

INSPECTION REPORT

Longridge High School
Longridge

LEA area : Lancashire

Unique Reference Number : 119749

Headteacher : A Lewis

Reporting inspector : S R Cooper
2459

Dates of inspection : 27th September – 1st October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708483

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Comprehensive High School
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	11 – 16 years
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Preston Road Longridge Preston PR3 3AR
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mrs P Cliff
Date of previous inspection :	March 1995

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M Weaver, Lay Inspector		Attendance Partnership with parents Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
J Stirrup	English Art	
A Blow	Mathematics	
P Craig	Science	Curriculum and assessment
C Coward	Design Technology Information Technology	
N Bertram	History Geography	Efficiency
J Mellor	Modern foreign languages	
C Holland	Music Equal opportunities	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
T McDermott	Physical education	
A Slade	Religious education Personal and social education	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development
C Jackson	Special educational needs	

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The school has developed a good ethos for learning with good behaviour, relationships and attitudes.
- Above average standards are achieved showing good 'value added' and good value for money.
- Very good monitoring and assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Very good range of extra-curricular activities developing very good social skills.
- The school is well led and managed and resources are used effectively overall.
- The teaching overall is good and staff are committed and hard-working.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The school has not made the improvements expected since the last inspection:
 - there is still too narrow a range of teaching and learning styles, that does not place a higher emphasis on pupils being involved actively in their learning;
 - its standards in national tests, which although still above average, have not risen in line with standards nationally.
- The provision for teaching information technology in Key Stage 4 is uncoordinated and does not meet statutory requirements.
- Individual education plans, for pupils with special needs, lack specific, short-term, attainable targets.

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified above are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils in the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Although for the last four years the school has maintained levels of achievement in national tests above both those achieved nationally and in similar schools, its standards have not risen to keep pace with rises nationally and improvement overall since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Improving the range of teaching and learning styles was a key issue in that report. Despite some good efforts to improve its range, in most lessons teachers are still closely directing the work and so precluding pupils' active involvement in the learning process and making them merely passive receivers of information. School planning has improved significantly to cover three-years with good linkages to departmental plans. Success criteria, however, lack specific goals making monitoring difficult. Staffing now closely matches subject requirements. The times allocated to both art and religious education are now in line with national averages. Through clear guidance for taking form assemblies the school now has daily acts of collective worship and complies with the statutory requirements. The school now identifies very well what pupils know and can do. Reports are issued to staff that very clearly highlight under- and over-achievement for every pupil in every subject in order to improve their progress.

The capacity for improvement is good. The staff are developing strategies for maximising the use of the assessment information provided which should ensure pupils fulfil their potential and that standards rise. Staff turnover and absences have had an unsettling effect on the school and standards in some subjects have fallen as a result. The current staff appears more settled, has strong shared vision and is working hard towards those shared goals. Senior heads of department have responded well to new management structures and their contribution to working parties and innovations has been very positive.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, and 16 year olds in national tests, GCSE examinations in 1998

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

The standards achieved in the 1998 Key Stage 3 tests were well above those achieved nationally and in schools with a similar intake. The standards achieved in the GCSE examinations that year were also above national standards and those achieved in similar schools. Given the pupils' average attainment profile on entry, good progress was made by the majority of these pupils. Standards achieved in the 1999 tests were not as high as previous years and the attainment seen in the school was in line with national expectations for pupils of their respective ages at the end of both key stages. High standards have been maintained in mathematics and the standards of mathematics and English seen were above expectations in both key stages. At Key Stage 3 most other subjects are in line with expectations except for modern languages, where standards are above. In music and art, where there have been staff absences, they are below. In Key Stage 4, standards are in line with expectations in science, geography, design technology, modern languages and religious education and above in all other subjects except for art and history which are below. Standards in information technology in this stage are below expectations and pupils are not receiving their statutory entitlement in this subject.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	information technology, modern languages, personal and social education and physical education	design technology
Years 10-11	Good	English, business studies, music and physical education	art information technology
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Teaching was satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons seen, it was good in 43 per cent and very good in 9 per cent. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching occurred in Key Stage 3. The teaching is enhanced considerably by the good behaviour and attentiveness of the pupils yet there is still a great deal of teaching that is over-directed which does not allow pupils to be involved actively.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour in the school is good. Pupils are responsible and courteous. They are generally attentive and hard working in class.
Attendance	Generally satisfactory with very low levels of unauthorised absence. High attendance is encouraged through an effective merit scheme.
Ethos*	The school has a good ethos. Relationships are good as are the pupils' attitudes to work. There is a concerted drive to raise standards.
Leadership and management	Leadership is good. The system of devolved management has proved effective in developing initiatives and in sharing ideals.
Curriculum	The curriculum is sound overall in both key stages. The carousel system causes some problems with continuity in Key Stage 3 and information technology provision in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory.
Pupils with special educational needs	The progress of pupils with special needs is sound throughout the school but the effectiveness of in-class support could be improved.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Social development, due to high community involvement, is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing is good and is now more settled. Resources are adequate, but accommodation is often cramped and restrictive. Staff and pupils work hard to overcome its limitations.
Value for money	Taking into account the school's context, income, standards achieved, quality of education provided and the attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils, the school gives good value for money.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>I. They find the school easy to approach.</p> <p>II. They feel well informed of pupils' progress.</p> <p>III. They are very pleased with the standards achieved.</p> <p>IV. The good range of extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>V. Most pupils like coming to school.</p>	<p>VI. Complaints are not always handled well.</p> <p>VII. It is not always clear what is being taught</p> <p>VIII. The frequency of the newsletters sent out.</p>

Parental comments were generally positive. Several said that they were not made aware of what is being taught. Inspection showed the homework diaries and planners gave a reasonably clear guide to the work and the team did not agree with these comments. Several parents felt that the school did not handle complaints well. The inspection found that the pastoral system was working effectively, especially where pupils were under-achieving. When this comment is coupled with that about newsletters, however, it indicates that the school is not communicating very effectively with the parents and the team agrees with this view. Although the majority of parents were very happy about the quality of homework set, a significant minority were unhappy, saying some homework was unimaginative copying. The team agrees that some of the homework set is unchallenging and does not extend the work done in class.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to maintain and improve the existing high standards the governors and the school should:

- i) extend the use of information technology in Key Stage 4 to:
 - a. ensure better depth of coverage of the Programme of Study for this subject;
 - a. re-institute the mapping and monitoring of the topics covered in the various subjects to ensure that there is good progression in the acquisition of knowledge and skills;
 - b. ensure that staff are trained to take full advantage of the resources available;

(See paragraphs: 14, 23, 35,46, 131, 145, 146, 149, 151)

- (ii) widen still further the range of teaching and learning styles, a key issue in the previous inspection, by:

- a. involving pupils more actively in the learning process;
- b. consolidating more effectively what has been taught;
- c. acknowledging and building on previous learning;
- d. matching work more closely to individuals so that they face appropriate

challenges, especially the more able;

(See paragraphs: 26, 30, 34, 36, 38, 104, 110, 118, 122, 128, 132, 156, 157, 167, 197, 200)

- (iii) to sharpen and quantify success criteria in individual action plans to ensure that they are measurable, achievable, short-term, realistic and written in a way that pupils and parents are clear about the goals to be reached;

(See paragraphs: 15, 51, 87, 169)

- (iv) continue to extend the use of target setting for individuals so placing a higher emphasis on the pupils being responsible for their own learning;

(See paragraphs: 80, 84, 121, 122, 132, 140)

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

1. Comply with the statutory requirements for the governors' annual report to parents.
(See paragraphs: 72, 82)

2. Now that the school has a permanent ceramics teacher, to extend the range of experience in art to include work in three dimensions by bringing the kiln quickly back into use.

(See paragraphs: 45, 180)

3. Look at the timings and organisation of the school day to bring the actual time spent in class in Key Stage 4 up to that recommended nationally.

(See paragraphs: 32, 43, 92, 97)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

- 1 The school is a mixed, 11 - 16 County Comprehensive with 676 pupils on roll. It is a popular school and, although situated close to the centre of Longridge, it draws its pupils from a wide catchment area that includes both urban and rural communities. The different wards served by the school show marked contrasts in the social and economic backgrounds of the pupils but overall these factors combine to be about average. Despite the diversity of backgrounds of the pupils creating a wide spectrum of ability and attitude, the overall attainment on entry is average and the percentage of pupils taking free school meals is also broadly average for the country.

- 2 The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average, but the percentage of pupils who come from homes where English is not the first language is well above. The number of pupils who are considered to have special educational needs is broadly in line with those expected in a school of this size. The percentage of pupils who have actual statements of special educational need is well above, nearly double, the national average. There is an imbalance of boys to girls in Key Stage 3 and boys form 61 per cent of the school population in this age range.

- 3 The major thrust of the recent school development has been the establishment of a central record system that monitors the attainment and progress of pupils as they move through the school. The current aims of the school include refining the use of this system and exploiting it more fully in setting individual targets for pupils and targeting additional support where it is required. Another priority is to develop the use of information technology more systematically across the curriculum in Key Stage 4.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	73	48	121

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	45	56	45
at NC Level 5 or	Girls	37	36	31
above	Total	82	92	76
Percentage at NC	School	68 (76)	76 (74)	63 (66)
Level 5 or above	National	n/a (64)	n/a (60)	n/a (56)
Percentage at NC	School	22 (47)	53 (50)	25 (40)
Level 6 or above	National	n/a (34)	n /a (36)	n/a (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	55	62	42
at NC Level 5 or	Girls	39	39	25
above	Total	94	101	67
Percentage at NC	School	78 (81)	84 (82)	55 (86)
Level 5 or above	National	n/a (61)	n/a (64)	n/a (61)
Percentage at NC	School	48 (43)	61 (56)	23 (56)
Level 6 or above	National	n/a (30)	n/a (37)	n/a (30)

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

GCSE Results		5 or more	5 or more grades	1 or more grades
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	28 (24)	61 (56)	62 (56)
	Girls	37 (39)	63 (59)	64 (60)
	Total	65 (63)	124 (115)	126 (116)
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	51.6 (54.3)	98.4 (99.1)	100 (100)
	National	n/a (44.6)	n/a (89.8)	n/a (95.2)

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.2
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.1
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	31
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	9
Satisfactory or better	94
Less than satisfactory	6

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

c. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment

4. The previous inspection found that the standards at Key Stage 4 were good and represented good progress in relation to the pupils' attainment on entry. Standards in Key Stage 3 were not as high, but almost all pupils were achieving at levels appropriate to their age. The school had achieved results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), that year, that were significantly above the national average.
5. The standard of attainment on entry shows a normal distribution of attainment and skills and the average attainment of the intake has been close to national average over the last few years. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, the overall achievement was well above the national average and well above that achieved in schools with a similar intake. In all core subjects the school has maintained above average results for the last four years and, given the average attainment on entry, shows that those pupils made good progress during their time in school.
6. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected level for 14 year old pupils in English in the 1998 tests was above the national average and above that achieved in similar schools. The percentage attaining above the expected level was well above both the national average and that achieved in similar schools. The results of the tests in 1999 are lower than those achieved in 1998. Key staff changes in the English department was a contributory factor to these lower results but the English results have fluctuated around the national average for the last four years.
7. In the mathematics tests in 1998 the percentages of pupils achieving the expected level for pupils of this age and higher levels were both well above national averages and those achieved in similar schools. These standards have been maintained in the 1999 tests and over the last four years results in this subject have been consistently above national averages.
8. In the 1998 tests in science, the percentage gaining the expected level for this age of pupil was above both the national average and that achieved in similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving levels above the expected level was well above both the national average and the average achieved in similar schools. The 1999 results are not as high.
9. In 1998, boys attained levels above what was expected of boys nationally at this stage but the girls achieved well above the national average for girls. The higher percentage of boys in the 1999 tests will account, to some extent, for the apparent decline in these results compared to previous years when there was a better balance.
10. Inspection of work over the previous year shows that the overall standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. Standards in English, mathematics and modern languages are above the level expected and in most other subjects standards are in line with expectations. Standards in art and music, where there have been staff absences, are below those expected for the ages of pupils concerned. The level of attainment observed in lessons for the whole key stage was below that expected in some subjects. This was most significant in science where a new scheme of work is being implemented which contains work with insufficient challenge to allow the pupils to perform at the expected level. Not enough attention is given in some

subjects in ascertaining what pupils have done before as, for example, in mathematics where pupils repeated in Year 9 work that had been covered in Year 8.

- 11 Overall pupils' results in the 1998 GCSE examinations were above the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining 5+ A* - C grades was above both the national average and that achieved in schools with a similar intake. The percentage achieving 5+ A* - G grades was well above both the national average and that achieved in similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining 1+ A* - G grades was above both the national average and that achieved in schools with a similar intake. In the 1999 examinations, the percentage gaining 5+ A* - C grades has fallen slightly. The percentage gaining 5+ A* - G grades has been maintained and every pupil gained at least 1 A* - G grade.
- 12 In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the results in mathematics, music, humanities, French, physical education, food technology and business studies were well above national averages. The results in geography, commerce and art were well below.
- 13 Over the last five years the school has consistently achieved results above the national average and has maintained a constant level of achievement. These results, however, do not reflect the rise in standards nationally and so the gap between the school and the national results has closed steadily over this period indicating that the school has not improved its performance in line with national trends. Nevertheless, the school has exceeded all the targets set for it by the local authority. There are no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls at this stage and both exceed the averages for boys and girls nationally by a similar extent.
- 14 The overall standards observed during the inspection at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with those expected nationally. Standards in English and mathematics are good, as they are in physical education, music and business studies. Standards in most other subjects are in line with national expectations except in art and history where they are below expectations for pupils of this age. Standards in information technology are below those expected nationally as the cross-curricular style of delivery does not currently develop fully the various strands of the Programme of Study for this subject in a coherent, progressive fashion. Although some older pupils showed familiarity with word-processing and some with the use of spreadsheets, databases and modelling, they showed less confidence in other aspects such as the use of control and sensing.
- 15 Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the classroom activities, where often additional support is provided, and there is little withdrawal apart from work with a dedicated remedial computer program. The standards that pupils with special learning needs achieve are as expected in most subjects. The needs of the pupils are clearly identified on their individual education programmes but, since these are often expressed as broad, long-term aims, the plans lack the specific targets that will allow progress to be measured in the short-term. The imprecise learning targets on these programmes, mentioned in the last report, are still causing problems as pupils are unsure of the targets they are working towards and how to achieve them. Pupils, and their parents, are not able to access their own programmes or able to assess their own progress. This recognised good practice is currently not possible with these targets. There is no coherent structure in place to support the gifted pupils identified within the school, although some isolated good practice has taken place with individual pupils and extension work is provided in some lessons.
- 16 The standards in speaking at both key stages are good and pupils are confident in addressing both other pupils and adults. The pupils respond well to questions and

are able to justify their answers. They are confident enough to initiate questions and are not afraid to challenge statements. There are good opportunities provided for oral work in English, religious education and graphics and pupils often show good understanding in framing their arguments. This ability is not always exploited to its full extent in the more formal lessons. Pupils can use and understand the vocabulary appropriate to the subject and show some delight in using technical terms.

- 17 Listening skills are good throughout the school. Pupils listen attentively and actively for most of the time and only when teachers speak for too long do they become passive listeners. In group activities they listen politely to, and respect, the opinions of others.
- 18 Reading skills are well developed and most read well for meaning and have sound research skills. Many will volunteer to read aloud in class and when they do so, it is with clarity and good expression. Reading for pleasure is well supported in the school which has a reading award scheme that encourages the use of the library.
- 19 Writing skills are good at both key stages. Pupils engage in a good range of writing styles both creative and formal. They show an ability to sustain writing in English, history, geography business studies and religious education. They are able to write for an audience and this skill is used effectively in information technology where they are also encouraged to draft and re-draft their work. Their ability to write for an audience is well illustrated by the notices written to encourage pupils to take advantage of the anti-bullying groups in the school. Note-making skills are less well developed as most notes are dictated or copied. The presentation of work is good and most pupils take pride in producing written work of a high standard of legibility. Spelling and punctuation skills are sound throughout the school.
- 20 Numeracy skills are well developed and used where appropriate across the curriculum. Pupils, for example, show confidence in transforming formulae in science. The use of tables, charts and graphs is widespread and many pupils show good interpretative skills in their use. Year 9 pupils can confidently predict the shape of a population pyramid to show how high birth rate or low life expectancy will alter its shape.
- 21 Investigative skills are well developed in science where pupils are able both to propose hypotheses and devise ways of testing their theories. Investigation skills in mathematics are satisfactory by Year 9 but are unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8 where they are given few opportunities to do such work. Pupils have sound research skills and, when given the opportunity, use them well to find information such as the lives of famous artists. The effective use of CD ROMs as a source of information is growing, especially in the science, history and geography departments, but generally these skills are not used widely. Less able pupils were observed using a CD ROM dictionary successfully to help them in English.
- 22 Information technology skills are sound overall in Key Stage 3 where pupils display above average keyboard skills in their use of word-processing and desktop publishing programs. They are able to model electrical circuits using a technology programme. Information technology skills in Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory as the pupils only receive a fragmented series of experiences which does not enable them to progressively improve or develop these skills. Pupils with special educational needs show competence with and are helped by the use of laptop computers.

Progress

- 23 Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 3, with good progress being made in English, information technology, mathematics, modern languages and physical education. Progress in most other subjects is satisfactory except in art and design technology where, in a significant number of lessons, progress is unsatisfactory. Progress in Key Stage 4 is generally good as it was during the last inspection. It is satisfactory in design technology, geography, religious education and science and is good in all the other subjects except for art and history where it is unsatisfactory. Progress in information technology is unsatisfactory due to the lack of coherently planned progression, and the need to expand the use of information technology across the whole curriculum as suggested in the previous report, has not been implemented sufficiently.
- 24 Pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English, mathematics and physical education. The development of skills in basic English and numeracy is supported through a dedicated computer program. This is used for pupils of all abilities who display weaknesses in these key areas and the scheme has already shown measurable improvements. Progress in the courses leading to accreditation via record of achievement units is generally sound and sometimes good.
- 25 There is no significant difference between the progress of the boys and girls. The use of the central records to identify pupils who are not making appropriate progresses relative to their prior attainment is

already having some beneficial effects.

Pupils who are not making the progress they should in several subjects, are mentored by the form tutors to determine any underlying causes.

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Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

- 26 In the previous inspection the pupils were seen as well motivated, co-operative, receptive and willing to participate and respond to challenge when presented with it. These attitudes have been maintained and are a good feature of the school. The school's mission statement includes encouraging pupils to attain high standards educationally and personally, and these aims are met well. Pupils show good interest and take pride in their work and standards of presentation are good. They are willing to sustain interest with minimal disruption despite the fact that they receive a great deal of directed teaching and learning is mostly passive. They generally work hard in all subjects and persevere with the tasks set. In English and mathematics especially, they demonstrate powers of prolonged concentration. They show an ability to work independently and collaboratively but this potential is not fully tapped in all subjects.
- 27 The standard of behaviour is good and pupils behave well in and around the school. Particularly good standards of self-control and self-restraint are required in the narrow, congested corridors. Pupils generally handle such situations with patience and good humour. There is an absence of graffiti around the school and in the pupils' exercise books. There is clear respect for people and property, especially in practical subjects where equipment is treated responsibly. There was one permanent and 31 temporary exclusions last year and 24 of these were boys. The number of exclusions is falling and is broadly in line with national averages for this size of school. The school has an excellent anti-bullying policy and pupils commented on how effective they considered it to be. Pupils select anti-bullying groups and these groups carry out their duties responsibly and effectively. The scheme is strongly supported by the parents.
- 28 The merit scheme in the lower school to promote good standards of work, behaviour and attendance is appreciated by the pupils. There is also a reward scheme to recognise and celebrate special achievements which includes prizes sponsored by a local bank. If pupils' behaviour does become unacceptable there are clearly defined procedures to respond to the situation. Such responses, on paper, can appear mechanistic but the school development plan suggests adopting a behaviour management approach that encourages teachers to look behind the problem and use alternative rather than mechanistic strategies. The school

employs a fully qualified counsellor who gives confidential help to certain pupils who are deemed by the school, themselves or their parents as likely to benefit from her assistance.

- 29 The school has an effective Respect Policy and its qualities of respect, orderliness and courtesy are reinforced by teachers in and around the school. There are good, constructive relationships between pupils and staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and between the pupils themselves who consistently show respect for the feelings, values and opinions of others. There is an excellent standard of racial harmony and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into the work and life of the school. Staff know the pupils well and consistently treat them with courtesy and friendliness to which the pupils respond well in return.
- 30 Standards of personal development are good overall and are only limited by the lack of opportunities to develop personal research or to take more responsibility for their own learning. Most pupils take advantage of a wide range of opportunities for personal development both inside school and outside in the wider community. There is a wide participation in efforts on behalf of charities and in the community involvement programme for Year 10 pupils who commit themselves to two terms of voluntary work, often for as much as three hours a week, in their own time. Each form has its own representatives who meet year tutors to discuss issues raised by the pupils themselves. Lockers were provided for the pupils as a result of a request through these representatives. The school prefects are given a whole day's team-building exercises sponsored by a local bank and this has engendered a mature and sensible approach to their duties. A small number of pupils in Years 9 and 11 become, with training, anti-bullying counsellors and there is great confidence in their roles and abilities.

Attendance

- 31 Levels of attendance were good at the time of the last inspection. The level of attendance at the school is satisfactory overall, though Year 11 rates occasionally dip below the 90 per cent level. The majority of pupils arrive punctually and tutor periods start on time. Appropriate arrangements are effective in ensuring that all pupils who arrive late, report to the school office before attending their tutor period. The school regularly displays the rates of attendance, lateness and unexplained absence in order to reinforce the need for pupils to maintain good rates of attendance. Certificates are given to those pupils who achieve 100 per cent attendance. The recording and reporting of the rates of attendance meets statutory requirements.
- 32 Registration periods are taken effectively and efficiently in tutor groups at the start of the day and at the start of each session after pupils have moved to different classrooms. Many lessons throughout the day are, however, often late in starting due to pupils moving between classrooms for specialist subject teaching. This arrangement is adversely affected by the congestion in the narrow corridors and stairways when all pupils have to move at the same time to other class bases. Staff supervise the transfer of pupils well, but the tightness of the accommodation does not enable pupils to move quickly around the school. There is no evidence of truancy of pupils during transfer between classes.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

- 33 Teaching throughout the school is generally of a good standard. The staff is extremely hard-working and dedicated, and teachers give freely of their time to provide additional learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities. Revision and extra lessons in specific subjects are provided at lunch times and after school together with more general activities such as science, numeracy and homework clubs. Parents and pupils recognise the teachers' commitment and are very appreciative of the efforts made by the staff.
- 34 The teaching observed during the inspection in Key Stage 3 was good overall with 7 per cent being very good, 44 per cent good and 42 per cent satisfactory in all respects. Only 7 per cent was seen as less than satisfactory and these lessons most often occurred when there was a lack of challenge or the pace was slow. In an unsatisfactory mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher controlled the pace of the work rigidly and did not allow pupils who had finished to get on, but made them wait for the others to catch up. The teaching seen in Key Stage 4 was better overall than in Key Stage 3. The percentages of good lessons and satisfactory lessons was similar at about 40 per cent each, but 13 per cent were rated as very good and only three lessons were seen as unsatisfactory.
- 35 Examples of good teaching were observed in many subjects but especially high standards were achieved in English, geography, business studies, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. The teaching of the 'Fast Track' pupils, who are not following the normal examination course, was often good. Teaching in mathematics was above average overall, but there were a number of unsatisfactory lessons. There was little teaching in information technology at Key Stage 4 seen during the inspection and there is evidence that some teachers lack confidence and training in some aspects, such as the use of sensing in science, for example. The non-examination course in personal and social education is taught well.

- 36 The range of teaching and learning styles has improved to some extent since the last inspection when its limited range and emphasis on teacher-direction was a key issue. Lessons were observed that contained role play, small and large group discussions, practical mathematics and matching word games in French. To increase its range, the English department has adopted the style of the Literacy Hour which involves an initial input followed by an activity and then a plenary session. There is still, however, a preponderance of teacher-directed lessons in many subjects where pupils are not involved in the learning process, but merely recipients of teacher-imparted information. Because the pupils are generally responsive and listen well, standards are not being adversely affected but, because the pupils have not internalised the new knowledge, their recall after a few weeks is often below that expected. When pupils are given the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own learning they do so with enthusiasm and often achieve higher standards. Teaching in English and religious education exploits this well by using discussions to consider complex ideas, and as a result, pupils show good insight and understanding. In a good science lesson, pupils were allowed to use models to explore abstract concepts associated with molecular structure and made good progress. Some departments, notably science and English, have good arrangements for sharing good practice among the staff.
- 37 Teachers have a good grasp of their subjects and very few have to teach outside their specialisms. Staff absence has had an adverse effect on some subjects, especially art, music and history, since most departments are too small to provide much internal cover. Lessons are generally well prepared and well planned and most have clear learning objectives. Relationships with the pupils are very good and represent a major strength of the school. Most lessons are typified by a relaxed, friendly, yet hard-working atmosphere. Many teachers share humour with the pupils such as the use of a doll and a bowl of water to discuss baptism. Classroom management is good and even allows practical activities in mathematics where the classrooms are small and overcrowded.
- 38 Given the good, sensible behaviour of the pupils, staff expectations are not high enough both in the work set and in the ways it could be carried out. There is still little individual research using the library or CD ROMs and pupils are seldom allowed to 'spill over' into the large open space near the languages department. There is little need, for example, to repeat instructions two or three times, or to read out a worksheet before allowing the pupils to get on task, as observed in some of the less effective lessons. Where teaching was good, as seen in an English lesson, expectations were high, pupils were given a good range of resources and allowed to work collaboratively to identify the use of persuasive language in advertisements. In a good graphics lesson, pupils were asked to identify the devices designers had used to convey the theme of a film on a poster and how they had used a style of lettering to reinforce those ideas. These pupils showed that they had good insight into methods selected and the discussions showed maturity and very good understanding.
- 39 Teaching aids are generally used well. Good use is made of an overhead projector in modern languages to look at maps of countries or to show cartoons as stimulus material for discussion. In some departments overhead transparencies used do not have enlarged print so making them hard to read. Here the use of the equipment is hindering rather than helping the lesson. There is frequent and effective use of video tapes, especially in religious education to explore complex ideas. The use of special educational needs assistants is satisfactory, but could be more effective. There is too little joint planning or consultation with these staff even when the class has a high proportion of pupils with special needs. Time in class is generally used well and most lessons have a satisfactory pace.

- 40 Since most of the classes in the school are set for subjects there is generally a good match of work to the abilities of the pupils in the class. There is, however, a degree of over-reliance on this and only in some cases is a variety of tasks and extension work regularly provided. Some very able pupils are still not being challenged sufficiently. Homework is set regularly by some departments and suitably extends the work in class. Not all homework set, however, is effective, especially where the work in class has to be completed at home. Such homework detracts from the need to work hard in class and does not provide sufficient extension work for higher attaining pupils. There is also homework that involves extensive copying from a worksheet, which is an inefficient use of the pupils' time. Some parents complained that the homework timetable was not always followed, causing an excess of work at times and no work at others and that the quality of some homework was poor. There was evidence found to support these views during the inspection in some subjects.
- 1 Work is generally marked satisfactorily, normally with helpful comments indicating where pupils could make improvements or to correct misunderstandings. Teachers know their pupils well and day-to-day assessment is used effectively to provide support where needed. There are regular assessments which are fed into a central system which then provides feedback on pupils who are seen to be under- or over-achieving. This information is used as a basis for providing extra tuition and support or to give praise and encouragement.

The curriculum and assessment

Curriculum

- 42 The school's curricular aims include the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum that develops pupils' abilities to the full, develops citizens with a good awareness of local and wider communities and develops moral values based on the rights of others. These aims are, in the main, achieved well. With the exception of information technology in Key Stage 4, the curriculum meets all the statutory requirements including the need to provide a daily act of collective worship. At Key Stage 3, all pupils have the opportunity to engage in the full range of subjects including religious education and personal and social education. Some of the higher achieving linguists extend their range of modern foreign languages by studying German in Years 8 and 9 in addition to French.
- 43 A teaching week of nominally 25 hours is planned to be delivered through a 26 period week. However, there is time lost on movement round the school between lessons, in taking afternoon registration and when a whole-school assembly is held. This reduces the time spent on learning to be less than the time recommended for Key Stage 4 by a significant amount. The introduction of a six period day on Mondays has not adversely affected standards and all teachers have adjusted their lessons to fit the time available, however, the additional movement between classes means more time is lost from the classroom.
- 44 At Key Stage 4, the curriculum offers a limited range of options though this still allows pupils to study the maximum number of subjects according to the levels of ability and choice. There is good equality of access to these options regardless of gender. Lower attaining pupils follow a slightly reduced pattern by being disapplied from modern foreign languages. Instead, they study a modular course offering access to a number of curriculum areas, which leads to unit accreditation for their records of achievement.
- 45 The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced. All subjects receive an adequate proportion of curriculum time. As an improvement from the last inspection, there is now sufficient time allocated to religious education for the demands of the Locally Agreed Syllabus to be met. Although more time has also been allocated to art, the carousel arrangement with technology subjects is inhibiting pupils' progression in this subject to some extent and is not helping remedy the below average attainment in art in both key stages. Opportunities to study textiles are limited and the lack of provision of a safety cage for the kiln restricts the study of ceramics. There is a good range of technology subjects in this carousel over the year including electronics. Information technology is offered as a separate subject in Key Stage 3 and fulfils most of the statutory requirements of the subject's Programme of Study. Pupils do not have the opportunity, however, to study all the strands of the programme in depth, in particular, measurement and control. There is some evidence of pupils using information technology effectively in other subjects, such as the use of databases in mathematics, but their experiences are not mapped or recorded.
- 1 The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is satisfactorily broad and balanced within the context of an extended core, which contains a technology subject and a modern language for the majority of pupils, and a small range of options. The option pattern makes it possible for pupils to study history and geography and for some in Year 11 to study two modern languages. All pupils take a double science option. Physical education is part of the core curriculum although some pupils take it up as an option at GCSE level. There is not enough planned provision for information technology in this stage, however, and the school is not meeting the statutory requirements for the subject.

- 47 All subjects lead to GCSE accreditation for the majority of pupils. A small minority of pupils, who follow the school's own 'Fast Track' programme receive accreditation via the record of achievement units. This programme is broad and is well supported by enthusiastic staff who make this work very relevant to pupils' experiences.
- 48 The school has a good programme of personal and social education and appropriate provision is made for sex, health, drugs and careers education within it. This lively programme enriches the pupils' learning effectively, as does the two weeks work experience programme in Year 10. Careers education within the school is effective but most pupils now receive only limited outside advice from the local agency. Pupils with special educational needs still receive this advice and two of last year's Year 11 pupils went on extended work experience where one was offered a job. The school has tried to compensate for the majority of pupils by providing an extensive careers library which includes advice via a computer program. There are good career links with local colleges, who send representatives to parents' evenings and provide 'taster days' for the pupils, and most pupils go on to further education. The continuity of education is less well developed and there is little curriculum consultation between the school and the receiving colleges.
- 49 At the start of Year 7, pupils are taught in mixed ability groups but within a short time they are placed into groups based on their prior attainment at the end of their primary education, standardised tests and subject information. All remaining year groups are set on the basis of academic achievement and there is transfer between groups as the pupils develop. All assessment information is kept on central computerised records that enable effective and efficient access to all members of staff of each pupil's progress and attainment.
- 50 The curriculum is equally accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs meets the specific needs identified in the learning objectives in individual education plans and for Stage 5 pupils in their Statement of Special needs and in their annual reviews. Apart from information technology and modern foreign languages, departments are using materials and resources that meet each individual pupil's specific needs.
- 51 Individual Education Plans are in place for all pupils at Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the register. These generally have subject specific targets. There is, however, a lack of subject specific targets in music, history, art, technology and information technology. The current structure of the plans means that whilst the pupils' specific needs are often clearly identified, they are not then related to measurable, achievable, short-term, realistic targets that a pupil can easily understand and aim towards. For example, when targets lack specificity such as 'improved accuracy in reading and spelling', or 'frustrations lead to him displaying attention-seeking and disruptive behaviour in lessons' then the pupils are not able to easily recognise their goals and subsequent achievement.
- 52 The school has a good equal opportunities policy that all departments follow and the inspection showed that there was no evidence of gender bias in lessons or work seen. Attention to gender issues was satisfactory and often good. Subjects such as modern languages, for example, refer to men and women in a variety of roles. Advice on careers and option choices is balanced and impartial. Any differences between boys' and girls' performances in tests and examinations is carefully monitored and addressed. Although the senior management team is entirely male, the broad management structure does have women in responsible positions to serve as role models. The presence of a counsellor, who is female,

means that girls have a means of seeking personal support and advice.

- 53 Curriculum planning in most subjects is at least satisfactory and in some it is good. All departments have well-developed schemes of work, except information technology in Key Stage 4. Curriculum planning that allows a continuity of experience is generally good within the school and there are some links with the local primary schools. Although assessment data is recorded along with other helpful information provided by the primary schools, the planning of lessons does not always take into account the work done by pupils in their primary schools and, occasionally, even what has taken place within the school itself. In science for example, pupils were seen classifying materials according to very simple properties, which is a typical activity, found in the primary years.
- 54 Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and the wide range of well-supported activities enriches and extends the curriculum experiences of pupils and meets thoroughly one of the school's curriculum aims. This is a strength of the school as it was at the time of the previous inspection. There is a broad spectrum of very successful cultural and community based activities that have included European exchanges and a variety of foreign holidays for the pupils. The school has good industrial links and has won local, national and European awards for its Young Enterprise Scheme. A wide variety of clubs with both academic and non-academic themes is actively encouraged. Sporting provision is very good and includes competitive events that involve large numbers of pupils.

Assessment

- 55 In response to what was seen as a key issue in the previous report, the school has developed very good assessment and recording procedures that are reflected in good practice across all departments. The school has access to a large body of data about each pupil from the primary school and its own testing procedures which is used to compile the central record system. This is a very effective and comprehensive system that generates information that is circulated to all departments by the School Improvement Group, which monitors its operation. The progress and attainment of every pupil is circulated and the reports identify, and very clearly highlight, pupils who are under- or over-achieving. Progress reports to parents are very informative and draw on data kept on the central system. The school has had a meeting with parents of Year 10 pupils who are seen as not achieving their full potential and most were appreciative of the opportunity.
- 56 All assessment data is carefully analysed by each department to determine trends over time and to track under-achievement by different groups of pupils. Under-achieving pupils are given extra support either through mentoring or through additional work and help. The use of the assessment data is beginning to be used more effectively by departments to inform curriculum planning, although its full potential has yet to be realised by all staff. Pupils keep homework diaries and planners, and some of them record improvement targets as discussed with their form tutors.
- 57 Marking is satisfactory across the school although it is not always consistent with the new school policy in some departments. Despite this, there have been substantial improvements in the quality of marking since the new policy was introduced. In most subjects good guidance is provided to help pupils improve their work.
- 58 Targets are set for the school annually by the Local Education Authority, which have an improvement factor built in. These are used by the school to identify targets for individual subjects and to analyse performance in each GCSE subject

against expected grades. Currently, the school is meeting and often exceeding the overall targets set.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 59 The previous report indicated that the school's mission statement adequately addressed these aspects but because the planning for collective worship was at an early stage the school did not fully comply with the statutory requirements. Currently, the spiritual development of the pupils is good. The school now fulfils its statutory obligations for collective worship, mainly through classroom assemblies taken by form tutors. There is significant assistance provided for these tutors from the teacher in charge of collective worship and from the senior tutor who has devised an assembly book for their use. This contains a good range of prayers, readings and meditations of a mainly Christian nature but with appropriate readings and prayers originating from the other religions practised by the pupils. Form and Year group assemblies give the pupils opportunities for personal reflection on spiritual and moral issues. Moments of spiritual significance are to be found in mathematics, science, history and especially religious education. In religious education there is a strong emphasis on prayer and worship as well as the study of six world religions. There is a voluntary Christian Union meeting each week.
- 60 Moral development is good. Moral issues are thoroughly explored in religious education and in the personal and social education syllabus, where drugs, health and sex education are considered in a very moral framework. Moral issues relating to the environment and genetic engineering are considered in science, and many such issues are explored in English. The school's Respect Policy is based on the moral stance of the value of each individual regardless of gender, age, religion, race, nationality or ability. This is reflected in the school by the way pupils and teachers treat each other with friendliness and courtesy. The school's code of behaviour is implemented effectively and pupils have a clear understanding between right and wrong.
- 61 The pupils have many opportunities to develop socially and do so very well. The personal and social education course considers matters such as citizenship, in line with the school's curriculum aims, but the main strength of the school is the social interaction between pupils and the staff and with other pupils. There is generally good behaviour and a sense of fair play, especially in physical education. The community involvement programme entails Year 10 pupils working in the community for two terms. The Young Enterprise Scheme is so successful that the school has not only won the national award, but has been second in the European competition. Charity work and fund-raising, as well as the Christmas concert, provide opportunities, readily taken, for pupils to develop their social awareness and responsibilities well.
- 62 The cultural development of the pupils is also good. There are a large number of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported. These are both on site and off, and include exchange visits to France, theatre trips and a religious education day for all Year 10 pupils that looked specifically at other cultures. The experiences of pupils from diverse religious backgrounds are used sensitively in religious education in order to embellish the study of those religions. Music, art, food technology, history and geography provide opportunities to increase cultural awareness, but generally there is only a limited stress on Britain being a multi-cultural society. The quality of display work, in and out of class, is good and uplifting.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

- 63 The school provides a caring, considerate environment in which good provision is made for the support, guidance and welfare of the pupils.
- 64 Pupils remain with the same form tutor as they progress through the school which allows them to build positive relationships. Year heads remain in post and develop the necessary expertise associated with each year of school life such as liaison with feeder schools, option choices and careers advice. A well co-ordinated structure involving the pastoral board, heads of year and tutors ensures that pupils receive effective day-to-day support. Pupils feel that teachers are aware of their needs.
- 65 The school has responded well to the key issue of the previous inspection to establish monitoring and evaluation systems. A central records system has been introduced that provides a computerised check for each pupil. It warns of under-achieving, recognises good performance and records performance across subjects. The intention is to use the same system to extend the setting of targets for individual pupils in future. Parents and year heads receive progress reports three times a year alongside the more traditional report and both groups comment very favourably on these.
- 66 Form tutors monitor attendance in the first instance, supported by office staff who automatically send letters home if no explanations for absence are received. Certificates reward good attendance and attendance figures are displayed outside classrooms.
- 67 Maintaining good behaviour is a priority of the school and the behaviour code is clearly displayed. A well-publicised system of merits and effective classroom management makes a substantial contribution to promoting the good behaviour of the pupils. The merit system is particularly effective in Years 7 to 9 and its extension into Years 10 and 11 is under discussion. There is a detailed anti-bullying policy and the Year 11 bullying council operates effectively. A prefect system also contributes to good behaviour management.
- 68 Liaison with feeder schools is good, with new pupils supported by an induction day and staff visits. Support continues through a well-organised careers and work experience programme as pupils progress through the school and there are good links with further education agencies and employers. Individual interviews and advice accompany mock exam results and the school works well with the Compact and Trident initiatives. The new school counsellor is effective and works with selected pupils who are seen as needing, or who ask for, additional support. Sound support is provided for pupils with special education needs by the special needs co-ordinator, who is currently the only teacher providing full time support in the classroom. A literacy co-ordinator was to be appointed to increase this support, but she withdrew after appointment and the school has re-advertised the post.
- 69 There are comprehensive anti-drugs and health education policies and education about drugs, health and sex is delivered through the personal and social education programme. Elements of careers education are also taught through this programme. This course has a good scheme of work in which the topics have been carefully selected to be taught at the appropriate stage in pupils' development. Teachers are given substantial help and advice in dealing with sensitive issues and their work is supplemented by talks from local health visitors and the police. Teachers involved in teaching about drugs have attended in-service training courses. The teaching is in line with the school's ethos characterised by friendly, good relationships and the sensitive handling of potentially very personal issues.

70 The school complies with the statutory requirements for child protection and the nominated officer is appropriately trained. The child protection policy, which uses the authority's guidelines, is in the staff handbook and all staff, including support assistants, are aware of it. There are effective links with Social Services. Child line phone numbers are displayed on notice boards. The Senior Tutor is the designated health and safety officer and a process of risk assessment in departments has just been completed. Pupils' health and safety is satisfactory overall but inspectors reported concerns over safety during busy periods in some areas of the building and some other issues that may merit further consideration have been referred to the headteacher. Year 10 receive lessons on health and safety in the workplace before leaving for work experience, and the school has ten members of staff trained to give first aid. Appropriate fire and electrical checks are made.

Partnership with parents and the community

71 The links with parents were seen as good in the previous report with parents being strongly supportive of the school and encouraged to participate fully in its life. The school's catchment has widened since then and the school's partnership with parents and the community is now satisfactory overall. Some of the comments from parents attending the meeting before the inspection and the findings of the parents' questionnaire indicates that the range and depth of communication with parents is only satisfactory. A significant minority of parents, for example, does not believe that the school provides a clear understanding of what their children are due to study in the term and that staff do not handle complaints from parents well. The school is seeking to overcome this perception and has provided a wide range of information to parents including the new system for reporting on the progress that pupils make and the level of attainment they have reached. These reports are accompanied with clear explanations. The school issues a termly newsletter but, although its tone is light and it is very informative, it is not very eye-catching in its format. Some parents requested that these should be issued more frequently. Comprehensive information is issued to parents as to when homework is to be given and the homework set is recorded in the pupils' planners. The team found that these were not always completed satisfactorily. The planners can provide a two-way means of communication and be used by teachers and parents to send notes when required. One parent, at the meeting, commented very favourably at the speed of response to a comment she had made. Parents also sign that homework has been completed.

72 Parents have been informed about the school's provision for a personal counsellor to be available for pupils needing to talk confidentially with a qualified adult other than a teacher. The school prospectus is generally informative but the level of some information is very limited. The governors annual report is well presented but omits information required to be reported, including details of the policy and progress of pupils with special educational needs, the professional development of staff and the dates of school terms. Nor does it provide details of the facilities to assist access by pupils with disabilities, nor details the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils being treated less favourably than other pupils. These are statutory requirements.

73 The end of year reports for pupils are satisfactory overall, but vary widely in the information provided. For example, many subjects' sections identify where pupils have developed specific skills and grasped new concepts, while others focus on the attitudes and responses of the pupils. Not all reports indicate ways for pupils to improve their work. The school holds regular consultation meetings for parents and these are well supported.

74 The school provides a welcoming and open environment for parents and visitors

and encourages them to become involved fully in the life of the school. Parents readily support the performances and concerts given by pupils and good support is given to the social and fund-raising activities organised by the parent-teacher association, which raises good levels of funding for learning resources for pupils.

- 75 The school maintains good relationships with the community and this reinforces the findings of the previous inspection report. Good links are maintained with a local insulation firm through the Young Enterprise scheme for developing pupils' awareness of work. The school also benefits from using some of the Company's resources for producing colour documents. Managers of local companies visit the school to discuss topics of business and to support the 'Fast Track' arrangements where a small group of pupils learn about business in the community. The school maintains its strong link with a wide range of businesses through the well-structured work experience programme. All staff receive an awareness brief on the companies involved prior to their visiting the pupils during the work placement. All pupils in Year 10 apply for a two-week placement in the workplace and are interviewed by staff to identify the benefits gained from the experience. The careers programme commences in Year 9 and is fully documented and includes a work-shadowing day, followed by pupils' choices for work placements in Year 10. The school endeavours to overcome its concern about the vastly reduced number of pupils receiving careers interviews by seeking to give appropriate support to pupils through more focused work from the school careers library.
- 76 The school maintains good relationships with the wider community. Pupils on the 'Fast Track' programme, for example, complete work modules in elderly peoples' homes. These pupils spend evenings and weekends visiting the homes, assisting the residents with shopping and spending time talking with them. Pupils use the local church for Christmas carols to which parents and the community are invited. Other visitors enrich the curriculum for the pupils, such as the school police liaison officer who talks about drugs awareness and personal safety for girls. The school nurse visits twice weekly and she also gives talks on sex education to boys and girls. Separate arrangements are in place for more personal aspects and a confidential counsellor enables individual pupils to discuss any personal difficulties in private. A local clergyman visits the school in connection with the religious education studies. Pupils on the School Council decide which charities should be supported each year. Year 11 pupils competently organised a collection and coffee morning for the Macmillan nurses during the inspection week. Pupils support the Lions Club in charity fund-raising and continue to host the regional music school.
- 77 The school maintains appropriate relationships with feeder primary schools and all necessary documentation is received on pupils' entry to the school. The relationships with colleges of further education are good and pupils receive interviews from colleges of their choice before leaving the school. A compact has been agreed with a local college where they are guaranteed education until they are 21 years old. The greater majority of pupils leaving the school in summer term 1999 had successfully secured jobs, placements in colleges and apprenticeships by the time they completed their secondary education.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

- 78 The leadership in the school is good. The headteacher has a clear vision of the ethos he wants to pervade the school and its educational direction. The collegiate style of management is effective in generating new initiatives and, by its nature,

engenders a shared vision among the staff. Much responsibility is delegated to departmental and Year heads who respond well to the sense of ownership and carry out their tasks effectively. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and a high degree of collaboration between staff. Most new ideas raised are initially explored and discussed by working groups drawn from all members of staff. An important initiative of the School Improvement Group, in response to a key issue in the previous report, was the establishment of the central record system to track the performance of every pupil and this is now the major vehicle for raising school standards. The governors have appropriate committees with clear terms of reference and these function well in their roles as critical friends to the school. Some now receive reports directly from heads of department which gives governors an insight into the department's aspirations and the problems it faces. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive, especially the Chair of Governors, who has an educational background, and the nominated governor for special educational needs, and they visit the school regularly.

- 79 Teaching and curriculum developments are well supported. The new heads of department specifically mentioned how approachable and supportive senior management is and how those in the smaller departments are not left isolated, but are attached to larger departments where they can seek help and advice. The monitoring of the curriculum and its delivery is primarily carried out by heads of department and time was made available for them last year to directly monitor teaching within their departments. Extending the range of teaching and learning styles was a key issue in the previous report and useful guidance and in-service training has been provided to try to improve these aspects. Teaching is also monitored by departmental heads as part of the teacher appraisal system operating in the school. Similarly, heads of year monitor the teaching in form periods and personal and social education lessons by direct observation. The work of the pupils is monitored by departmental heads checking exercise books, homework and planners and this, in the main, is done well. The departments themselves are monitored by the senior management team through the scrutiny of pupils' work and homework planners and also by following selected pupils in their classes through the week. The central records highlight both where individual pupils are under-achieving and departments where under-achievement is widespread. To enhance the monitoring provided internally, the school has also sought the advice of the Local Education Authority, which conducted a 'mini' inspection, to determine how well the school had responded to the advice given in the earlier report.
- 80 The implementation of the school's aims is good. The central recording system has been established well and is a powerful tool for raising standards and ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential. Staff have co-operated well in providing information and departments are beginning to develop strategies for targeting individual pupils. These targets are not as widely shared with the younger pupils, as they are with pupils studying for examinations who find them useful. The effectiveness of the system has yet to be fully realised and this is one of the school's current priorities.
- 81 The school is also using a computer program to support pupils identified as having a weakness in basic skills. Its use has shown some gains but support systems need further refining to be fully effective. The aim of providing pupils with a wide range of experiences is met very well and the provision of extra classes, clubs and visits is a strong feature of the school. Delegating initial responsibility to anti-bullying groups in Year 9 and Year 11 has engendered a feeling of independence among the pupils involved who approach these matters seriously and conscientiously. The additional training for prefects, provided by a local bank in response to a request from the school, has developed a high sense of maturity among these pupils.

- 82 The school has all the statutory policies in place as well as all those recommended. The school prospectus complies with the statutory requirements but its section on special educational needs lacks detail. The governors' report to parents, however, lacks several statutory requirements especially in terms of handicapped pupils and those with special needs. The school has a good policy on equal opportunities, which is generally applied well in practice. There is a thorough and detailed special needs policy and the school has a designated special needs co-ordinator.
- 83 Development planning in the school is sound. The plan covers three years having been extended to meet one of the key issues in the previous report. It has relevant targets and identifies key personnel, deadlines and monitoring procedures. It incorporates departmental development plans and there is now good linkage between the two types of plan, again meeting a key issue in the previous report. Success criteria, however, need to be more sharply defined to allow monitoring to be more precise. Most elements, especially in the departmental sections, are realistically costed and bids from departments are used to allocate the school's developmental funds before being incorporated into the school plan. The plan is used effectively by the school to guide its development. It is reviewed annually and priority targets for the next phase of development are identified in whole staff meetings. There are regular departmental meetings where progress in meeting its targets is discussed. This progress is reported directly to the headteacher in an annual meeting with each departmental head.
- 84 There is a good ethos in the school. It has a friendly atmosphere in which high achievement is valued. Pupils respond well to the climate in the school and can share humour with the staff without being impolite. There is a sense among the older pupils that they are working for themselves and not for the staff, who they see as being there to help them attain their goals. This is not capitalised upon to its fullest extent and pupils are not made responsible for their own learning until they embark on examination courses where pupils respond well.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

- 85 The number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff are well matched to the needs of the curriculum and meets a key issue identified in the previous report. The school has increased the number of teaching staff since the previous inspection and has built up a competent and capable management team. The great majority of teachers are teaching their specialist subjects. Since the previous inspection, the school has reviewed the job descriptions of staff and has revised many of the staff responsibilities to give clear notification of both teaching and management responsibilities. Teachers are actively involved in the work experience programme and this is effective in providing appropriate support to pupil's consideration of work in the community. There has been a high staff turnover in the last two years together with several teachers away with long-term sickness. These factors have had an adverse effect on standards in the school over this time.
- 86 The school has a small but adequate number of qualified and experienced technicians who make valuable contribution to the school's work and support the departments well. The school's well led administrative team is having an effective impact on ensuring that day-to-day administration, monitoring of pupil's rates of attendance and the school's financial control is run very smoothly and efficiently.
- 87 Staffing levels for pupils with special educational needs is currently below average but will be close to average when the post of literacy co-ordinator is filled in the

near future. Support staff possess appropriate qualifications and satisfactory aptitudes for their roles and they are generally used quite effectively in the classroom. Their effectiveness could be improved, however, by closer planning with the subject teachers before the lessons. Further training is required for all teaching and support staff to ensure that pupil's individual education plans contain measurable, short-term targets for learning. The Local Education Authority provides a generally adequate level of support for pupils with statements of special educational need. The school has a positive approach to teaching pupils with special educational needs both in classes and through the 'Fast Track' arrangements including the focused use of computers. Teachers are competent in supporting pupils with special educational needs in most subjects.

- 88 The school has well-structured arrangements for the professional development of staff. Appraisal procedures are in place and take the form of an annual professional development review with line managers to identify their needs and to ensure that plans for personal development are closely related to the departmental development plans. Monitoring of the work of teachers is conducted by the heads of department and the senior management team through a range of well-devised activities. They monitor the pupils' planners, folders and workbooks. Whole class teaching and learning activities are monitored by a member of the senior management team accompanying a pupil through a typical day, from which teaching needs are observed in an unobtrusive manner. This range of monitoring is having a positive impact on staff development. Well-constructed arrangements are followed for the induction of newly qualified teachers and new staff feel well supported by the school.
- 89 The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall and staff work hard to minimise its shortcomings. The high quality of self-discipline shown by pupils and the effective but unobtrusive monitoring of pupils transferring between classes contributes very positively to the school being an orderly community. The corridors, however, are too narrow causing congestion in all major areas where pupils cross to other classes. The special educational needs room is poor, the shower and toilet facilities for physical education are poor and unhygienic. Issues raised by the parents about the poor facilities in the pupils' toilets have subsequently been remedied by the school. Some teaching rooms are cramped, especially in mathematics, where pupils moving to specialist classes interrupt adjacent classes.
- 90 The accommodation for special needs teaching is currently unsatisfactory. The arrangement and furnishing of the specialist room for focused support outside of classrooms is poor. Printed resources in the base are currently very poorly presented and there is a dependency on inappropriate, out-of-date, learning materials in very poor condition. The school is aware of these shortcomings and intends moving the special needs support room to an under-used food technology room.
- 91 The quality of display of pupil's work varies considerably throughout the school. In many classes such as English and history, pupil's work is well presented and contributes well to study of particular topics. The display by the Year 9 anti-bullying group is good; it is eye-catching, well produced for its audience and contains useful information such as 'help line' numbers.
- 92 The arrangements for pupils moving between classes at the same time results in many lessons starting up to five minutes late at the start of each session. There is no specialist accommodation for drama and that for music is inadequate. These deficiencies have a detrimental impact on the range of learning activities provided. The school hall is devoted to use as a gymnasium while ball games take place in the shared sports hall. The recommendations made in the previous report

for improving the walls and windows of the hall have been completed effectively. A bid for external funding is in progress for refurbishing the physical education facilities. There are dedicated rooms with good computer facilities to support work in class and provide remedial work for pupils in English and mathematics but these were not used to their fullest extent during the inspection.

- 93 The provision of resources is satisfactory overall, though some areas for improvement are evident. The library is adequate but requires a review of up-to-date and attractive books as an aid to stimulate pupil's interest in reading, including pupils with special educational needs. The range of books in most subjects is satisfactory, though further book resources are required for information technology, English, mathematics, modern languages and in the library. Stimulating posters and displays are required for art. Computer resources for music are sufficient but there is a lack of compatible software.
- 94 The school site is well served for outside sports facilities, but these can become heavily waterlogged and unusable as an effective teaching area. The school is generally free from litter and graffiti as noted in the previous inspection.

The efficiency of the school

- 95 The overall efficiency of the school is satisfactory. The previous report indicated that the school managed its finances prudently but the planning mechanisms lacked the refinement to ensure that the quality of information, on which financial decisions were made, needed improving. Financial planning is now satisfactory and the Governing Body has a direct involvement with the setting of budget headings in relation to the school development plan as well as monitoring expenditure through the year. However, little evaluation of the sums spent, beyond looking at examination results, is carried out to guide future decision-making. The bursar is present at each finance committee meeting, being a full member of the Governing Body, and she is able to provide additional information on the regular financial statements provided for the committee. These are clearly set out and any virement is noted. Spending remains prudent with a clear aim of getting value for money. Other sources of funds, such as local industries, are explored to boost the amounts spent for the school's benefit and these have resulted in the purchase of the school's minibus. There have been very large contingency funds carried in recent years but these have been reduced recently to more usual levels and the school is holding money in hand as its contribution to buildings development. Whilst the school is holding these large sums, comments from several parents at the pre-inspection meeting on the lack of books to bring home to help with homework have some validity.
- 96 Departmental development plans are at the heart of the school development plan and are carefully and realistically costed. Many departments, such as science and geography, monitor their outcomes annually but some of the targets set lack sufficient precision to be capable of specific evaluation that will be of assistance in making future plans.
- 97 Members of staff are deployed satisfactorily. Departments have clear structures and the pastoral system supports the needs of the pupils well. The dual roles, which many staff carry, is normal for schools of this size and these duties are carried out conscientiously. Regular appraisal of the staff ensures that appropriate changes in job descriptions can be made to meet the changing needs of the school. The effectiveness of grouping rooms in departments, which on the whole is good, is seen by the school as providing better use of learning resources and of allowing closer support between staff. These benefits compensate, to some extent, for the time lost by the pupils in moving through the crowded corridors to cross the school. The school day has not been organised in a way that would allow time for

pupils to transfer between specialist facilities and so ensure that pupils in Key Stage 4 receive the recommended time in class. Accommodation is effectively deployed, given the nature of the buildings, as, overall, are the learning resources apart from time.

- 98 The administration of the school is very good, with an unobtrusive smoothness borne out of long experience and expertise. High standards are assured by the great pride taken in the efficiency of the office and the financial procedures. Systems for handling accounts are good and information kept on computer has good 'back up' systems. Funds for pupils with special educational needs are spent appropriately and money for in-service training is used to underpin the school development plan. Accounts are audited, including an independent audit for the school fund, and these are up to date. All the recommendations of a previous auditor's report were so successfully carried out that the most recent report had no recommendations to make.
- 99 Taking into account the context of the school, its income and expenditure, the standards achieved, the quality of education provided and the attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils, the school gives good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

- 100 Since the last inspection, when attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was seen as in line with that expected nationally, there has been an incremental improvement and the attainment seen during this inspection was above national expectations for pupils of this age. In 1998 the performance of pupils in the end of the Key Stage 3 national tests was well above both the national average and that achieved in schools of a similar intake. A well above average percentage of pupils achieved higher than the expected level. Following the national trend, girls outperformed boys in these examinations, but not significantly. The results in 1999 are lower than those achieved in 1998. These pupils' second year coincided with a period of instability in the English department and some significant changes in its staffing were a contributory factor in these lower results.
- 101 The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is good. GCSE results in 1998 in both Language and Literature were in line with national averages and the results in 1999 have improved on these.
- 102 By the end of both key stages pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. They are confident in their ability and express their ideas and opinions clearly and well. They listen to, and respect, the opinion of others. Pupils are able to utilise a range of oral activities in the exploration of a range of literature and media texts.
- 103 The standard of reading at the end of both key stages is good. Pupils are able to respond to a good range of reading materials, both literary and factual. Pupils read accurately, fluently and with expression and confidence. Pupils are able to read for information and demonstrate good reference and research skills, when given the opportunity. A number of above average attainment pupils in both key stages display high order reading skills. They are able to discuss character and story line, the use of language, subtext, and the underlying themes explored in the books they are reading.
- 104 The standard of written work at the end of Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils are able to write in a variety of styles, in response to a range of materials, and with a specific audience in mind. Pupils are able to make good use of a range of basic English skills, including spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary, and handwriting and presentation are good. Whilst pupils engage in drafting skills, examination of pupils' written work indicates that it rarely moves beyond the copying of rough to best copy. Opportunities are thus lost to utilise this skill as a means of improving the standard of work of below and above average pupils.
- 105 The majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 write at length about the texts and non-literary issues they explore as part of their GCSE studies. Examination of pupils' coursework files indicates that many pupils are capable of producing work of real quality and depth and the overall standard in writing is good.
- 106 The standard of attainment in English upon entry into the school is average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, then go on to make good progress in both key stages. Pupils in Key Stage 3 make good progress in their oral skills. They listen to teachers' exposition and are keen to make an active contribution lessons. Pupils' in Year 7 were seen to engage in a good range of drama activities, as they explored the witches' opening scene from 'Macbeth'. In contrast, a group of Year 9 pupils engaged in good paired work as they discussed

at length the importance and impact of company logos. Pupils make good progress in their reading skills as they read and respond to an increased range of reading materials, though there are limited opportunities for pupils to read poetry and pre-twentieth century literature. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have library lessons and the very good reading award scheme helps pupils to make good progress in reading for both pleasure and information. By using this good range of reading materials as a stimulus, pupils are able to make good progress in their writing over a range of extended writing activities.

- 107 Pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress overall. They make good progress in their speaking and listening skills and, through the demands of the oral element of the GCSE syllabus, they develop the ability to structure their ideas in a logical manner and present them to a specific audience. They continue to make good progress in their reading skills in Key Stage 4 as they examine a range of stimulating and more complex poems, novels and plays. Pupils' responses to teachers' questions in lessons, indicate that a number of pupils develop a good range of critical and analytical reading skills. Examination of pupils written work across the key stage demonstrates pupils' growing confidence in their ability to write at length and in more detail.
- 108 Pupils in both key stages take a positive approach towards their work. They show interest in their activities and stay on task. Pupils are able to work both independently and collaboratively, and have good working relationships with their teachers.
- 109 The quality of teaching observed in Key Stage 3 was good and that in Key Stage 4 teaching was very good. Lessons in both key stages are well planned with clear learning outcomes made known to pupils. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, and provide pupils with a range of challenging activities. Staff have good classroom management skills and ensure that pupils stay on task. Lessons are well paced and teachers have high expectations. Staff use the plenary session at the end of each lesson in a very effective manner in order for pupils to share their ideas and successes, and thus raise their personal esteem. Teachers also use this part of the lesson well to assess what pupils have actually learned.
- 110 Whilst teachers utilise a good range of teaching and learning styles, pupils are seldom given the opportunity to become independent learners and opportunities for pupils to engage in group project work are limited. Those lessons deemed to be good or better, often came about where teachers demonstrate a real enthusiasm, where the resources and activities matched the needs, interests and abilities of the group of pupils, and where teachers created a motivating, rigorous and active environment in which good learning can take place.
- 111 A good example of this took place in Year 11 where a teacher worked with a lower set on Macbeth. Resources were selected to match the needs and ability of the groups. Good questioning skills were used to extend their knowledge and understanding of the text, and to expand upon their initial superficial response to the teacher's questions. The teacher used the board effectively to record pupils' answers and to provide them with a framework for later written work. The teacher's dramatic reading of the text contributed to the creation of a motivating atmosphere. The teacher demonstrated that he had high expectations for this group.
- 112 Now that the department has entered a more settled period, the well-informed, forward-looking head of department, and his committed staff are in a good position to consolidate current standards, and to continue improving standards.

- 113 At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain above the national expectations for pupils of this age. The performance of pupils in the national tests at the end of this key stage in 1998 was well above both the national average and also that achieved in schools with a similar intake. The percentage reaching higher than expected levels was also well above the national average and that of similar schools. Over time, the school has maintained higher performances in mathematics than the national averages, and the 1999 test results show a slight improvement.
- 114 Throughout this key stage, attainment in lessons is generally above expectations for the ages of the pupils, except in some lessons in Year 7 and in lower sets in Year 8 where pupils are attaining their expected levels. Attainment is below that expected when pupils are repeating work they have already covered successfully at Key Stage 2, such as work in symmetry and data handling where the challenge of the task does not allow them to reach the expected level. Attainment in upper sets in Year 8 and for all sets in Year 9 is above expectations and generally pupils in these sets make good progress.
- 115 At the time of the previous report the standards achieved in the GCSE examinations by both boys and girls were considerably above the national averages. These standards have been maintained and at the end of Key Stage 4, the standard of attainment is above expectations for pupils of this age. The results obtained in the GCSE examinations exceeded the national averages by over 10 per cent in 1998 and similar results were obtained in 1999. The percentage gaining A* - C grades in 1998 was well above the national average with both boys and girls achieving the same level of performance.
- 116 Most pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3. All pupils in a lower set in Year 8 are able to subtract mentally two digit numbers. Pupils in a Year 8 second set can estimate roots up to the square root of four hundred. This set contains several pupils with special educational needs who are attaining and making progress in line with other pupils in the class. A Year 9 second set can find solutions to a quadratic equation by trial and improvement, and round their answer to one decimal place with understanding. Other pupils in a top Year 9 set can find the 'n'th term of sequences using tables of differences.
- 117 In Key Stage 4, pupils of all abilities continue to make good progress and achieve at a higher level than is expected based upon their measured attainment on entry to the school. Attainment is generally above average and in some cases it is well above. For example, in the top set in Year 10, pupils are able to use the sine rule and cosine rule with confidence and solve quadratics by formula, and Year 11 pupils are able to use upper and lower bounds to find maximum and minimum values. Even pupils in the lowest set in Year 11, who are targeted at foundation level GCSE, can understand the relationship between complex decimals, percentages and fractions. In Year 10, similar pupils are able to interpret tachographs.
- 118 Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 generally carry out investigations well, with some working to a high standard. For example, a Year 9 investigation into gradients was seen which worked from first principles to determine an algebraic solution. Investigation work is, however, unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8 where too few opportunities are provided. The majority of pupils in both key stages use mathematical language confidently and with understanding. Pupils of all abilities apply their mathematics with appropriate facility across the curriculum. For example, graphs and charts are used in history, geography and science together with topological network analysis in geography, algebraic transformations in science, and currency and time in modern languages.

- 119 Overall, the quality of teaching is good with the overwhelming majority of the lessons either satisfactory or better in both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an interest in their subject. Where teaching is good, enthusiasm and enjoyment is evident and infectious. Generally, lessons are planned and organised well and books are marked carefully, usually with constructive comments as well as grades for achievement and effort. The pupils have a list of what the department expects in the front of their exercise books and teachers insist upon these standards.
- 120 All teachers, to a varying extent, use good, open questions which draw upon pupils' responses to move the learning forward. A feature of all lessons is the good relationships that teachers establish in their classrooms. This is a strength of the department and the school. The pupils show interest in their work and sustain concentration well. They take a pride in their exercise books and are very tolerant of the cramped conditions in some of the mathematics rooms. Most enjoy their mathematics lessons.
- 121 The curriculum is carefully planned, adequately resourced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum except in the provision of information technology, where the school needs to expand the software available for pupils to explore and apply mathematics. The scheme of work, although detailed, does not contain clearly stated outcomes, nor success criteria. Teachers generally do not share the targets for their lessons with the pupils. No pupils, including those who are assessed as needing additional support, are given precise learning targets to help them take a measure of control over their own learning.
- 122 The previous report indicated that the range of teaching styles employed was narrow and that in some lessons teacher expectations were too low. All teachers have clear purpose to their lessons, and are aware of the standards needed for success at the end of key stages. This tends to lead to a strong emphasis on a 'right way' of doing things, particularly in Year 9 and throughout Key Stage 4. All teachers maintain tight control of pupils' learning, and still employ a limited range of learning styles which have not expanded significantly since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently exposed to a multiplicity of methods and approaches which leads to insufficient opportunity, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, to discuss, explore and reflect upon their mathematics. Even when targets are set for pupils seen as under-achieving, they are not shared with the pupils receiving the extra work so that the pupils can take more responsibility for their own learning.
- 1 Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated within the setting arrangements and all pupils have full access to the curriculum. There is, however, insufficient provision for higher attaining pupils. The department monitors in detail the pupils' performance against internal and external criteria, and additional support is given as appropriate. A special computer program is used as a diagnostic and support tool for both higher and lower attaining pupils who show a weakness in basic mathematical skills. It is a recently added resource and its effects have not yet been fully measured.
- 124 The head of department, with good support by the second in department, gives firm leadership, clear educational direction, and secures a good ethos for learning. There are good systems for managing staff development, however, the less experienced teachers are not given opportunities to learn from their experienced colleagues. The department makes efficient and effective use of the resources available which are well managed and deployed.
- 125 The school has a numeracy policy, and all pupils develop a level of numeracy appropriate to, or higher than, that expected on the basis of their prior attainment

on entering the school. Their levels of numeracy are an asset to other subject areas.

Science

- 126 The previous report stated that the standards of achievement in science were good. National test results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998 were above the national average at the level expected for this age and well above at the higher levels. The trend of results over the last four years, however, is falling to be closer to national averages. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is now in line with that expected nationally for pupils of this age.
- 127 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also in line with national expectations for 16 year old pupils. At the end of Year 11, pupils are entered for the Double Award GCSE examinations which caters for all abilities. In this syllabus, results at the A* - C grades have not improved over the past four years. Pupils taking this examination in 1998 gained a higher percentage of A*-C grades than the national average, but this percentage has fallen steadily since a peak in 1995. Although the percentage of pupils obtaining higher grades has decreased since the last inspection the results have always been in line with the targets set by the Local Education Authority for the school.
- 128 Pupils' progress is sound in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress which is enhanced by good in-class support. Progress is characterised by a broadening and deepening of both scientific knowledge and skills. By the end of Year 9, many pupils understand some abstract ideas such as current flow in circuits and are confident in planning their own investigations and presenting the results of these in well drawn line graphs. However, there are some pupils in both key stages who are unable to recall common scientific facts, such as the use of limewater to test for carbon dioxide. In Key Stage 4, a number of pupils are unable to relate the extraction of iron to work done in Year 8 on the reactivity series of metals. The scheme of work in use, whilst providing very supportive materials for pupils with special educational needs, too often introduces content and knowledge which pupils have encountered in their primary schools. In such lessons pupils are not given the opportunity, and so are unable, to develop new knowledge or make suitable progress.
- 129 After-school revision classes, a Science Extra Club and provision of mentoring all support pupils in their efforts to improve. Pupils on the special educational needs register are well supported with good science-specific individual education plans. The introduction of materials planned to match attainment has improved the progress of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs throughout both key stages. Assessment strategies, pupil tracking systems and feedback from these enables progress to be monitored and teaching to be informed effectively. The department more than fulfils the statutory requirements for assessment. All assessment data is thoroughly analysed to identify areas for improvement but the new marking policy is not applied consistently.
- 130 Relationships between teachers and pupils, and between the pupils themselves, are very good and contribute significantly to the progress made in lessons. The majority of pupils show good interest and, when carrying out practical work, they collaborate very well, help each other and are very well behaved. This enhances pupil's social development. Pupils listen well and are especially diligent in following all safety directions given by the teachers. Pupils express amazement at scientific phenomena which they encounter, such as the thermit reaction and colour changes of indicators, and this contributes to their spiritual development. Pupil's moral development is enhanced through the trust given to them in practical work and through topics which consider the morality and ethics of

scientific advances, such as genetic engineering. Work in science does not, however, draw enough upon the varied cultural heritage of pupils.

- 131 Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their numeracy through calculations using appropriate units and by displaying and interpreting data in graphs. The development of information technology capability is limited by the need for staff training and the identification of opportunities for its teaching in the scheme of work.
- 132 The teaching observed was generally good. It was satisfactory or better in all lessons and in six out of ten lessons was good or very good. This is a strength of the department. Teachers have a good command of their subject specialism which they teach with enthusiasm. Teachers are deployed very effectively across all age and ability groups. Lessons are usually well planned. Good resources and a variety of teaching strategies are used very effectively to enable learning objectives to be met. Excellent support is provided by the laboratory technician in preparing materials for class use and this makes a significant difference to the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching. Where teaching is at its best, pupils' ideas were elicited, reflected upon and opportunities given for these ideas to be changed actively. Independent learning is encouraged at Key Stage 4 where pupils engage in the course work requirements for GCSE but not with younger pupils. On occasions pupils are passive learners, especially where teaching is too directed, and insufficient time is given for reflection and reinforcement of learning. Some homework set does not extend the learning in class.
- 133 Resources available to the department are generally used effectively. However, the department does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their information technology capability, despite there being resources available for this.
A shortage of laboratory space was noted in the earlier report but this deficiency has now been remedied. The number and quality of text books has improved since the last inspection and is now adequate. Within the limits of capitation, which is adequate, the department is very cost effective.
- 134 There is a formal system of internal monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. Management and leadership of the department are very good, and there is a strong ethos of teamwork from teachers who are committed to high standards and improving pupil attainment. A good departmental development plan reflects the school's plan closely and is costed realistically. Staff training needs are clearly identified. Targets are being set for improvement but need to be more quantitative so that progress to them can be monitored more carefully. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection but the department has yet to rigorously address the identified strategies for raising standards. The capacity for further improvement in science is good.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Design Technology

- 135 Standards of achievement reported in the previous inspection were generally sound although there was some under-achievement in Key Stage 3, largely as a consequence of the work set lacking challenge. Pupils then had to follow detailed instructions and were given too few opportunities to solve problems themselves. There has been some improvement in the challenge of the work set and attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is generally in line with that expected at this age. That standards are not higher is, in part, due to the short time spent in each of the areas which contribute to the delivery of design and technology. There is also still insufficient attention given to the design process, particularly planning

and research, and the quality of the finished product in Years 7 and 8.

136. The range of practical work is broad and embraces wood, plastics, food, electronics, construction kits and graphics. Pupils have only a little experience of disassembling tasks and this limits their knowledge and understanding of materials, techniques and design awareness. Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. Attainment in some lessons is often good, especially the very good work done in the graphics course. Pupils generally, are now developing better graphical skills, although the range and depth of their work is often limited.
137. GCSE results in 1998 overall are above the national average and show a significant improvement from 1997. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A* - C in graphics were well above the national average. Food technology saw a five-fold increase in the percentage gaining A* - C grades in 1998 from 1997 to be well above the national average. Results in food technology and graphics were above the school average in 1998, while resistant materials and electronic products were below. The overall results in design technology in 1999 are not as high and the results in food technology have fallen sharply.
138. The progress made by pupils from across all design and technology areas overall is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. While progress in the majority of lessons is good, there are a significant number of lessons where progress is unsatisfactory. It is generally better in resistant materials and graphics than in other areas. Where pupils make unsatisfactory progress it is often due to a lack challenge and pace. The progress of all pupils at Key Stage 3 is constrained by the organisation of the carousel of activities offered. Progress from one task to another has not been addressed since the last report. Little attention is given to continuity and progression from one area to another, and this hinders progress over time. At Key Stage 4, progress is satisfactory and pupils have a sound knowledge of the design process, graphical skills are good and pupils use the computing facilities within the department for research and presentation. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress particularly when specialist support is provided.
139. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and teaching is also sound at Key Stage 4 and it is occasionally very good. There is a greater variation in the teaching at Key Stage 3 where some teaching is unsatisfactory. In the poorer lessons, expectations are low and tasks set are uninspiring and do not extend the pupils. All lessons are well prepared, but in the planning there was little evidence of matching the work to the abilities of the pupils. A set task for all pupils neither fully challenges the higher attainers in the subject nor fully supports the lower attainers. Where teaching is good the pace of work is brisk, expectations are high and pupils apply themselves purposefully to the task in hand.
140. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons observed. They listen attentively and respond well to the teachers and one another. Their attitudes to their work are satisfactory without being adventurous. They do as the teacher says but often do not extend the tasks. Pupils are polite and sensible and are willing to talk about their work in a mature manner. Some pupils take advantage of the extra curriculum time made available at lunchtime through the technology and graphics clubs, to complete work or carry out research. Pupils wear the correct clothing when doing practical work and observe safe working practice. Although planning is generally good, the linking to the programme of study and expected levels of working are not shared with the pupils.
141. The curriculum planned by the department meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum at both key stages. However, the use of computer aided

design is limited to graphics and there is no computer aided manufacturing offered due to lack of equipment. There is a comprehensive departmental handbook with clear policies in place for the efficient organisation and managing of the department. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work details the work in each area, but there are no systems to co-ordinate joint planning or key teaching approaches to ensure continuity of experience and progressive development of skills. There is still no overview of a pupil's experience in design and technology in this stage, which was highlighted as a deficiency in the previous report. Pupil self-assessment and recording sheets and the new central recording system now in place will, however, enable the department to address this issue. Across all technology areas, assessment is satisfactory at both key stages with pupil and teacher checks at the end of each unit of work. The good practice in the department is not shared to support colleagues who are new to the school or who do not have design and technology training.

- 142 Materials available for practical lessons are generally satisfactory, but the use of recycled wood for the structures lesson affects the quality of work. Reference books are available in each of the workshops to support pupils in their investigations. The computers within the department are used mainly at Key Stage 4 for research and presentation. There are no planned experiences to develop information technology capability at Key Stage 3, except for the use of a program for modelling a circuit with a Year 8 class. During the inspection, little use was seen made of the flexible learning centre to develop pupils' capabilities. Display is used effectively in each area as a resource to support teaching and learning. Although no health and safety issues were observed during the week of the inspection, there is some concern about the working space available in some groups.

Information technology

- 143 The previous report indicated that the standards in basic information technology skills in both key stages were generally satisfactory, but the amount and range of experience in both discrete and cross-curricular work was insufficient to allow knowledge and skills to be developed to higher levels.
- 144 Standards in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly satisfactory. From September 1999, all pupils across this stage are taught in discrete information technology lessons. Most pupils demonstrate some basic skills including changing font, sizing text, importing graphics and saving and printing work. Keyboard skills are generally well developed. However, the skills in data logging and control are not developed, and modelling is limited to using a circuit modelling program in design and technology.
- 145 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below expectations for pupils of this age. The use of information technology by pupils across the curriculum is not planned, monitored or co-ordinated and has not improved significantly since the previous inspection. Attainment in business studies at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. In the GCSE examinations in 1998 all pupils entered gained A* - C grades and this is well above the national average for the subject.
- 146 Because there are discrete lessons at Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in developing skills in using information technology. The co-ordinator has developed a scheme of work, but activities relating to control and measurement are not covered because of lack of equipment or expertise. The introduction of a vocational secretarial course in Year 9 enables pupils to develop word-processing, databases and spreadsheets, but the course does not address all the strands of the National Curriculum Programme of Study for this subject. Where information technology is taught through other subjects at Key Stage 4, progress is

unsatisfactory. The opportunities provided across the curriculum do not ensure compliance with the requirements of the National Curriculum for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are identified but there is no work matched to their abilities by task, or resources to support them in their learning. Where there is non-teaching support for pupils, the support is not sufficiently focused to enable these pupils to make appropriate progress. Higher attainers, and those who use computers at home, make better progress than others, especially in Year 9. Progress in business studies is good, with pupils building on previous knowledge and skills well.

- 147 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations at the beginning of lessons with frequent recapitulation and feedback throughout to support pupils. In Key Stage 4, teaching is unsatisfactory. It is left largely to non-specialists; there is little evidence of additional information technology skills being taught. The standard of teaching in business studies is very good. The teacher has a sound knowledge of the subject and draws on pupils' experiences to input into the lesson. Clear objectives and targets are set for both higher and lower attaining pupils and homework is used constructively to support learning.
- 148 At Key Stage 3, pupils have positive attitudes towards the use of information technology, they are keen to improve their knowledge and skills and obviously enjoy the subject. Behaviour is good and pupils work co-operatively with each other when sharing a computer. Outside lessons, pupils, mainly at Key Stage 4, use the computers available in the department, in the library or within departments, such as design and technology, to complete class work and to extend their skills. The capacity for pupils to develop individual skills, identified in the last report, is still not addressed fully. In the majority of lessons at Key Stage 3, there is little opportunity for pupils to work individually, while at Key Stage 4 it is left to the enthusiasm of individual pupils to access the computers in their own time. In business studies the response of pupils is good. Pupils are enthusiastic, well behaved, self-motivating and demonstrate a mature attitude when required to work in a group or independently. In partnership with a local firm, the school has had considerable success at a local, national and international level in Young Enterprise Scheme.
- 149 The new co-ordinator for Key Stage 3 is in the process of evaluating and reviewing the draft scheme of work to ensure the delivery of the full Programme of Study. Information technology tasks are currently not matched to the Programme of Study and its accompanying attainment targets in a way that ensures continuity of experience or the progressive development of skills. There is no effective information technology curriculum in place at Key Stage 4, where it is intended that appropriate skills and knowledge will be delivered by other subjects in the curriculum. Since there is currently no mapping of experience or strategy to ensure that skills and knowledge are progressively developed, the co-ordination of information technology at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. Some information technology related work was observed in design and technology, mathematics and English, with good wall displays in the science and business studies departments, but these were isolated incidents which do not form part of a coherent pattern.
- 150 The school has a network of computers which includes a flexible learning centre, a suite dedicated to the use of a program which supports pupils with special learning needs, two work stations in the library and a number of machines in departments such as mathematics, design and technology, science, humanities, modern languages and the staff room. The flexible learning centre could be used more fully by subject departments as a resource for teaching and learning. The Internet is only available for use by pupils in the library, although it is available

across the whole network. The special educational needs support suite has been in use almost twelve months, and some pupils have improved their literacy and numeracy skills through its use. The resources are, however, often left unused. The information technology/business studies room has a number of stand-alone machines, but the software is incompatible with the network and some machines are not working. The current room is cramped and there is insufficient access to machines and appropriate software. The school has refurbished a room to provide better specialist accommodation for this subject which is to be brought into use in the near future.

- 151 The school recognises that there is a need to develop better strategies in this subject at Key Stage 4 and it is a high priority target in its development plan. There is a comprehensive 3-year information technology action plan drafted by an information technology committee. The plan takes into account the school development plan, National Grid for Learning funding and New Opportunities funded training for teachers. The National Grid for Learning will partly fund an extension to the existing network, to be in place in December 1999. An audit of teachers' skills has been carried out and the New Opportunities funded training for subject teachers is due to start in January 2000.

History

- 1 Overall standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. The majority of pupils attain sound and sometimes good knowledge and skills, but there is a substantial minority who do not, and whose standards are below those expected. Most pupils can evaluate simple evidence and can put forward valid arguments. They know the main narrative of the history of Britain from the time of the Roman invasion of Julius Caesar, and are aware of many of the events in the intervening period and their significance. The substantial minority, who are not necessarily those of low prior attainment, have a simple idea of the passage of time and know some historical figures, but are not nearly so confident in the interpretation of evidence or the construction of cogent arguments from their own knowledge. They can state facts and historical positions but cannot readily use those facts to discuss, for instance, the reasons for Henry VIII's division of the church from Rome. Staff absence has been a factor in this. Pupils whose historical capabilities are in accord with national standards, have generally been taught by teachers whose historical knowledge is of a sufficiently high standard.
- 153 At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are below those expected for pupils of this age. Standards some four years ago, as reported in the previous inspection, were well above national averages. There has been a decline in standards over recent years which had reached a position where the percentage of pupils gaining A* - C grades in the GCSE examinations were well below national averages in 1998. Some pupils are confident in the knowledge of the course of the history of the twentieth century, including the study of the causes and events of the two World Wars. There is a majority, however, which does not reach this standard and this includes a number of pupils who do not present themselves for the examination. The lack of consistently good quality teaching, particularly in Key Stage 3, means that many of the pupils who do progress to study history in Key Stage 4, do not have sufficient rigour in their approach, and some lack the motivation to reach a satisfactory level in the time available before the examination.
- 154 In Key Stage 3, most pupils have experienced the complete range of the Programme of Study for the subject and make satisfactory progress. They know the importance of placing events in progressive chronological order. Most can understand the background to such matters as the struggles during the conquests both by Rome and the Normans and the social impact of these major military and

civil episodes on the lives of the people of the time. The majority can account for the changes that took place as a result of the desire of Henry VIII for a male heir. By the end of the key stage they are aware, at a simple level, of the alliances and political factors behind the two major European wars. A substantial minority has not had the opportunity to expand on this historical learning, having not had the benefit of continual contact with teachers with historical training. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in accord with the targets set for them.

- 155 There is a low take up for history at Key Stage 4 that has declined more rapidly than the national trend. The single group that is studying for the GCSE examination makes unsatisfactory progress, resulting in their attainment at the end of the course being below that expected of pupils of their age. There is a wide range of attainment within the group. Those who are successful, develop the study of the twentieth century to a level that enables them to put forward arguments that support or oppose, based on evidence, though the majority are unable to do so. The higher attaining pupil can say why the German people followed Adolf Hitler and give cogent reasons for his success in the 1930s. Those who are of lower attainment can follow the progression of events but not reach the higher level skill of evaluation. Low motivation, some of which arises from poor previous learning, means that some of the group opt out of taking the examination at all.
- 156 The response of the pupils is generally good, but better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. They work well together and can sustain their concentration over extended periods. The majority are willing to answer questions and the above average pupils are keen to test their knowledge in the brisk resume at the start of some lessons. Little group working is set but, when given the opportunity, pupils work well together and listen to and respect the opinions of others. In some of the less successful lessons, there is an over-emphasis on teacher direction and pupils respond by working placidly on the tasks set but without animation or obvious interest.
- 1 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and most lessons are well prepared with a good structured approach. Simple resources are used effectively. The work, however, is planned with little being matched to the abilities of the pupils in the class and higher attainers are often insufficiently challenged, especially in Key Stage 3. Homework is set regularly but much of the work is copying and unimaginative. When the teaching is good there is an appropriate level of challenge, brisk pace and a variety of activities.
- 158 The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. The plans to devise work specifically matched to the needs of lower attaining pupils has not been developed fully due to staff absence. Assessment by the staff is generally good in class and over a period of time, but staff absence leads to inconsistencies in this as well. Those aspects of organisation for which the head of department is responsible, such as overall planning and assessment, are sound. Over recent years periodic, and at times prolonged, absence in the department has meant that teaching has been in the hands of a variety of temporary teachers, not all of whom have the historical knowledge and training of the permanent staff. This has had a negative impact on the standards of attainment achieved by the pupils. Accommodation is supportive of the teaching and resources, though some are elderly and lacking variety, are sufficient for the delivery of the subject.

Geography

- 159 In the previous inspection, standards in the subject were reported as high and results in GCSE examinations were significantly above national averages. These

standards have not been maintained and attainment at the end of both key stages is now in line with national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are aware of the differences between countries and that there are areas of less and more economic development. They understand the forces behind the physical processes that shape the world around them and can evaluate the impact of economic development on the environment. By the end of Key Stage 4, the higher attaining pupils confidently approach the challenging course work involving investigation and research, mainly of the local environment and the majority can tackle such work satisfactorily.

- 160 The percentage of pupils gaining A* - C grades in the GCSE examinations in 1998 dipped to below national averages, but results in the 1999 examinations have improved. Over recent years, results in geography have been about the national average and the pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 are maintaining or even slightly improving those standards.
- 161 Progress through both key stages is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, all pupils cover all the National Curriculum Programme of Study, and in some aspects make better than expected progress. By the end of the key stage they can describe and evaluate the processes whereby rivers and glaciers create valleys. They can use available statistics such as birth and death rates, calorie intakes and medical figures to compare and contrast countries that are less or more economically developed. The use of complex statistical modelling is developed to an unusually sophisticated level, to analyse, for example, traffic flows in relation to settlement patterns. Though the use and understanding of these methods is better developed among the higher attainers, most pupils can see their relevance. By the end of Year 9, pupils can understand why countries such as Bangladesh and Japan have developed differently. Pupils with special educational needs receive individual attention, and sometimes in-class support, and make progress appropriate to the targets set for them. The progress made by all pupils in the Key Stage 4 options is carefully monitored to ensure that they are achieving appropriately, including those pupils who are following the 'Fast Track' course which includes a geography element.
- 1 Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They listen carefully during teacher exposition, respond readily and willingly to questions and are keen to show that they know or understand the point being made. When group work is set, mainly at Key Stage 4, pupils work with a will. They listen to their classmates with respect but are also prepared to counter arguments when they disagree. There is a general respect for each other and the codes of behaviour the school sets. At various points during the lesson, the pupils will help with class routines and all show respect for school property.
- 163 The teaching observed during the inspection was good at both key stages. It was never less than satisfactory and in over a third of lessons it was good or very good. Lessons are well planned and designed for the topic being covered. Good subject knowledge is used to underpin all teaching. Where it is particularly strong, as in statistics, it is well taught and well received. Interest is maintained and standards are raised by lively pace and changes in activity to match the learning. There are no discipline problems because of the mutual respect for all in the room and because most lessons are strongly led by the teacher. Simple resources are used well in the lessons that are good. In a very good Year 8 lesson seen, the pace and intensity of learning was high. Humour, good class knowledge and high expectations were used to draw materials from the pupils' own experience to show how creating a scattergram can lead to a greater knowledge of the influence of living conditions on life expectancy.
- 164 The curriculum planning is good and leads to a consistency of delivery by all staff.

The previous report stated that more extended comments were needed in marking to help the pupils improve their work. Marking has improved and comments are made to help raise standards. The planning meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Long-term assessments are computerised and used to influence setting arrangements. Class assessments by question and answer and periodic tests help teachers to change the course of immediate or future lessons.

- 165 The department is well led, and a good corporate responsibility is used to spread experience and develop expertise. In response to the last inspection, longer-term plans have been made, though the implementation of the use of information technology is only slowly developing. Monitoring of the department continues to be informal, but the minutes of the regular departmental meetings indicate that it is effective. Normally the department is able to secure the resources necessary. The rooms used for geography are not grouped together at the moment, but there are firm plans in place for this to happen in the near future which will help raise the already good availability of resources. Whilst there are sufficient resources overall, computer software is limited, so holding back many aspects such as research.

Modern Foreign Languages

- 166 Standards, at the time of the previous report, were about the national average in French and above average in German in both key stages. The overall standards of attainment in French at the end of Key Stage 3 are now above national expectations of pupils of this age and well above in some cases. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in French is mostly in line with the expectations of 16-year-olds. In German, attainment is above expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and in line at the end of Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection the percentages of pupils gaining A* - C grades have remained above national averages and attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has shown considerable improvement.
- 167 Progress in French is good in both key stages. Greater progress was observed towards the end of each key stage. Pupils are used to the target language spoken at normal speed in the classroom and for instructions. Generally they can follow the recorded speech of native speakers on familiar topics. They are confident in speaking and expressing opinions especially when they are supported by reference material. They respond well to opportunities for practice of good pronunciation and intonation. In reading, there is evidence that progress has improved since the last inspection, especially in Key Stage 3 where pupils have access to a wide variety of material and keep a record of their reading. Progress in writing skills is sound in both languages at both key stages and includes some poetry writing in French in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress although, at times, higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- 168 The response of the pupils in the lessons observed is at least satisfactory overall and often good. Although boys' achievement is less good than that of the girls at the end of the key stages, during the inspection they worked well in all aspects of the subjects. Pupils respond positively to a structured approach, where prior learning is taken into account, as when aspects of information about a past holiday are brought together into a conversation. Pupils behave well in lessons and show respect for each other, their teacher and their environment. They respond well to praise, rewards, songs, humour and competitive activities. By far the majority of pupils in the classes observed have the self-discipline to sustain concentration and to work independently. They are able to make effective use of reference material in textbooks in class and of the support material provided for work at home.
- 169 Teaching is good at both key stages and is consistently high in Key Stage 3.

When teaching was particularly good, the target language was used persistently and there was a wide range of well planned graded activities to sustain interest, challenge and extend pupils to achieve more. Discipline is firm and fair, with very frequent use of praise and encouragement. Pace is generally brisk and purposeful and resources are appropriate to the objectives. Homework is set regularly and exercise books are marked effectively. The use of information technology is limited, but there are plans in place to develop its scope and to extend contacts with France. The quality of class management is good and pupils move easily through a variety of activities. Planned work in both key stages has become more challenging since the last inspection, with extended writing topics and taped speaking work, as well as coursework done in both French and German in Key Stage 4. Individual targets set for pupils with special educational needs, however, lack the precision necessary to monitor progress.

170 Leadership in the department remains a great strength and there is evidence of good collaboration and prioritising. The departmental development plan reflects whole school issues, future developments within the department and professional training needs. The new scheme of work in French has made objectives and assessment practice clearer for pupils and teachers. The German scheme of work lacks the same coherence and development. Pupils in Key Stage 3 German are now given greater challenges, including past tense work, despite time constraints.

171 Accommodation is good with teaching rooms and resources close together. Rooms are well equipped and contain bright displays to celebrate and support pupils' work. Up-to-date material for both French and German is mostly available for all year groups in classrooms. The department does not currently have a system whereby good practice can be observed and shared, but it has begun to use available data to improve standards and discuss issues of practice and the subsequent achievement of pupils.

Art

172 The previous report stated that the majority of pupils achieved standards in line with expectations for their ages but that many pupils achieved standards below expectations. At Key Stage 4, there was under-achievement due the work relying too heavily on copying from secondary sources.

173 Whilst the standard of attainment in individual lessons, observed during this inspection, is broadly average, the standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below that normally expected of pupils of this age. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are likewise below national expectations. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils achieving A* - C grades was below the national average. Results in the 1999 examinations have fallen even lower. The department has, however, passed through a period of instability over the past two years and this has affected standards. A new teacher in charge of the subject was appointed in September of this year.

174 Progress in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 can be observed in some imaginative drawing work linked to the work of Van Gogh and the division of form, with a focus on shape, line, tone and contrast. Pupils in Year 8 explore the work of William Morris and use his work as a stimulus for their own work on block printing. In contrast, pupils in Year 9 utilise a range of sound drawing skills in their observational drawings of self-portraits and the human figure. Despite this satisfactory work and some interesting work on stencilling, paper manipulation and appliqué, the majority of work in Key Stage 3 revolves around drawing and painting, with limited opportunities for pupils to engage in three-dimensional ceramic and pottery work. Indeed no pupils have been engaged in

such work for the past two and a half years. Pupils with special educational needs are affected by the same factors as other pupils and they make unsatisfactory progress.

- 175 Art is organised as part of a carousel with design technology subjects in Key Stage 3. Whilst pupils are involved in some intensive skills related to a specific aspect of art within the half-term modules, time is not provided for pupils to reflect on, experiment and explore the skills they have developed within a wider framework. Progress is also inhibited by the fact that, even though pupils are provided with the recommended time for the subject, the carousel system means that having completed a module of work using one range of skills, they do not use those skills again for at least six weeks and sometimes for three months.
- 176 Pupils thus arrive at the beginning of Key Stage 4 without the range of skills required by the course they are about to begin and progress in this stage is also unsatisfactory. The curriculum continues to be restricted, with most work still being centred on drawing and painting. Despite the observation of some interesting work in Year 10, with pupils engaging in some imaginative work on pop art, pupils are not provided with the opportunity to explore a wide range of skills, techniques, styles and media. Examination of pupils' preparation for a project on 'The Natural World' in Year 11 indicates that virtually all the pupils could only explore the theme from the point of view of a drawing or painting. Even then most of the work relies on the copying of photographs, as in the earlier report, with little evidence that pupils have the ability to work in an independent manner and introduce an element of personal response and interpretation.
- 177 Whilst the majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 approach their work in a positive manner, a significant minority of pupils appear to go through the process without any real enthusiasm for, or commitment to, the activities in which they are involved. Whilst the attitude of pupils in Key Stage 4 is generally satisfactory a significant minority of pupils respond to their work in a casual manner and lack a sense of urgency in completing their work within the time available. Behaviour is good, pupils co-operate and share equipment sensibly and most enjoy the activities.
- 178 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory but is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. Lessons are generally well planned with clear learning objectives. Staff are secure in their subject knowledge and have good areas of expertise. In a good lesson seen with Year 7 pupils, tasks had been selected to match the individual attainment of the pupils. Individual pupils were supported well and were able to explore and contrast well their colour mixing techniques to those used by Van Gogh. Teaching was less satisfactory with a Year 11 group where, although the teacher supported individuals well, there was no sense of drive or urgency developed, the pace of the lesson, and hence the progress made, was slow.
- 179 Resources are inadequate to meet the requirements for the attainment targets in Knowledge and Understanding. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to explore the work of recognised artists and to use those works as a stimulus for their own. The department also lacks the resources to respond to the provision of a wider curriculum especially work in three dimensions.
- 180 The recently appointed teacher in charge of the subject is well aware of the issues within this report and has already made a very positive response to remedy a number of those issues. She has extended the curriculum by introducing a number of art activities, and has put into place some good documentation, schemes of work, and assessment procedures. Now the school again has a permanent teacher qualified in ceramics, there is a greater urgency to bring the kiln back into use and so extend the range of experiences provided in the subject.

- 181 Despite these positive factors, the department and school have yet to address some of the issues identified in the previous report. Rather than improve upon standards of attainment, GCSE results have declined over the past three years. The fragmented experiences gained in the carousel system means that the subject is not, at present, in a strong position to move forward even given the recent improvements.

Music

182. Levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 as reported by the last inspection, showed a wide variation and although many were achieving standards expected of their age there was some under-achievement. Standards were better at Key Stage 4, where pupils were following the GCSE course, and the majority were achieving in line with national expectations for that age while some were achieving above those. GCSE results at that time showed an upward trend.
- 183 This inspection came at a difficult time for the department. The new music teacher has only been in post for three weeks following a period of long-term sick leave by the previous head of department. These difficulties are reflected in the below average standards of attainment at Key Stage 3. In performing, keyboard skills are limited. Most pupils only use one hand when playing and most rely on letter names to identify the notes of the keyboard. A few achieve the national expectation and are able to play simple melody lines with chords in individual work. The size and layout of the accommodation limits opportunities for group work in class lessons and none was seen in this inspection. In instrumental lessons, and in the ensemble work in the extra-curricular activities, standards are good. Attainment in composing is limited for most by low performance skills and some lack of understanding in combining the musical elements. Pupils demonstrate some control of melody and rhythm but have less understanding of harmony and texture. They use major scales and Indian rags in their compositions and combine them with simple rhythmic patterns. In listening and appraising, pupils' knowledge and understanding is broadly in line with national expectations. Most can describe structure, tempo and dynamics correctly and are aware of the elements of Indian music. Pupils have no opportunity to develop skills in music technology at present.
- 184 Standards at Key Stage 4 are in line with national standards overall, and above in some areas. Performances are of a good standard and pupils play accurately with good technique and musical understanding. In composing, most show satisfactory skills in their use of melody, rhythm and harmony and the role of structure is understood. Limited resources restrict development of texture and instrumentation, though. Knowledge of musical styles is good and pupils understand and use musical terminology appropriately. Rhythmic aural dictation skills are developing well.
- 185 At Key Stage 3, progress over time in the recent past has been unsatisfactory but, in lessons seen during the inspection, progress is now satisfactory including pupils with special educational needs. Pupils consolidate knowledge and understanding of world music and musical elements and make some progress in developing performing and composing skills. Where progress slows, it is usually as a result of too little time devoted to practical learning. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good with pupils developing ability and understanding in both practical and listening exercises. They develop ensemble performing skills, construct complete melodies from given motifs and learn to discern between various musical styles. Pupils of all ages make good progress in their instrumental lessons and extra-curricular ensembles.

- 186 In lessons at Key Stage 3, pupil response is satisfactory and behaviour is mostly good. Their level of involvement and interest sometimes wanes though as the lesson progresses. At Key Stage 4, small groups of pupils work well and with interest throughout the lesson. They co-operate well with each other but also demonstrate concentration and perseverance in individual tasks.
- 187 Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and at Key Stage 4 it is good, especially in the instrumental lessons and the extra-curricular groups. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use personal musical skills well to demonstrate and support. Lessons are prepared with appropriate work sheets and in most lessons there is a variety of tasks well suited to the learning objectives. Classroom management is satisfactory and pupils are supported in their work in a friendly, encouraging manner. Explanations are clear and questioning is well used to check prior knowledge. Occasionally, the pace slows and restricts the time available for practical learning and, in some instances, expectations could be set higher. Marking is thorough and the new music teacher is currently re-writing the schemes of work in order to address the need to learn through practical experience and the need to fit the tasks to the varying attainment of the pupils.
- 188 In the extra-curriculum programme, pupils have good opportunities to develop skills in both the newly formed school band and choir and in the groups organised by the Regional Music Centre which are held at the school.
- 189 Since the last inspection the under-achievement reported still exists for some pupils in Key Stage 3 but standards at Key Stage 4 have improved. Pupils' progress is improving since the last inspection, particularly when learning is linked to practical tasks. There is a need to improve resources to allow pupils to explore and create music using technology and the existing accommodation limits the effective development of group work.

Physical education

- 190 In the previous inspection, standards at the end of both key stages were sound and slightly higher at Key Stage 3. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is just above national expectations for pupils of this age, as at the time of the last inspection. In the performance of practical activities, the level of catching, throwing and striking skills is good in most pupils, the very large majority of pupils are well co-ordinated and active, and have good balance and mobility. Pupils' attainment in planning, performing and evaluating practical work, and their knowledge of health related fitness, is also above national expectation in many lessons. Pupils know the basic rules, laws and tactics of football, basketball, hockey and netball, and they co-operate well together in gymnastics and athletics to develop particular skills. All pupils are aware of the necessity for warm up and warm down, and are expected to take an active part in the management of lessons when not actively engaged.
- 191 Standards in Key Stage 4 are above the expected levels for both boys and girls and show an improvement on the previous report. Pupils' theoretical knowledge of many aspects of the subject matches their levels of performance. They are able to plan and execute a good range of advanced defensive and offensive strategies, can analyse skills, and suggest improvements. The overall standard of GCSE work is good or better, with a consistently high level of performance in Year 11. Pupils are aware of the health related aspects of sport and know how to maximise their impact.
- 192 The progress of pupils with differing prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, at both key stages is good. In Key Stage 3, knowledge and skills are being developed rapidly, and progress in planning and evaluating

physical performance is satisfactory or better. At Key Stage 4, where pupils learn more advanced skills in soccer, hockey, basketball and netball, the rate of progress is good in all lessons. Levels of understanding and practical performance of both boys and girls improve at broadly similar rates.

- 193 The vast majority of pupils enjoy physical education and respond well to the expectations of their teachers. Attitudes in lessons, and behaviour in general are uniformly good. Pupils wear appropriate clothing, rates of participation are very high, and relationships between pupils themselves, and between pupils and staff are relaxed and respectful. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, respond promptly to instructions, and answer questions thoughtfully and confidently. They collaborate well in pairs, groups, and teams both in practice and in game situations.
- 194 The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. In the best teaching, teachers know their subject well, make effective and efficient use of time and space, engage pupils with challenging physical and intellectual activity, and make full use of correct technical terminology. In all lessons, teachers have high standards of discipline and generate a positive atmosphere of co-operation and learning. When there are slight weaknesses in otherwise good or satisfactory teaching, teachers allow the pace of the lesson to slow, use space inappropriately, or under-use positive feedback to celebrate pupil achievement in the planning, performance or evaluation of activity.
- 195 The overall management of the department is good. Policies are in place, team meetings are held regularly, and provision for pupils with special educational needs is well organised. There are schemes of work, though some need updating, and systems exist for their review and further development as appropriate. Assessment and recording procedures have recently been established and are used both diagnostically, and to inform curriculum planning. There is a strong ethos within the department, and staff provide good role models for pupils. There are high rates of participation in an effective learning environment where relationships are excellent. The programme of extra-curricular activity is good and enables many pupils to achieve high standards, and to be involved in representative sport. The resources available for physical education are generally good. The level of equipment is more than adequate for a school of this size, inside accommodation is generous and well cared for, and there are extensive fields and a large artificial playing surface. However, changing facilities for staff, and more particularly pupils, are significantly below commonly accepted standards in terms of capacity, layout, repair, and especially cleanliness.

Religious education

- 196 The previous report indicated that the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 were below those expected for pupils of that age, whereas the standards achieved in Key Stage 4 were up to expectations. Standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are now in line with expectations and pupils show a knowledge of the essence of the topics they have studied that is appropriate to their levels of ability. Year 9 pupils can discuss sensibly the symbolism of baptism and related issues, such as why parents want their children baptised, even when they themselves are not practising Christians. The department follows the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus, but in Key Stage 4 it has only just started to follow a GCSE short course, so there are no previous public examinations with which to compare progress. This is also the first year in which all pupils in Key Stage 4 have followed a discrete course in religious education.
- 197 Progress is satisfactory through both key stages, including pupils with special educational needs. Year 7 pupils, for example, show a sound factual knowledge

and understanding of the concept of 'community'. Throughout Key Stage 4, pupils make a thorough evaluation and personal response to major religious issues, such as the existence of God and many moral issues, doing so in depth, with enthusiasm and justified opinion. Pupils writing reflects the content of the lessons, but in Key Stage 3 there is too much work copied from books or teachers' notes. As a result, higher attaining pupils are not generally stretched.

- 198 Pupils show a good level of interest and enthusiasm in their work which is invariably well presented. Whilst pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to give prolonged concentration to the work in hand, this is not generally so in Key Stage 3 where there is a great deal of passive learning. Likewise, there is little personal study or independent learning in this stage which is a satisfactory aspect of Key Stage 4.
- 199 Behaviour is good. Pupils show self-control and are respectful to the teachers, to each other and to equipment. Relationships between pupils and staff and between each other are good. In discussions they listen to and always show sensitivity and respect for the opinions of others.
- 200 The standard of teaching in the department is satisfactory and teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable. Work is well planned both in the short- and long-term. The staff teach at a brisk pace, with humour and good standards of discipline. They are unfailingly supportive and courteous to the pupils. Although there is some good, thoughtful group discussion of complex issues in Key Stage 4, overall, the use of a variety of teaching styles and of information technology is limited. There is great sensitivity and awareness relating to pupils with special learning needs, and the GCSE short course was selected because those pupils who complete the course work, but who do not enter the examination, still obtain an official certificate.
- 201 The work set is appropriate to the age, prior attainment and experience of the pupils and is more demanding of the older pupils. All work is regularly marked but there is an absence of comments which would enable pupils to see how their work could be improved. Assessment is used well in the short-term to meet the needs of a particular lesson but only in a limited way to inform longer-term planning. Teacher expectations are higher in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 because the GCSE course has given focus to the development of academic demands. The work displayed in both classrooms is of high quality.
- 202 The subject makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. It addresses issues such as prayer, worship and a wide range of moral issues. The head of department is also responsible for collective worship and gives positive and systematic support to all the staff involved, so making a real contribution to its quality. A cultural dimension is seen in the well-organised study of six world religions. Additionally, pupils from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are sensitively used as a means of increasing pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of these. This was recently extended further during the course of a very successful religious education day held for all Year 10 pupils which introduced pupils to local ministers and leaders from most of the world's major religions.
- 203 The day-to-day contribution to the social development of the pupils is seen mainly through the way they work collaboratively in groups. Some fund-raising schemes originate in the department and these enable pupils to exercise responsibility, play a role in the community and increase their awareness of the plight of people in need.
- 204 The department is well managed and effectively led. Teaching is monitored informally and ideas are communicated clearly. Managerial planning in the

department is satisfactory and its development plans have promoted substantial progress in religious education's place in the curriculum, its staffing and resources. The subject is now well resourced with a good range of modern, attractive and suitable text books. These are well used by staff who teach in adjacent rooms and use this proximity to maintain continuity of experience, cohesion and co-operation. Resources, such as the use of video tapes, are used well to initiate debates and discussions. There have been several improvements since the previous report. There is now sufficient time allocated to the subject to meet the statutory requirements and under-achievement at Key Stage 4 has been addressed by the introduction of the short course. The staffing and the resources for the department have both been improved.

162 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

162 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

205 The inspection team consisted of 12 inspectors, 10 of whom had responsibility for the inspection of subjects which included the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The registered inspector and the lay inspector observed lessons across the subject and age ranges.

- 200 lessons or parts of lessons were observed.
- All full-time teachers were observed at least three times.
- 11 assemblies were visited and 11 registration sessions were observed.
- 12 extra-curricular activities were visited.
- 25 planned discussions were held with staff in the school during the week involving teachers with management, pastoral and academic responsibilities together with basic scale teachers. These included a discussion with a representative of the local bank that sponsored the prefects' training.
- All the available work from 3 pupils in all years of the school was examined in detail. Inspectors also looked at the work of many other pupils during the course of lesson observations.
- Planned discussions were held with 3 pupils from each year group. In addition, informal discussions were held with pupils in a wide range of situations.
- 135 questionnaires were returned by parents or guardians and 24 parents attended a meeting with the registered inspector.
- Meetings were held with the curriculum and finance committees and with the whole Governing Body.
- Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y11	676	31	47	90

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	39.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.92

Education support staff (Y7 - Y11)

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week	31.0

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	76.5
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	23
	KS4	20

Financial data

Financial year:

97/98

	£
Total Income	1420421
Total Expenditure	1430804
Expenditure per pupil	2208
Balance brought forward from previous year	191441
Balance carried forward to next year	181058

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	450
Number of questionnaires returned:	135

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	11	56	23	10	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27	59	6	8	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	14	50	23	9	4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	17	59	14	10	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	36	53	4	7	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	33	59	4	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	26	58	9	7	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	22	58	10	7	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	19	54	17	7	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	17	56	17	7	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	26	54	12	7	1

Other issues raised by parents

Several parents at the meeting indicated that they were unhappy about the frequency of the newsletters, one a term, and about communications generally with the school.