

INSPECTION REPORT

Holly Lodge Girls' School

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique Reference Number: 104688

Inspection Number: 184360

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Jowett

Reporting inspector: Mr David Cox
10295

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707971

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of students:	11 -18
Gender of students:	Girls
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Appropriate authority:	Liverpool LEA
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Date of previous inspection:	3-10 February 1995

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Ann Axon	Mathematics Equality of opportunity	
Bernard Treacy	English	
Jacqueline Sparkes	Science	
Ian Thompson	Design and technology	Assessment
Caroline Orr	Modern languages	Staffing
Shirley Jeffray	Physical education	
John Langley	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Scott Fellows	Special educational needs	
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Maxwell Pettitt	Art	
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REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

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

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 7
Key indicators

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 8 - 34
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 35 - 38
Attendance 39 - 42

Quality of education provided

Teaching 43 - 57
The curriculum and assessment 58 - 71
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 72 - 79
Support, guidance and students' welfare 80 - 88
Partnership with parents and the community 89 - 95

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 96 - 105
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 106 - 116
The efficiency of the school 117 - 122

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science	123 - 153
---	-----------

Other subjects or courses	154 - 239
----------------------------------	-----------

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence	240
---------------------------------------	-----

Data and indicators	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- GCSE results are rising at a much faster rate than the national average.
- The majority of students make good progress at Key Stage 3.
- At the age of 14, students' results in national tests are very high in English and mathematics and well above average in science when compared to similar schools.
- At the age of 14, students' results in English are above the national average when compared with all schools.
- Standards in art are consistently above the national average.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good; behaviour is very good.
- The quality of relationships is very good.
- Students' personal development is very good.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Provision for students' moral and social development is excellent and very good for cultural development.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are excellent.
- Enrichment through links with the community is excellent.
- The leadership and management of the school is very good.
- There is very good accommodation.
- Financial planning, financial control and school administration are very good.
- The school provides good value for money.

• Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Students' levels of literacy and numeracy are well below the levels expected nationally.
- II. The level of students' attendance is below the national average and their punctuality to lessons is very poor which impairs attainment and progress.
- III. Students with special educational needs make slower progress than most other students.
- IV. Students make unsatisfactory progress in information technology at Key Stage 4.
- V. Students make unsatisfactory progress in science at Key Stage 4.
- VI. The school does not meet all statutory requirements.
- VII. The amount of time spent teaching is much shorter than in most other schools.

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

• How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress since the previous report. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and standards of attainment have risen, albeit from a low base, at a much faster rate than the national average. The rate of attendance has improved but it is still unsatisfactory. Students' punctuality to lessons is still a concern. Under the leadership of the Headteacher, many of the issues identified in the previous report have been overcome. Given the improvements made, the quality of leadership provided by the Headteacher and the senior management team, the school is very well placed to continue its improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 19 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	Grade
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
Key Stage 3	D	A*	<i>Average</i>	<i>C</i>
GCSE Examinations	D	A	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
A/AS – levels	E		<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

Note: A* indicates that students' results were very high in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds.

In National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, results in English were well above the national average but below the national average in mathematics and well below in science. Overall, students' results in English and mathematics were very high in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds and they were well above in science.

GCSE results were below the national average. However, the performance of students is well above average when it is compared with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The best results overall, compared to other subjects in the school, were in English literature, art and religious education. The poorest results were in science and geography.

GCE A-level results were well below the national average. GNVQ results were above the national average.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, art, physical education, information technology and religious education	Science, geography and music
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	English literature, art, physical education and religious education	Science and information technology across the curriculum
Sixth form	Satisfactory	N/A	N/A
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3. It is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 56 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 11 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons but is never poor.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. It is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 46 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 14 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons and never poor.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory in the sixth form. It is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 42 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 7 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons and never poor.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Students' behaviour is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory. Punctuality to lessons is very poor.
Ethos*	Very good, raising attainment is central to the school's work.
Leadership and management	Very good overall, the Headteacher, senior management team and the governing body provide very good leadership. The management of special educational needs is poor.
Curriculum	Satisfactory except for religious education in the sixth form and information technology in Key Stage 4. The structure of the school day causes problems with student movement around the site.
Students with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory overall, students with special educational needs make slower progress relatively to other students in the school.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good overall, excellent provision for moral and social development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall; well qualified teaching staff, very good accommodation, good resources, insufficient curriculum support staff.
Value for money	Good value for money.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- VIII. Marked improvement in behaviour in the last two years.
- IX. Good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- X. Good careers guidance.

What some parents are not happy about

- XI. Parents had mixed opinions about examination
- XII. Lower attainers do not do as well relatively as
- XIII. Parents expressed concern about

The overall response to the parents' questionnaire is very positive.

The inspectors' judgements support the positive views of the parents.

Whilst the school does very well compared to similar schools, inspectors have concerns about the examination results in science.

Students with special educational needs do not do as well as other students at the school.

The inspectors found no evidence to support the view that communications between the school and home are weak.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

Improve students' literacy and numeracy skills by:

- XIV. providing more planned opportunities for students to practise key skills, such as reading and writing, within all subjects' programmes of study (para 20, 21, 22, 31 and 49);
- XV. applying the whole-school numeracy policy across all subjects (para 24 and 31).

Improve students' attendance and punctuality by:

- XVI. reorganising the structure of the school day to enable students to arrive at lessons on time (para 41, 59, 86 and 119);
- XVII. ensuring teachers take effective action to stop students wasting time when moving between lessons (para 41 and 52);
- XVIII. ensuring all teachers monitor and check why students are not in lessons (para 86);
- XIX. ensuring that the sixth form registers provide an accurate record of students' presence on the site (para 40).

Improve the progress of students with special educational needs by:

- XX. providing additional focused in-class support (para 34, 63 and 107);
- XXI. improving the quality of management of this area of the school's work (para 71 and 98);
- XXII. ensuring all teachers are fully aware of the needs of these students (para 34);
- XXIII. ensuring that individual education plans are up-to-date (para 70);
- XXIV. ensuring that individual education plans are also subject specific (para 57 and 70);
- XXV. improving the level of in-class support for students for whom English is an additional language and making all teachers aware of the needs of these students (para 33).

Improve the progress made by students in information technology at Key Stage 4 by:

- XXVI. ensuring all subjects provide tasks that enable students to learn new skills (para 31 and 191);
- XXVII. ensuring that all students receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for information technology (para 58, 66, 103 and 191).

Improve the progress made by students in science at Key Stage 4 by:

- XXVIII. extending the taught week so that students receive a similar amount of curriculum time to most other schools (para 31, 52, 59, 119 and 149);
- XXIX. improving the accountability of all teachers in the science department for the modular courses (para 149);
- XXX. ensuring that the head of department has a clear overview of the work of the department (para 152).

Meet statutory requirements by:

- XXXI. improving the provision for religious education in the sixth form (para 58 and 103);
- XXXII. improving the access to appropriate information technology in music at Key Stage 3 (para 58, 66, 206 and 103);
- XXXIII. providing a daily act of collective worship (para 74).

Other weaknesses

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

- XXXIV. address the health and safety issues raised in the report (para 87).

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1.Holly Lodge Girls' School is situated in the West Derby area of Liverpool, although the school's intake is city wide. It is a maintained 11 - 18 comprehensive school with 1493 students on roll, the number of students on roll has increased significantly since the previous inspection when there were 1306 students on roll. There are 163 students in the sixth form. The school is much bigger than most other secondary schools. The percentage of students speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. There are high levels of social disadvantage in the areas from which the school draws its students and the socio-economic circumstances of the students are well below the national average.

2.The school was last inspected in February 1995.

3.Nationally recognised tests indicate that a significant minority of students enter the school with standards of literacy and numeracy well below the level expected for their age. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of students with statements of special educational needs is below the national average. There are 198 (13 per cent) students on the school's register of special educational needs and there are 54 students at levels 3 to 5 of the Code of Practice. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 46 per cent, which is above the national average. In 1998, 59 per cent of students stayed on to full-time education; seven per cent gained employment; 18 per cent entered a training scheme and 16 per cent were in the 'other' category.

4.The standards admission figure is 240 but the school received 283 students in September 1999. It is over-subscribed.

5.Statutory targets set for the years 2000 and 2001 for five or more passes at GCSE grades at A*-C are 35.4 per cent and 38 per cent respectively.

6.The school has a relevant mission statement and 14 aims. These cover all the relevant areas for student development.

7.The school has focused particularly on the six key issues set out in the previous report. These are:

- .Make more explicit the medium to long-term curricular intentions and the links with financial planning and evaluation procedures;
- .Build on students' willingness to learn by adopting a more rigorous academic approach and by raising teachers' expectations of students;
- .Raise the level of attendance and punctuality to lessons and make more effective use of available teaching time;
- .Improve the consistency of practice both within and across departments by identifying strengths in teaching and assessment, and by promoting a wider adoption of them;
- .Improve the quality of learning by providing more opportunities for independent study and by matching the work set more closely to the interests and abilities of all students;
- .Review the policy and practice for (a) assessment and recording and (b) collective worship, in order to ensure that they fully meet statutory requirements.

• **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	0	241	241

• National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	176(172)	130 (115)	102 (85)
	Total	176 (172)	130 (115)	102(85)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	73(70)	54(47)	42(35)
	National	65(56)	60(59)	56 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	45(34)	30(24)	15(2)
	National	35(22)	36(36)	27(29)

• Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	0	0	
	Girls	175 (175)	133 (113)	106 (88)
	Total	175 (175)	133 (113)	106 (88)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (73)	55 (46)	44 (36)
	National	62(62)	64(64)	62(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	36 (28)	31 (22)	19 (3)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1998	0	228	228
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 students achieving standard specified	Boys	0	0	0	
	Girls	71(75)	200 (202)	212 (211)	
	Total	71(75)	200 (202)	212 (211)	
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	31(32.3)	88(87.1)	93 (90.9)	
	National	44.6 (43.3)	89.8 (88.5)	95.2 (94)	

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
School	0	N/a
National		N/a

Attainment in the Sixth Form⁴

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1998	0	36	36

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	0	9.6 (12.1)	9.6 (12.1)	N/a	4.0 (2.5)	4.0 (2.5)
National	0	N/a	17.6(17.1)	N/a	n./a	2.8 (2.7)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% Success rate
School	0	N/a
National		79.1

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate
School	29	100
National		72.5

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

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	10.2
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	1.6
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

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• Exclusions

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	3
	Permanent	3

• Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	12
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

1.By the ages of 14 and 16, in work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally.

2.In the 1998 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in mathematics and science, the proportion of students reaching level 5 and above was below the national average but was above the national average in English. The proportion of students reaching level 6 and above in mathematics and science was below the national average but was well above the national average in English. The average National Curriculum level was well above average in English, below in mathematics and well below in science when compared with all schools. Over the last three years there has been a clear trend upwards in English, no significant trend in mathematics but a decline in science. In comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds, students' average National Curriculum level is very high in English and mathematics and well above average in science.

3.In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C was below the national average. The proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-G was average. Based on averages over the last three years the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes, or equivalent, at grades A*-C was below the national average; the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes, or equivalent, at grades A*-G was close to the national average.

4.In 1998, the average total GCSE points score per student was below the national average. When compared with schools with students from similar backgrounds, results were well above average. Based on figures for the last five years, the average total GCSE point score per student showed a rising trend, at a much faster rate than the national average.

5.In the 1998 GCSE examinations, results at A*-C were well above the national average in art and religious education; above average in English literature; average in chemistry; below average in English, mathematics, design and technology, history and physical education and well below in science, geography, business studies and modern foreign languages. Results in the short course GCSE in religious education were in line with the national average.

6.In the 1998 GCSE examinations, results at A*-G were well above in art, history, physical education and religious education; average in science, English literature, design and technology, geography, business studies and modern foreign languages; below average in English and mathematics; well below in biology and far below in physics.

7.Students' best results overall, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were in English literature, art and religious education. The poorest results were in science and geography.

8.In the most recent examinations (1999), the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C fell whilst the proportion of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A*-G was similar to previous years.

9.The target set by the school for the number of students achieving five or more passes at A*-C in 1998

was achieved but the school did not achieve its target pass rate in 1999. Targets set for the next two years bear in mind the attainment of the different cohorts.

10. In the 1998 General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-level examinations, the average A/AS level points score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was well below the national average. Based on the average of the last three years, the average A/AS level point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was well below the national average. There was no significant difference in the most recent GCE A-level results. In 1998, in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) students obtained above average results. All students studying for GNVQ at intermediate and advanced levels achieved a pass, with all students achieving a merit or distinction.

11. In the work seen during the inspection at the ages of 14 and 16, students' standards of attainment are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally.

12. In work seen during the inspection in English, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 and 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally but are in line with course expectations by the age of 19. Students' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength at all levels in the school. The majority of students participate readily in oral work. They read novels and poetry that are appropriate for their age. Higher attainers read aloud with clarity and good expression. Most students are able to write in a variety of styles. However, the work of middle and lower attaining students is marred by unsatisfactory spelling, grammar and punctuation and by limited vocabulary.

13. Students' standards of literacy are well below the national expectation. Students are willing to speak and in some lessons, for example in drama, they are able to do so fully. In many lessons, however, students have few opportunities to discuss ideas in depth and are often constrained by lacking an appropriate subject-specific vocabulary. Listening skills are variable. When the teaching is clear, focused and dynamic, as is the case in some modern foreign languages and mathematics lessons, for example, students can be stimulated to achieve standards in line with, or above, national expectations. At other times they need to have instructions repeated. Lower attaining students have limited concentration spans, but remain on task when lessons are planned to involve an appropriate degree of variety.

14. Reading skills are below the level expected at both key stages. Many lower attainers are not able to read independently. Middle attaining students lack confidence in reading aloud and show poor recall of words, which have been taught recently. Higher attainers, who are in the minority, read fluently and with good expression. Throughout the whole curriculum, few opportunities are provided for students to read aloud and pay close attention to meaning and expression.

15. Higher attaining students are able to write for a variety of audiences and have developed their vocabulary sufficiently to meet the requirements of the subjects they are studying. However, the majority of students lack range in their writing, express themselves in a brief and restricted way and poor handwriting, spelling and punctuation often mar work. Many lessons involve students in completing worksheets and provide relatively few opportunities for students to produce extended writing.

16. In work seen during the inspection in mathematics, students' standards of attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally but are in line with course expectations at the age of 19. Higher attaining students develop strategies for solving problems. Low attainers use a systematic approach to problem solving but need guidance. They construct and describe the characteristics of graphs. In solving problems, middle attainers carry through substantial tasks and solve problems by breaking them down into smaller tasks. Students use scientific calculators

accurately and sensibly when solving problems.

17. Levels of numeracy are well below the standard expected. There is a whole-school numeracy policy but little evidence that numeracy is developed in the majority of subjects. Students are strongly reliant on calculators and mental arithmetic skills are weak. In physical education students measure and estimate distances of throws. They are involved in scoring in badminton. At Key Stage 4 in science, students produce graphs and calculate heat loss. At Key Stage 3, they have difficulty performing simple algebraic tasks when calculating momentum in experiments. Students' poor levels of numeracy often impact adversely on standards of attainment in information technology.

18. In work seen during the inspection in science, students' standards of attainment at the ages of 14 and 19 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally and they are well below by the age of 16. Students have a satisfactory grasp of investigation techniques and complete practical work to a good standard. However, they do not use the technical vocabulary of the subject. Their written work is well presented but contains many errors in the spelling of scientific terms. They understand variation and the inheritance of characteristics and with guidance, they plan investigations, form hypotheses and predict the outcome of experiments. Higher attaining students discuss the meaning of terms. However, many have a poor understanding of the concepts that underpin many scientific principles, particularly in physics. Students do not transfer skills from one area of science to another.

19. By the age of 14, students' standards of attainment are above the level expected for students of the same age nationally in art; at the level expected in geography, information technology, physical education and religious education; below the level expected in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and music.

20. By the age of 16, students' standards of attainment are above the level expected in art; at the level expected in physical education, religious education and business studies; below in design and technology, geography, history, information technology and modern foreign languages.

21. By the age of 19, students' standards of attainment based on examination results are well below the level expected. However, standards observed in lessons are at the level expected. At this early part of the academic year, students' standards of attainment seen in lessons are better than recent examination results would suggest. Many students in the sixth form have poor attendance records and this has an adverse impact on their examination results. Where there is sufficient evidence to form a judgement, students' standards of attainment are above course expectations in art and in line with course expectations in geography, information technology, modern foreign languages, GNVQ courses, sociology, psychology and economics.

22. The majority of students make good progress at the school. Students make good progress from a low base at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in most subjects. The majority of students make good progress in English and mathematics between the ages of 11 and 16 especially in Key Stage 3.

23. At Key Stage 3 there has been a considerable determination to improve students' standards of attainment and the development of teaching strategies has been instrumental in bringing about good progress. Teachers have high expectations at Key Stage 3 and students' rate of attendance is generally satisfactory. Students make good progress in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history, information technology and physical education and satisfactory progress in science, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. They make satisfactory progress in lessons in music but insufficient evidence was provided to make a judgement about progress over time.

24. At Key Stage 4, students make satisfactory progress. In lessons, students often make good progress

but their unsatisfactory attendance adversely impacts on their progress. Students' coursework is often incomplete. The short teaching week and the poor punctuality to lessons by many students also inhibits progress. Students' weak literacy and numeracy skills also impact on their progress with many students unable to answer examination questions. The unsatisfactory progress in information technology is because students are not provided with the opportunity to learn new skills within subject areas.

25. The progress of students in the sixth form is satisfactory but is adversely affected by the poor attendance of many students.

26. There is no significant difference in the progress of students from different ethnic groups although some students for whom English is an additional language do not always make the same progress as other students because they receive insufficient support to help them overcome their language difficulties.

27. The progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory in both Key Stages 3 and 4. However, these students progress less well than others in Key Stage 3 because of the lack of focused in-class support in the majority of subjects. Teachers do not match the work closely enough to meet their needs.

34. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

28. Attitudes towards learning are good, and have a positive impact on academic attainments and progress. The students' response to their work is rarely less than satisfactory and is often good or very good. There are no significant variations across age groups or ability groups. In all but a very few lessons, students are attentive, show interest in their tasks and sustain their concentration well. They are conscientious and take pride in presenting their work well. For the most part they are quiet and somewhat passive in class. They answer questions from teachers but do not ask many in return. Some students lack confidence and are reluctant to express their views in front of other members of the class. On occasions, they show enjoyment in learning, but eagerness and enthusiasm are not often apparent in lessons. Although most students can organise themselves effectively, and meet deadlines for homework and course work, their capacity for personal study is not well developed. They are often over dependent on their teachers, and quickly look to them for help when tasks in lessons become difficult.

29. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. This is reflected in the rate of exclusion, which is below the national average and on a downward trend. Students behave very well in class. They are polite to their teachers and to one another. Instances of interruptions, background chatter and other forms of low level disruption are rare. Outside the classroom students are self-disciplined and orderly, moving calmly and quietly around the site between lessons and during the lunch hour. No acts of aggressive or boisterous behaviour were observed during the inspection. Students are courteous and helpful to visitors to the school. They can be trusted to behave well even when unsupervised. The school's code of conduct is generally respected. They show respect for property by handling books and equipment with care. Most students appreciate the beauty of the school grounds and keep them free of graffiti. They disapprove of the minority of their peers who drop litter around the site.

30. Relationships within the school are very good. Students have a sense of community, and are loyal to one another and to members of staff. In lessons they work well together in groups or pairs, in a spirit of friendly cooperation. They are tolerant of other people's points of view and are sensitive to their feelings. Their relations with adults are characterised by mutual respect. They trust teachers, feel able to approach them over problems, and have faith in their ability to help. Out of class relationships are also very good. Students socialise very well with each other during breaks and the lunch hour. There is no friction between year groups, and instances of bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour are uncommon. When they do occur, they take the form of name calling. Usually the school takes effective action against bullying so

that it is not a persistent problem, but a few students say that they have experienced, and are continuing to suffer, racial abuse.

31. Students make very good progress in their personal development during their time in the school. In all year groups they respond positively to the many opportunities which they have to take on responsibilities. There is no shortage of students who are willing to be form captains, classroom assistants and monitors. Older students carry out the role of prefect conscientiously. Students also show initiative and drive when organising extra-curricular activities and fund-raising events. Their mature and positive approach to their responsibilities is well demonstrated by their successes in ventures such as Young Enterprise.

38. Attendance

39. The level of students' attendance is below the national average and their punctuality to lessons is very poor and impairs students' attainment and progress.

32. Attendance is below the national average for secondary schools and the rate of unauthorised absence is above average. During the week of inspection attendance was below 90 per cent in many lessons, and was lowest in Years 10 and 11. There are some instances of students leaving school after registration without authorisation. According to the school's figures, attendance is poor in the sixth form, but as sixth form registers are not accurate records, it is not possible to make a conclusive judgement.

33. Punctuality is very poor. Many students are as much as 15 minutes late for lessons. This leads to a significant loss of time for teaching and learning which affects all year groups and all subjects of the curriculum.

34. The school has made some improvement since the last report, but progress is uneven. The whole school attendance rate has improved and now is only just below the 90 per cent benchmark. Punctuality has not improved. Poor time keeping is still having an adverse affect on standards of attainment.

42. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

42. Teaching

35. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous report. Teaching was previously described as at least sound; it is now good. This improvement in the quality of teaching is one reason for the improvement in GCSE results.

36. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 56 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 11 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons but is never poor. The good teaching provision at Key Stage 3 is one reason for the good progress of most students. The quality of teaching is good in all subjects with the exception of science, geography and music where it is satisfactory.

37. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen; good or better in 46 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 14 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons and never poor. The quality of teaching is not as good at Key Stage 4 as that found at Key Stage 3 because teachers' expectations are not as high and this leads to students making satisfactory rather than good progress. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all subjects with the exception of art, design and technology, modern foreign languages,

music, physical education and religious education where it is good.

38. At sixth form, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons seen, good or better in 42 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in seven per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons and never poor. Again, teachers' expectations are not high enough and some lessons lack challenge and pace. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all subjects with the exception of art, history, modern foreign languages and science where it is good.

39. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4 and a satisfactory knowledge and understanding at sixth form level. This is particularly true at Key Stage 3 where teachers use their knowledge of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests system to improve the performance of students in English. In art students benefit from teachers who have good subject knowledge often enhanced by practical experience outside of school. This is one reason for the good progress made by students in art.

40. Teachers' expectations are high at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Expectations vary between subjects and within subjects. All teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour which accounts for the good working atmosphere in most classes. For example, in a French lesson, the teacher was rigorous in demanding a good response to oral drill sessions. By contrast, in science, teachers do not always challenge all the students to achieve their best and this is one reason for the unsatisfactory progress made by students in this subject at Key Stage 4.

41. The quality of planning is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. In mathematics, lessons are planned well with clear objectives as was the case in a Year 9 lesson where students understood what was required of them and proceeded to make good progress. However, teachers of many subjects do not plan their lessons to enable students to extend their information technology skills. Though plenty of opportunities are provided for students to consolidate their information technology skills few help them to improve them or learn new ones. This is one reason for students' unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 in information technology. At Key Stage 4, there is an over-reliance on tasks that call for the writing of short answers to lists of questions which does not help students develop their literacy skills.

42. Most teachers use a range of satisfactory teaching strategies and provide activities that help to sustain students' concentration and interest. The constant disruption to the start of the lesson caused by the very poor punctuality of students places restraints on what teachers plan to do and the methods they use. In a Year 11 child development lesson the teacher was dealing with a sensitive topic and wanted to use discussion groups but was interrupted and needed to restart the lesson because of students arriving late and had to forego the discussion part of the lesson.

43. Classroom management is a strength of many teachers, based on very good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students. In one Year 7 information technology lesson, a student with behaviour difficulties was fully engaged in a lesson on Buddhism because the teacher gave the student the opportunity to take the lead in the session. Teachers use praise to encourage and motivate students to particular good effect in Key Stage 3, but not exclusively so.

44. The use of time is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Because of the short teaching week and the very poor punctuality of students to lessons, many teachers have to sustain a good pace to enable them to cover the required content. However, many lessons are rushed towards the end because teachers are aware of the long distances that students have to travel to get to their next lesson. This often leads to the end of the lesson being disorganised.

45. Teachers make effective use of the available resources. In religious education, teachers have created good links with the local faith communities and these support students with their Key Stage 4 studies, one reason for the good examination results in this subject and the good progress that students make. Teachers do not yet make full use of information technology within their lessons, as is the case in music where the information technology component of the National Curriculum for music is not met.

46. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment is satisfactory. Students' work is marked regularly, but comments do not always inform students of their progress or how they might improve. Comments tend to be too congratulatory, even when work is not of a good standard. In a Year 7 netball lesson, skilful questioning enabled students to evaluate their work, as well as demonstrating their knowledge and understanding.

47. The setting and use of homework is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Many opportunities are provided for sixth form students to extend their studies through homework and independent study. Teachers set homework on a regular basis and it is normally relevant to the topic being covered.

48. Students with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily in most subjects, despite the lack of up-to-date individual education plans. Students with statements of educational need receive targeted support from outside agencies and school support staff on an individual or small group basis, which is appropriate and effective.

49. The effectiveness of teacher planning to meet the needs of students with special educational needs varies considerably between subject areas, as does the quality of opportunities for support staff to co-plan and evaluate input. Where individual education plans are available and subject specific, planning and support is good. Too often though, individual education plans are not in evidence or are out of date and effective teaching of students is hampered as a result.

57. The curriculum and assessment

50. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets statutory requirements, except in the provision for religious education in the sixth form, in access to appropriate information technology in music at Key Stage 3, and in information technology at Key Stage 4 where the statutory requirements are not being met fully. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum including religious education and personal and social education. However, students who study German in Years 8 and 9 lose one lesson of physical education per week, which leaves insufficient time to cover the Programmes of Study in depth. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

51. The length of the teaching week at 23 hours and 20 minutes is below the model for comprehensive schools nationally at Key Stage 3 and below the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) recommended time at Key Stage 4. Each day is divided into four double periods of one hour ten minutes. The accommodation of the school is spread over a large, single site campus, which means that curriculum time is lost each day due to movement between lessons. An example of this is in the area of religious education and personal and social education that are timetabled for 35 minute lessons consecutively, in teaching areas at opposite ends of the campus. The allocation of time to both history and geography at Key Stage 3 is below the national average, which means that some themes are only dealt with superficially.

52. At Key Stage 4, there is a core curriculum followed by all students with three further options, which also allow students to follow GNVQ courses in health and social care and art and design. A small group of students is disapplied from the National Curriculum in modern foreign languages and science in Year 10 to follow a foundation National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course in hair and beauty. In the

sixth form, the school offers 17 courses at GCE A-level, three advanced GNVQs and three intermediate GNVQs.

53. A well-planned programme of personal and social education promotes the personal development of students throughout the school and prepares them for adult life. Systems are in place to monitor the success of this programme and experienced and enthusiastic staff teach it. The programme includes health education, sex education, bullying and issues of drug misuse, which are comprehensively covered. The scheme builds progressively throughout a students' school life.

54. Most students have equal access to the curriculum, although there are students for whom English is an additional language who struggle to understand the content of some lessons because they do not have sufficient support. There is also a group of students in Years 8 and 9 who study German who lose one lesson of physical education per week, which leaves a time that is insufficient to cover the full Programmes of Study in depth.

55. Students with special education needs receive the full National Curriculum entitlement but curricular provision in mainstream classes is poor. Students receive very little additional in-class support and teachers do not always match the work to the needs of these students. This results in these students not making the good progress that most other students make.

56. The provision for careers education and guidance is very good. The programme in Key Stage 4 includes the opportunity for all students to have work experience in Year 10 and for students in the sixth form to take a further two weeks work experience linked to their future careers. All work experience is well monitored, with careful preparation and follow-up by members of the teaching staff during and after the placement.

57. The school makes available a good range of extra-curricular activities, at lunchtimes and after school, which enrich the curricular provision. In addition to music, dance, drama and sport, many departments offer curricular clubs, activities and educational visits. Around one-third of the student population takes a regular part in extra-curricular sporting activities, with nearer 100 per cent of students being involved on an inter-form and whole school basis. These sporting activities are supervised by a total of ten teachers.

58. Planning for progression and continuity is satisfactory. The curriculum is generally planned to create a smooth transition between key stages except in music where planning is within and not across key stages, and in information technology where there is no planning for continuity and progression at Key Stage 4. At a whole school level there are links with primary schools to help promote the school and to ensure continuity and progression in students' education.

59. The previous report noted that "the curriculum complies fully with the statutory requirements"; this is not now the case. The teaching week met the minimum requirements, it is now below the DfEE recommendations and further teaching time is lost through the movement between lessons in this large campus. However, cross-curricular themes and dimensions are now coordinated across subjects and included within the personal and social education programme. The range of subjects offered in the sixth form has been increased and students in Key Stage 4 can now follow NVQ courses. At the time of the previous report, Year 12 students followed a modular enrichment programme; this has only been reintroduced to Years 12 and 13 this academic year.

60. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment are satisfactory. They have improved since the previous report and now meet requirements fully. There is a clear policy for assessment, recording and reporting students' attainment and progress. Data is collected from before students enter the school and regular whole-school assessments are made. This information is beginning to be used to

establish minimum expected performance and value added so that the review system can identify underachievement and set targets both for individual students and departments.

61.Satisfactory use is made of assessment to inform curriculum planning. All departments follow the guidelines and teachers are accurate in their assessments but there are inconsistencies in application and in the way in which information is used. For example, not all departments involve students in their own assessment, although there is good practice in art, English and mathematics. The results of assessment are not always used effectively to set targets for improvement or to identify underachievement. Considerable effort is put into establishing accurate levels in design and technology and there is a good collection of examples of work to identify standards but these have yet to be used to best advantage in promoting progress. Apart from music and information technology, subjects across the school are beginning to use assessment to help plan teaching. For example, the curriculum in modern languages is being reviewed in the light of past examination performance and changes have been made to the teaching of physical education in Year 7.

62.Arrangements for the initial assessment and identification of students with special educational needs on arrival in school are adequate but ongoing assessment, monitoring and review, especially of students with individual education plans, is spasmodic. Annual reviews of students with statements have taken place in line with statutory requirements, but the review and updating of all other individual education plans is currently behind schedule.

63.Liaison between the special educational needs coordinator and departments is poor and the system of departmental representatives nominated to liaise on special education needs matters is not working. No system is in place to monitor levels of curricular support to individual students or to track their assessments with the result that some departments have begun to do this on an individual basis, with no standardised approach across the school.

71. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

64.The school makes very good overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with the moral and social provision being outstanding in quality. The provision stems from the mission statement of the school. This positive statement is being translated into a whole-school policy with vigour. The school recognises its responsibility to provide a wealth of experience to enable its students to mature into responsible citizens in a global society. The aims of the school are directly related to the promotion of these aspects of school life. The aims give rise to the promotion of a clear set of values concerned with consideration and courtesy, pride in achievement and hard work, understanding and tolerance which stems from self discipline, and respect for oneself and for others. These values and this vision form the basis of the policy statement that provides the structure for the provision through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. However, in order to assess the effectiveness of the subjects and the response that is made to the policies an audit of provision has yet to be undertaken.

65.The quality of provision for the spiritual development of students is good. The school encourages students to discover their own values and beliefs through the quest for meaning and purpose which is encouraged in subjects such as religious education and personal and social education. In these subjects students learn about beliefs and values and are able to question and consider their own beliefs as well as begin to develop a respect for the right of others to hold different beliefs. In English, students have the opportunity to explore their emotions and feelings to issues such as race and gender. In the creative arts, there is an emphasis on exploring and reflecting on the work of artists and writers to transmit the enthusiasm of staff, to raise student awareness and encourage enquiry. In art, there is clear recognition that the spiritual dimension is important in the evaluation of the work of great artists and the students' own artwork. Less well developed are the opportunities to reflect.

66.The quality of the acts of worship is good and reflects the ethos of the school. Each year group attends one act of worship a week. On other days time for reflection is planned to take place in form

periods at the start of each day. Despite the efforts made by the senior management team and the monitoring of the time for reflection, there is considerable variation in its quality. Too often the reflection is rather perfunctory and fails to give the form period a focus, and it fails to become a shared experience. In contrast, the main assemblies have a clear focus, the students frequently taking part in the presentations. In the main, Christian sources are used but other sources are used when appropriate. An opportunity to reflect or pray is included. The school does not comply fully with statutory requirements regarding acts of collective worship.

67. The quality of provision for moral education is outstanding. The school endeavours to make students aware of what is right and wrong. The school dress code is always adhered to. The behaviour policy is effective and is regarded by students as being fair and just. There is a strong sense of cooperation and fair play evident. Students are expected to respect truth, justice and property as well as each other. The adults are very good role models. Staff show courtesy to students acting in a non-confrontational manner frequently, being calm and patient in lessons. Students are encouraged to act with integrity and to take responsibility for their actions. A caring responsible attitude is implicit in the ethos of the school. Opportunities are provided for students to discuss moral issues and the choices they have. Several subjects make substantial contributions to moral development. The strong sense of responsibility carries over to physical education where the students learn to play by the rules and apply their understanding of fair play.

68. The quality of provision for social education is outstanding. The social development of students is regarded as a crucial element of the curriculum. A high priority is encouraging students to understand that they belong to several social groups, that within those groups they have responsibilities as well as rights and that in order for students to fulfil themselves they need to work collaboratively together and become involved in the community. Students are encouraged to relate positively to each other in school, several subjects providing opportunities for collaborative work, most notably in physical education. Similarly students have opportunities to use their initiative and develop independently, learning to organise and take responsibility for themselves in design and technology, for instance. Participation in school life is encouraged in a variety of ways. There is a good extra-curricular programme of sports with students being encouraged to join local clubs to widen their experience. There is a good range of opportunities for students to exercise responsibility and leadership. The opportunities range from form monitors to prefects with some sixth formers assisting staff in main classes from time to time. Visits with a residential component to locations in Britain and to Europe are a regular feature of school life. There is a range of social events organised for students during the year.

69. Action in support of charitable causes is a strength of the school. Each year students support a number of charities. The school through its links with external agencies fosters citizenship, human rights, environmental awareness and other global concerns. The areas of interest involve local, national and international agencies. For a number of years the school has been responsible for training sixth formers from across the city to take part in a UN model assembly held each autumn in the town hall. The school coordinated the Liverpool celebration of the 50th anniversary of the declaration of Human Rights. Using its links with overseas schools, a high quality calendar and a recipe book marked the event. The school's work on citizenship is recognised by awards from Lord Alton and from the Hope 2000 Award from Liverpool Hope University. Parents and students make annual nominations for good citizenship awards.

70. The quality of provision for students to appreciate their own cultural tradition and to begin to appreciate the diversity and richness of others is very good. The school endeavours to impart an appreciation of the richness of their cultural heritage and an ability to take a critical view of it. As with other aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development the experiences available to students are encountered in and beyond the classroom. In a number of subjects support for the cultural development of students follows the National Curriculum guidelines in those subjects. However, in others provision goes beyond these requirements. The school often has an artist in residence. The curriculum provides opportunities to explore everything from African design to Ancient Greek art and Chinese brush paintings. Regular visits are provided to the various national and regional collections,

galleries and museums on Merseyside. Through “Comenius” and “Socrates” funding the staff in the school are in direct contact with others in seven different European countries and with Taiwan, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

71.The previous report concluded that the school provided effective support and encouragement for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. This standard has been maintained and has been enhanced and now has some outstanding features.

79. Support, guidance and students’ welfare

72.The quality of support and guidance is good, and is valued by all students. The high standard of pastoral care and discipline is much appreciated by parents and is one of the reasons why they choose to send their daughters to the school.

73.The school’s pastoral system creates an environment that promotes successfully students’ academic attainments and personal development. It is soundly based on form tutors, who are led and supported by heads of year. These pastoral year teams stay with the same student groups from Year 7 to Year 11. The system, therefore, allows tutors and heads of year to get to know students well as individuals and makes good provision for continuity of care. Pastoral staff have adequate time for their roles. The very good relations that they have with students, who find them approachable and easy to confide in, enhance the quality of their work.

74.The school has established good procedures for monitoring the progress and personal development of its students. Students’ progress in each subject of the curriculum is monitored effectively by departmental staff. Their overall progress, including their behaviour, personal development and attainment in all subjects, is well monitored by the pastoral teams attached to each year group. The school’s behaviour policies and referral procedures ensure that heads of year and form tutors have a full picture of students’ attitudes and conduct. Pastoral staff track students’ academic attainments through checks on homework diaries and samples of work and report any concerns which they have to curriculum coordinators and heads of department. The monitoring system, therefore, acts as an effective link between the academic and pastoral area of school life. There are good arrangements for following up monitoring with practical support aimed at raising attainment. For example, all students get individual interviews with their tutors, and all students in Year 11 benefit from special mentoring. The provision for monitoring and support is extensive, but its effectiveness is impaired by weaknesses in assessment and reporting of students’ academic progress. Records of achievement, which form the basis of the system, do not include enough information on attainment to give students an accurate and full account of how well they are doing.

75.Students with special educational needs with emotional or behavioural difficulties have access to support through the school’s pastoral system and this need is indicated on individual education plans where available. The school liaises on a regular basis with outside agencies involved in meeting the needs of these students.

76.There are very good arrangements to help students to cope with life in school and the wider community, and to prepare them for the next stage of education. The school makes excellent provision for the induction of new students via taster days and, in the case of the current year’s intake, the “summer school” for Year 6 students. The school’s programme of personal and social education gives good coverage to health education, sex education and careers guidance. Students are also well briefed on GCSE and sixth form courses through a series of informative booklets. The school makes good provision for the teaching of study skills and provides practical aids to study in the form of information technology and homework clubs.

77.Measures for promoting good behaviour are excellent, and make a major contribution to the good order and high standards of discipline that prevail in school. Expectations regarding conduct are clearly communicated to both students and parents, and are backed by effective procedures. Prevention of bullying is taken very seriously. There is a good formal policy and any incidents are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Students are highly appreciative of the work of tutors and heads of year in this area. Levels of supervision arrangements are satisfactory, with prefects making a useful contribution. The school's system of rewards and sanctions provides an appropriate scale of incentives and deterrents. The use of referral and isolation from the classroom is very effective. Exclusion is used only rarely and as a last resort. The school has an assertive discipline policy which members of staff apply with fairness and consistency. Overall, teachers manage behaviour in the classroom very effectively. They maintain good order in lessons, and create an environment in which successful teaching and learning can take place.

78.The school's attendance procedures are satisfactory. Form tutors call registers at the beginning of school sessions in accordance with legal requirements and, together with heads of year, monitor attendance carefully. The school makes full use of targets and incentives in an effort to improve students' performance. It also follows up unexplained absences quickly and where necessary refers cases to the education welfare officer. However, these considerable strengths are balanced by weaknesses. Procedures for promoting prompt attendance are inadequate. Although there is a very serious problem with punctuality, there is no clear definition of "late for the lesson", and the school takes no effective action to stop students wasting time when moving between classrooms. In the sixth form, registers do not provide an accurate record of students' presence on the site, which undermines their usefulness as a tool for monitoring attendance.

79.Although the school makes satisfactory provision for risk assessments, its arrangements for promoting the health, safety and welfare of students are unsatisfactory. Portable electrical equipment has not had the statutory annual safety check. Provision for dealing with sick students is inadequate. The school has no medical room and students who are taken ill or have sustained minor injuries have to wait outside the school office for someone to take them home.

80.Measures for child protection are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. The school has a formal policy on the issue and a designated child protection officer, who has had appropriate training. Members of staff are aware of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a disclosure or suspicion of child abuse.

88. Partnership with parents and the community

81.Overall, the school has a good partnership with parents and the community. It has maintained and developed the many beneficial contacts with local and overseas organisations that were listed in the previous report. In the case of links with the wider community the school's provision is outstanding. It enriches its curriculum in a unique way and this has a positive impact on standards of attainment.

82.The home/school partnership is satisfactory. Most parents are at least passively supportive of the school. They approve of its aims, and the standards of work and behaviour which it seeks to achieve. They feel welcome in school and support members of staff when there are concerns over children's attendance and discipline. There is a well-established school association, known as the Community Association, and although only a minority of parents takes part in the running of it, its fund raising and social events receive good support from students' families. Parents' active involvement with their children's learning is less extensive. Many read and sign homework diaries and come to consultation evenings to discuss students' progress with teachers, but there are few direct links between subject departments and home. The school recognises the importance of strong home/school links and is aware of the need to increase parental involvement. Partnership with parents is therefore promoted vigorously at whole school level. For example the school has produced study packs which give parents valuable

guidance on supporting children's learning at home. Recently, the school recruited a number of volunteer classroom helpers, using the opportunities provided by its "summer school" to contact parents of Year 6 students.

83.The quality of information for parents is good and encourages them to be involved with children's learning and the life of the school. There are regular newsletters that contain a wealth of detail about students' successes, school events and community links. There are also useful booklets that explain the curriculum. Parents of new students are adequately briefed through induction evenings and the school prospectus. Students' homework diaries are available to parents as an on-going line of communication between home and school, and as a day-to-day source of information on what children are learning. The school makes good provision for briefing and consultation evenings. Parents get plenty of opportunities to discuss students' progress with teachers and form tutors and to raise any concerns that they may have. The school keeps them fully informed if there are problems with their children's attendance, standards of work, or behaviour. The quality of written reports is satisfactory. In the course of the year parents receive an adequate account of how students have progressed, and what they have learned, from their Records of Achievement. The system meets legal requirements, with National Curriculum levels being reported at the end of Key Stage 3. However, most Records of Achievement concentrate on students' attitudes to learning and contain insufficient information on levels of attainment. As a result they fail to give the majority of parents a clear statement of standards that their children have attained in each subject of the curriculum.

84.Partnership with other schools is very good and works for the advantage of students. Liaison with feeder primaries over the transfer of students to secondary education is very effective, and there is very good cooperation on other issues of common interest through the "cluster" of local schools. These include curricular matters, as in the case of the recent joint in-service training for Headteachers on literacy and numeracy. There are also excellent contacts with other schools via students' joint participation in extra-curricular activities, such as the United Nations Day, and via plays and concerts.

85.Holly Lodge has very good links with colleges of further and higher education in Liverpool, from which its sixth form students obtain significant benefits. For example, sixth formers have the opportunity to attend master classes at universities in the city. There are long established links with teacher training institutions.

86.The school has an excellent partnership with the wider community. It values its local and international links and has a policy of promoting and extending them. It has established a wide network of connections that enhance provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and promote students' academic and personal progress. Many subject departments, for example physical education and business studies, have links with local organisations that enrich the curriculum. Residential visits, and e-mail links with schools in other European countries, widen students' horizons and enhance their progress in modern foreign languages. The school's strong links with local businesses makes a major contribution to careers education. With the help of local employers, students are able to take part in activities, such as work experience and Young Enterprise, which increase their understanding of industry and the world of work. Programmes of work experience are well organised, and offer students in Year 10 and GNVQ students a good choice of placements. Industry links also contribute positively to National Curriculum subjects, as when students visit supermarkets and banks in order to develop their numeracy skills.

87.The school strongly promotes community service. Students are successfully encouraged to be active citizens and take part in community initiatives, as when art students designed a poster to advertise the Police and Community Programme. They are extensively involved in raising funds for good causes, many of which have an international dimension. The EUROBOUM project is an excellent example of the school's achievements in this area. Students run EUROBOUM as an ethical business in cooperation with Holly Lodge's linked schools and donate all profits from the Orchard of Hope to UNICEF and

95. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

95. Leadership and management

88.The leadership of the school is very good. The Headteacher provides very good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. A very clear direction for the work of the school has been established. There is a determination to ensure that students who attend the school achieve their potential.

89.The Headteacher has successfully steered the school through a period of considerable change whilst maintaining a focus on raising students' standards of attainment. On taking up her appointment three years ago, the Headteacher was faced with a significant deficit budget, an urgent need to make changes to the staffing structure and part-way through a multi-million pound capital building programme. The budget deficit has been overturned. The move to a single site is now complete and has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of accommodation. The reduction in the staffing budget has been achieved with the cooperation of most staff. The Headteacher is well supported by other members of the senior management team whose individual skills complement those of their colleagues. Members of the senior management team carry out their various roles well. They know the school well and work hard to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

90.The quality of leadership at middle management level is good but varies from very good in modern foreign languages through to poor in special educational needs. Initiatives prioritised in the school development plan for special educational needs have been either slow in implementation or insufficiently planned for the future. This is in spite of special needs being prioritised regularly in recent years. The number of students currently supported and per capita spending do not adequately reflect the level of need and there is no formally stated intention of how this is to be addressed. The special needs coordinator is not managing the new system of non-specialist teacher support successfully, a system which was introduced by the school with insufficient training for the staff involved. New developments such as the programme for the Gifted and Talented child, the appointment of learning mentors and the proposed learning support unit will need careful integration into an overall management strategy which can take full account of existing expertise and thus deliver a clear and cohesive provision for both ends of the ability scale.

91.The governing body has a very good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. It takes an active role in monitoring the work of the school. There is a planned programme of subject reviews, and governors work with subjects in identifying areas for development, setting targets and monitoring the progress made towards these targets. It is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses within subjects, such as the weaknesses in geography and science and has worked with the Headteacher in monitoring the performance of these subjects.

92.The ethos of the school is very good. Parents are very supportive of the school and are pleased with the values that the school promotes. Through its excellent links with the wider community and through its strong pastoral system it raises the self-esteem of its students. The school also strives to attain high standards and is successful in achieving this when compared to schools with students from similar backgrounds. It is very successful in meeting its mission statement.

93.The monitoring and support of teaching and of the curriculum is good. There is a programme of subject reviews that includes formal observation of all teachers of the subject. Examination results are discussed and action plans drawn up to support subjects. The results of this approach are clear in the improvement in teaching and GCSE results that are rising at a much faster rate than the national

average.

94. Development planning, at both a whole school and individual subject basis is very good, with carefully identified priorities appropriate to the needs of the school. Priorities are clearly linked to raising standards and improving the educational experiences of the students. Plans identify time scales and responsibilities for developments as well as indicating the costs to the school.

95. The governing body, however, fails to meet some of its statutory requirements. There is insufficient provision for religious education in the sixth form. Access to appropriate information technology in music at Key Stage 3 is limited and in information technology at Key Stage 4 statutory requirements are not being met fully. The school does not comply fully with statutory requirements regarding an act of collective worship.

96. The school has made good progress since the previous report. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and standards of attainment have risen at a much faster rate than the national average. The rate of attendance has improved although still unsatisfactory: students' punctuality is still a concern. Under the leadership of the Headteacher, most of the weaknesses identified in the previous report have been overcome.

97. Given the improvements made, the quality of leadership provided by the Headteacher and the senior management team, the school is very well placed to continue its improvement.

105. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

98. The match of the number, qualifications and experience of the staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. There are 78 full-time qualified teachers and 9 part-time staff. One other full-time teacher is unqualified, but her experience is such that standards of teaching are not affected. Otherwise all teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach. The part-time teachers provide useful flexibility for the management of the timetable as the school grows in size. They make a full contribution to the school and attend departmental meetings wherever possible; a small number have commitments as form tutors. Those with responsibility have adequate non-teaching time to fulfil their roles. Since the previous inspection the Headteacher has managed carefully changes in staffing. Staffing provision for students with special educational needs is poor. Of all the school staff currently involved in supporting students only the special needs coordinator has appropriate experience and qualifications.

99. The match between the needs of the curriculum and the number of support staff is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient learning support assistants to meet the needs of the students and this is one reason for students with special educational needs not making the same progress as other students. The shortages in technician support in art, reported at the last inspection, have been made good. The school now has two school nurses who attend once a week, working very closely with the heads of year and giving valuable support to students. The school is well served by its administrative and site staff, who make important contributions to the smooth running of the school. All non-teaching staff have access to training and representatives are now included in regular meetings with the Headteacher. There is now a part-time qualified librarian and a full-time learning resource manager to take over the supervision of the renovated learning resource centre.

100. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are satisfactory. The induction of newly qualified teachers is very effectively organised with a centralised programme and close mentoring by line managers, including classroom observation. Careful attention has been paid to the new arrangements for the probationary year of the four newly qualified teachers. The quality of mentoring by curriculum managers varies, but it is mostly very good. The induction of more experienced staff new to the school is less formal and less detailed.

101.The staff development policy is appropriate. Much school-based in-service training has been organised. Careful records are kept of courses attended by staff. Courses are evaluated well for their value for money in the short-term, but not so rigorously for their long-term effectiveness in raising standards of teaching and learning. The appraisal system scheme is in place; its overall quality in the school is satisfactory. All staff are observed teaching, given feedback on their performance and have the opportunity for a professional development interview with their line manager. The quality of the appraisal varies between departments and requires closer monitoring by the senior management team.

102.The school's accommodation is very good. It provides very well for the large number of students and enables the school to offer an extensive range of learning experiences in stimulating surroundings that include high quality facilities. Subjects such as, for example, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education are taught in new purpose-built specialist rooms, using very good modern equipment. A new Resources Centre is to be opened shortly which will provide excellent support for students' learning, both for class-based activities and their own independent research. Another important development is the extensive community use of the facilities, including, evening institute classes, local clubs and societies, and summer schools.

103.This is a very marked improvement on the situation reported in the last inspection. The buildings are now on one site, there are several new blocks, and money has been well spent on renovating and upgrading most of the remaining older buildings. The work of renovation is continuing to improve further the older buildings and facilities. The staff has worked hard and with commitment to maximise the opportunity provided by the major investment; they have supported strongly their colleagues with major responsibilities for the improvements, namely, the site manager and site supervisors. Good use is made, by the teachers, of corridors to display students' work. The site, however, remains a very large one, with 12 buildings spread out over 25 acres, and it continues to pose a challenge to the organisational skills of the school's senior management team. Minimising the incursion into curriculum time of the movement of students between lessons is a major consideration for their timetable arrangements.

104.Considerable investment has been put into a great improvement in the security of the site. The school buildings and grounds are well cleaned and maintained and, generally, the students treat their surroundings with respect. There is little evidence of graffiti. Their tendency to drop litter in the grounds is, however, a problem. This leads to inappropriate and costly use of the site supervisors to keep the problem under control.

105.Resources to support learning are good. Departments throughout the school have good resources except in music, where there is no appropriate access to information technology at Key Stage 3, and humanities where there is insufficient access to information technology and what there is does not fully support learning in the subject. This limits students' development as independent learners. Departments have an adequate supply of books except in the area of special educational needs where many books are old and out of date. The ratio of books to students is in line with the national average. The school spent over 12 per cent of the total budget on resources last year; this is well above average.

106.The ratio of students to computers is much better than the national average and in the near future the new resource centre will become operational. There is sufficient library provision that broadly reflects the range of interests and learning needs of the students.

107.The school and subject departments make good use of resources beyond the school by organising visits relevant to aspects of the curriculum and through many productive industrial, community and business links. The use of these resources is having a positive impact on students' personal development.

108. Since the last report, there has been a significant improvement in the level of resources in the school.

116. The efficiency of the school

117. The financial systems and governance of the school are good. The funding of the school in 1998/99 was broadly in line with the national average. The school received £2320 per student compared to the national average of £2298.

117.

118. Financial planning is very good. At a whole-school level, financial planning is very good with a carefully planned approach to the budget process. The current school development plan builds upon previous developments and includes measurable targets. These targets are well supported through very good financial planning. The central aim of the development plan is targeted towards raising students' standards of attainment and improving the learning environment. The governing body has a very good understanding of the difficulties that the school has faced, and continues to face, and is informed on a regular basis of the budgetary position through the finance committee.

109. The school makes satisfactory use of teaching and support staff. Staff are generally deployed efficiently but the present structure of the school day, and the below average length of the teaching week, leads to very poor punctuality to lessons and contributes to the unsatisfactory progress in some subjects at Key Stage 4. The accommodation is used well although there are occasions when students need to move between the far ends of the site with no travel time being allowed. This leads to a fragmented start to the lessons. Resources are well deployed and used effectively.

110. The school did not receive any capital grants. Funding for the new resources block is from the school's own budget. The management of funds for students with special educational needs and the use of non-specialist teaching staff in support is ineffective. There is insufficiently accurate monitoring of spending on special needs students against their identified targets for improvement.

111. The efficiency of financial control and school administration is very good. The school has turned round a deficit budget to one, this year, with a projected surplus. This has been brought about by an increase in the number of students on roll, increased funding from the Local Education Authority and the willingness of the governing body and the Headteacher to take difficult decisions to reduce the staffing budget, as well as the capacity to generate income. At the time of the previous report, the staffing budget was very high; it is now in-line with the national average. The latest auditor's report raised a number of minor issues that the school is in the process of addressing. The quality of the school administration and routine administration of the school's budget is very good. There are efficient computer based systems in place to allow monitoring of the school's expenditure against budget. The school has well defined procedures for obtaining quotations and tenders before placing orders.

112. The socio-economic circumstances of the overall student population are well below the national average, as is their attainment on entry. At the age of 14, overall attainment is below the level expected and at the age of 16 it is still below. At the age of 19, students' performance is well below that expected. Given that most students make good progress, respond very positively to the education provided and the improvement in examination results, and with the average student unit costs, the school provides good value for money.

122.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

122. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

122. English

113. In the 1998 National Curriculum tests the proportion of students at the age of 14 who attained level 5 and above was above the national average and the proportion attaining level 6 and above was well above the national average. Results improved markedly from 1996 to 1997 and remained at much the same level from 1997 to 1998. In 1999 the proportions of students attaining level 5 and above and level 6 and above were both lower than they were in 1998. In 1998, the average National Curriculum level attained by students was well above the national average when compared with all schools and very high in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds.

114. In 1998 the proportions of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C and grades A*-G in English were both below the national average. In English literature the proportion attaining grades A*-C was above the national average and the proportion attaining grades A*-G was in line with the national average. The trend of results has been variable over the last three years. Results attained in 1999 were lower than those attained in 1998 in both subjects. Students' results in English literature, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were significantly better than those obtained in other subjects.

115. In 1998 results achieved at GCE A-level in English language and English literature were in line with the national averages. Whilst there has been some variation from year to year, results have generally improved over the past three years. Results achieved in 1999 were broadly in line with those achieved in 1998.

116. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. This does not necessarily represent a drop of standards since the 1998 National Curriculum tests, but rather reflects variations in the pattern of attainment from year to year. Attainment at the age of 16 is below the national average and attainment at the age of 19 is in line with it. Both judgements are consistent with the 1998 GCSE and A-level results.

117. Students' skills in speaking and listening are a relative strength at all levels in the school. The majority of students participate readily in oral work. Higher attainers speak fluently, possess a sound vocabulary and often introduce a lively or unusual turn of phrase into their speech. Most students enjoy discussing personal or social topics, but only the minority of higher attaining students engage in discussing more abstract or analytic topics. Lower attaining students usually express themselves briefly and often find difficulty in explaining themselves more fully in response to questions. All students take part in drama lessons in Key Stage 3 and become more aware of how speech can be enhanced by the appropriate use of non-verbal communication such as mime, dress and facial expression. Students assume different roles in improvisation. Most students listen with a satisfactory degree of attention, but lower attainers possess only a limited span of concentration. Higher attainers in Year 11 and in the sixth form take full and accurate notes.

118. By the age of 14 students read novels and poetry that are appropriate for their age. Higher attainers read aloud with clarity and good expression. In one class students were able to decide which were the most important dramatic moments in a passage, to construct a story board based upon these and then move on to suggesting how the events might be filmed. Lower attainers read slowly and laboriously and are frequently dependent upon teachers to help them establish meaning. By the age of 16, higher attainers go on to read more complex texts and to deepen their understanding of what they study. However, middle and low attaining students continue to be hesitant readers and their understanding is

confined to the literal meaning. By the age of 19, students use their reading skills to study prescribed texts, and are able to appreciate the salient features of them, but they do not go on to read more widely or for their own pleasure or interest.

119. By the age of 14 most students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narratives, descriptions, diaries and reports. Some explore a range of poetry and some of Year 7 students were seen to enjoy expressing themselves in Haiku-style poems. By the age of 16 students go on to widen the range of their skills and higher attainers are able to produce convincing discursive essays and detailed examinations of characters presented in literature. However, the work of middle and lower attaining students is marred by unsatisfactory spelling, grammar and punctuation and by limited vocabulary. By the age of 19 students can produce accurate summaries and display sound insight into the moral themes conveyed in what they have studied. However, many have a restricted technical vocabulary and find difficulty in expressing an effective independent assessment of what they read.

120. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students cooperate well with their teachers and with each other. Whilst many students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are conscientious, only a few use their initiative to deepen their understanding of the work or to look beyond set tasks in a way that might be expected of students of this age. One group of students in the sixth form is making unsatisfactory progress. This is related to difficulties over continuity of teaching. At Key Stage 4, students' unsatisfactory rate of attendance adversely affects their progress. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 whilst other students make good progress. Teachers' planning does not adequately take into account students' specific needs, and on occasions learning support assistance is not effectively deployed in the classroom to help students to raise their standards. Students with special educational needs in Key Stage 4 make progress at the same rate as other students.

121. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Students wish to make progress and cooperate well with their teachers and each other to that end. They are ready to answer questions in class and enjoy working collaboratively. They respect the views of others and treat property with due care.

122. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. A particular strength of the teaching is the effective management of students. Discipline is firm and teachers insist upon their standards being met, but in a manner which avoids confrontation and is often good-humoured. Good teaching also takes place when lessons are planned in depth, the aims of the lesson are communicated to the students, the prior attainment of students is taken into account, all students are involved in the lessons, pace is maintained and there is variety in the work set for students. Teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective when planning does not sufficiently take account of the length of lessons and so students move off task in the later stages of lessons; tasks set are inappropriate for the age group being taught; the prior attainment of students is not adequately taken into account and learning support assistance is not effectively deployed. The quality of day-to-day assessment and the use made of homework are both satisfactory.

123. Leadership in the department is satisfactory. However, the quality of the subject-specific support for recently appointed and newly qualified teachers is limited. Classroom monitoring takes place but has not yet resulted in best practice being seen and shared by the whole department.

124. Since the previous inspection students have continued to achieve standards which are high in comparison to their prior attainment. There was no clear judgement made on the quality of teaching.

134. **Mathematics**

125. In the 1998 National Curriculum tests the proportions of students at the age of 14 achieving level 5

and above and level 6 and above were below the national averages. The average National Curriculum level achieved was below the national average. However, the performance of students was very high in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The numeracy skills of students are weak and this has an adverse affect of attainment in tests. The proportions of students achieving grades A*-C and A*-G in the GCSE examinations were below the national average. Students' results in mathematics, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were not significantly different than those obtained in other subjects. There has been an improving trend in the achievement at GCSE. In 1998, five students were entered for GCE A-level mathematics and all gained grades A-E. This is a small group and is strongly reliant on individual capabilities. Because of the small group, statistical analysis, and comparison with national averages, is unreliable.

126. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, higher attaining students develop their own strategies for solving problems. They begin to organise their work, and present information and results in tables. They describe situations mathematically using simple algebraic equations. Low attainers use a systematic approach to problem solving but need guidance. They discuss their work using mathematical language and present the results of their findings in a table but they are unable to identify the pattern. Low attaining students recognise expressions in algebraic symbolic form and use simple formulae involving one and two operations. They construct graphs of linear functions and describe the characteristics of graphs. In shapes, space and measures, middle attaining students calculate areas of combined shapes of rectangles using formulae. Low attaining students understand the probability scale, while the higher attainers use tree diagrams to identify the probability of combined events.

127. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally. In solving problems, middle attainers carry through substantial tasks and solve problems by breaking them down into smaller tasks. They solve simple linear equations involving brackets. Middle attaining students use trigonometric ratios to solve problems with right angled triangles. High attainers extend their understanding of trigonometry by using the sine and cosine rules appropriately. Students use scientific calculators accurately and sensibly when solving problems.

128. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations. In pure mathematics, students are familiar with different types of numbers and have learnt the relevant symbols that show the relations between them. They use these to solve problems and describe the types of numbers represented. Students are competent in transforming graphs. In mechanics, students recall and use Newton's laws of motion. They resolve forces in two directions and resolve the simultaneous equations that result. Their understanding of vectors is sound. In statistics students understand how to group data and plot cumulative frequency graphs using the upper boundary of the class interval.

129. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students make good progress where the pace is brisk and a variety of teaching techniques maintains their interest. This promotes good understanding in mathematics and students develop good mathematical skills. Progress is restricted where teaching methods are limited and the pace is slow. Unsatisfactory attendance at Key Stage 4 affects longer-term progress adversely. High attaining students progress well when assimilating previous knowledge of fractions and apply it to percentages. They quickly progress from simple percentages to a more complex understanding of the concept of percentages by working out simple percentages of amounts. At Key Stage 4, good progress is made, where teachers use questions effectively and by asking challenging questions they reinforce previous learning. Middle attainers consolidate skills and understanding introduced in previous lessons. They work at a brisk pace in practising techniques in using trigonometry to find any side of right-angled triangles. Students studying GCE A-level make satisfactory progress in consolidating understanding of Newton's Laws and applying them. Progress is good where students are consolidating new techniques.

Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, students with special educational needs make less progress than other students. Although the department has adapted schemes of work and the curriculum allows for teachers to assist each other, there is no individual support and this means that the progress of these students is less than that of other students.

130. Students' attitudes are good. The majority of students work hard in lessons and respond well to questions. They sustain concentration throughout the lesson. This good attitude to work and eagerness to do well promotes good progress at Key Stage 3. Behaviour is very good in the majority of lessons. Students handle equipment responsibly, for example when using calculators or when in groups working with practical materials. At all key stages relationships with each other, their teachers and other adults are very good. Students are courteous and show respect for their teachers and others. When given the opportunity, collaboration and cooperation is good. When working in groups they work well together and cooperate with each other. They are often given the responsibility for marking their own work and carry out corrections during the lessons. They talk confidently about their work, explaining it coherently. The department is an orderly community with positive attitudes to work. The response of students with special educational needs is very good. They enjoy their work and are proud of their achievements. In the GCE A-level lessons, students have a high level of concentration although response in class discussions is weak.

131. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics and there are often high expectations of what the students should be learning and of their behaviour. Lessons are planned well with clear objectives and these are communicated to students. Tasks are clearly explained allowing students to follow instructions and the better lessons provide extension work for the higher attainers in the group. Teaching methods are better at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, a variety of teaching methods and techniques are used. For example, a combination of practical work, directed teaching, and individual work, is used to maintain students' interest and this promotes good progress. Where teaching is weak, there is little extension work, and students are repeating work that they have already mastered. There is excessive individualised work. The management of students is very good. Homework is set regularly and marked. It reinforces knowledge and understanding acquired during the lessons.

132. The department is well managed and the quality of subject leadership is good. The members of the department have clear roles and this leads to a good working environment and teamwork. Planning of work is thoroughly undertaken with a very good development plan. There are insufficient opportunities for students to use information technology at all key stages.

133. Overall, the subject has made good progress. There has been a steady improvement in GCSE examination results since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved and there are a significant number of examples of good teaching and an increasing number of lessons where the teaching is very good.

143. **Science**

134. In the 1998 National Curriculum tests the proportions of students at the age of 14 achieving level 5 and above and level 6 and above were below the national averages. In 1998, the average National Curriculum level attained by students was well below the national average when compared with all schools but well above in comparison with schools with students from similar backgrounds. The average National Curriculum level achieved by students has fallen over the past three years. Students do not perform as well in science as they do in English and mathematics.

135. In 1998 the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C in double award science was well

below the national average but the proportion attaining GCSE grades A*-G was in line with the national average. Results for single award science follow a similar pattern. With reference to the separate sciences, the number of grades A*-C achieved was well below average in biology, average in chemistry but far below in physics. Students' results in science, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were significantly worse than those obtained in other subjects. GCE A-level results for the three sciences were variable, but were generally below the national average.

136. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students have a satisfactory grasp of investigation techniques and complete practical work to a good standard. Students have a good understanding of the topics they are studying, for example, students in Year 9 discuss food chains and describe the structure of a plant cell. Students have a sound knowledge of safety procedures. However, many students do not use the technical vocabulary of the subject. Students' written work is well presented but contains many errors with the spelling of scientific terms. Their numerical skills are also weak with middle and lower attaining students struggling to use formulae correctly.

137. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are well below the level expected. That said, by the age of 16, most students understand variation and the inheritance of characteristics. However, many have a poor understanding of the concepts that underpin many scientific principles, particularly in physics. Students do not transfer skills from one area of science to another. With guidance, they plan investigations, form hypotheses and predict the outcome of experiments. Higher attaining students discuss the meaning of terms. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of environmental issues and the impact of science on the environment. They have a satisfactory understanding of how characteristics are inherited and use relevant terminology with reasonable accuracy. In Year 10, students explain how a blast furnace operates. Higher attaining students understand the reactivity of metals but middle and lower attainers struggle with these concepts.

138. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are below the course expectations. Many groups are small and this limits the opportunity for lively and effective discussion.

139. Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form but make unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Within the lessons seen progress is satisfactory at all key stages. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. Time is lost due to poor punctuality to lessons. The unsatisfactory attendance rate adversely impacts on the modular nature of the subject; students often lose up to a quarter of their module time through absence. There is no oversight of all the work by teachers. Teachers take responsibility for the planning and teaching of their own module but not for others. Students with poor literacy and numeracy skills are particularly disadvantaged in science due to the demands of scientific terminology and the need for mathematical calculations, especially in physics. Students measure accurately but struggle to produce relevant graphs or to interpret data.

140. Students have good attitudes. They enjoy the practical work but find the theory work of less interest. They are well behaved and most have a positive attitude towards their work at both key stages. They concentrate well in lessons, are keen to answer questions and most remain on task. During practical work, students work well together, taking responsibility for various tasks where necessary and pay attention to safety precautions. They are courteous towards each other and share ideas in investigative work. Discussions with students at both key stages indicated that most of them enjoy science. Sixth form students show a positive attitude towards their work and are capable of working well independently.

141. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory and in the sixth form it is good. Lessons are well planned with a variety of teaching strategies to maintain the interest of the students. Teachers demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject. Lesson objectives are

clearly stated at the beginning of every lesson so that students are well aware of what is expected of them. Teachers are quick to spot and react to potential problems. Effective use is made of a variety of resources and a high standard of discipline is maintained. Teachers have a friendly attitude towards students and expectation is generally satisfactory although higher attaining students are not always challenged. Generally time is well managed and lessons are well paced but occasionally they are rushed towards the end therefore not allowing time for consolidation. Homework is set and marked regularly and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Books are carefully marked with plenty of helpful and encouraging comments but these comments do not always inform the student how to improve.

142. The quality of management is satisfactory on a day-to-day basis and there are good administration and record keeping procedures. However, there are weaknesses in the management of the department. There is insufficient development of strategies to plan for difficulties of progress from one module to another or to ensure adequate opportunity for teaching common strands. Teachers support the students well within each module area but do not always claim responsibility for the progress of individual students across all areas of science. The new accommodation block of 12 laboratories provides a stimulating environment for the students and excellent use is made of the display areas both in the corridors and in the laboratories where students' work is displayed.

143. Issues raised during the last inspection have been addressed successfully, but progress since then has been unsatisfactory with GCSE results declining whilst the school's results have been improving.

153. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

153. Art

144. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C and A-G in 1998 was well above the national average. Students' results in art, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were significantly better than those obtained in other subjects. This maintains the good level of attainment since the previous inspection. At GCE A-level and the GNVQ Advanced, all students entered for the examination in 1998 were successful. These results were above the national averages. The GCE A-level results indicate a consistently good attainment over the past few years.

145. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the ages of 14, 16 and 19 are above the level expected of students of the same age nationally. At age 16 work inspected in lessons does not reach the very good level indicated in the examination results since the inspection took place early in the school year. By the age of 14, students produce artwork of good quality in the practical areas of the course. The majority of students work confidently in a range of materials and communicate their ideas in 2-dimension and 3-dimension. Painting and drawing skills are well developed. By the age of 16, students produce artwork of good quality. In work on Egyptian tiles, Renaissance plaster carvings and Les Fauves there was good evidence of well-finished work utilising a wide range of practical skills. Sketchbooks are well used to refine and develop ideas, and research on artists made effective use of information technology. Many students are familiar with key art-specific terminology. However, students often lack confidence in evaluating their work. By the age of 19, students build on the good practice of earlier years and produce work with a high-level of finish. Their work on print making, still life and Egyptian boxes indicated a secure understanding of the need to develop work in progress. Sketchbooks were well used to develop ideas and research work on artists. Evaluative skills are less evident. In a GNVQ lesson, students worked at an impressive rate refining designs leading to a pot making project. Their drawing and modifying skills are very good. Students have a good knowledge of artists and awareness of Liverpool's major art collections. At GCE A-level, students demonstrate a wide range of skills relating to their individual projects. Life drawing work was of a high standard and reflected confident drawing. Mixed media work on multi-cultural stimuli indicated flair for design and presentation in both African and American Indian work.

146.Students make good progress at all key stages including those with special educational needs. Where the curriculum requires writing and research skills progress is satisfactory for the majority at Key Stage 3, but students with limited literacy skills make slow progress. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form progress in written work is good. Progress in evaluative skills is weak throughout all key stages.

147.Students have very good attitudes to their work. The high quantity of finished art work reflects a pride in their achievements. In all lessons students worked with high levels of concentration. All students remain on task and in most lessons work independently on their projects. Behaviour is very good and students display friendly, open and positive relationships with teachers and fellow students.

148.The quality of teaching is good at all key stages. Students benefit from teachers who have good subject knowledge often enhanced by practical experience outside school (for example, one is an artist who regularly exhibits work in the city). They have an excellent knowledge of the city's rich artistic life and use this in their teaching with both resources and visits to galleries. In the best lessons teachers set high expectations and challenge students with work of a lively pace, for example in a GNVQ foundation class. Planning is imaginative and coherent throughout the department. Students particularly benefit from the unusually wide range of projects and stimuli offered. Teachers are particularly effective where they use examples directly related to the students' own life experiences, as in the range of stimuli used to teach the emotional impact of colour in Year 8. Teaching methods vary across the department. The most effective lessons are aided by incisive questioning, clear strategies for success and imaginative materials. Some excellent individual advice and coaching is given at examination level. In a few lessons teachers use terminology which is not sufficiently clarified and understood by all students. All teachers provide a very supportive learning environment and operate fair, friendly and consistent discipline. Resources are well used. In a few lessons time is wasted setting up or clearing materials away. Formal assessment is efficiently managed but verbal assessment during practical activities is often limited to praise rather than providing detailed evaluation on how students might improve their ideas. An imaginative range of homework is provided and promptly marked.

149.The department is well managed. Standards in art and design are greatly enhanced by the range of opportunities provided for visits to galleries and museums. The use of Artists in Residence provides outstanding opportunities for students to work with professionals and contribute their own ideas towards major projects, some of which are on view in the city.

160. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. There has been an improvement in students' standards of attainment and the quality of teaching.

160.

160. Design and technology

160.

150.The proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1998 was below the national average. The proportion gaining grades A*-G was close to the national average. Results show a slight upward trend although at a slower rate than found nationally. Students' results in design and technology, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were not significantly different to those obtained in other subjects.

151.In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students understand the design process and carry out basic research. They rely heavily on their teachers and there is little independent development of ideas or experimentation. Written commentary on investigations and development of ideas are often limited, reflecting weak literacy skills. The majority of students explain their ideas but they do not remember technical vocabulary well. In food technology and textiles, teachers are using word displays that are helping students to develop their use of language. There is a wide range of practical skills that

affects standards in all material areas. Higher attaining students use hand tools and machines competently to make good quality products. However, many students have under-developed skills, which is shown, for example, when they find it difficult to cut accurately. This adversely affects the overall quality and finish of products.

152. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally. Students produce appropriate design briefs and specifications but exploration and development are limited by their lack of confidence in their own abilities. Students measure with reasonable accuracy, draw to scale and construct patterns for designs. The majority of students need considerable support in turning their designs into products.

153. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Students enter the school with well below average skills and knowledge, and have a very wide range of previous experience. Progress is best in practical skills, such as the ability to set up machines and to choose appropriate tools. The recent introduction of specialist equipment has led to rapid progress in control technology in Year 9. Progress in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. It is slowed for all students by the erratic attendance of a substantial minority of students because teachers have to revisit work that has been missed. This is made worse by students being unable to catch up with coursework effectively because they lack independent study skills. Students with special educational needs are well supported by teachers; work is adapted to their needs effectively and they make similar progress to other students.

154. Students' attitudes are good. Behaviour in lessons is usually very good; tools and materials are treated with care. Students are usually keen to learn and show enthusiasm for the subject. They have good relationships with teachers and each other. A particular feature is the way in which students support and help each other in all areas. However, they have little initiative and rely heavily on their teachers.

155. The quality of teaching is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers have good command of their subject and are well aware of the needs of their students. Students' low levels of literacy present considerable challenges to teachers which they work hard to meet. Lessons are well planned and are designed to stretch students of all levels of attainment. Enthusiasm is stimulated. Standards are clearly set and reinforced throughout lessons, although on occasion lower standards are accepted. Classroom management is a strength of many teachers, based on good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students. Classes, which often contain a high proportion of students with special educational needs, are kept focused on their work by the high level of individual support which teachers provide. Teachers maintain a brisk pace in lessons by frequent changes in activity. Day-to-day assessment helps students' progress through positive feedback. Marking of work is thorough. Examples of high quality work are used successfully in textiles to stimulate students' interest and to raise their aspirations. The faculty has a good collection of examples of work to establish standards in all areas. However, this is not used consistently, together with assessment data, to set targets for students and to promote progress. Homework is used well to support classwork and, at Key Stage 3, is often successful in involving parents and others in students' education. A good contribution is made to students' personal development, particularly through the efforts which teachers make to encourage them to reflect on wider issues, beyond the immediate subject, including ethical and moral matters.

156. The department is well managed. There is a good working atmosphere throughout which supports the school's aims and values. The department benefits from excellent accommodation and good provision of resources. No additional classroom support is provided for students with special educational needs. Although teachers adjust work carefully to enable students to make progress, overall standards are affected by the amount of time taken up by providing individual support.

157. The department has made good progress since the previous report. The quality of accommodation has been greatly improved. There is much better provision of information technology equipment to

support learning and to meet the requirements of control technology. National Curriculum requirements are met fully. The quality of teaching has improved.

168.

Geography

158. In 1998, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C was well below the national average, but the proportion attaining grades A*-G was in line with the national average. Students' results in geography, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were significantly worse than those obtained in other subjects. Results at the higher A*-C grades have remained consistent over recent years, though there has been a significant decline in 1999. In the 1998 GCE A-level examination students' results were well below the national average.

159. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with the level expected of students of the same age nationally, though attainment of a significant minority is below it. Most students acquire a range of geographical skills; they read coordinates to locate places and transfer information to maps. They gain knowledge of a range of topics, such as the characteristics of tropical rain forests and understand the environmental issues connected with exploitation, but there is insufficient application of knowledge through place study. Students gain knowledge of geographical terms and identify features in diagrams. Many students write satisfactorily in a given structured form but limited development of extended writing combined, with weaknesses in spelling and grammatical accuracy, limits attainment.

160. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Most students consolidate map skills; they observe and record data about settlement patterns in Liverpool, but for the majority the analysis of findings and reasoning in answers is weak. Knowledge of the characteristics of places is a weakness for the majority and they have only a superficial understanding of the inter-relationships between people and the environment. Many students write clear and ordered accounts of the topics studied but in some cases attainment is low due to incomplete work, often as a result of unsatisfactory attendance.

161. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations. Year 12 students identify characteristics of population structures in contrasting areas and understand a range of terms associated with development of countries, but depth of knowledge of tectonic studies is well below the standard expected. Year 13 students write clear notes and assignments show breadth of understanding of a range of topics, but discussion work is poor.

162. Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. They improve atlas and map skills through reading and representing information graphically and the drawing of 'field'-sketches. Students acquire knowledge of places both locally and abroad. They learn to contrast their own culture with that of Japan, drawing on information technology to obtain sources of information. Lower attaining students make very good progress in practical work about weathering of rocks, but progress was less evident in a lower ability Year 7 class when teaching strategies do not meet the needs of students with special educational needs. Progress for higher attaining students is reduced when time in lessons is spent on peripheral colouring tasks and other tasks are undemanding. Progress in some classes is restricted by the loss of time in arriving at lessons. Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Many higher and middle attaining students make gains in the range and competence in developing fieldwork skills to include observation, data collection and representation in varied forms. Most describe features clearly, with higher attaining students developing skills in testing and evaluating findings against hypotheses. Lower attaining students make progress when given close teacher guidance including a structured format in which to respond. For many students however, retention and recall of information is a weakness and understanding is not applied to other topics. Progress is less evident when students engage on re-writing of questions, re-drafting answers which could be successfully completed independently. Written work is sound, but progress for a minority is interrupted by irregular attendance. Progress in the sixth form is

satisfactory. In Year 12 good progress is made in consolidating understanding of population issues. Effective student-teacher dialogue helps learning to progress briskly, and gains are made in applying theoretical study to contrasting places. Students develop skills in reading, analysing and selecting information in working on assignments, but on occasions the absence of debate and challenge fails to promote active learning situations. On other instances progress is limited by extended dictation of information.

163.Students' attitudes are good. Behaviour in class is commendable and lessons proceed smoothly. Most sustain concentration for lengthy periods both when listening and completing assignments. Students show interest in their studies, particularly when given the opportunity to learn through practical situations. Opportunities for students to engage in group work, however, are not well established and there are insufficient opportunities to work independently on research activities. Relationships are mostly very good though a significant minority do not willingly engage in discussion activities in class.

164.The quality of teaching is satisfactory at all key stages. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and this has a positive impact on the quality of learning. Lessons have clear aims, fully shared with students and lesson planning is successful in achieving the goals. Teachers exercise good control and lessons proceed smoothly and effectively. At Key Stage 3 learning is very prescriptive with limited opportunities to foster student independence and self-reliance, and strategies to meet the needs of different attaining students are not effective for both higher and lower attaining students. Work is regularly marked but there is insufficient focus on assessment of the content and informing students how they can improve. At Key Stage 4 teachers employ a range of resources to stimulate interest and learning development. The use of information technology is encouraged but is not fully supporting learning in the subject. Lessons are well managed, relationships are good and time is used effectively. In the sixth form learning is effective when the teacher-student dialogue set appropriate challenges and the depth of topic treatment is appropriate for GCE A-level study. Teaching is not effective when there is lengthy dictation and lack of rigour in topic development.

165.The leadership and management of the subject has a number of weaknesses. The scheme of work at Key Stage 3 meets the National Curriculum recommendations but does not identify opportunities for the development of cross curricular contributions or the resources for different attaining groups. Planning of teaching intentions at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The subject does assess attainment to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 but the use of information to monitor student progress is not fully effective. The process of development planning is good but the priorities are not sufficiently defined. The resources and accommodation are good, which combined with good displays of work provides a positive ethos to learning.

166.Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in standards of attainment. Assessment is now linked to National Curriculum levels and the quality of teaching is maintained as satisfactory, but remains heavily teacher directed. GCSE results continue to be well below national averages at grades A*-C.

History

178. The proportion of students attaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 1998 was below the national average. There was a greater increase in the proportion of these grades than nationally, but this represented a recovery from a dip in the previous year. The number of such grades in 1999 fell well below the 1998 level. Every student entered for GCSE in 1998 achieved a grade between A*-G, which maintained the high proportion of these grades achieved by students in recent years. These proportions are higher than the national average, and the trend continued in 1999. In the GCE A-level examinations in 1998 the proportion of grades achieved was below the national average; slightly more than half of the entrants achieved grades below the levels predicted on the basis of their previous GCSE grades. Results fluctuate from year to year and, in the context of a departmental policy that provides open access to all students and the small numbers in classes, statistical comparisons are unreliable.

167. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected for students of the same age nationally. Students have a sound knowledge of the main events and people of the topics studied. In both oral and short written answers to questions requiring the extraction of information from historical sources, the great majority of students display that knowledge with success. Students of all levels of attainment, for instance, confidently explain the reasons for Henry VIII's break with Rome and his motives for closing down the monasteries. During lessons on that topic and others, including the development of the factory system, they show that they understand the link between the causes and the consequences of important events and that they brought about far-reaching changes to life in Britain. However, the proportion of students of higher attainment who produce convincing longer written answers, to questions requiring selection of relevant information and sustained reasoning, is below that expected nationally. The longer written pieces from these students too often describe and narrate rather than propose and support a point of view using appropriate evidence. The written work on the English Civil War by Year 8 students, for example, described what happened well, but lacked a structure for convincingly explaining the motives and actions of the main protagonists. This has implications for the level of challenge to their reasoning posed by the work set for them.

168. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students show good knowledge, of the topics they study, in their oral responses and in written answers to questions based on sources of historical information. They know, for instance, that the creation of binding treaties by opposing groups of nations prior to 1914 played a significant part in the outbreak of World War 1, and that the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of war in the early 1960s. However, many students find difficulty in expressing their knowledge convincingly in written answers needing explanations, in greater depth, of the reasons for events and the actions of people in power. The work on the extent to which the Domino Theory shaped the foreign policy of the USA during the 1950s and 1960s illustrates this difficulty and helps to explain why students' performance in examinations is below the standard many of them reach in their class and homework. Students who presently study history in the sixth form produce essays of good quality. Most write convincingly at length on topics such as the reasons for, and effects of, the fall of the Romanov family in revolutionary Russia.

169. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3. Their knowledge and understanding become more secure, which they demonstrate best when responding to questions asked of them by teachers during class discussions, as in a lesson on the development of steam power during the Industrial Revolution. The development of more mature writing skills is less secure and is not helped by the fact that the subject's share of curriculum time is lower than the national average. Progress in demanding literacy skills, in this language intensive subject, depends upon the availability of time, which is well used in terms of clear strategies for raising this aspect of students' attainment. The progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory rather than good and, again, is better in oral than in written work. The obstacles to the better development of their writing need to be more specifically analysed and appropriate learning strategies adopted by all teachers.

170.The progress of students by the age of 16 is satisfactory. Students make gains in their appreciation of the need for care in selecting relevant information to support their opinions. This is illustrated by answers on the war in Vietnam accounting for the fall in popularity of the leader of South Vietnam; a good level of understanding is apparent, and only a small minority of students finds it difficult to use key terms and grasp concepts. Students' progress is adversely affected by the unsatisfactory rate of attendance of students. Students studying for GCE A-level make satisfactory progress in the structure of their written answers and in the selective and accurate use of supporting evidence. This is well demonstrated, for instance, in their responses to the question about whether Lenin's adoption of the New Economic Policy was because of its merits, or because of the more pragmatic reason that it would save the revolution.

171.The attitude of students is good throughout the age and attainment range. The great majority behaves very well, shows interest, responds willingly to the teachers, listens attentively, and concentrates well. In lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, they show that they enjoy the subject. Examples of this include the Year 10 lesson in which two students took the lead in class work on the causes of World War 1, and the lively discussion in a GCE A-level lesson on Lenin. The standard of presentation of written assignments of most students across the age range conveys the pride and interest they have in their work. When required to work in collaboration with each other, students of all levels of attainment cooperate well and display respect for the opinions of others, and the level of support for the Year 10 students who led the lesson referred to earlier was impressive. Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. They relate very well to their teachers and other adults, and show a good level of respect for their own, and others', books, equipment and surroundings.

172.The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Teachers' subject knowledge and student management is good throughout. Lessons are well planned generally within the too limited range of teaching and learning strategies employed in the subject up to the age of 16. There are good examples of teachers providing opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and understanding in imaginative and collaborative ways. However, there is still an over-reliance on tasks that call for the writing of short answers to lists of questions based on sources of information. Teachers mark students' work regularly but the use of longer, more analytical, comments on students' work, aimed at informing them how to improve their writing, is too infrequent. Resources are of good quality and are used well by teachers. Homework is regularly set and of a generally useful nature that extends opportunities for students to learn.

173.The management of the subject is satisfactory. Good use is made of classrooms and corridors to display students' work and this contributes strongly to the encouraging atmosphere that pervades the subject area of the school. There is a programme of educational visits outside school that enhances the learning of students in each of the key stages. A significant contribution was made to the school's Global Neighbourhood initiative when students performed a play about women's rights.

174.The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards of student attainment and teaching have been maintained.

186.

Information technology

175.Students did not study GCSE information technology in 1998. In 1998 all three students entered for GCE A/S level achieved a graded result. Because of the low number of candidates entered for A/S level it is not statistically valid to make a comparison with the national average.

176.In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are at the

level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students make effective use of a range of applications to enhance their work. They use the wordprocessor effectively and higher attainers use the drop-down menu facilities and keystrokes accurately and with confidence. Most students accurately cut and paste and move information between applications. Students are less confident with the technical language of the subject and weak literacy skills hamper some tasks. When describing their activities, students explain their intentions but do not use technical terminology. During a Year 8 lesson on spreadsheets, most students were unaware of the basic concepts underpinning the use of spreadsheets although many could enter data and create basic formulae. Students' poor levels of numeracy often impact adversely on the students' standards of attainment in information technology.

177.No discrete information technology lessons were observed at Key Stage 4 but in work seen during the inspection in other subjects, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students are provided with insufficient opportunities to practise and develop key skills. There are no discrete information technology lessons at Key Stage 4 although subjects do contribute to students' information technology experiences. During project work, students enhance their work using a range of software applications. When provided with the opportunity, students use the wordprocessor accurately and confidently. They make effective use of CD-ROMs in geography to research and interrogate a visual database. In design and technology students use logic gates and control devices accurately.

178.In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age 19 are in line with course expectations. Students have a sound grasp of bitmap and vector image production, and most use the basic functions of the desktop publisher to produce booklets. Project work is in line with course expectations. Higher attainers produce in-depth project work that indicates high-level information technology skills.

179.Students make good progress at Key Stage 3 but unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. For those students undertaking a programme of study at Key Stage 4 that contains elements of information technology, progress is satisfactory. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3 because of the good quality teaching. Students are enthusiastic and this, coupled with the teachers' good planning and delivery, enables most students to make good progress. Students for whom English is an additional language do not always make satisfactory progress because they are not provided with sufficient support to enable them to overcome the language barrier which bars them from fully participating in the lesson. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, though not as good as other students because there is insufficient additional in-class support and this hinders their progress. Students in Key Stage 4, including those with special educational needs, make unsatisfactory progress because there are insufficient opportunities for them to acquire new skills although they are given the opportunity to consolidate previously acquired skills across the curriculum. The lack of enhancement of information technology skills across the curriculum was a criticism noted in the previous report; there are now many opportunities for students to consolidate skills. Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress. They acquire new skills and develop as autonomous users of information technology.

180.Students' attitudes are very good. They show interest in their work and are eager to participate in lessons. Students are polite and courteous, and speak openly with affection about their teachers. Relationships are very good and there is good cooperation between students when using the computers. They support each other and share ideas, an example being in a Year 7 class when students shared their ideas on Buddhism and then produced a document describing their findings. Behaviour is generally exemplary. Students have a good deal of trust in their teachers and in other students. They take good care of the facilities.

181.The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers have a good command of the subject material and a range of software applications. The relationship between

teachers and their students is very good, with teachers showing trust and valuing students' views. Teachers have high expectations of students' standards of behaviour and what they can achieve. The pace of most lessons is satisfactory although on occasion it can be slow. Teachers make good use of the PowerPoint presentation system to convey aims and objectives to the students, although some students are not always clear what is expected of them. The management of students is very good; teachers employ positive strategies to overcome many of the problems that arise. Effective use of praise is used to encourage. The organisation of most lessons is satisfactory and often there is a range of activities that helps to sustain students' concentration. Homework is set on a regular basis and is normally an integral part of the lesson. Work is marked regularly but comments do not always inform students how to improve.

182. The school does not meet fully the statutory National Curriculum requirements for information technology at Key Stage 4.

195. The school has made good progress since the previous report. Most of the issues noted in the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. The quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 3 from sound to good.

195.

Modern foreign languages

196. In 1998, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C were well below the national average but the proportion attaining grades A*-G was average. Students' results in modern foreign languages, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were not significantly different to those obtained in other subjects. GCSE results are similar to those noted in the previous report. Over the last few years, GCE A-level results have fluctuated, but candidate numbers are too low for valid comparisons with national figures.

183. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. The teacher assessment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is done for their first modern foreign language. The results in 1999 over-estimated students' attainment. However, their overall current attainment in lessons is slightly better than the performance in recent tests, mainly because of a period this term of more stable staffing and focused teaching. Students in the top sets listen attentively and understand most of the teachers' instructions and activities on tape. In one Year 9 lesson in the language laboratory, higher-attaining students responded enthusiastically to the challenge of listening and improving their pronunciation by working independently on tapes. However, most students do not listen carefully and understand only a very narrow range of vocabulary. A small number of higher and middle attainers display good levels of confidence in using the foreign language. Other middle and lower attainers are much less confident and some have not had enough practice over previous years in speaking French to gain any real fluency. In reading, many students pick out main points of the reading passages, which are carefully chosen to be within their capabilities. The highest attainers write accurately, but there is little evidence of their building up more extended descriptions and becoming familiar with grammar, particularly the use of tenses. Higher attainers make a good beginning in German in all skills. Much of their written work is of good quality and well presented.

184. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Most students listen and read in line with examination requirements, but only a few are prepared to take part freely in conversations about, for example, themselves, their families and school. Most students learn to use dictionaries sensibly to help in their reading. By this time, the higher attainers write at length, but, as is the case with all students, they need much teacher support in doing so. Middle and lower attaining students write much less accurately and within a very limited range of topics.

185. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 19 are in line

with course expectations. The number of students studying a modern foreign language is low and there is a very wide spread of abilities in most groups. The higher attainers express their opinions and written and spoken forms are at the level expected. They have a fairly wide vocabulary over a range of topics. They are, however, very reluctant to guess at meaning. Lower attaining students are very much more hesitant in speaking and are unsure of correct grammar and structure.

186.Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and good progress in the sixth form. Progress in individual lessons is often good but progress over time is less satisfactory because lessons are rather too long for younger and lower attaining students who find it difficult to sustain concentration. Difficulties with recruitment and supply cover has also affected students' progress adversely over time. The unsatisfactory attendance rate of some students in Key Stage 4 also adversely affects their progress. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them, but they are usually in classes of relatively large numbers and, particularly in Key Stage 4, their individual needs are not always met. In the sixth form, progress is good, since students start from a low basis of grammar and vocabulary after their GCSE course. Students have ample time to practise the language with the teachers in the small classes and have access to additional materials in private study.

187.Students' attitudes are good. The majority of students are interested in French and most of those who begin the study of German do so with enjoyment. Students behave very well in lessons, except for a small minority in both key stages who find it difficult to sustain concentration throughout the long lessons. However, other students of similar attainment in other classes respond very well to a more vigorous style of teaching which includes a good deal of oral work. The take-up of places on the very good programme of visits and exchanges to France and Germany is higher than expected. Students have demonstrated their interest very well by displaying photos and accounts of their journeys throughout the modern foreign language area. A good number of Year 7 students enjoy their extra language activities in the lunchtime Language Club.

188.The quality of teaching is good at all key stages. All teachers have a good knowledge of the languages they teach and provide good, and in a few cases, very good models for students to copy. Most teachers conduct the whole lesson in the foreign language and at the beginning of every lesson require students to answer the register, explain absences and give excuses all in the foreign language. Teachers are rigorous in demanding a good response to oral drill sessions and chorus work for pronunciation practice. The excellent system of awarding points to students for their participation in oral work is working extremely well in most classes, even in Key Stage 4. All teachers plan their lessons well and most provide a good sequence of activities to challenge and occupy students fully. Teachers usually state the objectives of each lesson clearly and most check regularly on students' performance during the lesson. There is some good use of overhead projectors, but the best practice is not yet shared throughout the department. The majority of teachers have high expectations of students' performance and behaviour. In many lessons, teachers manage to provide a stimulating fun element with mime, guessing games and simple language games with cards.

189.The new head of department has made a very good beginning in tackling the priorities of new schemes of work and in giving clear guidelines to raising students' attainment in speaking and listening. The team of teachers is committed to sharing developmental work and has already done much good work. The development of assessment and marking is under way to improve the presentation and accuracy of written work. Accommodation is excellent and teachers have put much effort into using the good resources to create a very good language-learning environment.

190.Standards of attainment are similar to those noted in the previous report. The quality of teaching has improved and this results in good progress in some lessons.

204. Music

191. Music has only been reintroduced this year at GCSE in Key Stage 4, therefore, there are no past examination results with which to compare the school against national expectations for students of the same age.

192. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are below the level expected of students of the same age nationally. Students compose melodies in binary form, having first been given opening bars and then perform them on electric keyboards, using an appropriate technique. The higher attaining students proceed to add a left-hand part following basic harmonic structures. Most students refine and complete their compositions using staff notation but there are no opportunities for these to use appropriate information technology to support their work. The lowest attaining students do not use an appropriate technique when performing on keyboards and are unable to relate written staff notation to notes performed at the correct octave.

193. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment in Year 10, the only Key Stage 4 group at present studying music, from a very small cohort with varied prior attainment, is well below that expected nationally. Students produce simple 12 bar, ternary form, compositions. These consist of a melody line and simple bass part, which demonstrates an awareness of harmonic structure and in some pieces, modulation and cadential points. The higher attaining students perform, on keyboards, pieces with a simple bass line and single note, right hand melody part. These are performed with confidence, control and fluency. The lower attaining students perform either a simple left or right hand part against a provided accompaniment.

194. Progress in lessons observed was satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. However, the department was unable to provide sufficient evidence such as students' books, taped examples of students' work, or past compositions to provide evidence upon which to make a judgement in regard to progress over time at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, this is the first year since 1996 that music has been offered at GCSE, and so there is as yet insufficient evidence to make a judgement on progress over time at this key stage. In most lessons observed at Key Stage 3, the majority of students make at least satisfactory progress, and the higher attaining students make good progress, in developing key skills in composition, using devices such as sequence and repetition, and in acquiring and developing performance skills on electric keyboards with an understanding of the use of written notation to record their intended performed sound. However, in lessons where progress is unsatisfactory, the students' retention of previously learned skills and knowledge is poor; this leads to these students being very dependent on their teacher for learning, which in the structure of group and individual practical work, impedes the progress of the whole class. In these classes there is a high proportion of students with special educational needs and no in-class support for the class teacher. In all other lessons, the progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Progress in the lesson observed at Key Stage 4 is very good. The students consolidate composing and performing skills and applying these to new and unfamiliar situations whilst acquiring new skills in keyboard performance and structured composition.

195. Students' attitudes are good. The behaviour of the majority of students is very good. They work well individually, in groups and as a whole class. There are good levels of concentration and students listen attentively and are able to articulate their ideas verbally. In practical work they persevere to achieve a desired end result. However, at Key Stage 3, there is a significant minority of students who are slow to respond, for example taking five minutes to take out worksheets. Many of these students are inattentive with poor levels of concentration. As these lessons are practically based using keyboards with headphones for the students, much off-task behaviour goes uncorrected which leads to unacceptable and disruptive levels of background chatter, requiring teacher intervention to keep these students on-task which therefore affects the progress of the whole class.

196.The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge through clear, lively expositions and practical demonstrations. They generally have high expectations that challenge the students, for example in the insistence of the use of correct performance techniques and the use of an appropriate musical vocabulary. Praise, encouragement, and question and answer are used to involve all students in the learning process. Discipline is generally very good. Lessons are characterised by clear targets and generally a good mix of inter-related tasks. Homework is used as and when appropriate and is regularly marked with comments to assist learning. However, in some lessons, discipline is unsatisfactory, which leads to low level, unproductive and disruptive chattering amongst students. A weakness of the teaching is that no exemplars or examples of students' work are saved over key stages and this therefore makes it difficult to moderate teacher assessments and to monitor progress. In some Key Stage 3 lessons there is a lack of variety of tasks, with all year groups following similar work on keyboards. This lack of variety leads to a falling off of pace and the higher attaining students not being sufficiently challenged.

197.The management of the subject is satisfactory. The curriculum is planned within key stages but is not at present planned for continuity and progression across key stages and there is no access to appropriate information technology as required by the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Students have the opportunity to widen their musical experiences through instrumental lessons provided privately through the Community Centre for Expressive Arts, and via extra-curricular activities consisting of a school choir and orchestra. However, less than eight per cent of the total school population takes advantage of these opportunities. Although the areas of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are implicitly covered by the curriculum, the schemes of work and department development plan do not explicitly cover these areas.

198.The previous inspection report noted that at Key Stage3, standards of achievement were average or below in relation to national expectations. They are now below. GCSE results were above the national average; music at GCSE was dropped from the curriculum until this year. Accommodation was described as inadequate. It is now good and the department is now accommodated in one suite. Teaching at Key Stage 3 varied from unsatisfactory through to good. It is now never less than satisfactory. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous report.

212. Physical education

199.The proportion of students who gained grades A*-C in the 1998 GCSE examinations was below the national average, but all students gained grades A*-G. The 1999 results are similar. Students' results in physical education, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were not significantly different to those obtained in other subjects. There is no timetable provision for physical education in the sixth form.

200.In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with the level expected for students of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, students have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and the need to warm up before participating in strenuous exercise. They know the names of specific muscles and the appropriate stretching exercises to use. Good fitness work was seen in a Year 8 lesson, where students experienced for themselves the difference between high and low impact exercises. Standards in dance are satisfactory. Students of all levels of attainment make a sound beginning in their dance studies. They compose, perform and evaluate their own dance motifs, and collaborate successfully to create a group dance. In gymnastics, standards of attainment are in line with the level expected. By the age of 14, students demonstrate a range of skills with good control and body tension. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 lesson focusing on flight, where students cooperated safely with a partner to perform assisted flight. Standards in games are in line with the level expected. In netball the majority of students shows good ball control and the ability to anticipate and move to the ball. The majority of students performs badminton skills with a degree of accuracy, but a minority has not yet mastered the basic skills, which inhibits their effectiveness in play. Students' evaluation skills develop well in the majority of lessons, particularly in dance and some gymnastics lessons, where students observe, analyse and comment on performance.

201. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 in the core physical education programme are in line with the level expected for students of the same age nationally. Students apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics, effectively, in netball and badminton. Attainment in GCSE dance practical is in line with the level expected, with a significant number of students attaining above the level expected. GCSE written coursework is well presented, and reflects a range of attainment from in line with the level expected, to more generally, a limited knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the course.

202. Standards in extra-curricular sport are often good, and individual students gain representative honours at district and, sometimes, county or national level. The Years 8 and 9 cross country team have recently won the Liverpool Schools' Challenge Cup, and school netball teams, of all ages, regularly enjoy some success in the Liverpool Schools' Championships. In 1999 some students were selected to represent Liverpool Schools in girls' football.

203. Students' progress is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The good progress at Key Stage 3 is because students have positive attitudes, and good teaching usually promotes a demanding pace of learning. Progress at Key Stage 4 is not as good as that at Key Stage 3 because of the unsatisfactory rate of attendance of many students. Effective gains in knowledge, skills and understanding are made in the majority of lessons, because teachers share the intended learning outcomes with the students, and check that students understand the tasks and know what they have to do to improve their work. Discernible progress by students of all levels of attainment is evident in many lessons, as they consolidate their skills through practice. This was well-illustrated in a gymnastics lesson, where students worked together in fours to achieve a group balance, successfully. Low attaining students often make good progress because they are interested and concentrate well in lessons, and because teaching is planned to allow careful development of skills at an appropriate pace, as seen in a Year 7 netball lesson. In some lessons, average and high attaining students make less progress than they could, because the pace of learning is insufficiently challenging, and no targets are set. Good progress is made in netball and dance, as students move through each key stage, but students' progress in evaluating skills is less evident. Students identified as having special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and generally progress at the same rate as their peers. Good opportunities are provided for students of all ages and abilities to participate, and make progress, in extra-curricular sport.

204. Students have good attitudes to learning in both key stages. They are well motivated, and take an interest in their work. These positive attitudes are reflected in good behaviour in lessons and a willingness to participate and become involved. Students respond well to tasks set, sustain concentration and work hard. They show a sound regard for safety and handle equipment carefully. Cooperative partner and group work is a feature of most lessons, well illustrated in gymnastics and dance. Good teamwork develops in games. Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, but these are limited in lessons. In dance, students evaluate performance sensitively, and appreciate each other's strengths and weaknesses. Independent learning skills are slow to develop in Key Stage 3, and students are often dependent on the teacher.

205. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. The teachers have very good relationships with their students, which leads to a supportive learning environment and contributes significantly to the good discipline and cooperation in lessons. Teachers build up students' confidence using praise and encouragement. They know their subject well, and are lively, enthusiastic and well organised. Student management is of a high order. Secure subject knowledge is reflected in well-planned lessons with clear objectives, which are shared with the students. In the majority of lessons the teachers have high expectations. They set a brisk pace and there is a clear understanding of what the students are going to learn, with well-designed tasks making appropriate physical and intellectual demands. The strongest teaching has a demanding pace of learning, a clear focus to the lesson and learning targets, which match students' abilities. The teachers, intervening appropriately, move students' learning forward without inhibiting their creativity. This was well illustrated in dance. Skilful questioning is used to enable students to evaluate their work, as well as demonstrating their knowledge and understanding. The best

teaching implements the school's literacy policy; there is a focus on key words, and well-designed work sheets are used effectively to emphasise the technical language of the subject. The high quality of teacher observation, assessment and feedback promotes good standards of progress, and is a teaching strength of many lessons. Students' evaluation also plays an important role in the best lessons, as seen in dance, where students' critical appraisal of performance was central to the learning process. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, expectations of students are not high enough, the pace is slow and students are insufficiently challenged by the activities in the lesson. A weakness, in some lessons, is the lack of opportunity for students to plan and evaluate, as well as perform. A limited range of teaching strategies inhibits students from taking responsibility, solving problems and becoming independent learners, in some lessons.

206. The department is well managed and benefits from effective and enthusiastic leadership, supported by a committed staff, who work well together. A good working ethos is enhanced by the excellent new indoor accommodation, which provides first class provision for the subject. The curriculum has been reviewed, leading to health and fitness aspects of the National Curriculum being taught in both Key Stages 3 and 4. However, a significant number of students do not have access to the National Curriculum in physical education at Key Stage 3. Years 8 and 9 students, who study a second modern foreign language, lose a third of their curriculum time, and this is unsatisfactory. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the department, and a wide, well supported range of clubs, open to all students, is provided, having a positive effect on students' attainment and progress.

207. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching has improved and students now make good progress.

221. Religious education

222. The proportion of students attaining grades A* to C in the short course GCSE religious studies in 1998 was in line with the national average and the proportion attaining A* to G was below. The small group who have taken the full GCSE course have results well above the national average for grades A*-C and A*-G in 1998. Students' results in religious education, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were significantly better than those obtained in other subjects. Most students take the GCSE short course first introduced in 1997. The number of students taking this course is increasing very quickly and results are in line with their performance in other subjects. There are no GCE A-level courses in religious studies. The school fails to fulfill its statutory obligation to provide a religious education course for all students in the sixth form.

208. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with the level expected nationally for students of the same age. They are achieving satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding of the distinctive features of the major religious traditions and their application to every day life. Students draw comparisons between the Jewish practices associated with "shabbatt" and the changing nature of Sunday. They use the appropriate terminology to describe matters of belief and practice. Students encounter the richness and diversity of most of the major world faiths, following the pattern of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There is an emphasis on Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Particularly good use is made of the links the school has with other faith communities using the religious background of students and staff to inform the subject. Students are developing their ability to form their own views on religious issues.

209. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in line with the level expected nationally for students of the same age. Students continue to acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding of the major faiths and in particular examine Buddhism. They have more opportunity to explore values that they are able to apply to their own experience through the examination of the religious perspective on issues such as marriage and attitudes to the elderly in the modern world. They provide clear explanations and explore their own understanding of belief, meaning and purpose. The high attaining students evaluate effectively the contribution that faith communities

make to personal, local and national life. The access provided to the GCSE short course is raising levels of motivation and providing clear goals for attainment in the school.

210. Religious education makes some contribution to the development of key competencies. In the classroom displays some attempt is being made to provide key words and ideas associated with each religious tradition. In contrast developing links between information technology and religious education is fostering information technology skills. Students in Year 7 are learning wordprocessing skills using material from the religious education scheme of work. Students are encouraged to use information technology when completing course work in the subject.

211. Students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 because the learning is related to the age and the ability of the class. There is an effective match between the needs of the students and the task in each lesson. Good progress is made in those lessons where students are clear about the task, well motivated and supported by staff to achieve success. In the remaining lessons progress is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs benefit from the good intervention skills of staff so that progress is satisfactory.

212. The students in Key Stage 4 make good progress. The improvement in progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 reflects the esteem the subject receives as a GCSE course and the commitment of the teaching staff. Teachers use approaches which engage the students and which focus on contemporary spiritual, social and moral concerns. Students are encouraged to listen to each other and develop their own thinking and ideas. Students with special educational needs continue to make satisfactory progress with achievements in line with their ability.

213. Students' attitudes are good. Behaviour in lessons is very good with students polite, courteous and well behaved. This is a consistent pattern. Students are attentive and well focused on the task provided. They listen carefully and take care in their work. They find the subject interesting and often personally relevant. Relationships are good, students working well with each other and with adults when required to do so. Discussion is encouraged and students, especially in Key Stage 4, are expected to listen to the views of others without pre-judgement or prejudice. A strength of religious education is the emphasis given to valuing other cultures and other people. Personal development is good with students encouraged to explore their ideas and insights through the discussion of a range of issues and pertinent questions.

214. The quality of teaching is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4. However the use of some non-specialist staff, especially in Key Stage 3, has an adverse effect on the levels of expertise and the expectations of staff. These non-specialists are committed and enthusiastic, and well supported by the head of subject but lack the security to lead lessons with as much confidence and with as much pace as the specialist staff. In Key Stage 4 discussions in particular are led with confidence and authority. Planning is good, reflecting the scheme of work and the Agreed Syllabus. Lessons are well organised and with a good sense of direction. There is a good balance between learning from religion and learning about religion. Methods and organisation of teaching is good. The priority is to make the curriculum accessible to students and a wide variety of teaching techniques is used. Many of the questions raised explored relate to the questions and interests of students. Students are encouraged to think creatively, to use their imaginations and to seek the meaning behind artefacts. Beliefs and values are seen to be at the heart of the subject rather than the phenomena of religion. Staff have created a good working environment. Lessons are interesting and flow well. The management of students is good. Lessons are well managed with staff seeking to ensure a positive learning environment with effective strategies to support individual students. The use of time and resources is good with a wide range of materials being used creatively and imaginatively. There are good links with a number of local churches and with the Jewish Learning Resource Centre. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Marking is regular and thorough. Standards are consistent but comments are often limited. This is a weakness especially in the context of the spread of ability and the needs of the highest and lowest attaining students. Tasks are

often not targeted to match student ability and do not allow these students to demonstrate clearly their knowledge, understanding and skills, and comments on work do not provide goals to improve performance. Effective use is made of oral assessment to encourage students and homework is set regularly and is an extension of class work.

215. Religious education benefits from the very good leadership of the subject that ensures that the teaching reflects the standards and ethos of the school. The accommodation of the subject has improved since the previous inspection. However, there are still restrictions to the effectiveness and standards achieved as the subject remains short of the time required to deliver the Agreed Syllabus and the GCSE course, staff having to resort to lunchtime lessons for GCSE. Further complications are the shared double period with personal development as more than 20 per cent of teaching time is lost crossing the site. Since the previous inspection there has been a further reduction in specialist staff from three to two, increasing the pressure on the remaining staff.

216. The subject has made good progress since the previous report. Attainment and progress have improved, especially in Key Stage 4 where there is less underachievement following the introduction of the short course in religious studies. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching, the range of techniques has increased and greater use is made of resources. The subject has a higher status and a higher profile.

231. Other Key Stage 4 courses and the sixth form

217. The school provides a range of vocational courses. These are GCSE business studies at Key Stage 4, GNVQ business, health and social care and art and design. At GCE A-level there are courses in economics, sociology and psychology.

218. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in the 1998 GCSE business studies examination was well below the national average, but in-line with the national average at grades A* to G. Students' results in business studies, compared to their achievements in other subjects, were not significantly different than those obtained in other subjects. All students achieved the advanced and intermediate GNVQ award. At advanced level these are mostly at merit or distinction level, whilst at intermediate level achievement is at merit and pass standard. GNVQ results are above the national average. At advanced level they are an improvement on those of 1997, but the 1999 results show a decline on the previous two years. The results at intermediate level have been consistently maintained over the three years to 1998. Results are good in advanced business and intermediate health and social care. All students who were entered for GCE A-level sociology and psychology in 1998 achieved a pass. 1999 results show a marked improvement on the previous year. Results in the 1998 A-level economics examination are poor with no student achieving a pass and 1999 results remain well below the national and school average attainment at this level.

219. In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are in-line with the level expected of students of the same age nationally. In the GNVQ courses attainment is in-line with levels expected for the course, except in art and design when it is above it. In GCE A-level sociology, A-level psychology and A-level economics attainment is consistent with the level expected nationally for the A-level course.

220. Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 business studies, A-level psychology, A-level sociology, A-level economics and most GNVQ courses, except in art and design where progress is very good. In Key Stage 4 business students made good progress in understanding about the factors which influence product marketing, but lateness to lesson and slow pace substantially reduces progress on another occasion. Good progress is evident in the Key Stage 4 GNVQ health and social care when students show evidence of depth of research into the needs of different social groups, but at advanced

level there is limited use of computers to progress vocational assignments. Rapid progress occurs in Key Stage 4 art and design lessons when students complete work on studies of natural forms in a range of materials. Students make satisfactory progress in advanced business in understanding about employment acts and equal opportunities issues, but progress is reduced when oral responses are insufficiently developed.

221. Students' attitudes to the majority of vocational courses are satisfactory. In GNVQ art and design, attitudes are very good where concentration and application to task is sustained throughout lessons. In health and social care they are good, with students responding well to the challenges of the tasks set for them and care is taken in the organisation and presentation of work. Attitudes are satisfactory in business. Students listen to explanations and show responsibility for the forward planning of assignments, but in some classes there is limited oral engagement and a reliance on teacher initiative.

222. The quality of teaching in the GCE A-level courses and in most GNVQ courses is satisfactory. It is very good in art and design courses. Teachers are appropriately qualified and in the GNVQ courses some have completed assessor training, which is making a positive impact on the standards. In art and design meticulous lesson planning incorporates a range of on-going tasks which sets appropriate challenge; in business studies learning is effectively linked to real-world activity, and high teacher expectations in health and social care lead to good progress being made in the lesson. On some occasions, lessons are teacher-centred, students are passively engaged for long periods and insufficient progress is made. In several lessons teaching fails to involve the majority in discussion and ensure that concentration is sustained on the task in hand, which slows the pace of learning for many students.

223. The schemes of work are established in most subject areas, except in economics where teaching intentions are not clearly set out. The GCSE business studies gives information about content and possible learning activities but insufficient guidance on opportunities for business focus, suitable resources for students of different attainment, time scales and the use of computers. The newly appointed GNVQ coordinator has formulated a development plan, which identifies future needs and intentions. The tasks however, are not prioritised. Available resources are sufficient for needs and the accommodation provides a positive learning environment.

224. There was no report on the vocational subjects at the last inspection.

239. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

239. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

225. The team consisted of 14 inspectors who spent 56 inspector days in the school. During the week, 218 lessons were seen. Inspectors also inspected many registration periods and observed a number of assemblies. All full-time teachers were seen teaching at least once and most were seen on several occasions. As many part-time teachers as possible during the week were also seen teaching. In addition, extra-curricular activities were visited. Fifty-two planned discussions were held with teachers, the Chair and other representatives of the governing body and with non-teaching staff. Inspectors looked at the written work of many students in class. All the work of a representative sample of six students from each year group was inspected. Planned discussions were held with these students and informal discussions with many more. A large amount of documentation supplied by the school was examined before and during the inspection. The Registered Inspector and his deputy held a meeting attended by 32 parents and the team considered 828 responses from parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school. These are published as part of the report.

240. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

240. **Student data**

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1493	11	198	684

240. **Teachers and classes**

240. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	83.2
Number of students per qualified teacher:	17.9

240. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	391

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	77.4
Average teaching group size:	KS3 26
	KS4 23

240. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/1999
	£
Total Income	3,369,360
Total Expenditure	3,452,830
Expenditure per student	2,377
Balance brought forward from previous year	253,312
Balance carried forward to next year	169,842

240. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 1493
 Number of questionnaires returned: 828

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	17	70	8	4	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30	63	4	3	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	19	59	16	4	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	23	65	7	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	28	60	8	3	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	34	60	4	1	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	36	57	5	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32	58	5	4	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	30	58	9	2	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	27	59	10	3	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	36	56	6	2	0

240. **Other issues raised by parents**

- Parents had mixed opinions about examination results.
- Lower attainers do not do as well as higher attainers.
- Marked improvement in behaviour in the last two years.
- Good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Parents expressed concern about communication between the school and home.
- Good careers guidance.