A*	D		
GCSE examinations	A*	C		
A/AS – levels	A	Not available		

An A* indicates results in the top 5%

Very high Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science indicate that pupils are three years ahead of the average pupil nationally. In comparison with other selective schools, pupils' attainment was above average in English, close to the average in science and well below average in mathematics. Overall, pupils' performance was below average compared with selective schools. In 1999 school results fell in English and science, and improved significantly in mathematics.

At GCSE in 1998, the highest standards were achieved in French, German and economics and the lowest in home economics. 47% of the GCSE results were graded at A* and A and this increased to 50% in 1999, proportions a little above those found in other selective schools. Although very high in comparison with all schools, the 1998 average points score per pupil was in line with that of other selective schools. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades increased, as did the average points total.

The A-level average points score for students entered for two or more subjects is well above the national average: for students taking three A-levels, the equivalent of a grade higher in each of the three. The average subject points score of about 6, indicates that the average grade achieved is grade C. This matches selective schools nationally. The highest standards in 1998 were achieved in French, German, chemistry, physics and religious studies.

Most students on leaving the sixth form are successful in gaining university places, several after taking a gap year.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, German, French, Drama	Information technology across the curriculum
Years 10-11	Very good	English, German, French, Art, History, Chemistry	Information technology across the curriculum
Sixth form	Very good	English, German, French, Chemistry, Economics	Information technology across the curriculum
English	Very good		
Mathematics	Good		

About a third of the teaching was very good or excellent and approaching three quarters good or better. The quality was slightly better than the overall picture at the end of Key Stage 4 and in Year 13, but a little below in Year 9. In Year 9 there was also a corresponding drop in the usually excellent responses of the pupils; they were a little less co-operative and responsive to teaching. Some teaching of the very highest quality was observed where the pupils made excellent progress and thoroughly enjoyed their lessons.

Teaching in French, German, English and Drama was very good throughout the school. Key Stage 4 history, chemistry and art, and A-level economics and chemistry, were similarly well taught. Effective teaching, resulting in sound or better progress for the pupils took place in all subjects, although one or two individual staff were insufficiently effective at times. The only area of significant weakness was in the teaching of information technology across subjects.

Literacy and numeracy are key aspects of teaching in several subjects. Specialist vocabulary is promoted very effectively. A great range of written work is completed by all pupils. In many lessons pupils are expected to listen intently and to speak with confidence. Several teachers use number and units frequently and expect pupils to be able to tabulate results and interpret numerical information.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Excellent
Attendance	Very good
Ethos*	Very good for learning, positive co-operative attitudes. Excellent working atmosphere. Everyone wants to do well
Leadership and management	Sound. Very good leadership by headteacher; some ineffective monitoring by senior managers; unsatisfactory management by some heads of department. Effective governors
Curriculum	Good. Breadth, balance and relevance; shortage of time; some good, some weak schemes of work; very good careers advice; excellent extra-curricular activities
Pupils with special educational needs	Sound provision and good progress. Individual education plans not all up-to-date or known by staff
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent promotion of moral and social development, good spiritual and cultural. Not all have collective worship each day
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Sufficient, well-qualified staff, sound resources. Excellent accommodation for physical education, poor for design and technology
Value for money	Good

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the high standards achieved, particularly French, German and English• the work ethos• caring and supportive, where all work as a team• very good extra-curricular programme• children are very happy at school• the school is very approachable if problems arise• a lot of good homework is set	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• too little information is provided on the curriculum and the children's progress• complaints and suggestions from parents are not followed up• some inconsistencies in homeworks• problem of a few disruptive pupils is not dealt with

Parents' questionnaire responses paint a very positive picture of the school, praising staff for the high standards of work, the extra-curricular activities, homework, and the good behaviour. The only significant unsatisfactory comment concerned a lack of information on what is taught.

Inspectors found substantial evidence to support the parents' positive views of the school and to concur with some of the negative comments, but not all. No evidence was observed of any disruptive behaviour. More information should be provided on the curriculum, although the school provides good information on pupils' progress. No evidence was found that complaints are not effectively followed up, but this is the perception of a small minority of parents. Inconsistencies do exist in the amount of homework set, but much of it is effective and worthwhile.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To improve further the standards of work and the learning of pupils, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- * Increase the amount of available curriculum time (paragraph 55)
 - * Review the roles of senior managers, both deputy headteachers and senior teachers, developing their monitoring and support roles in order to increase the effectiveness of heads of department (93)
 - * Improve the quality of management by several heads of department, ensuring that:
 - they monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas, providing guidance and support to teachers as necessary
 - each consistently implements the school's assessment policy, ensuring that work is marked effectively, useful records are kept of marked work, and assessment data is thoroughly analysed so that the most and least effective teaching is identified
 - the quality of subject schemes of work in several subjects is improved in order that less experienced staff have sufficient guidance on what and how to teach
 - greater use is made of information technology, leading to higher standards
 - all staff attend appropriate in-service training, focusing on teaching and learning
- (20, 56, 57, 63, 64, 93, 97, 105, 107, 139, 153, 167, 175, 217, 234)

- * Ensure that communication is good between the staff in the girls' boarding house and the girls in their care, working within a well-structured development plan for boarding (80, 82, 84)
- * Ensure that the health and safety issues identified in this report are dealt with (76)
- * Ensure that all pupils experience a daily collective act of worship (67, 103)
- * Continue to work to improve the poor facilities for some aspects of design and technology, which restrict pupils' achievements (110, 187, 191)

Minor issues

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

- ensure that the small minority of pupils who are unwilling to question and comment are given more opportunities to do so (paragraphs 36, 40)
- improve the small minority of weak and uninspiring lessons, so pupils' progress is consistently good in all classes (52)
- review the use of single periods for physical education, which is inefficient (55, 235)
- ensure that the requirements for information technology and religious education are fully met (56, 163, 167)
- continue to develop the personal and social education course (57, 58)
- ensure individual education plans are available for pupils with special educational needs on stage 2 or above of the register and these are updated regularly (47,61)
- increase opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues (67)
- provide more opportunities which recognise the contribution of many different cultures to the developments in subjects (70)
- improve the quality and quantity of food provided for the boarders' evening meal (81)
- ensure that both houses have appropriate sanatoria (81)
- make better use of the girls' house annexe (81)
- improve boarders' access to the school's good facilities in the weekend and in the evening, particularly computers and the library (81)
- improve liaison between the boys' and girls' houses (81)
- provide parents with more helpful curriculum information (88)
- ensure that computer facilities are adequate for the needs of the curriculum (111)
- ensure that long term financial plans are formalised to take account of the increasing size of the school (114)
- plan to increase the accommodation for music as the number of pupils in the school continues to rise (109, 226)
- strengthen links with partner primary schools to improve curriculum continuity, particularly in mathematics (134)
- improve management of the biology department (150)
- review the management of information technology and in-service training (107, 159)
- introduce target setting in design and technology as a means of keeping examination pupils focused for completion of course work and practical assignments (187)
- consider the possibility of a joint physical education department with a common policy (236)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Sir Roger Manwood's Grammar School is a smaller than average secondary school for pupils aged 11 - 18. The results of end of Key Stage 2 national assessment tests, and standardised tests taken by pupils as they join Year 7, indicate that attainment levels of entrants are well above national average figures. The school accepts pupils who take the Kent selection tests down to the 28th percentile. The roll has been rising gradually over the past five years, from 645 pupils in 1994 to 773 currently. In Year 11 there are 97 pupils and in Year 7 there are 149. 7% of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, well below the national figure of 15%. One pupil has a Statement of special educational need. Currently 1.7% of the pupils receive free school meals, a proportion well below the national average. 1.3% of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language, close to the average national figure. 50 pupils are boarders. Most pupils transfer from primary schools near to the school. The census indicates that the area from which the pupils come is average socio-economically.

2. Entry for day pupils to Sir Roger Manwood's school is by the county selection tests at 11+ or as a result of the school's own tests. For candidates at age 11, there are three clear criteria adopted by the school and applied in the following order:

satisfactory performance in a written test or tests

sibling of a current pupil

proximity of home to school.

Pupils are accepted into the sixth form via suitable GCSE grades. 10 school places are reserved for boarders in Year 7, but these pupils must reach the academic threshold to be accepted. If boarding places are not taken up, they are re-allocated to day pupils.

3. The prospectus and other school documents state the principles that underpin the school's work and intentions:

The school follows the National Curriculum and more, providing a good range of courses in Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form

Great emphasis is placed on the pastoral care of pupils, with the tutor at the centre, overseeing academic progress and general welfare, and supported by heads of year and senior managers

The school is very proud of its community spirit and the caring, family atmosphere that pervades the school.

Expectations of behaviour are high and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility

Strong parental links are developed and seen to be central to the academic progress and general wellbeing of the pupils.

The school always endeavours to provide the best facilities that it can for the benefit of the pupils

4. The main targets of the school's development plan focus on the following key areas

The academic success of the pupils as the central focus for all, striving to meet the targets set for the summer 2000 public examinations

Reviewing the size of entry into the school and Saturday morning school

Building upon the pupil mentoring system, making use of the new database of assessment information

Preparing for new sixth form courses and further improving information technology facilities and the library

Reviewing assessment systems

Implementing the new induction programme for newly qualified teachers and improving the school staff development programme

Improving the spiritual dimension of school life through better assemblies

Further developing the boarding curriculum and marketing boarding more effectively

Continuing to improve the buildings and site

Maximising advantage to the school from the new relationship with the local education authority as a Foundation school

Key Indicators

5. Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	38	58	96

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	36	37	37
	Girls	59	59	57
	Total	95	96	94
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	98(100)	99(100)	97(99)
	National	65(n/a)	60(n/a)	56(n/a)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	98(90)	91(97)	90(82)
	National	35(n/a)	36(n/a)	27(n/a)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	38	38	36
	Girls	58	58	58
	Total	96	96	94
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	100(100)	100(100)	98(100)
	National	62(n/a)	64(n/a)	62(n/a)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	100(98)	85(100)	92(87)
	National	31(n/a)	37(n/a)	31(n/a)

6. Attainment at Key Stage 4

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	53	42	95

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	48	51	53
	Girls	40	40	41
	Total	88	91	94
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	93	96	99
	National	45	90	95

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or
units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	N/a

¹

Percentages in parentheses refer to 1999

all those they studied:

National	➤	N/a
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7. Attainment in the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for

Year	Male	Female	Total
1998	41	43	84

GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	24.4	22.5	23.5	10.0	10.0	10.0
National	N/a	N/a	17.6	N/a	N/a	2.8

8. Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions)

missed through absence for the latest
complete reporting year :

		%
Authorised Absence	School	5.6
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0
	National comparative data	1.1

9. Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	2
Permanent	0

10. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	34
Satisfactory or better	99
Less than satisfactory	1

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

11. In comparison with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment in the 1998 end of **Key Stage 3** national tests in English, mathematics and science was very high. Similarly high standards have been attained over the period 1996-1998. The levels achieved indicate that pupils are three years ahead of the average pupil nationally. Boys' and girls' results were both high. In comparison with other selective schools, pupils' attainment was above average in English, close to the average in science and well below average in mathematics. Overall, pupils' performance was below average compared with selective schools. National comparative data for 1999 were not available at the time of the inspection, but school results fell in English and science, and improved significantly in mathematics.

12. In 1998, 93% of the pupils achieved five or more **GCSE** grades A*-C, a very high proportion compared with the national average, as has been the case over the past three years. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A*-G passes in 1998 at 97% was above the national average, and over the last three years this result has been well above average. Boys and girls have achieved very high results. Girls' results are higher than those of boys, but not to the extent found nationally. (Therefore, the relative success of boys at GCSE is greater than that of girls.) Over the past five years pupils' GCSE average points scores have showed a rising trend, but at a slower rate than the national average. Compared with other selective schools the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades is well below average and the average points score per pupil is below average, but there are reasons for these statistics which are stated below. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades increased to 96% and the average points total increased again. The proportion of A* and A grades increased from 47% in 1998 to 50% in 1999, a little above the proportion in similar schools.

13. Each year the school has a small number of boarding GCSE candidates, who are a year older than their class peers. When these pupils are 16, usually in Year 10, they take no GCSE examinations, yet they are counted in the Department for Education and the Environment's statistics as GCSE failures. Although the numbers are small they have a significant impact when comparing this school with other selective schools, changing the judgement from well below average to average. A 'real' 97% pass rate for pupils attaining five A*-C grades was achieved in 1998, rather than the specified 93%.

14. The **A-level** average points score for students entered for two or more subjects is well above the national average: for students taking three A-levels, the equivalent of a grade higher in each of the three. The average subject points score of about 6, indicates that the average grade achieved is grade C. This matches national selective school results. Over the past four years A-level grades have shown a rising trend. In 1999 the average points total fell slightly. In 1998 47% of the grades were at A and B, in 1999 this fell to 40%. Very few students now take fewer than three A-levels. Equal numbers of girls and boys were entered for A-level examinations but the average result for boys was almost a grade higher than for girls.

15. Detailed national subject comparisons for GCSE and A-level results are not available for 1998 or 1999, but the school's own analysis shows significant variation between subjects. At GCSE, attainment has been highest in modern languages and economics and lowest in home economics. At A-level, highest was modern languages, chemistry, physics and religious studies, lowest was biology and geography.

16. In the lessons observed, **progress** overall was good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Progress was strongest in Years 11 and 12, and weaker, relative to other years in Year 9. In Years 11 and 12, out of every five lessons observed, four led to good progress and in two of those progress was very good or excellent. In Year 9 these proportions fell to one in four very good or excellent and under two-thirds good or better. These progress judgements reflect the quality of teaching and the responses of the pupils to these lessons. Scrutiny of work shows detailed and accurate recorded work in all subjects. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, greater numbers of completed 'problems', and the pupils' very good written responses to questions, confirm the progress judgements based on lesson observations. There are, however, exceptions depending upon individual teachers. Standards achieved by pupils, in lessons observed throughout the school, generally reflected the attainment indicated by end of key stage results.

17. Most teachers are aware of the small number of pupils with **specific learning difficulties** and can identify them in class. They usually afford some degree of extra assistance so that pupils' attainment is in line with what would be expected and progress is appropriate to pupils' specific learning targets. In the key skill areas of English and mathematics, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

18. **Literacy** standards are very high. Pupils have very good listening skills and vocabulary levels. Their speech is accurate and well expressed. They use technical vocabulary well in art, science and design and technology. In mathematics, misspelled technical words were not corrected. Boys and girls read aloud clearly and with exceptionally good expression. Their written work is well above average in accuracy and complexity. Pupils' excellent standard of literacy makes a strong contribution to their work in geography and history.

19. Pupils' **numeracy** skills across the curriculum are good. They cost ingredients in food technology and use dimensions, working drawings, models and graphs in design and technology. In art, they demonstrate skills of measuring, enlargement and making three-dimensional forms using two-dimensional drawings. In science, pupils' number work is well-developed. Pupils in a Year 9 geography lesson made good use of an Internet database to find and interpret population figures, while a Year 11 English class analysed and illustrated research into newspaper content using computer generated pie charts.

20. The progress made by pupils in developing **information and communication technology** skills throughout the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Computers are used too infrequently, if at all, in several subjects, though pupils learn to appreciate their importance and value in handling data in geography and in the use of e-mail for GCSE Italian in the sixth form. Pupils use the library computer resources to research information and many pupils use their home computers to word-process and prepare documents. In science, however, pupils have too few opportunities to use sensors and to interpret results using information technology, in mathematics their use is underdeveloped and in music the lack of facilities restricts attainment. Pupils develop a good understanding of databases and spreadsheets within information technology lessons, but progress in these areas is restricted by lack of reinforcement in other subjects.

21. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and at A-level, the standards attained by pupils in **English** are well above the national average. GCSE and A-level results are in line with those for selective schools. Unusually, boys' achievement is in line with that of girls. Pupils' progress in English is very good in Key Stage 3. Some Year 7 pupils have weaknesses in spelling and punctuation and many do not write sustained continuous prose but by the end of Year 9 standards in these areas are well above average. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form very good progress continues, with improvements in pupils' skills in sustaining arguments and debate. Throughout the school, pupils' reading skills develop well as a result of effective teaching.

22. End of Key Stage 3 and 4 standards in **mathematics** are well above the national average. GCSE results are similar to those for selective schools. There are no differences in the attainment of girls and boys. Boys, however, have better spatial awareness skills and girls are better at number work in Key Stage 3. At A-level, examination success has been below average and well below the average for selective schools, but current attainment is well above average as a result of focused teaching and committed students. In Key Stage 3, pupils' progress over time is sound, although high attainers are insufficiently stretched and too little account is taken of curriculum continuity between the primary and secondary phases. Progress in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good.

23. Pupils' attainment in **science** at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is well above national averages. GCSE results were broadly similar to those of other selective schools. In A-level physics and chemistry attainment is very high compared with the national picture, and above the average for students in selective schools. A-level biology standards are similar to national averages, but below selective school averages. Pupils show good understanding of scientific terms and appreciate commercial implications of their school science. The importance of experimental design and evaluation, as well as fair testing and effective recording of results, is appreciated by pupils in Year 11. Sixth form standards vary depending upon the class, subject and teacher. Progress is sound in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and very good in A-level chemistry and physics. In A-level biology progress varies between unsatisfactory and very good, depending upon the teaching quality. The pupils' positive attitudes and the school work ethic ensure that progress is usually good.

24. The standard of the work pupils complete within **information technology** lessons is well above average, but their

overall standard at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average because information technology has not been taught sufficiently within other subjects. End of Key Stage 4 standards are average because only about half the pupils take a specific information technology course and the remaining half have insufficient opportunity to use computers in other subjects. GCSE results are similar to those of other selective schools. Pupils' overall progress is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Sixth formers are taught a module of information technology within their general studies course and they make sound progress.

25. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in **religious education** is above average. Pupils have average understanding of the principal religions in Great Britain because there is insufficient emphasis on this in the school's syllabus. Attainment is well above average in relation to national norms for those pupils who choose to take public examinations in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Results are in line with other selective schools at GCSE and well above for A-level. In Key Stage 3, pupils make sound progress in building up their knowledge of religious belief and practice, but insufficient progress in the application of religious insights to pupils' own lives. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, all pupils make good progress.

26. Standards in **art** at the end of Key Stage 3 are above national expectations for the majority of pupils and exceptional for a significant proportion of these. A Year 9 class could apply what they had found out about art movements in the 20th century to their own personal pieces of work. Attainment in GCSE art examinations is very high compared with all schools and above average for selective schools. Pupils investigate and research thoroughly. A-level groups demonstrate above average levels of attainment, but examination results have been below those of other selective schools. Progress overall is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and very good at Key Stage 4.

27. **Business studies and economics** standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average. In the sixth form attainment is average overall, but highly variable – high attainers achieve very high standards indeed, low attainers are under-achieving.

28. End of Key Stage 3 **design and technology** standards are above those found nationally. Pupils use a wide range of materials and techniques covering the National Curriculum and design skills are generally well developed. GCSE standards are above average, but below those of most other subjects in the school. Results are below the average for selective schools. A-level standards vary depending upon the subject, but are generally average. Numbers are often low. Progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is sound although some work is too prescriptive and design work shows weaknesses. The poor quality of some accommodation for design and technology has a significant negative impact on standards.

29. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE in **geography** is well above national averages. In Year 9 all use good geographical vocabulary, and Year 11 pupils have good map and data handling skills. GCSE results were a little above the average for selective schools in 1998. Attainment in A-level is above national averages but below the national average for selective schools. Progress through Key Stage 3 and 4 is good. The progress that A-level pupils make is satisfactory.

30. Attainment of pupils in **history** at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is well above national expectations. Compared with other selective schools, examination results were broadly similar at GCSE and A-level in 1998. Pupils have very good recall and standards are raised by pupils' ability to link historical facts and develop sophisticated conclusions. Progress through Key Stage 3 and the sixth form is good and in Key Stage 4 it is very good.

31. Attainment in **French and German** is high at the end of Key Stage 3 and very high at the end of Key Stage 4 and at A-level. Examination results are high compared with other selective schools. There is considerable added value over Key Stages 4 and the sixth form in languages. By the end of Year 9, all pupils in French and German use past tenses with confidence. By the end of Year 11, pupils of both French and German draw on a wealth of previously learnt material to respond to teachers' searching questions. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form progress is excellent

32. Attainment in **music** at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is above average. Compared with other selective schools, results are similar at GCSE and above at A-level. Pupils compose and perform with competence at the end of Key Stage 3, and at the end of Key Stage 4 are conversant with a wide range of music and musical techniques. In the

sixth form, attainment in performing and appraising is above average but composition is less developed. Progress throughout the school is good.

33. Attainment in **physical education** in the sixth form and at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is above the national average and in some activities, for example girls in hockey and boys in rugby, it is well above average. In Key Stages 3 and 4, students of all levels of prior attainment make good progress. In the sixth form, progress continues to be good and in some activities, particularly in team games, is very good.

34. At the time of the last report, standards were above average or higher in nearly all subjects, as they are today. Literacy and numeracy skills were very good, but use of information technology was weak. Literacy and numeracy standards remain high and some improvements have been made in developing pupils' information technology skills, but not enough. Biology and geography A-level standards are lower than previously reported.

35. Points for improvement are addressed within individual subject sections.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

36. In all lessons observed, pupils responded appropriately to the teaching; in a few lessons the excellent attitudes and motivation of the pupils enabled them to learn very effectively in spite of minor teaching weaknesses. In more than nine in every ten lessons pupils' responses were good or better and in almost two-thirds their responses were very good or excellent. The quality was equally high, for both boys and girls, in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In Year 9, responses were a little below those in other years although the overall standard was still very good. In the last inspection, behaviour was judged to be good, the school very orderly, and the pupils considerate, conscientious and hard working, although a small minority were reluctant to speak at times, as is still the case. The overall quality is now excellent and higher than reported in 1994.

37. Pupils with special educational needs have similar levels of attitude, behaviour and personal development to other pupils.

38. Pupils concentrate exceptionally hard and listen intently; they are keen to learn and achieve academic success. In a Year 7 English lesson, for example, pupils read the teacher's comments on their homework and immediately made corrections and improvements, anxious to 'do the right thing'. The lesson passed very quickly as they enjoyed the challenging work on parts of speech, rhythms and sounds of words. Year 11 pupils responded to the great pace and challenge of a French lesson and made use of every moment to develop their skills and make progress. Similar exceptional responses were seen in a number of subjects and classes. When pupils are asked to go to the library to research information, they do so quickly and thoroughly, showing very high order independent learning skills. Sixth formers are mature, generally confident, hard and willing workers, as seen when studying privately in their common room or the library, or when using the computers available. Students help one another, and nothing ever seems to be too much trouble. The learning culture promoted by the pupils, as well as the staff, is a key strength in the high standards achieved in the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent.

39. Behaviour is excellent. In lessons, assemblies and around the school, the pupils' conduct is of an exemplary quality. School rules are invariably obeyed. Pupils have the best interests and well-being of their colleagues at heart. Most parents, in their questionnaire responses about the school, said that the school achieves high standards of good behaviour. Parents were also very positive about the impact of the school's values and attitudes on their children, and almost all parents said that their children liked coming to school. The school has only had two fixed period exclusions in the past year and no permanent exclusions for some years. Supportive networks are established by the Year 7 pupils as they arrive at the school and these develop into very strong, helpful relationships amongst students in the sixth form. A small minority of parents remarked that a degree of intellectual arrogance can creep in as a result of the selective nature and academic success of the school, although hardly any instances of this were noted during the inspection.

40. Pupils are courteous and considerate to one another and adults. Mutual trust amongst pupils is such that bags can be left quite safely. Older students are 'buddies' for younger pupils, establishing very good communication between pupils, both boys and girls, at different stages in their school careers. Relationships between pupils are very

good indeed. Occasionally, pupils are unwilling to show initiative in lessons and question what they do not understand, but in most lessons appropriate teaching styles and confident articulate pupils combine to generate very good teacher-pupil relationships. In assemblies, the school's senior students manage the movement of pupils most effectively. Pupils take seriously the responsibilities they are given, for example as library prefects and senior cadets in the combined cadet force, and others in the school community respect these positions.

41. Points for improvement:

- ensure that the small minority of pupils who are unwilling to question and comment are given more opportunities to do so.

Attendance

42. Attendance levels were judged to be high at the previous inspection. These have been maintained. Attendance is very good, with levels well above the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is well below average. Punctuality to school is good, especially given the distances and complex journeys faced by certain pupils travelling from outlying areas. There have been improvements in time-keeping during the school day since the last inspection, helped by timetabling and allowance for movement around the site. In a few cases, teachers still keep classes beyond the end of lesson time, which prevents colleagues from making a prompt start to the next lesson.

43. Point for improvement

- ensure that all staff keep to lesson times

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

44. The quality of teaching observed was good in Key Stage 3 and very good overall in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, with very few unsatisfactory lessons observed. About a third were very good or excellent and approaching three quarters were good or better. The quality was slightly higher at the end of Key Stage 4 and in Year 13, but a little lower in Year 9. In Year 9 there was also a corresponding drop in the responses of the pupils; they were a little less co-operative and responsive to teaching. Some teaching of the very highest quality was observed where the pupils made excellent progress and thoroughly enjoyed their lessons.

45. Teaching in French, German, English and Drama was very good throughout the school. Key Stage 4 history, chemistry and art, and A-level economics and chemistry were similarly well taught. Effective teaching, resulting in sound or better progress for the pupils took place in all subjects, although one or two individual staff were insufficiently effective at times. The only area of significant weakness was in the teaching of information technology across subjects.

46. Literacy and numeracy are key aspects of teaching in several subjects. Specialist vocabulary is promoted very effectively in design and technology, geography and science, and extended high quality writing is expected in history. A great range of written work is completed by all pupils. In many lessons, pupils are expected to listen intently and to speak with confidence. Discussions amongst peers is encouraged and pupils improve their vocabularies as a result. In science, geography and design and technology, teachers use number and units frequently and expect pupils to be able to tabulate results and interpret numerical information. Although numeracy and literacy are effectively promoted through subject teaching, there are inconsistencies because no overall policy or strategy is being implemented.

47. Teaching of the small number of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, although teachers do not hold individual educational plans; they are located in the staff room. While most know some elements of pupils' needs they are not aware of specific strategies to help individuals; there are no subject-specific targets. Occasional inconsistencies in teaching are due to some teachers having only a limited awareness of pupils' targets.

48. Teachers' knowledge, and often enthusiasm for their subjects as well, is a great strength in all subjects taught.

For example, in an A-level economics lesson on the intervention role of government, quality newspaper articles were discussed authoritatively, enabling the students to make very good progress in understanding the complex relationships between employment, interest rates, exports and inflation. Cross-curricular information technology is an exception, in which some staff lack expertise and confidence. Examination syllabus requirements at GCSE and A-level are known very well. In modern foreign languages, for example, examination requirements are clearly stated to the pupils, ensuring they have an excellent understanding of how to achieve the highest grades, and in a GCSE mathematics lesson, common examination errors were discussed, enabling the pupils to learn from others' mistakes. Knowledge of National Curriculum requirements in Key Stage 3 although sound, is not as secure. The lack of National Curriculum focused teaching, for example in science, restricts high attaining pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 3. Subject expertise is valued and appreciated amongst the staff and is an excellent resource for the pupils.

49. Expectations, in terms of behaviour, are very high throughout the school. In terms of what the pupils can achieve, teachers' expectations, for both boys and girls, are very high in Key Stage 4, in the sixth form and in some subjects in Key Stage 3. In others, where the National Curriculum focus is weaker, expectations are just sound. For example in some mathematics lessons, insufficient account is taken of work pupils already know. Overall in Key Stage 3, expectations are good. Throughout the school in English and art, high attainers are challenged by what is taught and they respond very well to the process, making very good progress. In a Year 8 art lesson, the pupils were challenged to reconsider their value systems and beliefs about what art is. The teacher's very good questioning extended pupils' use of specialist language and a rapid pace was maintained throughout the lesson. Examples of high expectations observed were: demanding planning in music, where explicit learning objectives for the lesson were shared with the pupils; a brisk pace of work in history; and the use of every moment to carry out physical activity in short physical education lessons. In design and technology, however, work is not always sufficiently challenging for high attaining pupils. Good discipline in mathematics and religious education lessons ensures that pupils are always attentive and focused in their endeavours. The overall management of pupils' conduct is excellent.

50. The strategies and methods used by teachers are generally very good. Very effective teacher demonstrations and explanations in physical education, design and technology and science enabled pupils to see how tasks should be done. These often resulted in a rapid pace to lessons and very effective progress as pupils went on to carry out the tasks for themselves. Such techniques resulted in pupils respecting the expertise of staff. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good, which facilitates learning. Praise is used well to motivate pupils and several teachers make clear their own enjoyment of teaching.

51. Much of the pupils' work is marked in most subjects and helpful comments are written in books. Sometimes, particularly in Key Stage 3, cursory ticks rather than constructive criticism leave the pupils uncertain over what needs to be done to improve the work. In both English and mathematics, work is marked, but there is a lack of advice and insufficient follow-up for some work. Probing oral questions, asked in several subjects, enable both teachers and pupils to assess the extent of understanding. In a small minority of cases, such as some A-level biology teaching, teachers assess pupils' understanding insufficiently and this inhibits progress. Homework is set regularly and is taken very seriously by staff and pupils alike. Most parents said that they were happy with the amount of homework set, but a few said too much was set and a few referred to their children being overloaded on certain nights.

52. The proportions of sound and good teaching reported in the last inspection are now significantly higher. A small minority of dull and uninspiring teaching does take place as it did several years ago but a higher proportion is inspirational and motivating. The use of information technology remains an issue, as computers are not used sufficiently to enhance learning. The narrow range of teaching styles and over-reliance on texts has improved substantially.

53. Points for improvement:

- improve the small minority of weak and uninspiring lessons, so pupils' progress is consistently good in all classes
- improve the quality of constructive criticism of some pupils' work so that they are aware of how to make improvements.

The curriculum and assessment

54. Curriculum provision is broad, balanced and relevant, and good overall. It is sound at Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to a full range of National Curriculum subjects, enhanced in Year 8 by the addition of German for all pupils. At Key Stage 4, a choice of subjects, including two foreign languages, ensures greater variety. Not every pupil follows a common curriculum at either key stage, however, as a consequence of inadequate planning in several areas. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups with the exception of a fast track group in Year 11 English and setting for mathematics from Year 9 onwards. In the sixth form, students take three A-level subjects, religious studies, physical education, and personal and social education including careers. Additionally, nearly all take A-level general studies and some opt for A/S level art or GCSE Italian or sports studies. Study periods, which are supervised for Year 12, are used well in the sixth form.

55. The total curriculum time is below nationally recommended figures. Terms are short and despite Saturday morning school, which brings the number of teaching days in line with recommendations, the amount of time spent in lessons per day is lower than average. Furthermore, curriculum time for those subjects taught on Saturdays is decreased by Saturday exeat and term endings. The proportions of time allocated to subjects are broadly in line with recommendations. In physical education, however, although the planned curriculum meets statutory requirements, the time allocation, which includes single lessons, makes this difficult to achieve. This issue was identified in the previous report but has not been addressed.

56. Within the good overall provision, there are some deficiencies. In the last inspection, information technology and religious education were identified as areas of concern. The provision for religious education has now been addressed although the Kent Agreed Syllabus is not fully implemented, resulting in inadequate coverage of principal religions other than Christianity. Statutory requirements, with regard to information technology, are not met in Year 9 where there is not enough time to deliver all aspects of the National Curriculum and in Key Stage 4 where some pupils do not study a discrete information technology course. The provision of information technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory since many subjects do not plan its inclusion in lessons in a structured way. Improvement has been made, but insufficient, in this aspect of the school's work since the last inspection. There are weaknesses in design technology at Key Stage 3 because the structures and control aspects of the subject are underdeveloped. Drama is not taught in Year 9 nor offered as an option subject at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form. In music, there are shortfalls in composition in the sixth form.

57. Planning is inconsistent. It is good in English, for example, but less well developed in physical education, where there is no common, planned curriculum for girls and boys. In art, inadequate planning means that what pupils learn depends very largely on individual teachers. In mathematics, planning is not well linked to the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. In science and in French, although schemes of work are used effectively by established teachers, they do not support inexperienced teachers sufficiently to ensure consistent experience for all pupils. Information technology is not planned for across the curriculum, which contributes to unsatisfactory progress in some aspects of the work. Progress has been made in planning the personal and social education programme, but this area is a current focus for development.

58. The school meets statutory requirements for sex education although the current programme for personal, social and health education, which covers sex education and drug and solvent abuse, does not ensure full coverage of all aspects for all pupils. In Year 9 and throughout Key Stage 4 very good, impartial advice is given on careers and good links maintained with the local careers service. The one-year development plan is detailed. The school offers a wide range of work-related activities, which enhance personal and future development, including work experience for the majority of pupils, Young Enterprise and the Dr Barnado's Business Incentive scheme. Parents are kept fully informed about careers work done at the school. Homework is set regularly and contributes effectively to the high standards achieved; appropriate use is made of homework diaries to record this work. In the last report, homework was identified as an area for review to ensure a range of tasks and to meet the needs of pupils with varied abilities. Some progress has been made in this area but a few pupils continue to find the demands of homework assignments excessive.

59. Provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport, is excellent. There is an extensive fixtures list with other schools in several major sports. The curriculum is further enriched by a range of out-of-school activities, made available at lunchtime and after school. These include clubs for drama and history, the medics club, where pupils learn about dissection, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the Combined Cadet Force, which is well

supported by both boys and girls – over a hundred and fifty. A large number of highly successful drama productions are put on, involving many of the pupils. Numerous visits take place, catering for a variety of interests, both locally, to London and further afield, particularly for members of the sixth form. Extra-curricular music is very strong. Activities such as the Chamber Choir, where emphasis is on vocal technique and coverage of a variety of musical works, contribute not only to pupils' progress in the sense of performance, and but also to their progress over time in developing musicality and an appreciation of music.

60. The governors' curriculum committee meets regularly to oversee the curriculum. Its members are well-informed and contribute well to curriculum debate. They visit departments, are given presentations by departmental heads and have an effective programme of review, guided by particular priorities, such as the issues arising in information technology or the consequence for physical education of the new sports centre.

61. Individual education plans are in place for most of the small number of pupils with special educational needs. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning for these pupils is unsatisfactory in that their individual education plans have not been reviewed regularly to inform individual teaching programmes. At the time of the inspection no individual education plans had been drawn up for Year 7 pupils as a result of poor information flow between primary schools and Sir Roger Manwood's School.

62. Procedures for assessing pupil's attainment are satisfactory overall, although assessment practice varies considerably across departments and within departments. In design and technology, assessment is linked to National Curriculum levels and at Key Stage 4, assessment is made according to examination board criteria with useful comments to pupils on how they might improve. Similar practice is evident in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages although pupils are not always aware of their achievements in some subjects. In religious education, different teachers operate different systems for assessing pupils' attainment and a similar lack of consistency characterises marking across the science department.

63. Too little account is taken of pupils' attainment in their primary schools but use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is generally sound at Key Stage 3. Analysis of test results at the end of Key Stage 3 is too variable. Work in history and design and technology is moderated at the end of Key Stage 3 and the English department undertakes a thorough analysis of the test results including attainment by gender and teaching group.

64. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form although analysis of GCSE and A-level results, and the use made of such analyses, is inconsistent across departments – some is weak. All departments are required to produce a written analysis of their results at the beginning of the autumn term; the quality of these is variable. To date, staff have not received any training to help them appreciate the wealth of information which such data can provide, for example in predicting performance, identifying underachievement and highlighting good practice.

65. Since the last inspection report, there has been an improvement in the quantity and quality of marking of pupils' work, but assessment remains underdeveloped.

66. Points for improvement
increase available curriculum time
improve curriculum planning in some subjects to ensure equality of opportunity
review the use of single periods for physical education, which is inefficient
ensure that the requirements for information technology and religious education are fully met
continue to develop the personal and social education course
ensure that individual education plans are available for pupils with special educational needs on stage 2 or above of the register and are updated regularly
improve the consistency of assessment practice within departments, analysing assessment data more thoroughly so that strengths and weaknesses are identified
ensure marking policies are consistently implemented

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

67. As at the time of the last inspection, the aims for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are clearly set out and the school remains successful in meeting them in many aspects of its life. Provision for moral and social development is still particularly successful. Contributions from several areas of the curriculum enhance provision for spiritual development, which is good. Opportunities for reflection were seen, for example in science, when pupils observed cells or microscopic matter. In a few curriculum areas, opportunities are missed when pupils might, for instance, be fascinated by patterns and symmetry in the world around them, or develop a strong sense of curiosity by considering their own and other people's lives and beliefs. The quality of main school assemblies has improved since the last inspection, although opportunities to encourage a sense of occasion and atmosphere in daily assemblies, through regular use of music and a point of focus, are not being taken. Those pupils who have classroom assemblies are not always given time to reflect or take part in an act of worship. This means that the school does not meet legal requirements, in spite of its policy on providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

68. Support for pupils' moral development is excellent, through the school's routines, code of conduct and the curriculum. Adults set a very good example. Pupils are quite clear about the difference between right and wrong. In religious education, in particular, they debate the moral issues involved in matters such as crime and punishment. In English, good opportunities are given to consider moral issues raised in texts. In economics, a debate on the issues of third world debt made an impressive contribution to pupils' understanding of complex morality.

69. The school gives outstanding encouragement to pupils to relate effectively to others, in and out of lessons. Older pupils are expected to take on particular responsibilities and to contribute actively to the school community, for instance as prefects, buddies for younger pupils, team captains and participants in the extensive range of school clubs and activities. The school's codes and organisation encourage social skills and enable the high quality relationships, which pupils bring with them, to develop and flourish.

70. The school fosters pupils' cultural development well, overall, but is better at supporting appreciation of local traditions than helping pupils to appreciate and value cultural diversity. Opportunities are extensive for pupils to learn more about their own heritage through visits to art galleries, theatres, museums and places of interest and the school's many extra-curricular activities. Pupils are greatly encouraged to develop openness towards the music and art of other cultures, such as African and Aboriginal. This is not matched by opportunities in other areas of the curriculum for pupils to recognise the contribution of many cultures, for example to mathematics, scientific and technological development and philosophical ideas. The information and ideas presented in lessons rarely encourage pupils to reflect on the diversity and richness of cultures beyond their own. As a result the school is not particularly successful in helping pupils to value other cultural traditions.

71. Points for improvement:

increase opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues

provide more opportunities which recognise the contribution of many different cultures to the developments in subjects

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

72. The school has good procedures for monitoring the progress and personal development of pupils. These are strengthened by the good relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils feel safe and cared for in an environment where staff are involved with the pupils in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. The issue of some disruptive behaviour referred to in the last report has been addressed. Academic progress is monitored by regular assessments, interim reports and full written reports to parents. Within departments, however, academic monitoring is inconsistent. The recently extended mentoring system is of variable quality and some staff are finding it difficult to carry this out effectively in the time available. All students in the sixth form have three interviews, involving a senior member of staff and form tutor, where targets are set and academic progress measured against them. In some tutor group periods used for this purpose, those students not involved are left to do as they wish. All pupils' personal progress is monitored effectively through form tutors, heads of year and a deputy headteacher. Pupils are rewarded for good work and sanctions used when necessary.

73. A successful buddying system is in operation, where sixth form pupils help lower school pupils and act as their mentors. A mutually supportive ethos between home and school is strengthened with the homework notebook,

informing parents of pupils' targets. Pupils with special educational needs are supported similarly to their peers, and particularly well by the special educational needs co-ordinator.

74. Pupils' understanding of future careers and university prospects are helped by a very good careers service and supported by visiting speakers. A successful work experience programme is in operation. A personal, social and health education programme is delivered by form tutors, with some specialist input at Key Stage 4. Some aspects of this work are weak and disliked by the pupils. Policies for health and sex education are in place and delivered sensitively using outside speakers as required.

75. Child protection procedures are in place and meet statutory requirements - the deputy headteacher is the designated named person responsible. Further staff training is required, however, as not all staff have been made aware of the procedures to be followed. Some members of staff are trained first-aiders and others have expressed an interest in training.

76. A health and safety risk assessment audit has been carried out very recently by the schools' health and safety officer. Since the last inspection the issues raised in science and art have been resolved but several additional health and safety issues have been identified. In science, goggles were not always worn during experiments. The art accommodation issue raised at the last inspection has been addressed by closing down the room identified until better accommodation with appropriate health and safety can be found. Other health and safety issues raised during the inspection were: incomplete electrical testing of portable appliances; inadequate dust extraction systems in the workshops (one in fact draws fumes towards the operator); one room requiring artificial light to be used all day; the use of extension cables for certain activities; the floor surface in parts of the design technology area in a poor state of repair, being uneven and with some loose tiles; a lighting control panel in the school hall repaired in places with tape and considered unsafe to use in its present condition. Staff who drive the school mini-buses have only received in-house training in the past, but the school is now participating in the local education authority scheme.

77. Points for improvement:

ensure that all health and safety matters are dealt with as a matter of importance and that regular health and safety audits are carried out in future to ensure several minor issues do not return
ensure that the good procedures for mentoring pupils are realistic and effectively implemented
ensure that child protection procedures are thoroughly understood by all staff

Boarding

78. At the time of the last inspection the welfare and guidance of boarders was judged to be generally effective in the three boarding houses, but insufficient information was in writing. A boarding handbook has now been written, for the remaining two houses, which provides useful information on the structure of the day in each house as well as an appropriate emphasis on the 'boarding curriculum'. The utmost importance of pupils' welfare is a thread running throughout the document, with an emphasis on boarders' spiritual development - through house assemblies and optional attendance at church services, access to good facilities, and the provision of "a warm, both physically and psychologically, caring, bright and stimulating environment wherein young people can feel secure, develop friendships and grow up happy in themselves with the ability to enjoy life". The document refers to the need for each house to retain its individuality, for boarding life not to be too regimented and for effective liaison between the two houses, for example joint activities involving both boys and girls. A grievance procedure, as recommended in the last report, has been introduced. If boarders have grievances, they are said to have easy access to their parents through e-mail and telephone, and the right to speak to their housemasters and the headmaster.

79. The boys are confident and secure. The atmosphere in their house is relaxed and informal, and the boys know what is and is not acceptable. Staff and boys strive to provide a home environment under the leadership of the housemaster. The boys' privacy is respected. A good balance is found between tight regimes for homework and routine tasks, and freedom, for example to play pool and table-tennis, and watch television during recreation times. The boys said they do a lot more work than they would at home because of the lack of distractions and noise during prep periods. The essence of the school boarding handbook is put into practice in much that takes place. The housemaster's open door policy is appreciated and he receives good support from the tutor and matron.

80. New houseparents have been appointed for the girls' boarding house for the start of the spring term 2000. Judgements made in this report reflect the situation at the time of the inspection. The girls had recently been moved from the larger boarding house – now occupied by the boys because of their greater number – and this has left several girls disgruntled. A greater cause for dissatisfaction, however, was difficulty over communication with some of the house staff, because of their mood swings and their unwillingness to be available except when required to be. Confrontations between house staff and boarders have led to outcomes considered to be unjust by the girls. Some house staff are respected, and their energy, interest in the girls and willingness to help, are appreciated. Day-school life is enjoyed by the girls, and school friendships are strong.

81. Health and hygiene are given appropriate emphasis in both houses. Washing and lavatory facilities are clean and appropriate, although the new showers in the girls' house give barely acceptable privacy, even after the work of the house staff in improving them. Neither house has a sanatorium, which is unsatisfactory. Food at breakfast and lunch is of good quality, substantial, and appreciated. Tea, however, which is served at 5 p.m., is of much lower quality. Girls and boys buy considerable amounts of food to eat in the evenings. Governors are aware of this unsatisfactory situation and report that they are monitoring the quality of the food. The boys' house provides good, spacious accommodation for the 28 boarders at the time of the inspection; the girls' house is much more cramped for the 22 girls, although the substantial annexe is a very underused resource. Little thought has gone into how this good facility could be used for the benefit of the girls. Facilities such as pool tables and television rooms are appreciated in both houses. A small number of computers is available in each house, but insufficient to meet the needs of the girls and boys. Each house has Internet access, providing e-mail communication. After 4.45 p.m., boarders do not have access to the school's information technology resources or the school library, although the boarding handbook refers to the importance of accessing school facilities. Neither house has an effective library and very few books are available, although the school library has a good number of modern and interesting books, both fiction and non-fiction. Some joint activities of boys and girls take place, but liaison between the two houses is not as substantial as the school handbook indicates is desirable.

82. Present boarding house staff have very different experience and understanding of what constitutes good practice. Job descriptions focus on legal and administrative aspects rather than tasks, and little background information or support is available for staff. Just two boarding houses provide few opportunities to train staff, but existing expertise is not effectively used. Insufficient guidance and support is currently available for less experienced staff and no longer term strategy is in place to try to ensure continuity and development of boarding house staff. Neither house has to submit funding requests as other areas of the school are required to do, nor are there development plans.

83. Governors' have a boarding committee which is involved effectively with the day-to-day issues of boarding in the school. Governors make visits to the boarding houses and prepare analytical well-informed reports on what they have found. This is good practice. Outcomes are reported to the full governing body. The governors and headmaster are aware of the girls' concerns in their boarding house and action has been taken to try to improve the situation.

84. The numbers of younger pupils entering the boarding houses is very low – one Year 7 boy in 1999 and no girls in Year 7 or Year 8, although both houses are full. Governors have discussed financially viable numbers in boarding houses, but no decision has been taken over what might constitute a minimum number in a key stage. Governors have tried to identify, as far as is practicable, how the full costs of boarding relate to the income received. Figures indicate that there is currently quite a close match and that boarding neither subsidises nor takes an unfair proportion of the main school budget.

85. The boarding provision has strengths, mainly for the boys, but currently some weaknesses as far as the girls are concerned.

86. Points for improvement:

improve the quality of communication between some staff and girl boarders.

prepare short and long term development plans for boarding which expand upon the school development plan priorities

consider a later time for the evening meal, ensuring that the food provided is of good quality and sufficient

ensure that both houses have appropriate sanatoria

make better use of the girls' house annexe

improve access to the school's good facilities at the weekend and in the evening, particularly computers and the

library
improve liaison between the boys' and girls' houses

Partnership with parents and the community

87. The school has a very effective partnership with parents, who are very committed to education and high standards. Almost all attend meetings to discuss their children's progress, or to watch school productions, but are less likely to come into school for meetings which seem to have less direct bearing on their children's successes or talents. They expect to give support to their children's learning in whatever ways seem appropriate, including making contributions to fund-raising events and signing homework diaries. Their attitudes towards the school are very positive.

88. The quality of information provided for parents has improved since the last inspection through introduction of a newsletter and efforts to give parents a clearer idea of the progress their children make in different subjects. Not all parents feel that they have enough information about what is taught, particularly in the lower school, but also partly because of changing and complicated arrangements for teaching subjects such as design and technology. The school gives helpful guidance on option choices at the end of Year 9 and on what is taught in examination courses for GCSE and A-level. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are comprehensive, if very formal. Reports on pupils' progress generally give a good idea of effort made and achievement relative to the average for the class, and in Years 7, 8 and 10, the pupils also make a contribution to their own reports. This is good practice. At the end of key stages, performance is described in terms of levels of attainment as used nationally. Overall, information given to parents is of good quality.

89. The school has a very strong sense of itself as a community. Its work is enriched by links with the local community, including: the church, where boarders worship regularly, and its parish: the governing body's network of contacts including local employers; and the three maintained primary and secondary schools. The school's musicians sing and play for local people, in local churches and at concerts in the town. Work experience is available for those wishing to take part in it. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 choose to take advantage of this opportunity.

90. A very active charity committee gives pupils very good opportunities to contribute to charity fund-raising. Although there is no programme of community education or voluntary service, groups of pupils are active in local life. They help the local elderly through distribution of harvest gifts, Christmas lunches and visits to residential homes. Many participate very successfully in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The school choir and orchestra travel widely, including a recent trip to Venice. The range of links encouraged by the school's involvement in sport and the performing arts is very good. The contribution made by all such links to pupils' attainment and personal development is highly effective.

91. Points for improvement:

- consider ways of providing parents with more helpful curriculum information

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

92. The headteacher's leadership of the school is very good. He has taken the lead in regular evaluation of the school's academic achievements and ensured that action has been taken to maintain high standards or improve standards in most curriculum areas. Areas identified in the last inspection report are being dealt with systematically although a number still require further action. Leadership of the school is more effective than as described in the last report and significant improvements in management have been made. The governors have a clear strategic view for the school's future direction and they take an active interest in the curricular and wider work of the school. A good system of governor committees is established where areas such as finance, personnel, boarding and the curriculum are regularly reviewed. Individual governors make regular visits to the school - two governor visits each term - to review areas of interest and report back for discussion at the full governing body, for example on the teaching of

physical education and boarding provision.

93. All staff are given clear direction in their work, and their general roles are clearly defined. Senior staff have a clear understanding of their pastoral, academic and organisational roles, stated in the staff handbook. In the past year, a staff development programme, "Sharing good practice", has involved senior managers, heads of department and all teachers in a programme of classroom observation. This has been very effectively embraced by some departments, but not all. Senior managers' monitoring of policy implementation has had insufficiently high priority, resulting in continuing inconsistencies that are affecting the drive for still higher standards, for example in improving information technology standards across the curriculum and in assessment and the use of performance data. Heads of department manage several aspects of their subject areas effectively. They are enthusiastic subject experts who teach well. Resources are managed and used for the benefit of the pupils. However, some heads of department do not fully accept the need to monitor systematically the quality of teaching in their subject areas, providing guidance and support as necessary.

94. The special educational needs co-ordinator has had insufficient time to undertake her role prior to this educational year; the co-ordinator now has fewer responsibilities and so is allocating more, and sufficient, time to this area of responsibility. A named governor takes responsibility for special educational needs and is appropriately involved, reporting to the full governing body on provision and the progress of the pupils. A separate budget has been allocated for the first time this year and finances are allocated to areas of greatest need. Provision for special educational needs is managed effectively, with significant improvements currently taking place in the use of individual education plans to inform teaching.

95. In the last inspection report the school's aims were not fully reflected in the practices and policies of the school and further work was needed on the staff handbook. The staff handbook is a very useful document today and the school has clear aims and values. These are known and understood by teachers, governors and pupils. Clear policies cover all statutory requirements and state the expected practices and procedures for staff and pupils. Notwithstanding some inconsistencies, many are followed well, and are effective in practice.

96. The school has a well-considered development plan, which is much better than that described at the time of the last inspection. It covers all key aspects of the school's work, but no longer term priorities are indicated. Targets are concisely stated with deadlines and staff responsible, although success criteria are unclear in some cases. Current priorities include: continuing efforts to raise standards and to meet the school's own targets in public examinations; the new relationship with the local education authority, as the school comes to terms with its Foundation status after several years as a Grant Maintained School; the increase in school size; and a review of Saturday morning school. There is a thorough annual review and evaluation of progress and future direction. Many of the issues identified in this report, both major and minor, are referred to in the 1998-1999 development plan review - for example, marking practices and continuing to develop the managerial role of heads of department. The governors are actively involved in the drafting and review of the development plan as well as the regular oversight of financial policy and the strategic use of buildings and resources. Subject departments are involved in the preparation of the school plan, as well as preparing their own plans concerned with maintaining or raising standards - these relate well to the overall plan for the school.

97. The extent to which the school evaluates its own work is variable. The headmaster, through his annual review of GCSE and A-level results with each head of department, holds each to account for what has been achieved. This is very good practice and has resulted in improvements, for example in Key Stage 3 mathematics standards. The use of very good inter-departmental comparative data at GCSE and A-level ensures that appropriate judgements about relative standards can be made and targets for individual subjects are to be set for the current year. The pattern of monitoring individual progress within subject departments is too variable, however, with insufficient accountability and poor practice in one or two areas.

98. The school's ethos of working hard together to achieve high standards is very well reflected in the pupils' attitude to their work and their behaviour in school, which is excellent. The school is a very effective learning environment with well-established systems of support for pupils, including individual mentoring of all sixth formers and the buddy system for younger pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers and with each other are both friendly and purposeful. Parents' consultation evenings are fully subscribed and parents are kept well informed of their children's progress.

99. The school has an equal opportunity policy and confirms its intention to: enable all pupils to fulfil their educational potential regardless of race, religion, gender, class or ability; encourage pupils, parents, governors and staff to develop qualities of tolerance and open-mindedness on all equal opportunities issues; and encourage members of the school community to take action to counteract any perceived discrimination.

100. Documentation sets targets for many areas but these priorities are not reflected in all departmental information, and there is no group in place to monitor equal opportunity issues. Some departments, but not all, monitor pupil achievement by gender or prior attainment. The school is, however, establishing a complex database including important achievement data on every child in the school which will enable the school to monitor subject performance through value added judgements. This is an excellent initiative.

101. The school's commitment to "provide appropriate role models for all pupils" is not fully reflected in its staffing structure which includes many fewer females than males with positions of responsibility.

102. The school has made significant strides in dealing with the key issues stated in the inspection report of five years ago. Progress has been good, although a number of areas still require improvement - several of these are clearly targeted in the current year's development plan. Accommodation is much improved in most areas, but remains poor for some aspects of design and technology. The health and safety issues identified have been addressed; additional issues have arisen. Information technology facilities are much improved, good specific information technology lessons in Key Stage 3 have greatly improved standards, and teacher expertise has improved through school-based twilight courses. Information technology is used too little in many subjects, however, as stated in the development plan for the year. This plan itself is much improved on that inspected in 1994, and is now an effective instrument for change. It is leading to better departmental management, but this remains a key focus point in the 1999-2000 plan. The headmaster inherited a position where the school had rejected the idea of a whole school approach to assessment. He has, nevertheless, initiated a whole school policy for assessment and marking, which has resulted in substantial improvements in some subjects. This too is a focus in the current development plan. The timing of the school day has been improved although some short single periods still result in lost time. Policy statements and lines of communication are now good, but the preparation of detailed guidelines on boarders welfare still requires attention. The school has worked to improve assemblies, for example through the reintroduction of hymn singing, but not all pupils experience a daily act of collective worship. Given the current leadership, school ethos and management approach, there is good capacity for further improvement in pupils' standards.

103. The school meets all statutory requirements except for the provision of daily collective worship and certain health and safety issues.

104. Points for improvement;

- improve the management of information technology across the curriculum
- increase the monitoring and support roles of senior managers and heads of department
- improve the quality of management by several heads of department, ensuring that each consistently implements the school's policies

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

105. The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers to teach the National Curriculum and additional subjects offered in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Most teachers are experienced and have suitable initial qualifications in their specialist area. A minority of lessons are taught by teachers who are not subject specialists, for example in games and religious education. This is not affecting current standards as the experience teachers bring to the subject, particularly in religious education, more than makes up for a lack of formal qualifications. Not enough has been done, however, to provide suitable in-service training courses for non-specialist games staff, to ensure the continuation of present high standards.

106. An adequate number of support staff in the school have good qualifications and experience to support teachers and pupils. Technical support is good in science and design and technology. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported across the curriculum. Assistants in the modern foreign languages department make a valuable

contribution to pupils' learning and high standards of attainment. The small numbers of newly qualified teachers, appointed in recent years, are supported within departments and the induction arrangements are satisfactory.

107. The school's policy for a continuing programme of staff training and personal and professional development is not fully effective in promoting higher standards of teaching and learning. A programme of staff appraisal, in its infancy during the last inspection, has now been replaced. Observations of teaching have begun as a way of sharing good classroom practice. Some heads of department carry out regular observations conscientiously while others do not. Not all heads of department have been observed teaching by members of the senior management team. The link between appraisal and training, referred to in the previous report, has not been formalised. In some cases requests for training courses from staff have been agreed without suitable reference to identified whole school or departmental priorities. Effective after school in-service training in information technology has been provided, but not all those staff who lack expertise have made use of these opportunities. This weakness in staff knowledge, identified in the last report, has not been dealt with fully.

108. Overall, the school's accommodation is satisfactory and much improved since the last inspection. In several areas it is good and in geography, modern languages and physical education it is very good. The new sports hall, hard surfaces, playing fields and swimming pool provide very high quality facilities. New classrooms provide pleasant working environments. The laboratories, both new and old, provide good accommodation, and the preparation and storage areas are substantial. In these instances, the standard of the accommodation enhances the quality of the teaching and the standards of attainment and progress of the students. A reduction in the number of boarders has resulted in a number of small rooms gradually coming into use for a range of purposes. The staff, as a result, now have a very useful study room equipped with computers. The three new computer centres are a great improvement but the school is aware of the need for further developments. Investment has been made in networking the whole school to facilitate the use of new machines as finance becomes available. The school grounds are very well maintained, providing a most pleasant environment for the pupils.

109. The new, high quality music suite enhances the teaching of music, but one room is too small to accommodate the numbers in some larger groups. Some music teaching therefore takes place in the drama studio, which is unsuitable and unsatisfactory as it is too far away from the music suite and valuable teaching time is lost. It has a detrimental impact on the standards of attainment and progress of the students concerned. Specialist music accommodation is an increasing problem as the number of pupils in the school rises each year.

110. Overall, the accommodation for design and technology is poor. It is good in the food and textile areas, which are clean, light and conducive to learning, but the resistant materials and graphic products areas are cramped, dingy and unsuitable for quality work. This has a negative effect on the standards of attainment and progress of students in this subject and this is reflected in GCSE and A-level results.

111. Resources are broadly satisfactory. The provision of computers has substantially improved since the last inspection but there is still insufficient access to, and use of, computers in some areas. This hinders the development of pupils' competence to apply appropriate computer skills across the curriculum. Resources for some aspects of design and technology are insufficient and out-dated.

112. The school library is attractive and well suited to support independent learning. Library resources are good with seven modern computers, four with access to the Internet, and about 40 CD ROMs, a database of all books held and a good stock of modern, interesting and useful fiction and non-fiction books. These include, unusually, a good range of mathematics reference books. A well-qualified librarian, supported by library prefects, ensures that the library is accessible most of the week and manages the resources very well. On four nights it is open after school to enable pupils to work late and to use the facilities. The mezzanine floor provides a very useful quiet study area. The library forms a pleasant and stimulating environment conducive to use at all levels in the school.

113. Points for improvement:

- improve the management of in-service training so that professional development is more closely tied to school and departmental needs

- expand computer facilities as finance becomes available

- continue to work for improvements in the facilities for design and technology

- endeavour to increase the accommodation for music as the number of pupils in the school continues to rise

The efficiency of the school

114. School expenditure is carefully planned by the governors, headteacher and senior colleagues. Previous expenditure patterns are appropriately considered by the bursar in preparing the first drafts for the headmaster and senior colleagues. School development plan priorities, where significant costs are involved, are built into planning. No long term planning is available but the school is aware of the budget implications of the increasing numbers of pupils being accepted into the school. The headmaster has introduced a bidding system for departments to try to ensure that funds are allocated according to need. A curriculum development fund ensures that important initiatives are properly funded. Governors ratify the final budget and monitor expenditure against agreed headings throughout the year. The governors' finance committee meets regularly to discuss the bursar's report and to review developments such as the major building improvements, which have taken place over the past three years. An audit of the school's accounts and financial procedures for the past financial year indicated just two areas for comment, concerning the need to update the school's assets register and an overstatement of the number of pupils entitled to free school meals. Governors accepted the auditor's points and implemented changes to ensure that the issues were resolved.

115. The loss of Grant Maintained School status is having a significant negative impact on the budget for the current year. A balanced budget has been agreed by governors but at the expense of lost sixth form general studies periods, larger groups for some Key Stage 3 subjects, and an increased teaching load for all staff. The headmaster, deputy headmasters and senior teachers all have substantial teaching loads. The school's overall teacher-pupil contact ratio at over 81% is very high when compared with other selective schools – the national median is near 77%. The high number of taught periods per teacher is efficient but in the case of senior managers, it restricts their ability to carry out tasks which must take place during the school working day, such as monitoring teaching and learning. Some inefficiencies remain in department management, for example through duplication of work in separate boys' and girls' physical education departments. Administrative staff are efficient and effective, providing a welcoming supportive presence in the school. Technician support in science is generous, but as increasing numbers of pupils work their way through the school practical work demands are likely to increase. The provision of a chartered librarian is very effective and enables efficient use to be made of the good library resources.

116. Expenditure on resources has been well above national averages, but it has fallen to an average figure for the current year. An appropriate amount is spent on each subject area, resulting in sound resources overall, although further expenditure on information technology facilities is needed. Effective use is made of resources throughout the school, including the three computer rooms and the library. Pupils' borrowing of books has doubled over the last four years in the library and computers are in high demand at lunch times for research projects and homework. Heads of department make value for money checks before orders are placed, to ensure efficient purchasing, but evaluation is not made of the impact of expenditure on the standards pupils' achieve. The school buildings are well used for the benefit of the pupils. Restrictions are placed on the letting of the buildings but, where possible, use is made of them to increase school revenue.

117. Costs per pupil are high at over £2,700 per pupil, but the school works hard to gain additional funds, such as the £30,000 towards improved information technology resources from a major national charity, as well as some funds from its own foundation, which inflates the expenditure figure. Budget expenditure proportions in 1998-99 were similar to national figures in several areas, but differed in below average teacher costs, low supply costs, higher than usual technician and administration costs, and very high buildings costs. The below average teaching costs are explained by the high contact ratio without particularly small teaching groups. Administration costs are high because of the need to administer the two boarding houses, and building and site costs are high because of on-going maintenance of a range of buildings and the thirty acre site. The low figure allocated to provide for the small number of pupils with special educational needs is spent appropriately. Boarding costs neither subsidise nor are subsidised by the main school budget. Governors set a break even boarding fee, and to ensure that this is the case the bursar is reviewing costs of boarding to the school.

118. The last report refers to the school providing good value for money, with efficient use made of resources against a background of above average expenditure on staff and resources. The school continues to provide good value for money, without these above average expenditures. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above average and attainment

at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is very high and well above average in the sixth form, although compared with other selective schools, 1998 published results were below average at Key Stage 3 and average at Key Stage 4. Both the quality of teaching and pupils' progress was good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The headmaster provides very good leadership. All the key issues from the last report are being addressed and progress is good. Further development is needed on a number of these issues, particularly cross-curricular information technology and aspects of departmental management. The behaviour of the pupils is excellent, however, their attendance very good, and the school ethos for learning is very good.

119. Points for improvement

address inefficiencies in department management

ensure that long term financial plans are formalised to take account of the increasing size of the school

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

120. At all key stages, the standards attained by pupils in English are well above the national average. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests pupils attained standards in 1998 that were above the average achieved by pupils in selective schools. Unusually, boys' achievement is in line with that of the girls. Results fell in 1999. Current pupils display well above average listening skills and vocabulary levels, and their spoken answers are confident and well expressed. Both boys and girls read aloud clearly, generally accurately and with exceptionally good expression. Their written work is well above average in accuracy and complexity. They read books of increasing challenge, showing exceptional understanding of plot, character and theme and dramatic impact in plays such as 'Macbeth'. By the end of Year 9 they have acquired a full vocabulary for literary appreciation that they use with confidence. In GCSE English language and literature, pupils regularly attain standards that are in line with those from other selective schools. The proportion gaining the highest grades, A* and A, has usually been higher in literature than in language, but in both subjects the average grades are well in line with those for similar schools. By the end of Year 11, pupils are exceptionally articulate in debate, presentations and oral summaries. They listen attentively but with a developing critical awareness that is well above average. They write confidently in a variety of styles and are able to compose extended pieces of narrative, commentary and responses to literature. They read demanding books, such as 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'The Merchant of Venice' and show insights into motives and situations and appreciation of the authors' use of language that are well above the national expectation. In A-Level English literature, pupils' attainments have been consistently well above national standards over the last three years, and in line with those from other selective schools. The proportion of those gaining the highest grades, A and B, has also generally been in line with national standards for these schools. Sixth form students develop discussions on theme, dramatic technique and use of language, and engage in debate to a high level. Their written work is well above average in its length, depth and complexity.

121. Pupils' progress in English is very good, both in most lessons observed and overall. Boys and girls make very good progress during Key Stage 3. Although part of a selective entry, some Year 7 pupils still have weaknesses in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphing. Many do not initially write sustained pieces of continuous prose other than stories. By the end of Year 9, however, the great majority of pupils can produce substantial essays of well above average standard. In reading, they progress from children's books to Shakespeare and Dickens and the poems of Tennyson and Wilfred Owen. One Year 7 class, for example, reading a poem for the first time, made excellent progress in their understanding of rhythm and their mastery of new vocabulary. Pupils are capable of short but lively debates and presentations. Very good progress is maintained during Key Stage 4 in all aspects of English. In one written project, pupils developed the ability to recognise and contrast different styles that reflected the authors' personalities. They give articulate and considered responses to questions in class, listen with concentration and critical awareness, and develop well their ability to sustain an argument in debate. In the sixth form, very good progress continues, so that by Year 13 the most able students have acquired a very sophisticated level of response to literature. They are capable of an increasingly wide range of reference - in a study of Mary Shelley they were making appropriate allusions to Marlowe, Wilde and Stevenson - and support their ideas by close

reference to the text. Debates about their reading become passionate. At all key stages, the few pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

122. Throughout the school the pupils' response to English and drama is excellent. They show a high level of interest in their work, and they are open and generous in listening to other people's ideas. The level of concentration in nearly all lessons is very high. They develop very good study habits – completing tasks on time, making notes without being told and making very good use of the school library as a source of information and pleasure. They are exceptionally well-behaved, punctual and polite. Books and furniture are very well looked after and the excellent displays of their work are respected. Relationships with teachers are cordial and there is a very strong sense of working together, particularly in drama at Key Stage 3.

123. The quality of teaching in English and drama is very good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In the lessons observed all teaching was satisfactory or better, and in more than half it was very good or excellent, reflecting teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, which is excellent in literature and very secure in language. High expectations and very good management of the short teaching period characterised all lessons. Best practice in lesson planning was seen when teachers stated their objectives and related them to the syllabus; in others, experience was the main basis for planning. Pupils' work is marked regularly with positive encouragement and a clear scheme of grading, although some advice given is not sufficiently detailed for pupils to know how they are to improve. Homework is always related well to the work in class, and provision for the pupils with special educational needs is unobtrusive but helpful. Although information technology was evidently used by pupils at home, mainly in word processing their writing, there was limited use of computers in the lessons seen. In media studies work (for example the study of newspapers and films), pupils were not taught a sufficiently broad and analytical vocabulary for them to achieve a deeper understanding.

124. The syllabus for English is carefully constructed to meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum, including information technology. In speaking and listening, pupils are given many formal and informal opportunities to develop their skills, including the annual public speaking competition. The syllabus is firmly based on literature, providing a challenging range of reading in prose, poetry and drama. Individual reading is encouraged and good use is made of reading aloud. A good variety of writing is reinforced with formal teaching of grammar and other linguistic skills. The drama syllabus for Years 7 and 8 is very well designed to maintain a balance between social education and performance. In assessment, a detailed structure of well-defined gradings is understood by the pupils. Examination results are carefully analysed and targets set for pupils. Overall, the curriculum is very good and assessment procedures are effective.

125. English contributes well to pupils' personal development in Key Stages 3 and 4 and very well in the sixth form. The varied diet of literature – including 'The Diary of Ann Frank' and 'Frankenstein' – helps to raise their spiritual and moral awareness. Social development is enhanced by drama and by the reading of books such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. Cultural awareness is encouraged throughout the syllabus and in extra-curricular visits – eleven theatre visits have taken place in the past year. There was little sign, however, of the positive celebration of other cultures.

126. The English department is well led and managed. Clear guidance is available for teachers on good practice, standards and procedures for assessment and reporting, and new teachers are well supported. Regular monitoring of teaching does not take place at present. The ethos in which the subject is taught reflects the school's aims: high achievement, broad development and independence as learners. The staff are well qualified and relationships are good. Accommodation is good for English and adequate for drama.

127. Since the last inspection the department has maintained, and sometimes improved, its high standards.

128. Points for improvement

ensure that advice on marked work is always sufficiently detailed to help pupils improve their performance
ensure that the use of information technology is included in classroom practice

Mathematics

129. The pupils' results in the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were very high in comparison with the national average but below the average for similar schools. This year the department made sure that pupils were better prepared for the tests and the 1999 results were much higher. Attainment of girls and boys is similar overall but boys have better spatial awareness skills and girls are better at number work. On the basis of lessons observed, attainment of current Year 9 pupils is well above the national average.

130. The pupils' GCSE results in 1998 were well above national averages and in line with the average for similar schools. The 1999 results show a similar pattern. The number of A* and A grade passes is below that achieved by the same pupils in English and science. The attainment of the current pupils in Year 11 is well above the national average, though their mental arithmetic skills are not so well developed.

131. The students' results in the 1998 A-level examinations were below national averages and well below the average for similar schools. In 1999, the department achieved four grade A passes in Further Maths; however, in mathematics overall a number failed to achieve a pass. On the basis of lessons observed, current attainment is well above average as a result of focused teaching and committed students.

132. Pupil's numeracy skills across the curriculum are good. They cost ingredients in food technology and use dimensions, working drawings, models and graphs in design and technology. In art, they demonstrate skills of measuring, enlargement and making three-dimensional forms using two-dimensional drawings. In science, pupils' number work is well developed and in a geography lesson, pupils in Year 9 made good use of an Internet database to find and interpret population figures, while a Year 11 English class had analysed and illustrated research into newspaper content using computer generated pie charts.

133. The development of literacy skills in mathematics is variable, with one teacher effectively demonstrating how language might be used on the examination paper while, in another class, poor spelling of words such as quartile or cumulative frequency was not corrected. The use of information technology is under-developed and little evidence of any meaningful use of it was seen in the work sampled or lessons observed. Department documentation suggests that information technology might be used to develop sequences, undertake graphical work and analyse statistical information but not all staff are committed to its use in the classroom.

134. In Key Stage 3, pupils' progress over time is sound. On the basis of work seen in lessons and samples of pupils' work, progress is only satisfactory because too little account is taken of curriculum continuity between the primary and secondary phase. In these years, too much repetition and emphasis on consolidation work is at the expense of new learning; especially for the most able. The majority of pupils make little progress in Year 7 and many of them find the work boring although they do enjoy the recently introduced mathematical challenges.

135. Progress in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good overall. The work produced at the end of

Key Stage 4 for GCSE coursework shows considerable improvement especially in using and applying mathematics. Progress is inhibited by coursework tasks that require too much repetitive data collection for which little credit is given or else tasks that are too prescriptive and do not allow pupils to think. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, helped by additional support from the teacher in the lesson and at the weekly mathematics surgery.

136. The response of pupils in both key stages is good and they show an interest and enthusiasm for their studies. They concentrate on teacher explanations and apply themselves to their work. In class, they respond well to challenges when they are presented with them. The response of students in the sixth form is very good and they will ask when they are not sure about something. Sixth form students also act as mentors to younger pupils and provide a useful contact for anyone who is having difficulties with their mathematics.

137. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, very good standards of discipline and high expectations of their pupil's work. Calculators are used appropriately and well but there is too much repetition of basic number work and insufficient emphasis on mental methods. Lesson planning does not take account of the full ability range and teachers make insufficient use of questioning to involve pupils and challenge their thinking.

138. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is good. In a Year 10 class, the teacher showed an effective method for converting cubic metres to cubic centimetres using diagrammatic representations. Work is regularly marked and mistakes highlighted, although misunderstandings are not always followed up and some pupils were still unable to appreciate their errors even after correction by the teacher. Teaching in the sixth form is good but includes too much teacher led and directed activity.

139. The subject curriculum meets statutory requirements. Schemes of work are provided in Key Stage 3 but they are not linked to National Curriculum criteria. There are no proper schemes of work at Key Stage 4 or the sixth form, where the work is based on the textbook with insufficient evidence of any linking between topics to allow pupils to appreciate the coherence of the subject.

140. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are unsatisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3, assessment is good and pupils' work is moderated against National Curriculum levels. Assessment at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is unsatisfactory because there are no effective systems in place and pupils are unaware of what they must do to improve. The department is beginning to make use of assessment data but analyses are not fully used to predict pupil performance or identify pupils who are underachieving.

141. The leadership of the department is sound and recent work has been successful in establishing good working practices and providing a vision and ethos for the department. There is insufficient evidence of any formal monitoring and evaluation of the department to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Staffing is adequate but the majority of staff have other teaching and management responsibilities which create tensions for their involvement in the department. All staff are suitably qualified but there is little evidence of any recent relevant professional development, especially on different teaching and learning styles.

142. The department has begun to address some of the issues raised in the last inspection report including the variable standards of achievement at A-level, decreasing enthusiasm at Key Stage 4 and the lack of opportunities for pupils to discuss new ideas or take them further. The range of teaching styles is still limited and lessons are over directed by the teacher.

143. Points for improvement

- strengthen links with partner primary schools to improve curriculum continuity and identify pupil attainment under individual attainment targets.
- continue to develop the work in progress on:
 - raising attainment at all key stages
 - teaching to ensure that it takes account of the spread of ability in classes
 - assessment to ensure that it informs lesson and curriculum planning
 - developing the use of information technology within the department
- carry out monitoring and evaluation of the department to share strengths and identify areas for improvement
- identify the professional development needs of staff, in particular with regard to teaching and learning styles
- improve the quality of schemes of work

Science

144. Pupils' results in the 1998 assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were very high compared with national average test levels as they have been for the past three years. The 1998 results were broadly in line with those achieved by similar selective schools. Boys' and girls' attainment was equally high. In 1999 results fell, with fewer pupils achieving the higher level 7. Science results in the school were lower than those in English, and substantially lower than mathematics results in 1999. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were too generous and significantly higher than the results pupils achieved. Pupils at this early stage in the current Year 9 are attaining standards at a level similar to the 1999 test results. The school is aware that the course currently followed lacks challenge for high attainers, particularly at the end of the key stage, and a new scheme is being thoroughly introduced. Pupils understand terms such as 'input and output variables' in Year 7 and by the end of the key stage can, for example, appreciate how to link changes in an electromagnet to the field strength achieved.

145. All pupils took GCSE double science in 1998 and results were well above the national average. 41% achieved A and A* grades and this proportion increased to 50% in 1999. Nationally about 37% of the grades in dual award science in selective schools were at A* and A in 1998, so results in that year were broadly in line with the national picture for like schools, and significantly higher in 1999. The average points score achieved by the pupils in science, and their A*-C pass rate, over these two years shows a similar picture of rising attainment. The comparative double science figures are inflated to a certain extent because no pupils take triple science at Sir Roger Manwood's, a course taken by many of the brightest pupils in other schools. The department's own analysis shows too great a variation in results between classes with a similar range of ability. Useful departmental comparisons have been made between boys' and girls' achievements. Compared with other results in the school, science standards at GCSE are average. Pupils currently at the start of Year 11, following the last year of their GCSE course, are achieving similar standards to those reached in 1999, with potentially very high results. Year 10 pupils, using the kinetic theory to explain gas pressure, could appreciate the relationship between temperature and pressure. Pupils in Year 11 showed understanding of the commercial value of auxins as well as their role in photo- and geotropism; they clearly know the importance of experimental design and evaluation as well as fair testing and effective recording of results.

146. A-level students' average points scores in physics and chemistry for the past two years have been very high compared with all schools nationally and above those gained in similar selective

schools. A-level biology grades have been substantially lower, close to the national average in 1998 and below that of similar schools. In 1999, none of the 25 A-level biology candidates achieved a grade A and six did not pass. In chemistry, where a similar number of students took the examination, eight gained grade A and just two did not pass. In-school comparisons of results show that both chemistry and physics results are substantially higher than those for biology. Standards of A-level students currently in the sixth form are similarly high in physics and chemistry, but in biology they are too variable.

147. In lessons pupils' progress was sound in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Science teachers are usually aware of the few pupils' special educational needs so that they make similar progress to their peers in classes. The observed progress varied in quality between very good and unsatisfactory. The pupils' responses in lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 were excellent, however, and this enabled them to make improvements in their knowledge in all lessons seen. Pupils co-operate with one another and the teacher, are quiet and extremely attentive, and often confidently question teachers on misunderstandings. The responses of the sixth formers were very good overall, with some intense discussion and thorough analysis which led to excellent progress, but at times few questions were asked and students were rather passive.

148. Pupils' written work in Key Stages 3 and 4 includes a lot of copied notes. Much is detailed and accurate and, when learnt by the pupils, results in examination success. Some other work is not well marked, however, with few helpful criticisms to help pupils improve, particularly in Key Stage 3 - not all staff are following the good departmental assessment policy. Scientific investigation is given appropriate emphasis and many good examples were seen of numerical work, graphs and data interpretation. Too few examples were evident in the pupils' work, however, of the use of information technology. Sixth formers' written work is similarly detailed and accurate, enabling students to achieve a good base of factual information. In some cases, however, the work is scruffy and unchecked. Many more problems and questions are set in physics and chemistry than in some biology classes and this is confirmed by staff markbooks. This inconsistency is restricting the progress being made in A-level biology. Standards of oracy and literacy are high because pupils have so many opportunities to practice these skills. Overall progress in science is good.

149. The quality of teaching observed was sound in Key Stage 3, and good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Individual lessons ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory throughout the school. The greatest strengths observed were in chemistry, but some physics and biology lessons were also successful. Weaknesses were apparent in a few individual teachers' approaches. Staff subject knowledge is very good in all three sciences and this, coupled with high expectations and very good relationships, resulted in a few very good and excellent lessons. For example, in an A-level chemistry lesson, demanding questions were used to ensure that pupils understood the relationship between the flame colours they observed and the quantum theory. "What would happen if ...?" questions were used very effectively and scientific vocabulary was emphasised. The lesson went beyond syllabus requirements and retained the interest of the students very well. In an unsatisfactory A-level biology lesson, the lack of involvement of the students resulted in underachievement. Demonstrations were often used in good lessons to show pupils particular techniques. A good emphasis on pupil practical work was seen during the week, but a number of pupils remarked upon the dearth of experimental work in a few classes. Several lessons ended with good questioning of the pupils' understanding of what they had learnt. Key Stage 3 lessons, although sound, were less effective. Work was insufficiently challenging at times and this has been reflected in the small number of pupils achieving higher levels in Key Stage 3 assessments. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the great range of examples given caused the pupils to lose sight of the

electromagnetism objectives being taught. In other lessons, too few questions were asked so teachers could not assess the depth of the pupils' prior knowledge, nor their understanding. In one lesson observed pupils did not wear eye protection when it was necessary.

150. The department as a whole is effectively managed, with good management of the sub-departments of physics and chemistry. Biology is not effectively managed, with insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and few department meetings where curriculum and learning issues could be discussed. Curriculum planning is sound overall with a new Key Stage 3 scheme being introduced to inject greater challenge. Mark books are too variable and a few include insufficient records of pupils' achievements. Examination data is carefully analysed and interpreted, enabling areas of weakness to be identified. This is good practice. The department has sound resources but makes insufficient use of those relating to information technology. Accommodation is well used and although some of the laboratories are old, they provide a good facility. The department is supported well by three technicians, working from four preparation areas. Staff do attend important in-service training opportunities, which is helping to improve teaching.

151. Standards and the overall quality of teaching are similar to those referred to in the last inspection report. Weaknesses in A-level chemistry have been comprehensively dealt with, as has the necessary increase in technician time and the quality of the laboratories. The use of information technology has improved but remains an issue.

152. Points for improvement

- improve standards in Key Stage 3 and in A-level biology
- monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure teaching weaknesses are resolved
- improve management of the biology department
- ensure that departmental policies, such as assessment, are thoroughly implemented by all staff
- increase the use of information technology in science lessons
- ensure that safety procedures are enforced at all times

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information technology

153. The pupils' results in the 1998 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average. The standard of the work pupils complete within information technology lessons is well above average, but their overall standard at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. This is because information technology has not been taught sufficiently within other subjects, and so pupils have not reached as high a standard in the areas of information handling, modelling and control as in communicating information.

154. GCSE in information technology has been taken by about 20 pupils in recent years, as an optional subject. In 1998, the school's results were close to the national average for selective schools. Overall, pupils did less well than in most other subjects. The results improved slightly in 1999. The number taking the subject each year is too small to identify significant trends in results over time. The coursework of the Year 11 pupils currently taking the GCSE short course is of a similar standard, well above the national average. However, only about half the year group take this course. The school intends that the remainder are taught information technology within their

other subjects. This happens in a few subject areas, but insufficiently for these pupils to make the progress they should and so overall standards are average.

155. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3. They quickly become confident and skilled in using computers and develop very good keyboard skills. Throughout the school, pupils attain the highest standard in the area of communicating information. They make very good progress in this at both key stages, through the sequence of well-planned projects within information technology lessons. At the start of Year 7, they learn to integrate text and graphics to present texts attractively, such as a poem. By Year 9, pupils have developed the skills to design and create sophisticated multimedia programmes, using advanced features of the software skilfully. Many pupils apply these skills to presenting their coursework attractively in other subjects, at home or through using the school's computer facilities at lunchtime. In a few subjects such as geography, pupils further extend their skills in communicating information by lesson activities such as using the Internet for researching information. Pupils in both key stages make good progress in learning computer modelling and control through their projects in information technology lessons, such as designing and testing a computer model of a fire alarm system. They also develop a good understanding of databases and spreadsheets within their work in information technology, but this is too rarely built on by other subjects which affects their progress in these areas. Overall, pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, with good progress by those taking examination courses, but unsatisfactory progress by those who are not.

156. Information technology has just been introduced for sixth form students, as a module within their general studies course, and the work completed so far shows that the Year 12 students have made sound progress in considering moral and social consequences of the use of information technology.

157. Pupils are very keen to use computers, both in lessons and in their own time. This is a major improvement since the last inspection. They work well in pairs and independently, and are very helpful towards each other. Occasionally, they are too chatty about their work, and sometimes those helping others do so at the expense of getting on well themselves. Overall, their response was very good in the lessons observed at Key Stage 3. It was good at Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form lessons when students were seen using computers as part of their learning in other subjects.

158. The quality of teaching is much higher than at the last inspection. It was good in the lessons observed at Key Stages 3 and 4. No information technology lessons were observed in the sixth form, but when other subjects used computer resources the teachers made satisfactory use of information technology. Teaching strengths included setting interesting, open-ended projects, allowing pupils of all levels of attainment to progress well. Teachers' relationships with pupils are encouraging, and they give good support to individuals. Explanations are clear, and the lesson activities are managed well. Teaching was less successful when opportunities were missed to make a teaching point to the whole class rather than to many pupils individually, leading to some pupils having to wait for the help they needed. Occasionally teachers allowed pupils to chatter too much.

159. A purposeful response has been made to the findings of the last inspection and good improvements have been made within the department. It now has appropriate curriculum plans which cover National Curriculum requirements, and a system for assessing pupils' work. Resources have been improved, particularly in the provision of networked facilities and an additional computer room. Teaching is much improved. As a result, pupils are now keen on this subject and standards have risen. Across the curriculum, however, the requirements for information technology are not met, which contributes to pupils not doing as well as they should. Insufficient

time is provided, particularly in Year 9, affecting the progress pupils make. Staffing remains a weakness. Their other responsibilities limit the effectiveness of the information technology teachers, particularly in areas such as supporting and monitoring the teaching and use of information technology across the curriculum. Nevertheless, the department has satisfactory potential for further improvement.

160. Points for improvement:

- link curriculum planning with other subjects' use and teaching of information technology
- reorganise staff responsibilities, so that information technology as a subject is taught and managed by specialist teachers without too many other responsibilities

Religious education

161. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average in that pupils are able to write at length on religious and ethical issues. By the end of this key stage the highest attaining pupils have developed the skills essential for GCSE in knowing, understanding and evaluating the topics studied. This is seen in essay questions such as 'When do you think human life begins?' However, attainment is average in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principal religions in Great Britain because there is insufficient emphasis on this in the school's syllabus for religious education.

162. Attainment is well above average in relation to national norms for those pupils who choose to take public examinations in religious studies in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. At GCSE, almost half gained A* and A grades in the most recent examination. Individual coursework submitted for this examination is of a high standard. It shows thoroughness with regard to detail, the ability to understand and explain religious ideas, and an ability to express personal viewpoints clearly. Results are in line with other selective schools at GCSE and well above for A-level. All A-level candidates have passed in recent years, with more than half of them gaining A and B grades. Coursework for this examination also is of a high standard, showing the ability to research an issue at depth, to understand critical scholarship and to marshal a range of material into a coherent argument.

163. Pupils' progress in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Two-thirds of lessons resulted in good progress or better, with the highest proportion in the sixth form. It is difficult to judge pupils' progress in relation to the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus because the school does not use it sufficiently in planning its religious education. At Key Stage 3, pupils make only average progress in terms of building up their knowledge and understanding of religious belief and practice, and this is mostly about Christianity. There is little opportunity to evaluate religious and moral issues before Year 9, after which pupils make good progress in writing about their own points of view. Some progress is made in the application of religious insights to pupils' own lives, as in an essay on 'My Temptations' in relation to Jesus' temptations. There is not enough emphasis on this aspect of religious education in the school's syllabus.

164. At Key Stage 4, all pupils make good progress in the knowledge and explanation of religious beliefs, such as the Jain idea of 'ahimsa' (non-violence). They make good progress in evaluating social and personal issues such as prejudice. The GCSE candidates also make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of Judaism. In the sixth form, all pupils make good progress. They learn the main ideas of great philosophers such as Plato and theologians such as Tillich. They

learn the meaning of philosophical terminology such as 'teleological' and 'deontological.' They also begin to make progress at this stage in their ability to argue against points of view in discussion.

165. Pupils are interested in religious education. This is particularly evident in the effort they put into displays, such as the Year 10 work to express an 'eternal question' that interests them and the preparation Year 11 pupils made for Remembrance Day. Their interest is also shown by the fact that this is a secure subject option at both GCSE and A-level. Pupils are attentive in religious education lessons throughout the school, including the non-examination courses. They are courteous in class discussions and collaborate well in small groups when given opportunities to work together. Their written work shows that they are well-motivated and hard working.

166. The quality of teaching is good overall, throughout the school. Teachers manage all classes well and maintain good discipline. Specialists teach nearly all classes, and all teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Work is challenging in so far as there is an emphasis on extended writing and on the understanding of religious beliefs and philosophical theories, but there is not sufficient encouragement for the exchange of views. Homework is set and marked regularly, but some books remain unmarked when pupils fail to hand them in. Different teachers operate different systems for assessing pupils' attainment.

167. The school is now fulfilling legal requirements in that all pupils, right through to Year 13, have religious education lessons weekly, whether or not they opt for it at examination level. However, the Kent Agreed Syllabus is not being fully implemented in its content and attainment targets. There is no recent departmental development plan nor monitoring of pupils' work across the department. Accommodation and resources for this subject have improved since the last inspection. There are two subject rooms situated together in the new Humanities block. These have attractive and interesting displays of pupils' work. The library stock has been overhauled, and many new books and some CD-ROMs have been purchased for this subject.

168. Points for improvement

ensure that the Kent Agreed Syllabus is fully implemented

increase opportunities for pupils to discuss issues, particularly in Key Stage 3

Art

169. Attainment in GCSE examinations is outstanding. The percentage of higher, A*-B grades, is well above average for all pupils nationally and for selective schools. Similar high standards were seen in lessons. Pupils express themselves fluently and accurately, using technical vocabulary. They investigate and research thoroughly; some use a computer to experiment and manipulate images, and develop their ideas further in two and three-dimensions.

170. Attainment in the higher A-B grades for A-level examinations is below the national average, although in all but the most recent examinations all pupils have gained a pass grade. The students in current A-level groups demonstrate above average levels of attainment overall. For some students, the improved academic and intellectual rigour seen in the contextual studies aspect of the course are not always reflected in other aspects. First hand experiences, visits to galleries and exhibitions, make a valuable contribution to the overall breadth and range of work that students produce and can use for reference.

171. The 1999 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 show only half of Year 9 pupils attaining above the expected standards for their age. Based on the evidence seen, in lessons and in the work supplied by the school, attainment against the end of key stage descriptions is higher than teacher assessments indicate. The majority of pupils attain standards beyond expectation and the attainment of a significant proportion of these is exceptional. In a Year 9 class, where standards were very high, pupils could apply what they had found out about art movements in the 20th century to their own personal pieces of work. These examples were unusual because pupils drew from wider experiences and knowledge of the arts - poetry, literature and history. In another class, pupils demonstrated a sound understanding of different printing processes and, when asked, could say how the process had been used, modified and adapted by artist printmakers. The quality and depth of investigative work and the presentation of work in sketchbooks does not always reflect the high standards achieved in other aspects of the course.

172. Progress overall is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and very good at Key Stage 4. Standards on entry are average and do not reflect the high attainment of other subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 and 8. The development of a specialist vocabulary and critical skills are particularly good. Progress in Year 9 is very good, as smaller teaching groups provide improved opportunities for teachers and pupils to negotiate more individualised, and intellectually demanding, work. The pupils who opt to take art in Key Stage 4 make very good progress. High standards of analytical, and critical thinking contribute significantly to high attainment in examinations. Pupils write and speak fluently. The results of their research and investigations, for example of the life and work of nominated artists, acted out in a role-playing situation or in group presentations, are of the highest order. Where teachers ask open questions, and allow pupils the time to express their views and interpretations, progress is outstanding. Past examination results would indicate that some students on A-level courses have not sustained the same rate of progress throughout the course. In all the lessons observed, progress was very good. Teachers had made diagnostic assessments of the strengths and weaknesses in students' work and used them as the basis for planning their input for the next stage of learning.

173. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and respond very positively to the opportunities provided for them. The quality of independent work is exceptional in some cases, often supported by visits to galleries and other places of interest. Attendance at a life drawing class in the locality adds significantly to the breadth and quality of the work in the sixth form. Pupils' study skills and their developing ability to reason, make aesthetic judgements, question and hypothesise, are strengths that impinge on all aspects of their work.

174. The quality of teaching is good in KS3 and the sixth form and very good with some excellent features at KS4. There are many strengths, notably teachers' specialist skills, their passion and knowledge of the subject. Teachers have very high expectations. Their assessments of individual pupils' work have led to changes in teaching style in Key Stage 4 and A-level classes that are proving very effective. The same rigorous assessments have not been carried out for pupils in Key Stage 3 classes and the quality of teaching and progress in lessons is more variable. The quality of the activities that teachers plan and the use made of resources, to support the wide range of work undertaken in the department, are an added strength. Very good use is made of books but, although the use of information technology is proving an exciting tool for some pupils, teachers' expertise in this area of the curriculum is limited.

175. The ethos for learning in the department is high but the lack of a curriculum structure and procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' work at Key Stage 3 are weaknesses. Coverage of

the National Curriculum cannot be guaranteed and inequalities in provision are affecting the progress pupils can make. Since the previous inspection, these aspects of management and curriculum development have not been addressed and remain unsatisfactory.

176. Points for improvement

- provide a curriculum structure for teachers' planning that promotes equality and progression through Key Stage 3
- develop appropriate procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress through Key Stage 3
- ensure that appropriate teaching and learning strategies continue to address weaknesses in the long-term progress of A-level students
- endeavour to improve teachers' expertise in information technology

Business Studies and Economics

177. Business studies and economics form part of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form curriculum. Pupils are prepared for both subjects at GCSE and A-level.

178. GCSE results for business studies in 1998 were a little above comparable averages for similar schools. The results for 1999 show improvement, with 96% of candidates gaining grades A*-C. The 1998 results in GCSE economics were well above comparable averages, with 100% of candidates gaining A*-C. The proportion of pupils gaining A* and A was also well above that in similar schools. A-level economics results were below comparable averages in 1998 but in 1999 there was a substantial improvement in attainment.

179. At the end of, and during, Key Stage 4, attainment in business studies and economics is above average. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of basic economic concepts, such as the causes of unemployment and the effects of fluctuating exchange rates, and are able to analyse effectively. In the sixth form, higher attaining pupils achieve very high standards in economics. In 1997 a pupil from the school gained the examining body's award for the highest mark in A-level economics across the country. Sixth form students have a good understanding of abstract concepts, for example comparative advantage, and are adept in critical analysis of real and nominal exchange rates. Pupils are given many opportunities for discussion and debate. A number of pupils in Year 13 are able to debate at a level beyond the basic requirements for A-level and make astute observations, relating problems to economic theory and structures. Discursive argument is very well developed. Pupils are often able to apply a cultivated sense of logic when considering cause and effect. This high level of debate, however, reduces the opportunities for some lower attaining students to consolidate their skills. Attainment for sixth form economics varies between very high and below average.

180. Pupils' attitudes towards business studies and economics are very good indeed, with pupils keen to produce written work of a high standard and to enter into debate. Pupils in the sixth form adopt a mature and critical approach to their work. A good proportion choose the options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils enjoy both subjects and this enhances their progress in acquiring necessary understanding. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good with high expectations. Pupils make good overall progress in both subjects.

181. Teaching in business studies is sound with significant elements of good practice. Teachers' subject knowledge and individual expertise have a good effect on the standards attained. In economics, particularly at A-level, teaching is often very good, with subtle use made of questioning

and trains of logic. While this tends to improve the performance of high attaining pupils, others are left in need of consolidating materials. There is insufficient supplementary information, especially for pupils of lower attainment. Co-ordination across the subject is good; great care is taken in the planning and delivery of lessons. Marking is undertaken regularly, sometimes with helpful comments to assist pupils' progress. The use of information technology was not evident in observed lessons. However, schemes of work and homework assignments make some provision for the appropriate use of computers. Information technology is used in a limited number of projects. Both subjects make a good contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy, through the use of graphs, charts and extended writing. Homework is used well to extend learning.

182. The department is well managed with many appropriate administrative processes in place. Systems for assessing, analysing and recording pupils' attainment, to inform teaching and curriculum development, are mostly sound. However, such systems for the management of the department are often informal. The department is introducing a modular syllabus in A-level economics. This should provide pupils with opportunities to engage a wider range of resources and activities, and to develop individual enthusiasms in their project work. Accommodation is satisfactory, with good displays, and the department suitably resourced. The department is active in promoting Young Enterprise and a Barnardo's charity project and these help to extend the pupils' experience.

183. Points for improvement:

- expand the methods through which the curriculum is experienced so as to avoid too much teacher-text-based work. The continued development of computer-aided independent research work would be advantageous.
- further develop differentiated tasks and consolidating materials for pupils of varying abilities, particularly in the sixth form.
- continue to encourage pupils to develop their own enthusiasms, particularly where this can be related to project work.

Design and technology

184. In GCSE examinations the 1999 results showed that 77% of pupils passed graphic products, 85% resistant materials, 75% home economics food and 80% home economics textiles at A*-C grades. Results have varied considerably over the previous three years. When compared with pupils in all selective schools, the number achieving A*-C grades has been below the national average more often than above and particularly in resistant materials. The proportion was above average in food technology in 1996, craft design technology in 1997 and graphic products in 1998 when it was well above average in textiles. The pass rate was 100% in A-level technology in 1998 and 1999, and 57% and 73% respectively in home economics textiles. Results at GCSE and A-level are generally below other subjects in the school

185. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show standards for the majority of pupils to be above those found nationally. This is also seen in work currently in the department and over time. Pupils use a wide range of materials and techniques covering the National Curriculum programmes of study, including resistant materials, electronics, food technology and textiles. They are able to work in a practical environment safely and confidently. When working with these materials, pupils develop a good understanding of the principles and processes involved and higher attainers can interpret technical details, for example in a mechanisms lesson, where they understood terms such as oscillate, linear and reciprocal motion. In food technology, pupils were able to understand the

value of vitamins and fibres in a healthy diet. Higher attaining pupils write detailed and thoughtful evaluations of their work but some lower attaining pupils often have incomplete work and weaker evaluations. Design skills are generally well developed. Good folders show a range of presentational skills, including the use of colour, photographs, commercial material and good shading techniques. Less successful design folders lacked depth of research and show limited presentational skills. The use of information technology is underdeveloped at this key stage. Progress at Key Stage 3 is sound overall and good in each area when lessons have good pace and the work is appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Some work, however, is too prescriptive. Pupils' design work varies in quality but practical outcomes are usually of a good standard.

186. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is above average overall. Pupils complete a range of work, produce models of a good standard and use a variety of presentational and practical skills to solve problems. Higher attainers can understand how one form of mechanical motion can affect another and apply that knowledge to wider applications. In food technology, most pupils understand the economic factors involved in food production. Written work across the departments indicates satisfactory coverage of the theory aspects of the course. Design folders vary in quality. Better examples show good research and analysis, with a range of presentational skills including some information technology. Target-setting, focusing on completion of coursework and practical assignments, has yet to be introduced. Progress at Key Stage 4 is sound overall. Good progress was seen in well-paced lessons, where pupils were kept on task and teacher intervention was appropriate, for example in a resistant materials lesson, when pupils could relate the application of a mechanical movement to a practical situation.

187. Attainment in the sixth form is at the level expected in technology, exemplified by pupils' understanding of the heat treatment and carbon content of steel. A variety of project research work shows skills in the use of textbooks, support materials and the Internet as sources of information. Progress is good in students' developing knowledge of technical terminology such as elasticity, ductile and malleable, and the application of knowledge to wider uses. From the evidence of work seen, attainment in textiles is average. For example, pupils understand the properties of materials and how blending fibres affect those properties. Good progress is made in understanding new fibres such as elastin, and where these materials might be used appropriately. Overall progress in the sixth form is sound. Progress throughout the school is sometimes hampered by lack of suitable facilities and sharing of equipment.

188. Pupils respond very well in lessons, showing positive attitudes towards their work. They have good relationships with adults and each other. They are attentive during teacher explanations and demonstrations and concentrate well when working on tasks. Pupils' behaviour is always very good.

189. The quality of teaching observed was good overall ranging from satisfactory to very good, but with some unsatisfactory elements. The most effective lessons were well planned and organised using a range of resources to support or extend learning. Teachers gave clear demonstrations of skills and techniques and used careful questions to check pupils' understanding. Teaching was less effective when teachers talked at length, reducing opportunities for pupils to engage in purposeful activity, or when expectation and challenge were insufficient, especially for higher attaining pupils. Pupils' results indicate that teaching has shown weaknesses in the past as well. Specialist vocabulary is always used and key words are on display in teaching rooms.

190. Assessment of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory with moderation across departments to enable teachers to agree an overall National Curriculum level at the end of the key

stage. There is some self-assessment but pupils do not know how they are performing against National Curriculum criteria. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, assessment is satisfactorily linked to examination board criteria. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Key Stage 4 pupils can take a long or short course to GCSE level. The structures and control modules in Key Stage 3 are under-developed. Marking is regularly done and homework consistently set and marked.

191. Appropriate technician support is available in the department. Accommodation in food technology and textiles provides a good working environment, with displays of exemplar material and pupils' work. Similar displays are seen in graphics. In resistant materials the accommodation is poor and restricts the delivery of the curriculum, affecting standards. Pupils sometimes work in cramped conditions and the opportunities to engage in research or design work are very limited. Much of the equipment is traditional, with few information communication technology facilities, and most of the furniture is in poor condition. The decor of the area is not conducive to learning and no work can be displayed effectively. It is difficult for the subject to contribute positively to the learning experiences of the pupils under present conditions. This issue remains from the last inspection. The on-going target for the whole department is to increase levels of examination performance.

192. Some health and safety issues were identified in the design technology area: dust extraction systems are inadequate; some floor areas are uneven and extension cables are used for some activities.

193. Points for improvement

monitor attainment and progress in all years at Key Stage 3, ensuring that pupils know the levels they are working at and how to improve

plan the curriculum to include greater use of information technology

- improve curriculum planning in the structures and control modules at Key Stage 3

introduce target setting as a means of keeping examination pupils focused for completion of course work and practical assignments

Geography

194. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, judged by teacher assessment, is well above national averages. The attainment of current pupils in Year 9 is also well above average. GCSE examination standards in 1998 were above those for all selective schools. 95% of pupils achieved A*-C grades compared to the 1998 national average of 93.2%. In 1999, the school figure rose to 98%. There has been a steady improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving at these levels of attainment over the period 1996-99. Girls' attainment is similar to that of boys. Attainment in A-level examinations in 1998 was below the national average for selective schools. The A-level average points score fell in 1999. The school's explanation for this is the nature of the cohort opting for geography; its data analysis of pupil's previous attainment gives some credence to this.

195. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national averages. Pupils learn key skills, such as map reading, early in Year 7. In Year 9, many know how to evaluate and explain the trends in population changes and all use good geographical vocabulary. Pupils have a good knowledge of place. Their attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above expectations. Year 11 pupils have an awareness of the range of problems facing farmers in the less economically developed world; in considering changes in British farming they were able to point

out the subtle connections between social changes and farm practice. Pupils have good map and data handling skills, which are demonstrated well in their course work. Their excellent standard of literacy has a positive impact on attainment: they make notes easily and write fluently. In sixth form lessons, pupils' attainment was above national expectations. Pupils in Year 13 used their knowledge of location and their familiarity with data handling to develop clear views on the factors governing industrial location along the M4 corridor.

196. Progress through Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils are taught a great deal of information in a systematic way. Work in lessons consolidates, then builds on previous learning. A Year 9 group made good progress when interrogating the United States Bureau of Census Internet site. Pupils worked at a good rate on the interesting activity, using the teacher's clear guidelines and seeking and receiving help when needed. In Key Stage 4 pupils also make good progress. Teachers maintain a strong focus on the needs of the examination syllabus, regularly setting examination style questions for pupils. Homework is very well used to summarise what has been learnt or practise examination techniques. High expectations manifested by teachers are invariably met in the performance of pupils. The progress that A-level pupils make is satisfactory. Teacher expertise is a strong factor; pupils ask for and receive help as appropriate.

197. Pupils' response to geography is always positive. They are attentive, have a powerful work ethic and respond strongly to challenge. Behaviour is consistently excellent, pupils relating well to one another and their teachers. When given opportunities, pupils demonstrate good skills as independent learners or work well in groups. They move from task to task within lessons with minimal fuss and are very good listeners. Occasionally, where lessons are unstimulating, they are passive participants. Many have the maturity to react with sensitivity to serious issues, like those raised by variable population densities across the world.

198. Teaching of geography in Key Stage 3 is good overall. Teachers plan well and have very good knowledge of their subject, expectations of pupils are high and questions are used well to check and reinforce understanding. A number of lessons, where the teacher delivers what is learnt while pupils take notes and write at some length, lack stimulation and opportunities for pupils to undertake independent learning. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is also good, displaying similar subject knowledge. Well-planned lessons maintain a clear focus on the needs of the examination syllabus. Resources of good quality are used effectively in lessons. Some lessons have strong intellectual rigour but lack enthusiasm. Sixth form teaching is satisfactory. Very good subject knowledge is often communicated with great clarity. Teachers have high expectations of pupils so that Year 12 pupils in their first few weeks of A-level work are asked probing and challenging questions which extend their knowledge. However, delivery of some lessons is staid and unimaginative: in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge and questioned pupils carefully but displayed little enthusiasm for the topic and set routine, unstimulating tasks. Only the pupils' strong commitment enabled effective progress. Teaching at this level lacks variety. Marking of pupils' books at all stages is satisfactory but lacking in helpful comments to develop a dialogue with pupils and assist progress.

199. The use of information technology in the teaching of geography is good: for example pupils use the Internet to access up-to-date information on topics such as population growth. Appropriate and accurate assessment procedures are in place for A-level pupils, targets are regularly set and pupils regularly monitored by interview. At Key Stage 3 and 4 the recording of pupil progress is underdeveloped and so assessment fails to feed back into the curriculum. Monitoring of planning is satisfactory but monitoring of teaching only happens occasionally.

200. Since the last inspection attainment has shown improvement in Key Stages 3 and 4 and fluctuated at A-level. There have been some improvements in teaching, which now has good challenge, but assessment weaknesses have only been effectively addressed in sixth form teaching. The provision of information technology through geography has improved. The quality of teaching and subject management means that the capacity to maintain high standards is satisfactory.

201. Points for improvement:

- implement a wider range of teaching styles
- develop thorough means of recording and using assessments in Key Stages 3 and 4
- improve attainment in A-level examinations by using a greater range of teaching strategies

History

202. 1998 teacher assessments indicate that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was well above national averages. The level of attainment indicated by 1998 GCSE examinations was well above national averages with 100% of pupils gaining A*-C grades compared with the figure for all selective secondary schools of 93.4%. The 1999 school figure is 95%. The 1998 average points score, however, was below the norm for selective schools. Girls' performance was better than that of boys but broadly in line with national differences. GCSE performance over the past three years has been broadly similar. Performance in A-level examinations in 1998 was a little below national averages for selective schools. The students' average points score was 5.4 compared with the national average of 6.28. In 1999 the school's average score improved considerably to 6.28; boys performed marginally better than girls but these differences are insignificant. A-level results have improved steadily over the last three years.

203. During the inspection week, attainment of pupils in the current Year 9 was also well above national expectations. For example, a Year 9 group working on agricultural change in the eighteenth century, were able to use their very good recall of work done earlier in the key stage, on farming in medieval times, and what they knew from recent work on industrialisation, to make the links between changes in farming and industry and new agricultural innovations. Based on the work seen during inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also well above expectations: recall is very good and standards are raised by pupils' ability to link historical facts and develop sophisticated conclusions. Pupils from a Year 11 class, studying the fall of the Weimar republic in inter-war Germany, used their considerable knowledge to link economic, political and international factors in accounting for its collapse. The attainment of current sixth form students is well above expectations; a major contribution to this is that pupils are very conscientious in their studies. A Year 13 group, taking part in a simulated debate on the trial of Charles I, was passionately involved in discussing the controversy but kept a strong focus on facts, quoting what they had previously learned in preparation for the lesson to support their points of view. History makes strong contributions to the development of pupils' literacy. Pupils write in a range of forms and with increasing length as they progress up the school. Information technology and skills in numeracy are occasionally used in the study of history.

204. Progress through Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils are committed to their studies. Careful planning by the teacher, effective consolidation of earlier learning and a clear focus on learning objectives are positive factors; pupils are invariably clear about their tasks, which are demanding but achievable. At Key Stage 4 progress is very good. Pupils improve their performance through the very clear focus that teachers maintain on the demands of the GCSE examination; they are frequently given 'tips' on how best to answer questions. A Year 10 class, marking one another's examination question answers to clear examination board criteria, rapidly developed a close

understanding of how to reach higher levels of attainment. Progress is generally good in the sixth form, but varies in lessons, depending on the teacher. Where the pace and challenge were high and questioning pertinent and persistent, progress was good or better; if the lesson slowed down and pupils were engaged in routine listening and copying, even the most willing learners only moved forwards at a satisfactory rate.

205. Most pupils enjoy history and all respond very well throughout the school. They have a very strong work ethic, arriving promptly to lessons and settling down very quickly. The behaviour and concentration of pupils is excellent; they are immediately obedient to teachers' instructions. They are keen to answer questions and readily work in pairs and small groups, helping one another with their tasks. A Year 9 class, working on agricultural developments two centuries ago, showed strong focus on the lesson - a number were keen to answer questions, but in a very orderly fashion. Many pupils made rough notes from what was said by the teacher, unbidden. Written work was conducted in silence. A few pupils were reserved in their performance in the lesson. The consistently high quality of pupil response is a strong contributory factor in pupils' progress.

206. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Lessons are typified by good teacher knowledge and planning, focusing on clear, and usually explicit, learning objectives. Teachers work at a good pace, constantly challenging pupils to do better; they relate well to pupils and effectively manage them at all stages of lessons. These factors contribute greatly to pupils' good progress. In a Year 7 lesson, examining the significance of the legend of Romulus and Remus, the teacher only moved onto the new topic after ensuring that pupils had effective recall of the previous work on historical sources. An open-ended task was set which encouraged an interesting range of pupil responses, contributing to good progress. Key Stage 4 teaching is very good, with great strengths in equipping pupils to pass GCSE examinations at high grades. Teachers utilise their very good subject expertise, pace and expectations of high quality work - which are usually met. Sixth form teaching is good overall but there are variations; it is less effective when there is over-reliance on the positive attitudes of pupils. A lesson on United States foreign policy at the turn of the century had few teaching strategies, slow pace and pupils' tasks were pedestrian - such as copying from the board; pupils became passive. In contrast, the teacher's knowledge and skill in managing a Year 13 simulated debate was exceptional and led to excellent progress. Homework is used as an effective adjunct to lessons in all stages.

207. Pupils of history undertake a good range of field trips, which broadens the curriculum and has a positive impact on progress. Appropriate and accurate assessment procedures are in place but recording of pupils' progress is underdeveloped and so assessment does not fully feed back into the curriculum. Accommodation is very good and the quality and range of books used is of benefit to pupils.

208. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved at all age ranges. The curriculum, which formerly lacked breadth and balance, is now good. Considerable improvements have been made in accommodation and the resources available. The quality of teaching and subject management means that the capacity to maintain high standards is good.

209. Points for improvement

- ensure consistency of teaching
- develop thorough means of recording and using assessments to improve progress.

Modern Foreign Languages

210. Pupils' results in the 1998 end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments indicate that attainment was high in relation to national standards. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is well above national averages. Results in the 1998 GCSE examinations in French and German were very high in comparison with national averages and high when compared with those of similar schools. The attainment of current Year 11 pupils is high when compared with national averages. A-level results in French and German were very high in 1998, both in comparison with national averages and with similar schools. Current sixth form pupils achieve high standards in relation to national averages. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

211. Over the past three years, results in GCSE have improved, with every pupil entered for French and German gaining A* -C grades in 1998 and 1999. 1999 percentages for A* and A grades were particularly high in both languages. There is considerable added value over Key Stages 4 and 5 in languages. GCSE grades attained by pupils are significantly higher than the grades predicted by external assessors, based on the end of Key Stage 3 assessments. Similarly, at A-level, pupils achieve substantially higher results than predictions based on analysis of GCSE results.

212. By the end of Year 9, all pupils in French groups use past tenses with confidence and higher attainers use connecting words such as 'et puis' or 'alors' to increase fluency. All pupils are comfortable in a totally French environment. By the end of the key stage in German, most pupils use the past tense well and higher attainers enhance their work with a variety of past tenses. By the end of Year 11, pupils of both French and German draw on a wealth of previously learnt material to respond to teachers' searching questions. They extend their answers and create longer sentences. Higher attainers produce accurate, interesting essays on topics such as hobbies; lower attainers are less accurate and less confident in their use of French and German. In the sixth form, students of German gave perceptive reasons as to why transport pressures affect the environment. In French, they used material, such as tourist brochures, as a basis for discussion and debate.

213. Languages contribute well to the development of literacy across the curriculum. They contribute less to the development of skills in numeracy and information technology. Equipment is available, but the satellite television is not working and the listening booths were not seen in use.

214. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form, students make excellent progress in both languages. Progress over time is very good. Pupils are encouraged to use the languages taught and develop equally their knowledge, understanding and the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Foreign language assistants enhance the development of speaking skills. Short lessons are a definite bonus in language teaching and contribute greatly to the high standards gained, particularly in Year 7, where pupils acquire new language very quickly and use it well to inform subsequent learning. In a Year 9 French lesson, pupils used the language they had learnt to develop role-plays about a police enquiry based in Paris. In Year 10 German lessons, pupils move rapidly through a variety of activities designed to enable them to increase their ability to speak, listen, read and write. They prepare oral presentations well and extend their knowledge by listening to one another. In sixth form lessons, pupils make excellent progress by redrafting work, drawing on teachers very detailed feedback notes and following excellent guidance on how to answer questions and how to improve content, grammar and style. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the German exchange contributes significantly to the development of oral skills and to the overall progress of pupils.

215. Pupils' attitudes are a strength of language learning. They are very good at Key Stage 3 and 4

and excellent in the sixth form. Teachers capitalise on the very positive attitudes of pupils and their highly developed learning skills to ensure rapid progress in acquiring knowledge and skills.

216. The quality of teaching varies from excellent to satisfactory and is very good overall. At Key Stage 3 and 4 teaching is very good. Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. In the best lessons teachers identify clear learning objectives, share them with pupils, question effectively and move through lessons at a very fast pace. They give detailed advice about examination requirements and ensure that pupils' memory skills are well developed through regular tests and assessment of work learnt. Strengths of the teaching were seen in a Year 7 French lesson, where the teacher presented work on the family using a filmstrip and pupils employed the new language immediately to describe family relationships. In a Year 11 French lesson, the teacher used a basic piece of writing to show pupils how it could be enhanced and extended. In the sixth form, in both languages, teachers have established an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation, which results in total immersion in the work and the very highest standards. In a Year 12 German lesson, for example, the teacher created an authentic interview situation. Pupils were required not only to employ the highest speaking and listening skills but also to set up the interview situation and negotiate their own roles. Not every teacher, however, provides opportunities for such creative work. With the exception of individual intervention, which is excellent, strategies are not always effective in meeting the needs of the few lower attaining pupils. Display is used insufficiently to celebrate pupils' achievements and to support learning.

217. Statutory requirements are met, with the exception of information technology. Not all teachers are providing opportunities for pupils to use computers within the classroom although in Italian, sixth form students studying GCSE, have exchanged e-mail letters to penfriends in preparation for a visit later this term. French is the first foreign language. German is introduced in Year 8 and all pupils can study two languages at Key Stage 4. Italian GCSE is provided in the sixth form. Both departments are effectively led and subject leaders provide clear educational direction and a very strong ethos for learning. Development planning does not adequately identify targets for future development such as professional development for teachers or resource requirements over time. Schemes of work support the majority of teachers but do not guide inexperienced teachers sufficiently. The French textbooks used with some Year 7 classes and with all classes in Years 8 and 9 precede the National Curriculum. They do not adequately support every teacher in delivering all aspects of the programmes of study. Marking is good and in some cases, particularly effective in identifying points for improvement. Data collected on pupils is not yet used sufficiently to target individual pupils and track their progress across the key stages. There are insufficient resources such as good quality overhead projectors, to fully support the wide variety of activities required by the National Curriculum. Day trips to France and a variety of visits for A level German students greatly enhance the learning.

218. No major issues were identified by the last inspection report apart from the statutory requirement for National Curriculum levels to be included on end of Year 9 reports. End of Key Stage 3 reports now meet statutory requirements.

219. Points for improvement:

- conduct baseline assessment to identify exactly what pupils have been taught in the primary school and to serve as a marker for future assessment of progress. Use the available data to identify trends over time and set individual targets for pupils as they move through the school.
- provide differentiated materials for pupils within groups.
- review schemes of work in both languages

Music

220. In 1998, GCSE results in music were close to the average for similar schools. Results improved in 1999 when all candidates gained grades A*-C, the majority achieving A* and A grades. Results for A-level music in 1998 were above the average for similar schools but the small number of candidates invalidates statistical comparisons. In 1999 A- and A/S-level results were at a similar level to previous years.

221. Attainment in music on entry to the school is a little above average and by the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to use electronic keyboards and classroom percussion instruments with competence, for both performance and composition. Pupils build on their vocal skills to good effect. In Year 7 they are able to select and manipulate vocal sounds to enhance group compositions. In Year 8, singing is often well above average, with pupils successfully singing in up to four parts. Pupils have strong linguistic skills. They are able to develop and use a wide musical vocabulary with which to describe and appraise the music they hear.

222. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are above average in composing, appraising and performing. Pupils are conversant with a wide range of music and musical techniques. Year 11 pupils are able to use a variety of symmetrical and other scales in composition. Pupils in Key Stage 4 make some use of computers for composition. Individual vocal and instrumental skills are often strong. In the sixth form, attainment in performing and appraising is above average. However, composition is less developed. In part this is due to lack of suitable computer resources and, subsequently, insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop necessary information technology skills in music. Overall standards in music compare very favourably with general attainment in the school, often being at or above the levels of other subjects.

223. Many pupils make very good progress in levels of achievement across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils achieve good progress in relation to their ability on entry to the school. Attainment and progress for the few pupils with special educational needs is often good. At all stages pupils have opportunities to develop necessary musical skills. Progress in the lessons observed was usually good.

224. Pupils' attitudes in music lessons are very good indeed. In all observed lessons pupils' response was attentive, with very good levels of interest, co-operation and behaviour. They take pride in their work. Pupils work well individually and with enthusiasm in instrumental groups. At Key Stage 3 they co-operate in group composition and are often enthusiastic in performing tasks. Pupils enjoy playing compositions to their peers who respond by listening attentively. Independent learning skills are well developed at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Take-up for music at Key Stage 4 is quite good and at A-level is usually satisfactory.

225. Teaching is good overall, varying between very good and satisfactory in the lessons observed. Expertise and skills of a high level are used to very good advantage in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. Teaching embodies strong commitment, good planning, a range of interesting work, and a supportive approach. Pupils have opportunities to explore their own culture and value the opportunity to explore and broaden their understanding of world cultures. In a project on African music, Year 8 pupils were able to perform an African song and then develop their own compositions based on similar material. Pupils are also helped to consolidate their literacy skills;

teachers routinely refer to the spelling of technical terms. Regular homework is set which supplements and extends the work done in the classroom and has a good effect on pupils' progress. The fifteen visiting instrumental teachers make a valued contribution to the curriculum and their work is thoroughly managed and fully integrated into the work of the department. Pupils have the opportunity to take instrumental grade examinations and have a good record of success.

226. The department is very well organised, with suitable administrative processes in place. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of pupils' work are very good, and day-to-day assessment is effectively used to develop the work offered to pupils. Accommodation is mainly very pleasant, the main music room providing a stimulating and agreeable environment. However, the use of the drama workshop for some music lessons causes logistical difficulties and this has a detrimental effect on progress for some pupils. On the whole the department has quite good instrumental and general resources. Information technology resources are not sufficient for current needs. The department is aware of the need to develop and enrich computer work at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form so that pupils can receive full entitlement to information technology in music lessons.

227. The department provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and additional visits and exchanges with other European countries. Regular exchanges take place with a French instrumental group from Hardelot near Boulogne, and regular orchestral visits, for example to Venice. Such activities, together with many small instrumental and vocal groups, considerably broaden the delivery of the music curriculum within the school and extend the cultural horizons of the pupils. The performance and composing work of pupils is appropriately celebrated in the school and in the community, within a regular calendar of musical events. Such opportunities for pupils to perform have a strong impact on the prevailing ethos and do much for the kudos of the department and the school. The department has made very good progress on most issues mentioned in the previous inspection, notably in raising standards and pupils' awareness of the music from different cultures. Insufficient specialist accommodation is still a problem.

228. Point for improvement:

- develop information technology resources and use, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.
- resolve the difficulties created by use of the drama workshop for lessons.

Physical education

229. GCSE physical education is offered as an option to students in Year 12 and is taught over a period of two terms instead of the more usual five terms in Years 10 and 11. Results in the GCSE examinations in recent years have been consistently well above the national average for similar schools. In 1999, all who entered gained grades A*, A or B. Attainment in the sixth form and at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average and in some activities, for example girls in hockey and boys in rugby, it is well above average.

230. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are generally above average and, again, in activities such as rugby they are well above average. Boys in Year 8, for example, were able to play a full-sided game of rugby and show a high level of skill in receiving and passing the ball, together with a mature awareness of spacing and team play.

231. In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils of all levels of prior attainment make good progress.

This is particularly so where lessons are well-structured with a brisk pace and a variety of activities which allow high and low attainers to make good progress. In games lessons, in both key stages, where a whole year group is involved, the pupils are “set” into groups and taught at a level and pace which is matched to their needs and abilities. In the sixth form, progress continues to be good and in some activities, particularly in team games, is very good.

232. A significant factor in the way the pupils progress is their universally high, positive attitude to physical education together with their mental aptitude. This positive response is illustrated by the fact that consistently, each year, 15 to 20 students opt to take GCSE physical education as an extra 26-week course in their first year in the sixth form, whilst still following their two-year A-level courses. In all years and at all levels of attainment, pupils are enthusiastic about their work. They are able to sustain concentration in both short and longer lessons. They work well together both collaboratively in practices and in a friendly competitive spirit in a game. Their sense of teamwork is highly developed.

233. The overall quality of teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. It was at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen and in 60% it was good or very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The knowledge and understanding of the specialist teachers is clearly very good and they are able to structure practices and skills training to provide good progress and continuity for their pupils. Time in lessons is well used and especially so in the very short lessons, where there is generally a brisk pace and a variety of activities. This is also an improvement since the last report. In both the girls’ and the boys’ departments, expectations are consistently high of pupil participation, behaviour and capacity to understand and complete tasks and this is another significant factor in enabling them to make good progress.

234. The previous report noted that pupils were given insufficient opportunities to plan and evaluate their work on a regular basis. This point has not yet been fully addressed. It was reported that in some activities and in some lessons pupils were given this opportunity. No evidence was seen in the lessons observed during this inspection and there was insufficient detail in the planning documentation of either the boys’ or the girls’ department to be sure that such opportunities are consistently given to all pupils in all activities. Planning is a weakness in the boys’ department in particular. Schemes of work are sketchy and do not include objectives, methods or organisation. Day-to-day lesson planning in the girls’ department is in place although it is minimal and not consistent. There was no evidence of lesson plans in the boys’ department and no record of objectives for lessons, what had actually been done and achieved and therefore no way of monitoring the effectiveness of the work, particularly of non-specialist teachers.

235. The planned curriculum meets statutory requirements although the time allocation, which includes a single period, makes this difficult to achieve. The curriculum is considerably enhanced and extended by a wide range of extra-curricular sport which gives opportunities to pupils both to experience a variety of activities as well to achieve excellence.

236. No common policy or curriculum for physical education exists across the two departments and this fact, together with a lack of monitoring, means that there is no way of ensuring that boys and girls receive similar experiences and have equality of access and opportunity. The organisation of physical education in two separate departments leads to duplication of work, for example schemes of work, and therefore an inefficient use of teachers’ time. This was noted in the previous report.

237. The use of a significant number of non-specialist teachers to teach games was also identified

previously as an issue needing review. This is still the case. Not enough has been done to make available for these teachers appropriate in-service training, either locally or within the school, to ensure that the present high standards attained by the pupils will be maintained.

238. There is a very strong commitment to high achievement and a very effective learning environment in both departments. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good which is another significant factor in the good progress pupils make. However, the previous report identified that pupils have limited opportunities to extend their learning by working in mixed gender groups and this is still so. The ethos within each department is good but the total separation of the two departments does not reflect the co-educational nature of the school and is disadvantaging some pupils who would gain from the opportunity to take part in some mixed gender physical education.

239. Points for improvement:

- consider the possibility of a joint department with a common policy and the opportunity to work together more closely for the benefit of all pupils.
- expand planning and documentation to ensure that the objectives for teaching different activities and also organisation, methods, progressive practices are all made clear.
- ensure that there are consistent planned opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate their work.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

240. The inspection was carried out by a team of 13 inspectors, who spent a total of 52 days in the school over a period of one week. Over 180 lesson observations were carried out, taking approximately 136 hours. Almost all staff teaching during the week of the inspection were observed at least once. A substantial amount of additional time was spent on examining samples of pupils' work in each subject, and on inspecting the subject and management information provided by the school. Planned discussions were held with pupils from all year groups, as well as conversations with pupils in lessons, during breaks and lunchtimes, and in the boarding houses. Discussions were held with governors about their roles and responsibilities. The headteacher, all members of the senior management team, heads of year, heads of department, boarding houseparents, a number of other teaching staff and some support staff had discussions with inspectors. 46 parents attended a meeting to express their views about the school and the 252 questionnaires returned by parents were analysed.

DATA AND INDICATORS

241. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	773	1	56	13

Teachers and classes

242. Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	45.98
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

243. Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked each week	203.5

244. Teaching staff contact ratio

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	81%
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245. Average group size

KS3	26
KS4	21

246. Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	2001815
Total Expenditure	2025525
Expenditure per pupil	2729
Balance brought forward from previous year	35533
Balance carried forward to next year	11823

PARENTAL SURVEY

247.

Number of questionnaires sent out:

773

Number of questionnaires returned:

252

Responses (percentage of answers in each category)

248.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	23	51	19	8	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	56	6	5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	20	35	39	5	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	21	48	19	12	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	38	49	8	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	55	41	3	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	53	39	8	1	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	39	51	5	4	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	45	44	6	4	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	40	49	8	2	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	48	45	4	2	1

Other issues raised by parents

249. Parents were extremely positive about the school, happy with the standards attained and their children's attitudes to learning. They referred to some inconsistencies in teaching and A-level biology standards being lower than in other subjects. Extra-curricular activity is seen as a great strength in the school.