

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR SCHOOL  
BALDOCK**

LEA area : 919

Unique Reference Number : 117509

Headteacher : Mr Peter Chapman

Reporting inspector: Stuart Powell  
3653

Dates of inspection: 8-12 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708144

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Comprehensive
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	11 - 19
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Park Street Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 6DZ
Telephone number :	01462 620700
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mrs Marian Adams
Date of previous inspection :	23 January – 3 February 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Stuart Powell, Registered Inspector	Art	Characteristics of the school Attainment and progress Teaching Curriculum and assessment Leadership and management
Ros Wingrove, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Linda Ellis, Core Team	Science Equal opportunities	Efficiency Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Stephen Lavender, Core Team	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Anne Dobson	English	
Brenda Rayson	Mathematics	
Cairene Armour	Design technology	
John Burden	Geography Special educational needs	
Maggie Holling	History	
Ken McKenzie	Information technology Business studies/economics	Key Stage 4 Sixth form
Kevin Sadler	Music	
Susan Cooke	Physical education	
Bernadette Clinton	Modern foreign languages	

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The school provides a purposeful and ordered learning environment in which a work ethic pervades.
- Pupils' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are very good.
- The quality of teaching is mostly good or better and the school spends more on teachers than others of a similar type do.
- The curriculum is broadly based, balanced and relevant to the needs of all pupils.
- The quality of the pastoral care of pupils is very high. Moreover, pupils offer good support to one another.
- The general attainment of pupils by the age of 16 far exceeds national norms and in art and design attainment is outstanding.

### WHERE THE SCHOOL HAS WEAKNESSES

- Statutory requirements are not met in teaching information technology and religious education in Key Stage 4.
- Whilst teaching is good or better overall, there needs to be a focus on learning and more opportunity for pupils to discuss ideas in-depth, to formulate alternative hypotheses and to make more than brief responses to closed questions.

**The school's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Standards in this very good school are improving. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection will be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school has made considerable progress since the last inspection in analysing the progress made by pupils. There are now very sophisticated procedures for determining the value added by the school for individual pupils in each subject area and for progress overall. Whilst the programme of target setting has yet to be fully implemented, there is evidence that work to date is having a very positive effect upon outcomes.

In response to the last inspection report, the school increased the number of periods taught. More recently, in response to its own monitoring and review procedures, the school has increased further the length of the taught day. This has enabled considerable changes to be made to the curriculum, including the introduction of information technology and personal, social and health education at Key Stage 3 and the opportunity for all pupils to study for ten full GCSE subjects.

The Governing Body has greatly expanded its involvement in the strategic management of the school and, working with the senior management team, contributes a very effective influence on all aspects. All but one of the current Governors has or has had children educated at the school and, in consequence, Governors contribute freely of their time and expertise, show commitment to raising standards and monitor with rigour the progress made in implementing the school development plan. This plan is now costed and there is a clearer understanding of the budget planning process.

The range of activities now contained in programmes of study constructed for pupils with special educational needs has increased and pupils are now offered a more appropriate curriculum. However, further work is required to achieve appropriate levels of in-class support and improvements are also required to ensure that homework is offering appropriate challenge across the ability range.

## STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999.

<b>Performance in:</b>	<b>Compared with all schools</b>	<b>Compared with similar schools</b>	<b>Key</b>
Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	<i>very high</i> A*
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	<i>well above average</i> A
A/AS-levels	C	C	<i>above average</i> B
			<i>average</i> C
			<i>below average</i> D
			<i>well below average</i> E

Attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is well above average in Key Stage 3. Whilst pupils start from a high base on entry to the school they continue to make excellent progress and achieve results which are well above average in comparison with both national data and also well above compared with the average for schools in similar contexts. In fact the school's results place it in the top quarter of highest attaining schools in the country both in 1998 and 1999.

In the 1999 examinations pupils achieved passes in 5 or more GCSE examinations at A\* - C Grades or GNVQ equivalent which is very high in comparison with the national data. Results were also very high when compared with the average for schools in similar contexts; and, in particular, the school's results were amongst the top five per cent of schools across the country. This excellent achievement builds upon results in previous years that have been well above the national average and broadly average in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils achieved standards which were very high in English and mathematics compared with all schools and schools in similar contexts. In science, attainment was above the national average and broadly average with schools in similar contexts. The



school's policy is that all pupils enter the double award science examination and this policy is not typical nationally. Amongst other subjects, the highest performing one is art and design.

The school offers a wider than usual range of subjects in the sixth form. Last year, for those entered for two or more subjects at GCE A level or AS equivalent, results were below the national average. However, results in 1999 were broadly in line with the national average and the trend over time is in line with national norms. The school has quite an open access policy to A level courses and a significant number of pupils achieve excellent results. The school is currently using good systems that enable rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress based on their prior attainment. Challenging targets are set for individual pupils.

## QUALITY OF TEACHING

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English; art and design	information technology
Years 10-11	Good	mathematics; music; art and design; drama	religious education and information technology
Sixth form	Good	art and design; English literature	
English	Very good		
Mathematics	Very good		

The above table should be set in the context of a situation where the teaching was at least satisfactory in 96.5 per cent of lessons observed and was very good or better in a quarter of these. In well-taught lessons pupils make good progress by engaging with stimulating ideas, rigorous work, penetrating discussion and a brisk pace. In some lessons there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to work individually and whilst gains in the subject knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils were clearly evident, the challenge that arises from discussion of ideas was missing.

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	Very good behaviour was observed within class and around the school. The school is an ordered community and pupils have respect for property and the work of other pupils.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average and unauthorised absence is well below the national average.
Ethos*	Excellent. A purposeful and welcoming atmosphere exists in this school which has a strong emphasis on academic, social and moral development. The pastoral care of pupils is a strength and there are many opportunities for pupils to engage with a rich diet of activities outside the classroom.
Leadership and management	The Governing Body is now actively engaged, committed and supportive. There is a clear visionary steer from the headteacher and he is well supported by a senior management team who offer a wide range of complementary skills.
Curriculum	Good breadth and balance. Most curricular planning is effective but specific learning objectives need to be identified and integrated into the short term planning of teachers.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is consistent with the national code of practice but monitoring needs to be developed further to reference pupil progress to targets set in individual education plans.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for moral, social and cultural development is very good with numerous opportunities for pupils to develop in these areas offered throughout the curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually are rather more confined to a small number of individual subjects.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school has an adequate number of well-qualified staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. They receive good support from non-teaching and technical staff. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are some deficiencies in the available resources, most notably in reading material for those older pupils who have below average attainment in reading.
Value for money	The school gives satisfactory value for money. Efficient financial planning and control mechanisms are becoming embedded into routine processes.

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

## THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school values and achieves high academic standards.</li> <li>• Transition from primary school is well managed.</li> <li>• Staff respond quickly to problems.</li> <li>• The headteacher is a strong, charismatic figure who provides extremely good leadership.</li> <li>• High standards of discipline and an ordered atmosphere exist.</li> <li>• It is a caring place where pupils can develop social, cultural, emotional, spiritual and aesthetic understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework takes too long to complete to an acceptable standard.</li> <li>• Insufficient support for pupils with special educational needs and challenge for pupils with lower academic ability.</li> <li>• Parents' evenings are too late in the year and there are difficulties about seeing all staff in the time available.</li> <li>• Inequality of opportunity in physical education with boys disadvantaged in respect to girls.</li> <li>• Lack of opportunity to use information technology appropriately.</li> </ul>

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents. The school has a clear sense of purpose and the will to critically examine and improve all aspects of its performance. Pupils are confident, articulate and readily turn to a wide range of sympathetic adults who willingly make themselves available at times other than those formally structured into the timetable.

Parents raised very few concerns and even those parents expressing concern tempered their comment with overall praise for the school, seeing more positive features than negative. All respondents demonstrated a very genuine desire to make Knights Templar a better place and no parent had only criticism to offer.

Inspectors agree that many pupils spend more time on homework than planned. This is a tribute to the diligence of pupils but also a function of high expectations by staff of their pupils and results in high standards of attainment. The school meets the statutory requirements of the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. The progress of pupils is monitored effectively in relation to their annual reviews, but greater care should be taken to identify accurately progress made against targets set in individual education plans. Inspectors agree that parents would benefit from consultation evenings being spread across two evenings but have found the school to be very responsive to requests from individual parents to visit the school at any time to discuss the progress of their child. In physical education there are inconsistencies across the subject and these inconsistencies arise because two separate departments deliver the subject. A recommendation about co-ordination of this one national curriculum subject is made elsewhere in the report. The school recognises that it is failing to meet statutory requirements in information technology and this has been identified as a key issue for the school.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To improve and build upon the good quality of education that pupils already receive, the Governors and senior management of the school should:

1. Ensure that the national curriculum is met by:

- embedding the use of information technology more effectively into all subjects of the curriculum in Key Stage 4;

(33), (73), (76), (97), (98), (105), (128), (129), (141), (148), (149), (153), (157), (161), (164), (165), (167).

- teaching religious education to all pupils in Key Stage 4.

(30), (33), (41), (44), (71), (202).

2. Broaden the range of learning styles by:

- ensuring that learning objectives for individual lessons are clearly defined;

(27), (138), (155), (156), (173), (177), (181), (187), (197), (201), (202).

- ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to engage in independent learning.

(14), (26), (43), (84), (95), (96), (104), (105), (127), (129), (146), (147), (149), (150), (151), (154), (155), (173), (186).

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

- 1      Knights Templar serves the town of Baldock and local villages including Ashwell, Weston and Sandon. The local population is expanding and the school is always oversubscribed. 1102 pupils are currently on role, of whom 191 are in the sixth form. There are 68 pupils on the special needs register 16 of whom have statements. The school is bigger than other secondary schools nationally, but the percentage of pupils identified as having special needs and those that have statements is broadly in line with the national average.
  
- 2      The social and economic background of pupils is mixed, but broadly average overall. Unemployment in the area is very low and the extremes of wealth and poverty are not evident. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (6 per cent) is below the national average. Pupils joining the school have generally performed well in end of Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests, with local schools achieving above average results. Only a small number of pupils (35) from minority ethnic families attend the school but this is in line with the local demography. Nearly ninety per cent of pupils at the end of Year 11 continue with full-time education after 16.
  
- 3      Knights Templar's aims are clearly stated: to educate pupils in a community which values and cares for the individual; that all pupils achieve the best of which they are capable; that they are prepared for their future lives; and that learning is made interesting and enjoyable. The school's development plan for 1999 onwards is rooted in its aims and identifies key areas as priorities for action. These are linked to detailed plans, giving costs, named personnel and time-scales.

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	109	72	181

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	89	89	92
	Girls	61	56	56
	Total	150	145	148
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	83 (86)	80 (78)	81 (82)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	42 (62)	57 (54)	47 (51)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	85	94	90
	Girls	62	60	60
	Total	147	154	150
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	80 (80)	85 (79)	82 (79)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	48 (53)	61 (58)	48 (49)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	75	78	153

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	50	74	74
	Girls	62	76	76
	Total	112	150	150
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	73 (55)	98 (96)	98 (98)
	National	48 (46.1)	88 (81.3)	94 (93.4)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	
National		

### Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>3</sup>

Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	37	45	82

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.2	19.3	18.6 (15.7)	3.3	5	4 (2.8)
National	16.3	16.0	18.2	3.2	3	2.7

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved this qualification:

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	
National		

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success Rate
School	8	100
National		

<sup>3</sup> Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year :			%
	Authorised Absence	School	5.6
		National comparative data	8.1
	Unauthorised Absence	School	0.3
National comparative data		1.2	

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year :			Number
	Fixed period		33
	Permanent		0

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :			%
	Very good or better		23.6
	Satisfactory or better		96.5
	Less than satisfactory		3.4



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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

4. Attainment on entry to the school is well above average. Matched data for the pupils currently in Year 10 is available and the school makes very effective use of this in setting targets. In 1996 (the year in which Year 10 pupils entered the school) 72 per cent of pupils transferring to Knights Templar achieved Level 4 in the English test, compared with 57 per cent nationally. In this same year, 77 per cent of pupils in the school achieved Level 4 and above in mathematics compared with 54 per cent nationally. In science 86 per cent of pupils in the school achieved this threshold compared with 62 per cent nationally.

5. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science these same pupils, reaching the age of 14 in 1999, attained very high standards in comparison with others nationally and in all three subjects the school achieved well above the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Test results in 1998 reflected a similar pattern with the exception of results in science, which were very high (in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally) in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In English and mathematics test results were well above average.

6. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils in the school reaching Level 5 and above in design and technology to be 78 per cent compared with 63 per cent nationally. In geography, the school recorded 66 per cent compared with 61 per cent nationally. Assessments in history showed 67 per cent compared with 60 per cent nationally. In information technology 79 per cent of pupils were assessed as attaining Level 5 and above compared with 59 per cent nationally. In modern foreign languages,<sup>4</sup> where national data is recorded differently from other subjects, 75 per cent of pupils were assessed as achieving Level 4 compared with 63 per cent nationally. These teacher-based assessments are in line with judgements made by the inspection team with the exception of information technology where the teacher assessment process was deemed to be lenient and based on limited evidence.

7. Pupils with special educational need make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 against the targets set for them. Progress is monitored effectively at annual review but more needs to be done to identify progress more accurately against targets set in individual education plans. This aspect requires ongoing systematic review. The language phase assessments of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds have yet to be completed and the new language and curriculum support teacher intends that these be completed by March 2000. In the absence of this data it is difficult to form accurate judgements on the progress of these pupils, although evidence from lesson observations indicates that pupils make at least satisfactory progress.

8. Parents generally think that their children progress well in the school and the inspection supports this view. Overall the pupils are making very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. A scrutiny of pupils' work carried out by the inspection team revealed that pupils in the sixth form also make good progress over time and the attainment of pupils is in line with national norms overall. There are several notable examples each year of outstanding progress made by individual pupils in the sixth form.

9. In the lessons observed in Key Stage 3, the progress being made by pupils was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons and good or better in 55 per cent. In Key Stage 4 the pattern was not very dissimilar from Key Stage 3 but instances of excellent progress were noted in this Key Stage. In the sixth form, inspectors noted that in some 73 per cent of lessons observed progress was good or better.

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<sup>4</sup> This is the level below the expectations for the other subjects because modern foreign languages are not introduced until Year 7.

10. Pupils at the school achieved exceptional GCSE examination results in 1999 in both English and mathematics examinations. The attainment of pupils in these subjects places them in the top 5 per cent of pupils nationally. Science results were lower because of the policy of entering every pupil for the double award. In this subject the average for schools in similar contexts was broadly in line, however pupils' results at the school were above the national average. The school has improved upon performance this year over last. 73 per cent of pupils achieved 5 or more GCSE/GNVQ passes at Grades A\* - C this year and this means that pupils' results at this school are very high (in the top 5 per cent) in comparison with the average for schools in similar contexts. 99.9 percent of pupils achieved 5 or more passes at GCSE/GNVQ Grades A\* - G and this impressive performance again places the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. Standards last year were broadly in line with schools in similar contexts but well above the national average for all schools.

11. In both Key Stages and in the sixth form art and design has with consistency over time been the highest performing subject in the school. In 1999 all pupils entered for the GCSE subject achieved Grades A\* - C. Twelve of the nineteen pupils entered for GCE Advanced Level achieved Grade A.

12. There has been an improved performance this year over last for those candidates entered for two or more GCE A level or AS equivalent subjects. The average points score per candidate rose from nearly 16 (below the national average) to nearly 19 (a figure in line with the national average). All GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate candidates also passed.

13. Both boys and girls in this school perform equally well compared with the performance of others nationally.

#### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

14. In class and in assemblies, pupils listen intently and absorb what they are being told. All pupils show a mature attitude, with older pupils behaving in an adult fashion. Behaviour in the school is very good and allows pupils to take a full part in the curriculum and achieve rewarding results in their examinations. Response to direct questioning is good but at all levels there is a lack of animation and pupils are not being encouraged to use their initiative and take control of their own learning.

15. There is a feeling among some parents and pupils that the amount of set homework is too great and in order to achieve a good grade pupils have to work longer than is intended. Classwork and homework are usually marked, graded and annotated. Pupils respond well to comments that offer constructive guidance on how to improve and strive to attain the standard expected.

16. Pupils take a pride in their work and it is well presented. Housepoints are awarded for good work. There are some good displays of work in the school but the architecture of the school, with no entrance hall and narrow corridors affords limited opportunities for public display. Pupils work well in groups and in pairs and relationships between pupils from all backgrounds are very good. Staff and visitors are treated with respect. Teachers treat all pupils in the school as adults and they are trusted to behave well. There is some "letting off steam" when lessons finish but the site is restricted and pupils moving between classes and buildings show restraint. There are narrow passageways which could be dangerous but no one-way systems operate. Pupils behave sensibly when moving through these areas.

17. The crowded dining room is used by pupils consuming over 700 cooked meals and many packed lunches every mid-day and, considering the movement and queuing which is necessary, behaviour and manners are good. Pupils treat their books and the school's other resources with great respect.

18. The school has many good rules which are drawn to the attention of primary school children before they transfer and often thereafter. It also has a well-written behaviour policy with which everyone is familiar. Pupils are aware of the rules and generally their responses are good. There have been some fixed-term exclusions. In the local community the school is held in high regard and is noted for the pupils' good behaviour. Consequently

there is a waiting list of pupils wishing to attend. Local employers who take pupils on work experience compliment the school on the mature attitude of pupils and on their ability to use initiative.

19. Pupils learn to take responsibility for themselves and are keen to help others when asked to do so. Two representatives from each year group serve on the school council, which meets to discuss changes to routines and the needs of pupils. Pupils consider the Council to be effective although some items do recur without being resolved. Earlier in the term its members played a role the appointment of the new deputy headteacher and are soon to be involved in designing the new catering service.

20. Pupils in the sixth form take on more responsibility as prefects, house and sports captains. Their attitudes to work are excellent. These pupils contribute enormously to the very positive ethos of the school. They assume responsibility for pupils in the lower school and provide very powerful role models.

21. The Prospectus states that the school sets high standards and pupils are expected to live up to them. The school has high expectations for their academic progress and aspirations for every pupil to achieve their best. It is achieving success in all these aims.

### **Attendance**

22. The attendance of pupils is very good. At 94 per cent it is well above the national average and there were only 0.3 per cent unauthorised absences last year. Staff have worked hard to maintain this good response. Less than five pupils are giving cause for concern by their long-term absence and everything is being done to assist them in returning to school.

23. Only a few pupils are persistently late and teachers take appropriate measures to deal with this problem. The register is called at the beginning of morning and afternoon school and records kept meet legal requirements. In addition the roll is called at the beginning of every class and lessons begin promptly giving children the full hour available so that they may make good progress.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

24. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons and good overall. It is satisfactory in nearly one third of lessons, good in nearly half and very good in a fifth. Of the 220 lessons inspected less than four per cent had teaching that was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school.

25. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most explain the content of lessons thoroughly, choose appropriate topics and illustrations and use specialist language appropriate to their subject. Good teacher knowledge contributes significantly to the high standards pupils attain.

26. The majority of teachers expect and demand high standards of work from pupils. In the best lessons teachers posed questions that required pupils to think carefully and give full answers. The use of an appropriate mix of open and closed questions with time for probing discussion of key concepts was also a feature of the best lessons. In some lessons there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to work individually and whilst gains in the subject knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils were clearly evident, the challenge that arises from discussion of ideas was missing. Very few opportunities were noted where pupils were encouraged to discuss ideas in depth, to formulate alternative hypotheses or to make more than brief responses to closed questions.

27. Lessons were well prepared and showed good organisation and planning but some teachers confused learning objectives with tasks to be completed by pupils. Most work is suitably matched to pupils' levels of

attainment. However in a significant minority of lessons the same work is set for all pupils without modification.

28. No instances of unruly behaviour were observed in class. Pupils were kept on task, often with good humour. Teachers usually create a stimulating learning environment, which is orderly, interesting and purposeful. Time is used very well. Lessons begin punctually, most have brisk pace.

29. Homework is usually set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been learned in school. Pupils use a diary to record this set work and most diaries are well maintained.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

30. In Key Stage 3 all subjects of the national curriculum and religious education are offered. All pupils study drama and personal, social and health education. In Year 7 there is one foreign language taught, alternating in successive years between French and German. Both planning and assessment feature as a weakness in religious education in this Key Stage. The work is however based on the agreed syllabus.

31. In Key Stage 4 all pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, physical education, design and technology and personal, social and health education in addition to a humanity and a modern foreign language. An appropriate range of optional subjects is offered for GCSE examinations and all pupils are entered for a minimum of 9 GCSE subjects.

32. A very wide range of courses leading to GCE A level examinations is provided for pupils in the sixth form and in addition, consortia arrangements exist to support courses of minority interest. GNVQ courses are offered at intermediate and advanced level.

33. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except in information technology in Key Stage 4, and religious education in KS4. In information technology there is time tabled provision in Key Stage 3 but in Key Stage 4, timetabled provision is only available for those pupils who choose it as one of their GCSE options. Information technology is not sufficiently embedded in other national curriculum subjects to ensure adequate coverage of the statutory programmes and cross-curricular monitoring is a weakness. Aspects of religious education are covered in personal, social and health education in Key Stage 4 but the work is not based on the Agreed Syllabus. Provision for health education and sex education is very good.

34. The school has made a good start towards a consistent approach to literacy. A whole school literacy initiative and policy is in place based on the results of a curriculum audit. There are practical guidelines to promote awareness and consistency. A fortnightly literacy lesson takes place within Year 7 and Year 9 English, which builds on and develops literacy skills across the curriculum. Pupils can identify parts of speech and work to improve the variety within sentences using connectives. Teachers across the curriculum support pupils' literacy through each subject. Key words are visible and promoted, writing frames are available in some curriculum areas to develop planning and organisation in writing. Most pupils have good note taking skills, can write at length, and with largely accurate spelling and punctuation. Pupils have good oral skills but in too few lessons across the curriculum are pupils encouraged to speak at length, to engage in debate or to offer reasoned argument. Most pupil responses consist of short answers to closed questions.

35. Pupils are able to enjoy an exceptionally rich extra-curricular provision. The arts generally thrive. Some 350 pupils learn musical instruments in school from 25 peripatetic tutors. Bands, groups and ensembles abound covering the whole spectrum of musical types. Many pupils play in District and County groups. There is a fine tradition of large-scale productions in the school. Over 150 pupils are currently engaged with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The school has also a fine tradition in sailing, entering its own crew in The Tall Ships' Race for the past seven years. Sport is a key element of the schools extra-curricular provision, with many able children participating at District and County levels. Some reach regional or national honours.

36. Timetable arrangements are good. The school currently offers 25 one-hour periods across a two-weekly cycle. Setting arrangements are very thoroughly administered and procedures for curricular planning are effective. Very good systems for inducting new pupils to the school exist and are supported by excellent relationships with local primary schools.

37. There is good provision for careers education and guidance. A sound programme of careers education is included as part of the personal, social and health education programme in Year 9 and careers education is offered on a modular basis in the upper school. Very good liaison arrangements exist with the careers service. All pupils participate in a well-organised work experience programme and during the placements staff visit pupils.

38. The school makes very effective use of assessment data provided by contributory primary schools. This range of data includes important information from national curriculum standardised tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Information from tests of cognitive ability which the school obtains in Year 7 is also used very effectively to inform setting of pupils and targeting of additional resource at specific needs identified.

39. Pupils' work is marked regularly and provides good feedback to pupils in many subjects on what needs to be done to improve. Assessment arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory.

40. Most pupils are competent in number operations and use calculators with confidence, they can apply ratio and proportion, they can construct graphs and charts and interpret data from them. They apply these skills in course work in many areas of the curriculum for calculating, statistical analysis and graph work.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

41. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. For Years 7 - 10 the school provides two formal assemblies for pupils each week; for Year 11 - 13 one is formal, the second a year meeting. Those observed during the inspection ranged from notice giving and announcements in the sixth form to a very moving act of worship which encouraged pupils to reflect on the meaning of Remembrance Day. The school is still not meeting statutory requirements for daily worship due to limitations of space. Provision for spiritual development across the curriculum is patchy. In art, pupils are inspired to reflect on the world around them and express this in a variety of media; in religious education, pupils sometimes discuss issues of beliefs and values and experience local buildings of religious and spiritual importance. However, insufficient provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 is limiting its contribution to spiritual development. In the recent evening on

the poetry of Simon Armitage, pupils in Years 10 and 11 were given extended opportunities to reflect and explore the poetry in a variety of media.

42. The provision for moral development is good. The newly restructured personal, social and health education programme is making a strong contribution to moral development by giving pupils opportunities to consider personal and social matters within a clear framework of moral values. Issues of a moral and ethical nature are considered in a range of curriculum areas including drama, English and religious education. Opportunities across the curriculum are, however, not made sufficiently explicit through the schemes of work. The school has a clear framework of policies for behaviour and other codes of practice and each pupil receives an individual booklet from the school with full details of these policies. There is strong encouragement therefore for pupils to be aware of what is right and wrong and pupils in general abide by the codes.

43. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities right across all areas of the school. Large numbers are involved in musical activities with 50 per cent of Year 7 participating. A large range of other extra curricular activities are provided by teachers in the school including sport, drama, outdoor activities, modern language exchanges and trips, religious education trips to Israel and Rome and many clubs and activities at lunch times. The geography department, with the help of the sixth form, encourages pupils to participate in a national quiz, which is a regular event. Pupils are encouraged to take part in the active school council and assist at parents and open days. Sixth formers act as prefects in a discrete and helpful way especially for younger pupils and are presently organising a sixth form revue. All pupils are allowed free access to the building before school and at all break times. They respond very well to the trust shown in them to look after the buildings when not directly supervised. Pupils are less willing however to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons; they expect teachers to teach them directly and they have fewer opportunities to take initiative. Some examples of good practice were seen however during the inspection in physical education, drama, music and personal, social and health education. Pupils are encouraged to have a keen sense of community by raising money for both local and national charities and through the various links with local churches, industry and homes for the elderly and disabled.

44. The provision for cultural development is good. There is a large range of visits and trips to art galleries, concerts, religious buildings in the area and theatres. Regular opportunities to participate in musical and drama performances are a strong feature of the school. Pupils are encouraged to learn about the cultural traditions of this country throughout the curriculum. In English all staff are made aware of pupils' linguistic and cultural backgrounds so that their needs can be fully catered for. In modern languages pupils are taught respect for people from other lands and to see that French for instance is not only used in France but in many countries across the world. In religious education pupils study a range of the principal religions found in Great Britain but at present no work is being covered on Buddhism or Hinduism. The school's equal opportunities policy states that it seeks to develop awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity. This aim is not yet systematically established across the curriculum. However the school has identified pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as a key priority in its own development plan for January 2000.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

45. The Knights Templar School makes very good arrangements to help pupils' transfer from primary school as easy as possible. A few pupils who were bullied in their previous school, for working too hard, feel safe and free to work without harassment. As well as a visit to the secondary school with their parents in the autumn term, the whole cohort is invited to spend a day in July in their new school taking sample lessons and finding their way around. In addition teachers from the primary schools work with those in Knights Templar to arrange setting and tutor groups which will best suit the incoming pupils. These teachers also have training days together and the head of the lower school spends time in the primary schools getting to know the children in advance of their transfer. Pupils attend plays and concerts at the Knights Templar school and musicians from there go to play in the primary schools. Peripatetic music teachers also provide a common link between primary and secondary schools. Communications between the two tiers of school are excellent.

46. Arrangements for children to transfer who have special educational needs are carefully considered and, if necessary, they may spend several half-days with their support assistant in the secondary school in the term before transfer. When they have transferred they are well provided for, encouraged by their class teachers and their progress is valued. They do not, however, receive enough appropriate homework.

47. Good measures exist to encourage full attendance. The education welfare officer is involved with some families where children are frequently absent and has had to take parents to court but this is the last resort after every possible means of support has been offered to the family and the child. The school office records latecomers and tutors also note who is regularly late and try to make them more responsible. Efforts to ensure that only those who go home to lunch leave the school at lunchtime involve the staff in manning the gates occasionally to check passes. The roll is called at the beginning of each class.

48. Most of the buildings on the school site are not suited for disabled pupils and this is a regular item for discussion by the governor's Buildings Sub-Committee, as is the poor state of repair and decoration of many of the buildings. The school has a Health and Safety policy. Health and safety problems are reviewed monthly by a joint panel of governors and staff but not enough of the budget is devoted to putting matters right. A full asbestos survey was carried out and remedial action taken. A senior member of staff is responsible for health and safety matters on a daily basis and pupils are aware of the dangers when they are using certain materials or machinery.

49. As a good safety measure, parents have been prevented from driving through the car park when dropping off or collecting their children as this was becoming increasingly dangerous. The site was surveyed by pupils to identify those unseen places where bullying might take place and consequently prefects patrol these areas. There is a well-written policy on behaviour and bullying and any issues of harassment, name calling or bullying is dealt with quickly and a record is kept. Pupils feel that they can talk to their form tutor or a subject teacher if they have problems themselves or concerns about another pupil. There are good arrangements for child protection overseen by a deputy headteacher, and staff are trained in the correct procedures if they feel that a pupil may be a victim. Social services, the education welfare officer and other agencies can be called in to help a child in difficulties.

50. Throughout the school detailed records noting the development and academic progress of every child are kept. Teachers and Year 12 and 13 pupils work well together to overcome any difficulties in the A level years. There is a special booklet of advice for pupils who enter the sixth form, including good information about how to study and revise.

51. In personal, social and health education lessons pupils are given good advice about taking responsibility for themselves, personal safety, drugs awareness, careers information, sex education and social and moral issues generally. These lessons are underpinned with information from relevant bodies and speakers on the subjects. A well-prepared programme is being introduced for personal, social and health education lessons for all pupils.

52. Pupils in the school are treated as young adults from their first day and are trusted. They have the freedom of the buildings at all times but outside lesson time may only enter classrooms of pupils in their own year group. Open space on the site is restricted and the playing fields across the road are only used for games. Security of the site is under constant review by the governors and a security policy is being finalised. The number of external doors in regular use makes the task of the cleaners very difficult but the standard of cleaning is good and in the much-used dining room efforts are made to ensure cleanliness and good hygiene.

53. Over 900 pupils took advantage of the recent offer of meningitis vaccine and inoculation against tuberculosis is also available. There is a qualified Matron in school who looks after any pupil who may be injured or unwell and good arrangements are made should any pupil need medication in school time. The health education policy reviewed in 1999 deals with aspects such as smoking and alcohol. Pupils may not bring them onto the premises and staff are encouraged not to smoke.

54. Many excellent extra-curricular activities are available to the pupils such as drama, music, sports, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, overseas visits, sailing and much more. A high standard of sensible behaviour is expected from all that take part. Pupils who have part-time jobs have to have the school's permission.



## **Partnership with parents and the community**

55. The previous OFSTED report identified the Knights Templar school as a centre of excellence in its relationships with the local community and industry links. These good relationships have, if anything, been enhanced in the last four years.

56. Very strong links exist with the six main primary schools from which nearly all of the children that go to Knights Templar are drawn and this helps to smooth the transfer. The school's partnership with parents is also very good. The newly introduced home/school agreement is signed by the headteacher, the parents and the pupil. It is a well-presented document detailing the roles each will guarantee.

57. There was a good response from parents to the questionnaire and meeting held shortly before the inspection began. 724 replies were received which mainly showed strong support for the ethos of the school, its attitudes to learning, behaviour policy and the care and guidance given to pupils. Parents are well informed about the school and receive many clearly written booklets giving advice and information about the house system, the school council and the school year. The termly diary is one such example. Not only is it used to carry two-way information, but also homework details are written up every day and at the weekend a parent has to sign to say that they have read what is there. Failure to get this signature regularly can result in a detention for the pupil. Some parents expressed concern about the length of time taken by homework. Pupils gave the view that, in order to gain a good grade it was necessary to work much longer than the time set.

58. The school Prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report to parents are two important documents. In the past these have not contained all the information required by law but efforts have been made with the help of the LEA to make sure that the Annual Report, which has been sent out for consideration at the Annual Meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup>, complies with all legal requirements.

59. All classes have parents' evenings once a year and these are very well attended. Some parents have asked for more than one a year but this would be logistically impossible. There are meetings for parents on specific subjects however. Parents and sixth form pupils do have additional meetings to help them make the right curriculum and higher education choices.

60. Each pupil has a Record of Achievement, which is compiled as they move through the school. It gives information about extra-curricular activities and interests outside school of a voluntary or sporting nature. Each year, subject teachers compile a detailed report on the pupil's progress for inclusion in the Record of Achievement; these reports tend to be very positive but lack constructive criticism and advice on where pupils should strive to improve their academic performance. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 receive a more detailed interim report, which is discussed with their subject teachers.

61. Parents, local employers, primary schools and other friends of the Knights Templar school are sent a fortnightly magazine called "News Knight" which gives, in an interesting format, up-to-date information about school happenings. It is very well received especially when it is able to give reports of excellent examination results and achievements of past and present pupils.

62. There is a strong Parents' Association, which raises money for specific purchases of books and equipment. Social functions are organised and are well attended and there is a covenant scheme and a 200 Club. At over forty school events, members of the Association's committee run licensed or soft drinks bars both to raise funds and serve as an amenity to parents and visitors. There is a drive to persuade the parents of the younger children to become more involved as the longer-serving members of the committee are nearing the end of their terms of office.

63. Local businesses give good support to the school in sponsorship and by taking an active role in the careers education, which is available. There is an active Industry Links group and members of this group provide interviewers for mock interviews with members of the sixth form and work experience opportunities for

Year 11. They take part in exhibitions and enterprise competitions for pupils at all levels in the school. Links with local shops and stores are good. These provide prizes and more work experience opportunities. A Letchworth bookshop supports activities for the school library and the local school uniform supplier assists with a fund for uniform for those in financial difficulties.

64. Members of the local community make good use of the school for their own education. In the evenings computer studies, keep-fit, languages, art history and psychology courses are available. These help to provide income for the school as does the use of the sports facilities by outside groups. They also provide a useful community resource. The school has great hopes for a new Sports Hall which is to be built in the year 2000 following final approval from Sport England. This is as a result of a prolonged campaign of fund-raising by the school supported by local organisations, the County and the District Council, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and Sport England themselves.

65. Many of the pupils are members of the Saturday Music School which meets on the premises and they take part in performances playing or singing for local groups such as the Home and Day Centre opposite the school, in the local churches and primary schools. The school has good links with all the local churches and clergy visit to lead assemblies and take religious education lessons on a regular basis. Newspapers, television and film companies have used the school on a number of occasions. Pupils have raised money for many local charities such as Letchworth Hospice, national charities like Help the Aged and the British Heart Foundation, and international disaster appeals. Pupils take part in non-uniform days, Red Nose Day and Children in Need. They do swimathons, all-night basketball and sponsored walks.

66. Pupils are able to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the local Fire Service among other community groups supports this work. Pupils have been able to visit Peru, the Himalayas and other faraway places as well as doing adventurous activities in Lancashire and Yorkshire and even closer to home.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

67. The headteacher provides significant vision and energy to drive forward the school's development. He is involved in every aspect of school life, is easily accessible to teachers, parents and pupils and uses praise frequently to reward their efforts and achievements. He sets high standards for both staff and pupils but leads by example and is appropriately intolerant of poor quality in any aspect of the school's performance. He demonstrates clear resolve that the school should make sustained progress in attaining its goals, appreciates its strengths and how to sustain them but more importantly, knows its weaknesses and how to overcome them.

68. The Governing Body is very clear about its priorities: to provide good strategic management for the school's direction; to act as a critical friend to the school; and to hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of education it provides. Governors sit in and contribute with staff at key planning meetings. For example, the Chair of the Curriculum Sub-committee, a former headteacher, contributes at the meeting of heads of faculty and through this process is able to make a more informed contribution to curriculum planning within the Governing Body.

69. The senior management team provides very good leadership that gives a firm steer to the school's work. Responsibilities are appropriately divided. These include issues such as the setting of priorities, the effective deployment and management of staff, induction and support arrangements, the development of effective management and information systems, and the detailed monitoring of the school's performance against targets. The school has made particularly good progress in target setting and the use of assessment data to inform the monitoring process. This work represents an exemplar of good practice.

70. The quality of leadership shown by staff with responsibilities for subject areas and pastoral teams varies but is good overall. The pastoral care of pupils is a strength of the school and due in no small part to the efforts of all staff at classroom level.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

71. The school has sufficient staff to meet the needs of its curriculum. Almost all teachers have appropriate qualifications for the subject they are required to teach. Religious education is the only subject that is adversely affected because not all teachers have sufficient subject knowledge. The school is well served by non-teaching staff and by technical support especially in science.

72. There are good systems to support new members of staff. Last year's five newly qualified teachers spoke well of the extensive support they had received. A comprehensive staff handbook describing the school's policies and practices is available to all staff. The school has a procedure for monitoring classroom performance but some observations of teaching lack rigour and do not contribute significantly to the development of individual staff.

73. The school keeps good records of the professional development of staff and there is evaluation of the effectiveness of this training. Staff have engaged with much information and communications technology training which should impact upon curriculum practice. The school is very well supported by a dedicated team of non-teaching staff.

74. The condition of the school's accommodation has improved since the last inspection but it is still unsatisfactory. There has been an improvement in library accommodation and in the availability of equipment in the information and communications technology suite. The increase in the school roll has put pressure on the availability of suitable classrooms however there have been additional classrooms for mathematics. Some of the teaching spaces and corridors are in need of repair and one laboratory in particular is very untidy providing an unsuitable working environment. Technology and art areas are also in need of some attention. There is inadequate accommodation for the teaching of music and this factor reduces the quality of some aspects of the provision.

75. The school's library is too small to provide an effective learning support centre. Access is restricted and the resource is not available before school. The careers library is not complete although it is up-to-date. There are some deficiencies in the available texts, most notably in reading material for those older pupils who have below average attainment in reading.

76. There are sufficient learning resources for most subjects. The number of textbooks in science and modern foreign languages supports the good quality work in those departments. There is a good range of artefacts to support religious education. The number and range of musical instruments are significant features in the good quality of music making. Despite improvements, the computer resources are limited and many machines are out of date.

### **The efficiency of the school**

77. The school provides good value for money at a unit cost, which is consistent with the standards attained. The school carried forward a small deficit this year but has a good recovery plan for recouping this in the next twelve months.

78. The Governors have a clear strategic view of where funds need to be deployed. This has led to an important initiative to provide a new community sports centre on the school site. The school has raised just under half a million pounds in partnership with the community in order to attract National Lottery funding of around a million pounds. This massive undertaking has undoubtedly put pressure on school resources, notably

staffing in the current year. The school has coped well with this added pressure and should reap the benefit in the immediate future.

79. The Chair of Governors is also Chair of Finance and a senior accountant by profession. She is tireless in her efforts to work with the school manager in financial planning and monitoring. They are ably supported by a deputy headteacher who has been given the specific brief to monitor efficiency and effectiveness. The collaborative efforts of this strong team ensure that the Finance Committee is extremely well informed in its deliberations and decision-making.

80. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in producing a clear school development plan that is fully costed.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

81. Pupils' attainment in GCSE English and literature examinations in 1999 was well above the national average. 85 per cent gained grades A\* - C for English and 80 per cent for literature. The percentage gaining grades A\* - G was well above the national average in both subjects. Girls performed better than boys did; 94 per cent gained A\* - C for English and 95 per cent for literature. 79 per cent of boys gained A\* - C for English and 65 per cent for literature. These results represent a significant improvement over 1998 when results were also above the national average. In both subjects, the increase in attainment at grades A\*, A and B and in boys' attainment was especially notable. In English the number of boys achieving grades A\* - C rose by 24 per cent. These results place the school in the top 5 per cent nationally. Achievement at post 16 is good. A level results at A - E and grades A and B are just above the national average.

82. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in tests is well above the national average and has been for the previous 3 years. In 1999 end of Key Stage tests, 82 per cent gained level 5 and above. Girls do better than boys but the three-year trend shows a decreasing difference. These results place the school in the top 5 per cent nationally. Pupils contribute confidently in lessons and take account of other views in group and whole class context. They are attentive listeners. They can retrieve and use information from a range of texts, and respond to ideas, characters and themes in class readers with understanding. Reading aloud is sometimes hesitant in pupils of all abilities. Writing is generally accurate and confident, some committed and imaginative. More able pupils write at length and can shape their writing to interest the reader.

83. Pupils of all abilities make good progress. Teachers and learning assistants support the progress of pupils with special educational needs. They learn to respond to the language and intentions of writers and to create tension and drama in their own writing. Experimenting with tone and style in role-play and scripts helps them understand language change. Work in drama makes a strong contribution to all pupils' progress with spoken language. They develop a wide repertoire of oral skills and learn to take account of their audience through presenting work and through giving and receiving feedback.

84. Progress in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is sound or better. Well-planned and structured opportunities for presentation have helped pupils develop as speakers. They take account of audience, sometimes wittily, can sustain a formal style and ask apt and probing questions in role. Most pupils have extended their ability to analyse themes and language in fiction and poetry and can give reasons for the impact of a text. They have developed a more sophisticated understanding of a writer's intention and the cultural and historical contexts in which they were writing. Pupils research and evaluate information from different sources using books and information technology, responsibly and with enjoyment for example, on the first world war and for A level. Pupils generally write well and in a range of styles, though some pupils of all abilities have a limited range of strategies to edit and improve their own writing and can be over dependent on the teacher. Most pupils use standard English effectively in speech and writing. Sixth form pupils are responsible and independent in managing their work. Their attentiveness and own questions show perception, and they make links and comparisons between texts. Detailed, rigorous written comment guides and prompts their learning.

85. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons in all three Key Stages. Teachers demonstrate confident subject knowledge across the range of the curriculum and communicate the importance and enjoyment of the subject through energetic and committed teaching. They create a calm, purposeful environment where pupils are able to learn. In the best lessons at Key Stage 3, teaching has pace and challenge, approaches are varied and allow pupils of different abilities to take part and learn in an active way. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is best where learning objectives are clear, all pupils have a role in the lesson, are able to contribute effectively, and where evaluation makes the criteria clear and encourages learning. Planned activities in collaborative group work or in

formal presentations promote effective speaking and listening and challenges pupils to maximum involvement. The quality of work for pupils of lower ability has improved since the last inspection.

86. Teachers are generous with praise and support individual pupils well. Class and integrated homework form a clear sequence that makes sense to the pupils. Marking is thorough, honest and constructive. Setting targets for future work has just begun and as precision develops will help pupils identify areas for improvement. In all three Key Stages there are some lessons where the teacher dominates and there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop and consolidate their understanding through pair or group work.

87. Pupils are attentive, industrious and obedient in lessons, relationships are positive. They work successfully and co-operatively in groups when asked. Research opportunities and homework requirements help them develop as independent learners. Their confidence and readiness to discuss their thoughts and reflections and to work together enhances their social, moral and cultural development.

88. An A level media studies course has been recently introduced and is proving to be a popular option. The department is well managed and ably led, with clearly articulated aims and principles. Teachers work together as a group and share an ethos of hard work and high expectations. The head of English has worked hard to extend and establish systems which have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Documentation is recent, comprehensive and good. Schemes of work provide a balanced curriculum which matches the requirements of the national curriculum. Links between drama and English have improved since the last inspection and cross-curricular links are a strength. Monitoring of pupils' work and exam results is good and data has been used very successfully to target areas for improvement, in particular boys' achievement at GCSE.

89. Resources are reasonable and there is access to information technology facilities. The quality and standard of display and displayed work in English classrooms and in the corridors enhances the learning environment. Book stock to entice and encourage readers of all stages should be developed further in the department and in the library.

## **Mathematics**

90. Standards in mathematics are well above average across the school. Pupils enter the school with above average achievement in mathematics. Results in the national tests at age 14 in 1999 are well above the national average; four out of five pupils achieved level 5 or above and nearly three in five achieved level 6 or higher. There is little variation between the performance of boys and girls at these levels. These results are well above the average for similar schools and the average points score of 37.5 is in the top five per cent.

91. At age 16 in the 1999 GCSE examinations, seven out of ten pupils achieved grade A\* - C. This is well above the national average and in the top five percent for similar schools. These results are considerably higher than the previous year when the proportion of A\* - C grades was close to the national average and represented a dip from a trend that has been above the national average over recent years. In the 1999 examinations girls were just ahead of boys at the higher grades but the gap has narrowed considerably.

92. In GCSE A level in 1999 nearly half the passes are at the higher grades A - B this is above the national average and represents a return to higher than average results following a dip in 1998.

93. In lessons, standards of attainment relate to the setting arrangements so that pupils in the higher attaining sets reach standards well above the national expectation of age 14 and 16 and those in lower sets achieve good standards relative to their level. Number is particularly well developed, pupils are comfortable with calculation at all levels, they use calculators appropriately and with precision and they successfully calculate mentally. In Year 9 higher attaining pupils are working with standard form notation and by Year 11 middle attaining pupils revise compound interest and depreciation. Pupils are equally confident with algebra, in Year 8 lower attaining pupils explore number relationships and express these as formulae and Year 11 higher

attaining pupils factorise complex expressions. Good standards are reached in shape, space and measure and in data handling, in Year 10 lower attaining pupils successfully use the theorem of Pythagoras, in Year 11 middle attaining groups revise cumulative frequency graphs. There was less evidence of using and applying mathematics, extended problem solving and investigations. This aspect of the mathematics curriculum is taught as discrete modules of work. Scrutiny of samples of course work show that good standards are reached but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop and apply these skills in the context of the other areas of mathematics.

94. In both Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils frequently make good progress when, in the majority of lessons, work is well matched to pupils' needs, prior knowledge and skills. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to make good progress through carefully structured and highly organised tasks. For example in a lesson on reflection and symmetry a carefully pitched introduction followed by a series of short practical tasks enabled all pupils, including those with special needs, to develop a clear understanding of the concept. After further practice, pupils were able to work in groups on an investigation with great success. In the sixth form, pupils make good progress from GCSE and cope well with the demands of the courses.

95. In all year groups pupils show overwhelmingly positive attitudes to their work. They are highly motivated, work hard and respond positively to the expectations set by their teachers. They take pride in their work and standards of presentation are generally high. They are eager to engage in activities. Older pupils adopt a mature attitude to their lessons, at all levels they are keen to do well. Pupils persevere with tasks and share the different strategies they have used to find solutions and solve problems. Pupils work well together when given the opportunity, as in the lesson on symmetry. There are too few opportunities for pupils to work in this way.

96. The quality of teaching is good in the majority of lessons, it is never less than satisfactory and in some it is very good. All teachers have a good subject knowledge and show an enthusiasm for mathematics. They generally manage pupils well in class encouraging a positive response. Most lessons are well planned and run at a brisk pace. Teachers provide clear explanations, showing methods, emphasising mathematical terms, precision and presentation. Questioning is usually strong with an emphasis on understanding strategies that pupils have used. Exposition followed by practice is the dominant teaching strategy and teachers are very skilled in this. There is scope for a broader range of learning strategies. Most teachers set clear time limits for work to be done, ensuring that pupils are clear about what is expected of them. At appropriate stages teachers emphasis examination technique and practice. This is a strong feature of the teaching that supports pupils well in preparing for exams. Teachers are conscientious in marking; at its best it is informative, offers praise appropriately and provides advice about what pupils need to do next, as in the A level marking. A feature of the department are the surgeries that teachers hold at lunch breaks; pupils, particularly advanced level pupils, greatly value this provision.

97. The department offers a broad and balanced curriculum and has well-developed assessment procedures which includes targets for pupils. This year an additional lesson for numeracy has been introduced in Year 8. The range of courses available in the sixth form is impressive. The use of information technology is planned in Key Stage 3 but, except for the use of recently acquired graphical calculators; there is little opportunity to use information technology in Key Stage 4 or in sixth form courses. The element of using and applying mathematics is formally taught in separate units and modules, some teachers adopt teaching strategies that bring it into everyday activities improving the quality of pupils learning experience. Schemes of work lack reference to the national curriculum programmes of study but in many other respects they provide a thorough basis for lesson planning, with clear advice about timing, content, progression and extension activities. The department is very well led and managed and all members of the department participate fully in its work. Strong team planning is a major strength. Since the last inspection, overall standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 have improved, other developments have included, review of the curriculum and coursework in both key stages; an information technology planning framework for Key Stage 3 and the development of a whole school numeracy policy for the school. The head of department analyses results and monitors pupils' work books, this is the first phase of a wider monitoring and review system.

98. To raise pupil achievement further the department should:
- share practice to incorporate a broader range of teaching and learning strategies within the work of the department;
  - fully develop the monitoring and review system;
  - develop the use of information technology in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

## Science

99. By the age of 14 the pupils' attainment is very high in comparison with all schools and to schools of a similar type. There has been an upward trend since the last report. The pupils have very good recall of science facts and their ability to write explanations for observations is well above average. For example, the pupils in Year 9 were able to explain the reasons for reactivity series of metals. Investigative skills are less well developed as the curriculum is weak in this aspect.

100. By the age of 16 the pupils' attainment is above average. Even though the number of pupils sitting the double science examination and passing is well above that normally found, the proportion attaining A\* - C grades is above national average. This proportion is about average for schools of a similar type. All pupils attain a pass at GCSE science, which is a high proportion in comparison to other schools. The pupils' have good knowledge and understanding however they are not very proficient at reasoning and applying their knowledge. This is a contributory factor in relatively low proportion of pupils attaining A\* and A grades. Also the pupils do not readily transfer their knowledge from one science subject to the other. Attainment in science is considerably lower than attainment in English and mathematics.

101. By the age of 18 the pupils' attainment is above the national average in physics, chemistry and biology. Pupils also attain good grades in astronomy.

102. Progress across Key Stage 3 is very good; the pupils make considerable gains in their knowledge and understanding but do not make as much progress in practical skills such as drawing graphs and making predictions. Their progress in lessons is satisfactory. Progress across Key Stage 4 whilst satisfactory for the majority of pupils, it is unsatisfactory for some groups. Many pupils who had high attaining at age 14 did not reach the highest grades at GCSE in 1999 and some middle attaining pupils are not being challenged sufficiently in their lessons. Low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Progress for pupils studying sciences to A level is good.

103. The pupils in Key Stage 3 enjoy their science lessons and are curious and enthusiastic. They work collaboratively together on practical tasks such as determining solubility in Year 7. They respond quickly to questions posed by the teacher and persevere to reach an understanding of some difficult concepts for example in a Year 8 chemistry lesson describing and learning about elements. Older pupils have developed good scientific attitudes for example they have respect for evidence and retry experiments that have produced inaccurate results. Some pupils of average attainment are less well motivated and appear to be bored in some of their lessons.

104. The overall quality of teaching is good. Almost all lessons are satisfactory or better with one in five lessons being very good. In most lessons teachers have high expectations of the pupils and are precise about what is required. Teachers are good at defining the important words and checking the pupils' understanding. The pupils are also challenged to explain the things they see happening. Activities are usually well planned and meet the needs of the pupils however, in the few unsatisfactory lessons many pupils are engaged in work that does not extend their learning. With some notable exceptions, teachers' marking of books is not very good at helping pupils understand what it is they need to do to improve and the results of assessment tasks are not used to inform planning. Homework is regularly set but is insufficiently challenging for some pupils.



105. Each pupil is taught by three different science teachers who each teach a third of the course at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. There is a scheme of work for each area but this does not indicate that teachers should make links between them so, for instance, pupils learning about photosynthesis in biology were unable to apply knowledge learnt in physics to explain absorption of coloured light. The curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements; there are too few opportunities for the scientific investigations and too little use of information and communications technology.

106. The teachers in the department work well as a team and the day to day management is good. There is a focus on high standards and a good development plan highlights most of the issues that will raise attainment. There is good informal monitoring using information from assessment tasks but there is little observation and evaluation of teaching skills. There is a good range of expertise in the department and the excellent support from technicians makes a significant contribution to the good quality of experimental work. There is adequate accommodation although some of the older laboratories need some refurbishment in order to provide a good quality environment. There are good book resources and sufficient practical resources.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

107. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards generally higher than those found in other schools nationally though attainment on entry to the school is not dissimilar from other schools. There is a trend nationally for girls to perform much better than boys. Both boys and girls do equally well in this school. In relation to the skills of investigating and making and in the degree of knowledge and understanding exhibited the pupils of Knights Templar are outstanding.

108. For pupils aged 16, the school's performance in GCSE examinations is significantly better than schools nationally. 23 candidates achieved 100 per cent A\* - C grades in the unendorsed course in 1999 compared with 63 per cent nationally. A further 23 pupils also achieved 100 per cent A\* - G grades in art (graphics) with 96 per cent achieving A\* - C grades. Compared with schools of similar type, in art and design, Knights Templar pupils performed significantly better on both syllabuses. At GCE Advanced level the school achieves stunning results. The trend over time is consistently higher than national data.

109. Pupils make excellent progress. Evidence of progression is to be found in pupils' sketchbooks and in a portfolio of work, many of which have spectacular impact. Pupils clearly understand the vocabulary of the visual language – line, tone, colour, pattern, texture, shape, form and space and apply this language with increasing effectiveness in their work. By the age of 14 they are able to select and use a range of resources and materials confidently, employing appropriate techniques. They communicate their ideas in both two and three-dimensional form and explore, investigate and experiment with materials and ideas, transferring knowledge gained in one activity or medium to another.

110. By the age of 16, pupils use skills of visual analysis in selecting and organising content. Sketchbooks are used very effectively and record in considerable detail feelings and ideas mostly drawn from direct observation. Very good making skills are evident through investigation of ideas and good expression of them.

111. Pupils display enormous enthusiasm for this subject. They have a sense of pride and achievement at all levels of ability. They persevere with lengthy tasks but also respond imaginatively to short focused tasks that require an immediate response. Pupils display a questioning approach to their work, developing and modifying as they question their ideas. Pupils of all ages display enormous maturity when working in the art studio. They concentrate for extended periods and show enormous respect for the work of others, valuing their contribution and learning from them. Intuitive work is stunning and whilst many respond through formal decision-making, many are able to respond more imaginatively. Pupils work collaboratively when required but also show initiative and take responsibility for their own work. They are trustworthy, behave well and show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.

112. Teachers have secure and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of concepts and skills across the disciplines of art, craft and design. All use the terms, language and symbolism of art, craft and design accurately and make effective links between the practical work and the application of associated knowledge. Demonstrations of personal skill are excellent and teachers inject pace and challenges into the work of pupils yet also provide time for reflection. All teachers intervene sensitively in the work of pupils, helping them to make progress. The quality of teaching in art is variable but always at least satisfactory and usually excellent.

113. Teachers are particularly effective in encouraging pupils to express opinions about their own work and the work of others, helping them to use formal language where appropriate. Teachers show skill in encouraging pupils to look beyond technical accomplishment towards the expression of feeling, meaning and values.

114. The use of sketchbooks in this school is an exemplar of good practice. All pupils have a sketchbook and use these effectively both in class and for homework for basic practice in observational skills and recording techniques, gathering visual and other resources to support practical work. The characteristic, which makes use in this school better than that found nationally, is the use of sketchbooks for analysis.

115. Pupils are encouraged to study independently and take responsibility for their work but support is always to hand if required. Personal, expressive and imaginative responses are not only encouraged but also actively planned for in schemes of work. Secondary source material is used but used effectively and never as a substitute for primary material. Pupils have access to a broad range of art activity. There is balance in the coverage of these activities and progression from national curriculum requirements to GCSE and from GCSE to post-16 courses is excellent. Sixth form provision is complemented by a well-planned course in art history and this is delivered with enthusiasm and imagination.

116. The quality of three-dimensional work is excellent and constitutes strength in provision. Similarly, excellent use of a viewfinder was observed during the inspection on a number of occasions as pupils engaged with a variety of compositions in a range of media.

117. Assessment always draws upon a range of evidence assembled over time, including pupils' sketchbooks and portfolios, and leads to informative reporting. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly effective progress in this subject because of very effective curriculum planning.

118. A programme of extensive visits to museums and galleries provides opportunities for pupils to observe, reflect on, and record the built and natural environment. The study of a wide range of artists dealing with spiritual themes and subjects which raise moral issues encourage pupils to explore issues in visual form. There is particularly effective treatment of art from non-western cultures.

119. Subject leadership is imaginative and dynamic. There is a clear commitment to high standards of achievement and a work ethic pervades the department. The learning environment is cluttered but provides a rich source of stimulus material. Relationships are excellent and both boys and girls strive to please in a culture of achievement. A recently appointed technician with specialist skills in textiles contributes significantly to the work of the department.

120. Visual resources and books support teaching about the work of artists, craftspeople and designers in a variety of genres and styles, the past and present and a variety of cultures. The department has produced a good range of materials to support gallery visits and pupils are encouraged to research using books into a diverse range of art, craft and design. There are sufficient specialist rooms to allow for the safe development of practical skills but storage of pupils' work is a very real issue with work intruding into the teaching space. There is no dedicated space for sixth form studies in art. This is a particular problem given the scale of work usually undertaken by pupils post 16.

121. The kiln is appropriately housed in a separate area but cannot be used because of an asbestos lining. The absence of this resource limits the experience available to pupils in all key stages. Plans should be made to refurbish or replace this piece of equipment. Several other pieces of equipment associated with work in ceramics lie idle because work can not be fired.

122. Information technology equipment is available to the department including a digital camera and good use is made of a CD-ROM containing material from the National Gallery.

### **Business studies/economics**

123. Examination results in this department are good although there has been some fluctuation in the last two years. The number of \*A - C grades at GCSE in business studies in 1998 was in line with the national average but showed a significant improvement in 1999 when they were well ahead of the national average. The performance of girls was markedly better than that of boys in both years but the gap was narrowed in 1999 following departmental efforts to improve boys' grades. In GCE A level business studies, results, which were in line with the national average in 1998, fell below the average in 1999 but in GCE A level economics there was a very significant improvement in results putting the school ahead of the national average. In GNVQ advanced business results were very good in 1998 and good in 1999. The GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism candidates gained merits this year. Sixth form pupils who took the Young Enterprise examination were successful.

124. The attainment of pupils in lessons in Key Stage 4 on GCSE courses and on advanced level GCE and GNVQ courses in the sixth form was usually sound or good. Much of the course work in progress was of a good standard allowing pupils to demonstrate their ability to undertake suitable research, evaluate information and draw suitable conclusions. Work of a high standard was in evidence from those following the GNVQ advanced course in Business. The presentation of work was generally good; classwork books and folders were well kept.

125. In both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form pupils of all abilities made progress in lessons which were sometimes sound but more often good. Examples of classwork and homework in folders indicated good progress over time. The courses offered within this curriculum area provide suitable opportunities for pupils of differing ability and aptitude to progress.

126. On all courses the majority of pupils had a positive attitude, they were well motivated and interested in their work. Relationships were good. In lessons many pupils were prepared to answer questions although responses were frequently brief. In the sixth form supplementary questions were often used by teachers to elicit more detailed responses. Those on the GNVQ courses, in particular, were taking more responsibility for their own work and tackling assignments in a well planned and thorough manner.

127. Teaching in the department has a firm basis in detailed schemes of work and appropriate departmental policies which are adhered to. At Key Stage 4 teaching was almost always at least sound and often good. Teaching objectives were well understood, teacher expositions were clear and pupil activities were appropriate and challenging, in an economics lesson preparation was under way for a visit to a local bank where pupils would work with the manager. Sixth form teaching was at least sound, more often good. Teachers had good subject knowledge and high expectations. Good pace was maintained in lessons and pupils were kept involved through frequent questioning. In all years teachers led lessons from the front and despite the use of questioning, pupils were often passive recipients of knowledge. There were good relationships with pupils and a good working environment engendered in lessons. In the light of this and in view of teachers' strengths, more opportunities could be found for pupils to be more actively involved in the learning process in the classroom. This does sometimes happen outside the classroom, for example, on "Enterprise Day" the whole of Year 12 works on business issues with facilitators from the local business community. In addition many are involved in "Young Enterprise" activities and take an examination at the end of the year. Marking is regular, often detailed

and diagnostic. Assessment is thorough and used to inform planning. Staff are aware of gender issues and have had success in improving boys' performance at GCSE.

128. Although much of the work of the department takes place in mobile classrooms, they do have appropriate access to information technology facilities for courses where computers are required. Teaching and learning could be further enhanced if information technology were used effectively in all courses. Spreadsheet models and resources from the Internet could prove to be valuable throughout the department.

129. In order to further improve standards in economics and business courses, the department should consider:

- more active approaches to learning giving pupils more responsibility in the classroom;
- including more opportunities for the use of information technology into those courses where it is not a requirement, economics at GCSE and GCE A level as well as GCE A level business studies.

### **Child development**

130. A course in child development is offered as a GCSE subject and a number of boys and girls have taken up this option. As well as work in class, opportunities exist to undertake work experience in the reception classes of local schools.

131. During the inspection a class was making toys from waste materials. Previously they had prepared a well-written description of the child who would receive the toy and had planned the construction meticulously. Pupils performed exceptionally well in 1999 with 96 per cent achieving A\* - C grades in GCSE examinations.

### **Design and technology**

132. This is a good department that achieves good results. By age 16 pupils' attainment in full and short GCSE examinations is well above the national average. Results in the summer of 1999 improved upon the good results of the previous year with a high proportion of candidates achieving A\* or A grades. Overall this represents an improvement since the last inspection. This success is the result of good teaching and clearly defined objectives for pupils to ensure that they understand what they are required to do to fulfil examination requirements.

133. Whilst attainment at age 14 is at least in line with national expectations and often exceeds it, progress of pupils and continuity of work over Key Stage 3 is constrained by the carousel arrangement. This means pupils encounter five short modules of work in a year, each with a different teacher focusing on a different aspect of technology. The planning and delivery of the modules would benefit from further development to ensure that pupils extend and build on previous learning when they move groups.

134. Progress of the small number of pupils at A level was judged to be at least satisfactory; at the time of the inspection the course had only just been re-introduced to the sixth form provision.

135. Pupils show good attitudes in all the contributory disciplines of this subject. They are attentive and keen to achieve. There were many examples of good collaboration and co-operation between pupils and relationships between teachers and pupils is a strength of the department. Practical lessons are well structured and pupils work safely and independently, making appropriate use of the teacher's skills and knowledge to maintain progress. For example two Year 10 lessons in which pupils made bread rolls required them to follow their time plan, apply previous learning and new skills to ensure that they completed their task within the hour lessons.

136. Pupils use a range of research evidence to support their projects, and in Key Stage 4 in particular, good use is made of the collection and analysis of data. More able pupils relate this effectively to the identification of their chosen product. The quality of the presentation of work is variable and graphical skills need further development to help communicate ideas and designs. The use of computers within the department to enhance the

presentation of work and as a source of information is very limited. Those that do utilise these resources do so in their own time at school or at home.

137. Where teachers intervene, with well-targeted support or modified tasks, pupils with identified learning needs make good progress. The Head of Department is in the process of collating more information to assist all teachers identify individual pupil needs.

138. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their specialist discipline is good. This combined with their management of classes provides a strong foundation for the delivery of the design and technology curriculum. Lessons were observed in which teachers related learning to environmental and social issues, as well as industrial practices. When learning objectives were made clear to pupils and the process of achieving these discussed, pupils knew what they had to do to and how to go about it. For example in a Year 9 lesson a clear introduction from the teacher was supported by a summary on the board and a demonstration. This gave pupils the confidence to make a template for their metal windchime from their scale drawings, then cut and shape the metal using appropriate tools and skills. The teacher moved from group to group helping individuals and ensuring progress. In the very small minority of lessons judged to be less than satisfactory, pupils did not fully understand the concepts and did not make sufficient progress. Overall, the quality of teaching was good or very good in over two thirds of lessons observed.

139. The department has schemes of work, which are mapped against the programmes of study for national curriculum design and technology. These could be improved to provide for a more coherent curriculum in Key Stage 3 that develops and reinforces learning in each of the modules. For example, pupils can learn about the properties of materials through the use of wood, metal, food and textiles. Assessment records show pupil attainment across Key Stage 3, although the department recognises the need to ensure that standardisation and moderation procedures are more fully developed to ensure consistency. At Key Stage 4 assessment is closely aligned to the needs of the GCSE examination and provides pupils with guidance for improvement.

140. Management of the department is good, reflecting the high degree of professionalism from both main contributory areas of resistant materials and food technology. A greater sharing of the contribution each discipline can bring to the curriculum would further underpin the good practice, which already exists. The departmental development plan needs to identify the strategies to achieve its stated objectives. The department's resources are well managed, but access to and the use of information technology has not changed significantly since the last inspection and remains inadequate. Overall the environment is kept clean and tidy. One of the food technology rooms has been updated but the second food technology room requires attention to the cracked surfaces and flooring to ensure hygiene is not compromised. More emphasis on photographic or three-dimensional display within the department would enhance understanding of quality in design and technology and inspire others.

141. To continue their trend of improvement, the department should:

- further address the progression and continuity of the Key Stage 3 curriculum;
- enhance the access to and use of information technology, including the training of teachers in its use;
- further improve the quality and extend the use of graphical skills to support the communication of design ideas.

### **Drama/theatre studies**

142. GCSE examination results in 1999 were well above the national average for both boys and girls. In both Key Stages attainment in lessons is at or above the national expectation and pupils of all abilities make good progress and develop confidence and skills. They create short sequences with conviction and consider how to convey their feelings and ideas to an audience through words, expression, body language and use of space. In Key Stage 4 pupils plan and perform well in groups and can sustain a role. They act on the teacher's evaluation to improve their work and they assess each other's work using the language of drama. Pupils enjoy the subject,

work hard and are given opportunities to take initiative and to be creative. Up take at Key Stage 4 and A level has increased since the previous inspection; gender balance is more even and a second teacher has joined the department.

143. Teaching was good, very good or excellent in all the lessons observed. Sequences of work are clear, appropriate and well structured. Learning objectives and success criteria are precise and made clear to the pupils and they are challenged through high expectations, the teachers' use of language, the requirement to be perceptive observers, and the well judged pace and structure of lessons. The subject is well managed and there are creative links with English, personal social and health education and art. The subject itself and extra curricular opportunities make a strong contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils.

## **Geography**

144. Standards of attainment, by age 14, are above national expectations as reported in the statutory teacher assessments and as observed in lessons. By age 16, standards of attainment are above national expectations in lessons and well above in GCSE results. By age 18, standards of attainment are above national expectations in lessons and well above in terms of A level results. Girls attain significantly better than boys in all public examinations except A level and the department is addressing this issue. GCSE results are currently around average for the school. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of physical and human processes in geography. They are able to use a range of geographical and study skills to collect and analyse data, retrieve information and communicate their findings. Standards of examination project work are impressive. Standards of speaking and writing are good in geography. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the standard of pupils' attainment and progress.

145. Progress is good at Key Stage 3 and A level and sound at Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress at all key stages, including the basic skills course in Tourism and Leisure at Key Stage 4. Progress was best in lessons which were stimulating and active and where challenging questions were posed for all pupils. Progress was slower when the pace of lessons was slow and where activities were not well matched to pupils' abilities.

146. Pupils' response in lessons is good overall and very good at Key Stage 3. Pupils are well behaved, sustain concentration and persevere with tasks set. They show interest in their work, are good listeners and often contribute positively in class during question and answer sessions. Relationships in lessons are good and pupils are able to work co-operatively. Pupils show great pride in their work and standards of presentation are good throughout all year and ability groups. Their capacity for personal study is developed effectively through project work and individual studies at all key stages. Outside this work, there were few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility or show initiative. Lower school pupils enjoy taking part in geographical quizzes, both within school and in national competitions. The number of pupils opting to study geography is good, both at Key Stage 4 and A level.

147. The quality of teaching is good overall, and better at Key Stage 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are enthusiastic and pose challenging questions in lessons. Expectations are high and standards of discipline are good. Teachers offer clear explanations, communicate well and make effective use resources, including audio-visual aids. Greater variation in classroom management should be introduced and more in-depth planning is needed. In some lessons, there was over-dependence on the use textbooks and copying. The use of enquiry methods needs to be increased. Appropriate homework is set and work is marked regularly, but there is too much variation in the standards applied by teachers and in the quality of comments given.

148. The geography curriculum taught meets statutory requirements, but schemes of work need improvement at all key stages to provide a coherent and progressive planned framework to support teaching. The department also runs an effective basic skills course in Tourism and Leisure for a small group of less able pupils for whom

the full range of GCSE's is inappropriate. Provision for fieldwork is very good, but the use of information technology is minimal. The department is aware of this and has made plans to improve provision. Good assessment procedures are in place at Key Stage 3 and a useful portfolio of pupils' work has been developed to support judgements. The tracking of pupils' progress across all key stages is effective and good target setting and mentoring is developing, especially at Key Stage 4. The department is effectively and efficiently managed. There is a good ethos for learning which promotes the school's aims and values. Monitoring of the department's work is developing and could be extended further. Development planning is good. Specialist accommodation and resourcing are good. The department is addressing the need to increase the variety of resources, particularly to challenge the more able.

149. In order to raise achievement, the department should:

- increase the variety of teaching and learning methods;
- improve the use of information technology

## **History**

150. By the age of 14 attainment in history is at least in line with national expectations or better than this amongst average and higher attaining pupils. Generally, lower attaining pupils achieve below the national expectation. These observations from lessons are reflected in the latest results of teacher assessments where overall attainment is slightly higher than the national average. Overall pupils are making satisfactory progress but the assessment results indicate that girls do better than boys in achieving the higher levels in the national curriculum. Pupils are acquiring a good grounding in knowledge and understanding of different periods of British history. They are learning to use relevant terms and dates and gaining a good understanding of chronology. They have fewer opportunities to investigate topics through a variety of historical sources and their appreciation of the usefulness and limitations of evidence is less well developed.

151. By the age of 16 pupils' attainment is mostly above the national standard and this is reflected in the most recent GCSE examination results. Pupils are making good progress overall. They have a thorough grounding in knowledge and understanding, acquire a greater depth of knowledge and can discuss historical events with the confident use of appropriate terms, for example, in a lesson on the Cold War where some pupils were able to explain at length the reasons why it developed. Though some are acquiring an appreciation of the differences in the way history is interpreted they do not have enough regular opportunities to use and evaluate evidence. Though there have been fluctuations in GCSE results since the last inspection, the department is putting in place a number of strategies to maintain and improve on the last set of results. These include the setting of clear targets for pupils based on a range of assessment data and individual discussions with them at key points in the course. Pupils are also better informed about what they need to do to improve their work. The recent results show that girls still do better than boys in the GCSE examination.

152. Sixth form pupils attain higher than average standards overall and make good progress. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study and are able to present a coherent and convincing argument both in essays and in discussion. In a lesson about Chartism there was some good, confident discussion about the success and failure of the movement in comparison to the Anti-Corn Law League. In the recent A level examination all pupils gained a pass grade.

153. Lessons in history are beginning to contribute well to the development of literacy skills. In Key Stage 3 new vocabulary related to their history topics is introduced and pupils are being given help in how better to structure their writing. They are provided with ample opportunities for writing and many can write at length but the range of writing in history is currently too narrow. At the moment the contribution of history lessons to the development of pupils' numeracy and information technology skills is very limited.

154. In all their lessons pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are diligent, attentive and listen well. They are very well behaved and the relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good. They can

work well together but are not given enough opportunities for sharing ideas and views or for taking initiative or responsibility for their own work in lessons. With homework they are usually conscientious, work hard and produce good work.

155. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and often good. The teachers have many strengths. They are knowledgeable about their subject, are well prepared for lessons and have good class management skills that promote good relationships and behaviour. Resources and activities are usually selected carefully with the needs of the pupils in mind. Some teachers employ good questioning techniques, which help provide suitable challenge and pace in lessons. Where teachers have clear learning objectives and share these with the pupils it is easier for both teachers and pupils to assess progress in lessons but this does not happen consistently amongst all teachers. All teachers mark work regularly and write brief supportive comments on the work but not enough information is given to pupils about what they need to do to improve. The main weakness in teaching is that teachers do not vary their methodology sufficiently. Linked to this not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to think for themselves or for them to discuss their work with each other.

156. The new head of department is providing good subject leadership within the humanities faculty. She has introduced a number of initiatives to improve standards and the department development plan has relevant targets for further improvement. Schemes of work are in place in Key Stage 3 and now need to be implemented in Key Stage 4. They provide helpful guidance for teachers but the learning objectives for each topic need to be made clearer. The schemes of work for Key Stage 3 do not sufficiently detail progression in historical skills and though the curriculum is generally broad and balanced this does not help teachers to give sufficient attention to skills development. The monitoring and evaluation of work and teaching and learning is being developed satisfactorily.

157. Resources for learning are satisfactory except in information technology where the department holds barely any resources. There are some visits to support work done in class and these also contribute to pupils' awareness of their own culture. However, more could be done in history lessons to help pupils not only appreciate their own culture but also the cultural diversity of this country and the contribution of other cultures in shaping it's history.

158. The department's progress since the last report is satisfactory except in the contribution to the development of information technology. There is some scope to contribute more to the development of numeracy. There is evidence that strategies now in place to effect improvement are improving attainment at GCSE and are beginning to close the gap between the attainment of boys and girls. The good teaching in the department has been maintained and the capacity for securing improvement overall is good.

### **Information technology**

159. In 1999 teacher assessed attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 was ahead of the national norm but the assessment procedures were unsatisfactory. In 1999 GCSE \*A - C grades in computer studies were just ahead of the national average. In 1999 GCSE information technology \*A - C grades were in line with the national average. In GCE A level computing in 1998 A - B grades were well below the national average although overall A - E grades were better than the average. There was a significant improvement in A - B grades in 1999 putting them ahead of the national average. About 20 per cent of pupils in the sixth form took RSA text and word processing exams at levels 1 - 3 where a high percentage of distinctions were achieved.

160. Information technology was introduced to all pupils in Key Stage 3 from September 1999. This has made a good impact upon attainment and progress in those strands of information technology which are covered. In discrete information technology lessons, in Years 7, 8 and 9, attainment was at least sound and often good. Progress in these lessons was also never less than sound and more often good. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their information technology knowledge and skills in other subjects. Some aspects of control are covered in design and technology. There is some use in English, mathematics and modern



foreign languages. Very good use is made of information technology in music throughout the school. However, the measuring strand of information technology is not covered in any subject.

161. In Key Stage 4 information technology is taught in a number of optional courses: GCSE information technology, information systems and business studies. The progress seen in taught information technology lessons was mostly good. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate attainment in computer control and none in measuring. As there is insufficient information technology used across the curriculum the pupils who do not take any of these options are not assured of opportunities to use information technology in other courses. This involves about half of those in Key Stage 4. Attainment in Key Stage 4 overall is unsatisfactory and statutory requirements are not being met. There is, however, autonomous use by pupils for coursework in many subjects, completed either at school or at home.

162. In the sixth form attainment and progress in A level computing lessons was at least sound, and often very good. Good information technology use was seen in GNVQ courses and good word and text processing skills were in evidence in the RSA sessions. There is a significant amount of autonomous use of information technology in the sixth form.

163. In all information technology lessons observed pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good or very good, they were well motivated, interested in the work and keen to produce a good quality outcome. They displayed good levels of concentration and perseverance, they were co-operative and relationships in the classroom were good. The ethos that has been developed is such that pupils are allowed open access to computer facilities at all times when machines are available.

164. Teaching on all information technology courses in both Key Stages 3 and 4 was based upon appropriate schemes of work, which in Key Stage 3 were referenced to national curriculum attainment levels. In information technology lessons at Key Stage 3 and most lessons in Key Stage 4, teaching was never less than sound, more often good. Lessons usually had clear objectives that were shared with pupils. Exposition and instructions were usually clear, appropriate pace was maintained and a good working atmosphere was engendered in computer rooms. In some information technology courses, good use is made of on-screen resources which are up to date and interactive. However, insufficient opportunities are taken to include information technology in the schemes of work of some national curriculum subjects.

165. The school has recently embarked upon a long-term programme of staff development in the use of information technology. This provision has improved teachers' awareness, competence and confidence, which now needs to be channelled into greater use in the subjects of the curriculum. However, current information technology provision militates against this as the ratio of computers to pupils is below the average for secondary schools and computer rooms are already heavily booked with timetabled information technology lessons. There are four information technology rooms, two of which have up-to-date computers; another has recently been re-equipped with refurbished older machines. Internet access is available in one of the rooms. Information technology provision in the library is poor.

166. Assessment procedures in the past have been inadequate at Key Stage 3 and have not given an accurate picture of attainment and progress but a system is currently being developed which will assess performance in information technology lessons and information technology work across the curriculum. Assessment in Key Stage 4 is carried out in accordance with exam board requirements on those courses mentioned above where information technology is a significant component. Responsibility for co-ordinating, assessing and reporting on information technology needs to be more clearly defined in order to implement successfully the measures needed to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

167. In order to improve the standards in information technology the following points need to be addressed:
- map the curriculum in Key Stage 4 to record what is taught where. This will inform planning of opportunities to include information technology in subjects where the requirement is largely ignored currently;
  - ensure that all national curriculum subjects include information technology appropriately in their schemes of work;
  - continue to develop the evolving assessment system in Key Stage 3 to ensure the accuracy of the overall assessment of information technology;
  - ensure that information technology resources are adequate to meet the requirements of the national curriculum;
  - improve information technology resources in the school library.

### **Modern foreign languages**

168. The A level French results are good with pupils achieving above expectations. The German A level results are at expected levels. GCSE A\* - C grades in French are well above national averages. The results have been improving since 1996, but the 1999 results show a major improvement on previous years. 1999 GCSE A\* - C grades in German are above national averages and have improved steadily since 1997. All pupils are entered for a language GCSE and there have been no failures for the last two years. Girls are still attaining better grades than boys. This is consistent with the national picture but boys' results in the school are improving. By age 14, boys are attaining at far above the national average for achievement at Level 4 and above of the national curriculum. Girls are also achieving above the national average.

169. Behaviour is excellent and attitudes to work are positive. Pupils show respect for each other and respond well to challenges. They concentrate throughout the lessons. The good behaviour ensures that pupils can listen effectively to each other, the teacher and tapes. Listening skills are well developed with all pupils able to pick out main points and structures from passages. Accents are developing well in Years 7 and 8. Pupils are comfortable with using computers and good use is made of language computer programmes. Top set pupils in Year 9 are making excellent progress in speaking and listening. Year 10 and 11 pupils are producing good written work in a variety of forms including letters, forms, descriptions and analytical pieces. Reading is well developed in Years 12 and 13. The most advanced use of past tenses was observed in Year 9 German and French classes. Where pupils are given the opportunity, they produce excellent oral group work.

170. The teachers are all hard working and committed. All the lessons observed were satisfactory, good or very good. Teachers use French and German almost exclusively in lessons and this provides excellent models of language use for the pupils. All the teachers set high standards of work and behaviour. Planning for individual lessons ensures that all pupils can access the learning and a variety of activities are well organised. The relationships are very good. In some lessons observed the structure did not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop more complex language. Planning needs to be improved with new schemes of work produced.

171. The faculty is well led and teachers work well together. The banding and setting arrangements do not disadvantage any student. The lower ability pupils are given full access to the curriculum. The faculty is well aware of the tendency for boys to be over represented in the lower sets and monitors this situation closely. Each student has a textbook and this contributes greatly to supporting them in completing their class and homework. All pupils in Years 8 and 9 are studying both languages for two hours each per week. In Year 7 there is one language taught alternating between French and German. The time allocation has recently been increased in Key Stage 3. In Year 10 there is a dual language group.

172. Displays in classrooms and corridors contribute to learning and to the celebration of student achievement. The various trips and exchanges to France and Germany are an essential part of the language learning experience in this school. The department has made great progress since the last inspection.

173. In order to develop the work to improve the attainment of all pupils the faculty should:
- amend the schemes of work to identify clear learning objectives;
  - ensure that the learning objectives are shared with pupils;
  - give pupils more opportunities to do extended work where they can take the initiative and work more independently.

## Music

174. By age 14, pupils' attainment in music is above national expectations. In Year 9, pupils are able to use Cubasis sequencing software to produce 'mood' compositions. When working in groups, pupils plan and discuss their composing effectively, making subtle changes to the melody, texture and instrumentation to create the required effect. Most pupils use simple technical language to describe features of music from a variety of times and cultures, for examples, pupils in Year 8 were observed analysing melodic and rhythmic elements of an Islamic chant. However, insufficient support was given to a small number of low attaining pupils to help them complete the task satisfactorily. The quality of singing in Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils perform with accurate pitch, a good degree of sensitivity and plenty of confidence and enthusiasm. By the age 16, pupils' attainment is significantly above the national average. In 1999, 94 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* - C. This continues a long established trend. The number of pupils opting for GCSE music is also above the average. The quality of musicianship and instrumental and vocal ability demonstrated by examination pupils during lessons and extra-curricular activities is very good. Composition by many GCSE pupils is of the highest quality. By the age of 19, pupils' have a good knowledge of genre and style. They are able to realise a figured bass in several baroque dance styles using appropriate harmonic and melodic conventions. In 1999, 122 pupils were entered for an instrumental examination with a 98 per cent pass rate.

175. In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, however there was evidence that a very small minority of pupils do not make sufficient progress in musical literacy or keyboard skills. Progress within individual units of work is good but there are few opportunities for pupils to practise skills acquired in the previous unit. In Key Stage 4 and during the sixth form, pupils' progress is good. Experiences in the classroom and during extra-curricular activities result in increasingly heightened musical sensitivity and expression by all pupils. Pupils' participation in a wide range of musical opportunities contributes to good progress in their instrumental and composing skills.

176. In all lessons pupils have a very positive attitude to music. They are well behaved, courteous and show the greatest respect for the musical equipment in the department. Most pupils are keen to answer questions during lessons. They listen responsibly to the thoughts and views of others. In examination classes, pupils are increasingly encouraged to hypothesise. In one A level lesson, a pupil and teacher engaged in a mature and in-depth debate regarding a particular harmonic feature that may or may not have been typical of the baroque style. Extra-curricular choral activities are well attended and valued by pupils. Several rehearsals took on a spiritual dimension as all pupils committed themselves wholeheartedly to the music.

177. The quality of teaching overall is good. Examination teaching is a particular strength, and on examination courses all teaching was either good or very good. Teachers in the department have excellent knowledge and are fine musicians. Very good relationships exist in the classroom. Instrumental teachers, supplied by the Hertfordshire County Music service make an invaluable contribution to the musical life of the school. The instrumental lessons observed were characterised by able musicians acting as musical role models for pupils and by fast paced teaching with good attention to detail. The expectations of teachers are high, but there are occasions where tasks are not matched to the learning needs of all pupils. Paper based responses to listening activities in particular, tend to be targeted at the middle to high attaining pupils. Medium term planning in Key Stage 3 sets out a broad range of topics and activities which provides a good framework from which progression and continuity of musical skills, knowledge and understanding can be achieved. However, learning objectives are not clear in planning, are sometimes vague in lesson delivery and are not shared with pupils during lessons. In Key Stage 3, assessment takes place through homework tasks and at the end of each

module. Only a few opportunities were observed for pupils to indicate their understanding of a task during a lesson. Assessment is used to evaluate each unit but has limited impact on short-term planning. However, assessment in examination classes is good.

178. The curriculum meets all national curriculum requirements. Good progress has been made since the last inspection to provide opportunities for pupils to celebrate cultural diversity. Where appropriate, units of work use music from around the world as a basis for performing, listening and composing. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils were observed singing an African chant as part of a project that examined a wide range of vocal styles. The use of computers from Year 9 onwards to support composing activities is very well established. The music department offers an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities; pupils are also encouraged to form their own bands and ensembles. Over 300 pupils benefit from instrumental tuition on a wide range of instruments. Music makes a major contribution to the cultural life of the school although there are few opportunities to reflect either individually or as a class on the aesthetic qualities of music.

179. The head of department provides clear vision for the department and is committed to high achievement. He provides excellent guidance, support and development opportunities for other colleagues within the department. There is however, a lack of opportunities to discuss teaching and learning issues with other arts departments and to share the good practice that exists.

180. The department has sufficient musical equipment. However, the alternating of teaching groups between the two music classrooms is unsatisfactory. The limited size of one room prevents pupils continuing the practical work started in another and has a negative impact on standards. The high number of instrumental teachers prevents practice rooms being used for group activities. Groups are therefore confined to the main teaching rooms. The resulting high level of sound inhibits discussion and musical experimentation and affects the quality of pupils' compositions at Key Stage 3.

181. In order to sustain improvements in attainment and progress the department should:

- revise the scheme of work to include specific learning objectives;
- share learning objectives with pupils and review pupil progress against them at the end of a lesson;
- provide opportunities for the reinforcement of key musical skills at the start of each lesson;
- make greater provision for lower attaining pupils;
- provide greater opportunities for reflection.

## **Physical education**

182. By age 14 pupils' attainment in physical education is above the national average. This represents a continuation since the last inspection. In gymnastics pupils have good body management, they understand and can demonstrate tension when linking movements together. In dance pupils are able to appraise each other effectively about aspects of their performance. In rugby pupils are able to describe and demonstrate their understanding of a scrum to gain legal possession and outwit the opposition.

183. By age 16 pupils' attainment in physical education is above the national average. Year 10 pupils working on set moves in football as part of their GCSE course displayed good levels of basic skills. The higher attainers communicated effectively within the group to set up defence systems.

184. The progress of all pupils is good through Key Stages 3 and 4 including those with special educational needs. In Key Stage 3 pupils are acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a rate which exceeds expectation in all aspects of the subject. In Key Stage 4 progress continues at a similar rate and is predominantly good. Good progress is a direct result of well structured, knowledgeable teaching. In netball in Year 7 pupils improved their passing and receiving of the ball. They learnt to pivot and combined this successfully with previously learned skills in a half-court game. In Year 11 health and fitness, pupils link the

theoretical elements effectively with practical performance; they make good use of each other to support learning and progress.

185. The attitude and behaviour of pupils is very good. Attendance and participation rates are high. They are enthusiastic and sustain concentration well. Pupils work well individually and in groups. They are supportive of each other and have a high regard for safety. Relationships with each other and with the teachers are good.

186. Teaching is very good overall and never less than satisfactory. Knowledge and understanding of the subject together with management of pupils are strengths. The most effective teaching is structured to provide good opportunities for pupils to engage in the planning and performing aspects of their work. In some lessons teachers do too much of the decision making and feedback. In the girls' department there are excellent examples of using literacy to support learning. Key words for each area of activity are displayed in the changing areas. The words are used in teaching and pupils have planned opportunity to use them in context.

187. The curriculum meets the national curriculum requirements and is planned to provide continuity and progression. The boys programme is not balanced with activities weighted to invasion games. The boys' department has a manageable system of recording information about pupils' progress although it does not record strengths and weaknesses. Not all schemes of work have clear learning objectives and they are not planned to incorporate an assessment strategy. The girls' department is currently reviewing schemes of work. Those completed are coherent and progressive, incorporating an assessment policy. There are opportunities for target setting to support improvement and progress.

188. A high percentage of pupils take part in a varied extra-curricular programme at lunchtimes and after school. This is supported by house activities throughout the year. There are good links with the community allowing opportunities in a range of sports for pupils to participate outside school.

189. Subject leadership is good. However, there are inconsistencies with two separate departments and as a result there is an inefficient use of staff time. Staff are hard working and well qualified. Good use is made of the current facilities. The changing rooms are small and the fencing around the court area is in need of repair. The department will benefit from the proposed Sports Hall.

190. In order to sustain improvements in attainment and progress the department should:

- formalise the monitoring of teaching across both departments;
- share the good practice on planning and assessment in the girls department.

### **Personal, social and health education**

191. At Key Stage 3 until recently social education and health issues were part of tutorial periods but the time proved inadequate and when the school day was altered and the timetable reviewed, one hour every other week was allocated for structured lessons on health and social matters.

192. Years 7, 8 and 9 are introduced in well-planned lessons to the ways of secondary school and their own responsibilities as part of the school community. Years 10 and 11 have three twelve-week modules. There is good coverage of health matters including sex education and drugs awareness training. The second module deals with social responsibility and moral issues and the third with vocational education and careers. There are plans to introduce some careers information to Years 7 and 8.

193. The new head of health and social education is building a strong team of members of staff with special training to deal sensitively with these subjects. She is enthusiastically preparing a structured course of interesting studies but has yet to undertake any monitoring. Outside speakers such as police officers are

involved and quality material suitable for inclusion in the programme is received from organisations dealing with drugs awareness and personal safety.

194. The Industry Links group on which the school is represented gives good support for careers education. Employers take part in mock interviews and assist with work experience placements currently for Year 11.

195. The careers service based in Letchworth also supports the programme with informative material and gives interviews to Year 11 pupils who request them. High priority is given to the slower learners and those less likely to achieve a quantity of GCSEs. Pupils may have more than one careers interview and parents can be involved if they wish. Information on A level courses and higher education is good and plentiful although the display of careers literature in the school library is meagre. Further information can be gained, however, from a good computer link. Special meetings are arranged for Years 12 and 13 and their parents to cover application for University places and the student loans scheme.

196. The head of careers education is co-operating with the head of social and health education to ensure that every pupil receives sound advice in time to make the right curriculum choice.

### **Religious education**

197. By age 14 attainment is in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This represents a continuation since the last inspection. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions is better developed than their capacity to learn from religions and to reflect on moral and ethical issues. Written work shows that pupils can give accounts and explanations of aspects of Christianity and other faiths and abler pupils can explain similarities and differences between some religions. However, they are rarely required to show understanding or show evaluative thinking. There is a lack of clear focused and challenging learning objectives linked to the attainment statements in the Agreed Syllabus of religious education. By age 16 pupils attainment in the most recent GCSE religious studies full course was above national expectations. In the GCSE religious education short course results were below national expectations. In lessons observed pupils are responsive and draw on knowledge of Christianity. In a lesson discussing religious attitudes to women pupils demonstrated evaluative skills. The falling trend in achievement over the last three years has been checked by the much improved results this year.

198. In the sixth form, pupils at A level in 1999 achieved good results according to the school's value added data although they were below the national average. There is no A level group at present but in the AS group standards are below the national average. Pupils' work shows signs of their ability to relate knowledge gained to critical analysis.

199. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress in terms of knowledge and understanding of religions. However sometimes gains in knowledge are limited by the level of tasks set. For instance in a series of Year 7 lessons pupils quickly learn about Christian symbols, many building on Key Stage 2 learning, but are not challenged to consider the different ways in which believers can express their beliefs. Over Key Stage 4 progress in GCSE is just satisfactory. In lessons observed, although pupils are gaining knowledge they are not being rigorously required to engage in a range of writing activities beyond routine copying and note taking. Given their attainment at age 14 across the curriculum pupils make insufficient progress by age 16. In the sixth form pupils make satisfactory progress on the AS level course. Overall pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress.

200. Pupils show a good attitude to religious education. They are interested, are willing to answer questions and listen to teachers and visiting speakers attentively. They show respect for the beliefs of others and take responsibility in lessons when given the chance. However the take-up rate for GCSE is very low. Those that do opt are very enthusiastic.

201. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory but overall it is satisfactory. The strengths of the teaching include effective pupil management; the use of a range of resources including artefacts, visits and visitors; regular marking of pupils' books and clear teacher expositions generally based on sound subject knowledge. The weaknesses in teaching include expectations which are too low resulting in too many tasks which are routine and lacking in challenge; a lack of clear learning objectives which are understood by pupils and homework which is not matched to pupils' ability.

202. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is based on the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus but the present scheme of work is not balanced across the key strands or matched to learning objectives. No use is made of the attainment levels to give a clear vision across the department of what pupils are expected to attain. The leadership of the department is rather relaxed and does not give sufficient support to the religious education staff especially non-specialist teachers, although the co-ordination is made difficult because those teaching religious education are involved in other curriculum areas. The resources for religious education are very good with an excellent collection of artefacts and objects. The school is not providing sufficient statutory religious education in Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form.

203. In order to improve attainment and progress the department should:

- review the schemes of work to ensure balanced coverage of the agreed syllabus;
- use the attainment statements from the syllabus to set more challenging work for pupils;
- look for ways of improving the take-up rate at GCSE.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

204. The team of 13 inspectors visited the school for a combined total of 49.5 days. During the week of the inspection over 204 hours of teaching was observed and the team observed 220 whole lessons or parts of lessons, many morning and afternoon registration and form-tutor sessions and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

205. All full-time teachers at the school during the inspection (including the headteacher) were seen teaching, most several times. Fifty two planned discussions were held with Governors, the headteacher, the senior management team, all heads of department and other staff responsible for particular policies or aspects of the school's work. Inspectors had twelve other discussions with a wide range of non-teaching and support staff.

206. Inspectors looked in depth at all the work of a representative sample of pupils in each year group, held formal discussions with these pupils and talked informally with many more.

207. Documentation provided by the school about all aspects of its work was analysed by the team in detail before and during the inspection. Three meetings were held at the school before the inspection – with the Governing Body, with teaching staff and with parents at a specially arranged meeting. The team considered responses from 725 parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school. The inspection team gave feedback on their performance to all teaching staff. The Registered Inspector reported after the inspection to the senior management team and to the Governing Body.



## DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	Number of pupils on school's register of special educational needs	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Years 7 - 13	1102	16	68	78

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Years 7 – 13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	64.19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.17

#### Education support staff (Years 7 –13)

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked each week	254

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	75.9
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Average teaching group size:	Key Stage 3	24.3
	Key Stage 4	23.0

### Financial data

Financial year:	1999
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	£
Total Income	2610753
Total Expenditure	2663817
Expenditure per pupil	2491.88
Balance brought forward from previous year	-4738
Balance carried forward to next year	-57802

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1102

Number of questionnaires returned:

724

### 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	26.8	61.5	9.0	2.5	0.1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38.2	53.6	4.7	3.5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	23.5	48.8	23.2	4.5	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22.7	55.1	17.1	5.0	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30.6	55.8	10.8	2.4	0.4
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	39.4	55.2	4.6	0.8	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	37.6	49.1	10.0	3.2	0.1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	25.5	61.6	6.0	5.3	0.7
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	32.4	52.7	11.7	3.2	0.1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	28.9	54.1	13.3	3.6	0.1
My child(ren) like(s) school	32.0	54.8	9.7	3.2	0.3

### Other issues raised by parents

None