

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE CORSHAM SCHOOL**

CORSHAM

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126454

Headteacher: Mr M Williams

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver  
20224

Dates of inspection: 27-31 March 2000

Inspection number: 184504

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: The Tynings  
Corsham  
Wiltshire

Postcode: SN13 9DF

Telephone number: 01249 713284

Fax number: 01249 701102

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Toogood

Date of previous inspection: 27 March 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Anthony Beaver	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Brigid Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
			Sixth form
Valerie Banks	Team inspector	Geography	Equal opportunities
Andrew Bennett	Team inspector	English	
Anne Bridger	Team inspector	Sixth form courses	
Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	Adequacy of accommodation
Annabelle Guyver	Team inspector	History	Adequacy of staffing
Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information technology	
Thelma McIntosh	Team inspector	Music	Adequacy of learning resources
Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Religious education	Special educational needs
Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art	How good are curricular opportunities?
Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well the school cultivates pupils' personal development?
Alan Webb	Team inspector	Science	

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd

The ICAA Education Centre  
Brighton  
ALRESFORD  
Hampshire  
SO24 9RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

### PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school  
How good the school is  
What the school does well  
What could be improved  
How the school has improved since its last inspection  
Standards  
Pupils' attitudes and values  
Teaching and learning  
Other aspects of the school  
How well the school is led and managed  
Parents' and carers' views of the school

### PART B: COMMENTARY

#### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? 1-16**

The school's results and achievements  
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT? 17-27**

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS? 28-41**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS ? 42-46**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS? 47-51**

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? 52-65**

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? 66-67**

#### **SIXTH FORM 68-73**

### PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

#### **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES 74-159**

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Corsham School provides education for 1039 boys and girls, in equal numbers, aged 11 to 18 years. It is comprehensive, and of about average size as a secondary school. The sixth form consists of 173 students. The school has increased in size since its previous inspection, and the number of applicants is rising further from parental choice and additional housing locally. Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds, but the proportion claiming entitlement to a free school meal is below average. One hundred and fifteen pupils either left or joined the school other than at ages 11, 16 or 18 last year, mainly because of changes in parents' work or lifestyle. Some pupils with behavioural difficulties are transferred to a pupil referral unit run by the local authority. The percentage of pupils who are identified as having special educational needs is below average. Twenty-one have statements of special need, a proportion in line with the national average. Very few pupils have English as an additional language, fewer than is the case nationally. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 spans the full range of ability, and is average overall.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. Leadership is managing change well, and necessary developments are very well planned. Pupils achieve standards that are usually above average at Key Stages 3 and 4, and high at A level. Teaching is good, overall. The school has many more strengths than weaknesses, and provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils make good progress, and from average attainment on entry, at age 11, they achieve above average standards in Key Stage 3 national tests and at GCSE.
- Sixth form students have excellent attitudes to school and exercise responsibility extremely well. They achieve high standards at A level and GNVQ.
- Headteacher and staff ensure good standards of work and behaviour. They have successfully identified and planned key matters for development.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work, and behave well.
- Teaching is good overall. Much teaching is very good, particularly in the sixth form.
- The school maintains excellent links with its partner primary schools.
- Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages.
- Standards in information technology at Key Stage 4 and the use of computers across the curriculum so that statutory requirements are met.
- The loss of time for lessons caused by the way the school day is organised.
- The extent and condition of some accommodation with full regard to issues of health and safety.
- Implementation of plans to monitor and evaluate standards of teaching and learning.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress since its last inspection in March 1995. The trend in pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 national tests has risen in line with the national rate of improvement, but at a level above that achieved nationally. A similar improvement has been achieved at GCSE, where the trend in pupils' average points score has risen consistently, and has remained above the national rate of improvement since the previous inspection. At A level and GNVQ, students have achieved well above national standards, year-on-year since 1996. Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved. Far fewer lessons are now unsatisfactory, and many are very good. Able pupils are usually suitably challenged. School development planning is now very thorough, and change is being well managed. Statutory requirements are now met for sex education. Statements of pupils with special educational needs are now updated regularly, and provision for these pupils is good. However, not all pupils have

opportunity for a daily act of collective worship. Although pupils' progress is now reported to parents at Key Stage 3, the information provided is insufficient in information technology. Religious education is suitably provided at Key Stage 3, but lacks adequate time at Key Stage 4 in order to deliver the local Agreed Syllabus. However, the school has plans to remedy this situation in September 2000. The school has good capacity to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar † schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

†Reference to similar schools is to those schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who claim eligibility for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. There is no comparison with similar schools at A level.

Pupils have consistently achieved standards above, and sometimes well above, the national average in Key Stage 3 tests in comparison with all schools. Attainment in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science, has varied over the last three years, but English was ahead of the other two subjects in 1999, both in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Overall, during the last four years at Key Stage 3, the trend in the average points score achieved in the tests increased in line with the national trend. In lessons seen during the inspection, standards at Key Stage 3 were above average overall, including those in English, mathematics and science.

GCSE results, shown in the table above, have usually been above average. The points score was in line with the average of all schools in 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C was above average, both in comparison with all schools and similar schools. Standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection were above average overall. Pupils achieve very high standards in art, where their creative flair is released. In some lessons in French, pupils do not achieve the standards that they should. During the last five years, the trend in the average point score has risen in line with the national trend, but at a level significantly above this. The targets set by the school for GCSE results are suitably challenging and adapted for the abilities of different year groups. Overall, pupils achieve the standards that they should at Key Stage 4. Their attainments are average in comparison with those of similar schools.

At A level and GNVQ, students have consistently achieved well above average results, as shown in the table above. During the last four years, students' average A level points score has risen from slightly above average to well above average. Students usually achieve their objectives for higher education or employment, and most proceed to higher education.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and work, and want to learn. Sixth form students' attitudes are excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good, especially in lessons.



Personal development and relationships	Pupils act responsibly, and relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

Relationships are particularly good, and support opportunities for pupils to learn from teachers and from each other very well.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	very good

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

Teaching in 96 per cent of lessons was at least satisfactory. It was good or better in 72 per cent. In 31 per cent it was very good or excellent. Four per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The quality varied across a range of excellent to poor. Pupils learn successfully, gaining new knowledge and understanding of subjects very well as a result of the good quality of teaching. Their attitudes to learning are very positive in lessons, enabling them to progress very well in most subjects.

Teaching is particularly strong in art, design and technology, music, physical education and science. In these subjects in particular, pupils and sixth form students are very well challenged and the pace of learning is very good. The teaching of drama is satisfactory, but lacks enthusiasm. Some teaching of modern foreign languages does not enable pupils to make the progress in learning that they should. The teaching of English is good at both key stages and very good in the sixth form. In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory at both key stages and good in the sixth form. Science is taught well at Key Stage 3, and very well at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In some subjects, marking of classwork and homework does not provide pupils with sufficient advice on how to improve their work. Overall, teaching meets the needs of high attainers and low attainers well. However, some teaching of mathematics does not always fully enable pupils of average and lower ability to progress as rapidly as they could in the subject at Key Stage 4. The teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, but could be improved by the development of whole-school practice, as planned.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range of learning experience provided at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory and good in the sixth form. Excellent continuity with primary schools. Statutory requirements are not fully met for all pupils, with regard to design and technology, information technology or religious education at Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils of very differing needs are well provided for.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils are well provided for at all key stages through the mainstream curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for social development is particularly strong.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Tutors, heads of year and all staff contribute well to ensuring pupils' well-being. Assessment data is used to increasing effect to support pupils' progress, but it is not yet fully exploited to set targets for improvement for all pupils. Some safety issues cause concern.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school works well with parents. Some parents have concerns about homework, and the quality of information on progress that they receive.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff give thoughtful direction to the work of the school, and ensure that standards of work and behaviour are good, overall. School development planning is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors inform themselves well about the experience pupils gain in school. They have strong commitment to the school, and give the headteacher and school strong support. They do not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, or make sufficient provision for design and technology, information technology and religious education at Key Stage 4. Appraisal of staff is in abeyance, and targets for the headteacher and deputy headteacher have not yet been set.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school and each subject department monitor standards achieved closely. An essential system to extend the monitoring of standards of teaching and learning has been planned, but is not yet in place.
The strategic use of resources	Funds are used well. Planning identifies priorities for spending well. The principles of best value are properly applied. Pupils' achievements compare well with those achieved nationally. The school challenges itself effectively and provides opportunities beyond what are required. Consultation within the school has identified areas for development very well. Appropriate competition is successfully managed for its services. Staff and learning resources are used well, but there are deficiencies in resources in some areas. The school makes best use of accommodation, but considerable deficiencies remain. The organisation of the school resulting in loss of time for lessons could be improved.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>They feel comfortable to approach the school with problems about their children.</li> <li>They are confident in the progress their children make at school.</li> <li>They consider that teaching is good.</li> <li>They think the school enables their children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>Their children like attending school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They would like to see improvements in homework.</li> <li>They would like more information on how their children are getting on.</li> <li>They would like the school to work more closely with them.</li> <li>Some parents are concerned about standards and provision for modern foreign languages.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents that much is expected of pupils who generally respond well and work hard. The school is very receptive to parental concerns, and the effective reception system for managing parents' and pupils' concerns is very effective and much appreciated by parents. Parents are right to feel confident that their children are making good progress at school. Teaching is good overall, and much is of very good quality. The values that the school promotes have a beneficial effect on pupils, and relationships are good across the school. Most pupils attend school willingly, and many enjoy the good range of extra-curricular activities provided. Homework is set regularly, but is not always marked well enough to provide sufficient advice to pupils on how to improve their work. Parents receive appropriately detailed information in the annual report on their children's progress, except for information technology which is not reported well enough. There are opportunities to consult with teachers about progress. The school invites parents to attend information evenings on a range of topics and work more closely with them. Not all parents take up the opportunities available.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

*"Similar schools" throughout the report refers to schools which have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools providing education for pupils of similar backgrounds.*

1. When pupils enter the school at age 11, their attainment is average overall. This is shown by results of end of Key Stage 2 national tests, and other national tests conducted by the school. There is little difference in pupils' levels of achievement between the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Overall, pupils' attainment spans the full range of ability, with some differences between year-groups on entry to the school. For entry to A level and advanced GNVQ courses, the school requires students to achieve five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, and grade B standard in the subjects they intend to study. For entry to intermediate GNVQ courses, four GCSE subjects at grades A\* to E are required.

2. In end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 1999, pupils attained standards above those achieved nationally. In 1999, standards in English were ahead of those gained in mathematics and science. Both boys' and girls' results were better in English than in 1998, and well above the national average. Standards have varied between the three subjects in the tests over the last three years, with mathematics ahead of English and science in 1998, for example. Overall, standards have remained above, and sometimes well above, the national average in recent years. During the last four years, the average points scores achieved by pupils in the tests have risen at the national rate, but at a higher level. There has been little difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the tests in mathematics and science. Girls achieve higher standards than boys in English, but the difference is not beyond that found nationally. In comparison with similar schools, pupils achieve average standards overall.

3. According to the evidence of the inspection, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science. In English, they read and make written response to literary texts well, showing sensitive understanding of ideas and characters. In mathematics, all pupils manipulate problems of space and shape satisfactorily. Higher attainers have good algebraic skills. In science, pupils handle practical work well, and their written work is good and well presented. Pupils achieve above nationally expected levels in art, geography, physical education and religious education. In other subjects, they are achieving at the expected level. Overall, pupils achieve the standards that they should at this key stage, including their use of information technology across much of the curriculum. However, inappropriate methods of teaching prevent some pupils from achieving more highly in French, where their skills of extended writing are insufficiently well developed.

4. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have achieved above average results at GCSE since the previous inspection in 1995. Their average points score has been broadly in line with the rising national trend over these years, but at a higher level than that achieved nationally. In 1999, the overall points score per pupil was average. However, the school does not yet enter pupils for additional GCSE subjects, as short courses, and some pupils are entered for qualifications other than GCSE or GNVQ at age 16, reducing the overall points and number of GCSE grades that can be achieved. The school does well at GCSE

in comparison with others in the local authority, based on the evidence of pupils' prior levels of attainment shown at the end of Key Stage 3. Girls attain more highly than boys overall, but the difference is not greater than that which applies nationally. In some years, the difference has been marginal. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C has been regularly above average. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE A\* to G grades has been close to the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining A\* and A grades at GCSE is above that achieved nationally. Pupils regularly attain very high standards in art, well above their standards in most other subjects. They achieve very well in GCSE double science, making excellent progress over Key Stage 4 in this subject. In 1999, pupils achieved considerably lower standards in drama than they did in their other subjects. Boys, in particular, attained lower standards than they should in French. In comparison with similar schools, pupils achieved average standards overall in 1999. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, in comparison with similar schools, is usually above average, as it was in 1999. The targets set by the school for GCSE are suitably challenging and adapted for the assessed abilities of different year groups.

5. From evidence of the inspection by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain above the levels expected nationally. In most subjects, pupils of all levels of ability achieve well, including high attainers. In English, pupils' skills of writing develop well. They analyse texts effectively and present their findings with good understanding. In mathematics, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in lessons, but the rate of progress of middle and lower attainers falls below that of higher attainers at this key stage. In science, pupils discuss scientific ideas with considerable perception and understanding, making very good progress. Both boys and girls achieve particularly high standards in art, where their creative flair is fully released. They achieve well above expected levels in design and technology. Pupils do not achieve the standards that they should in information technology, except for those who follow a GCSE course in the subject. Most pupils do not use information technology across the curriculum sufficiently so as to enable them to progress at a satisfactory rate. In drama and modern foreign languages, pupils attain average standards. In other subjects, they attain above nationally expected standards.

6. At A level, the average points score per student has been well above the national average since 1997. It was marginally above average in 1996, and improved to a standard well above average in 1997. It has been sustained at this level subsequently. The A level subject pass rate was 95 per cent in 1999, and well above average. The proportion of grades A and B achieved is regularly well above the national average, and was double that in 1999. Attainment in the few advanced-supplementary subjects taken was above average overall in 1999. Students attained above average standards in advanced GNVQ examinations in 1999. They achieved highly in GNVQ art, and above average standards in business, health and social care, and science. At intermediate GNVQ level, the few students involved usually gain success in at least some units of study, but not all achieve full accreditation.

7. In lessons observed in the sixth form, standards achieved are above average overall, and students achieve at least the standards that they should. Students draw on prior knowledge and understanding of their subjects very well by the end of Year 13. As they encounter new knowledge and ideas, they extend their understanding and range of skills impressively, articulate their thinking well, and are not diverted from learning by the immediacy of important examinations. Very good progress is made and well above average standards reached in English, art, science, design and technology, geography, history, physical education, psychology and sociology. Good standards are achieved in lessons in mathematics, music and GNVQ courses in business, and health and social care. Average

standards are reached in information technology, modern foreign languages and theatre studies.

8. Pupils are generally competent in literacy. Their speaking and listening skills are good throughout both key stages and in the sixth form. Pupils' reading is sufficient for them to manage the reading demands of the curriculum, and is well developed in English and history. However, lack of wider reading in some subjects, for example in mathematics and design and technology, restricts the development of vocabulary and skills. Extended writing is not well enough developed in many subjects, but standards overall are satisfactory. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory over Key Stages 3 and 4. However, some pupils, including some more able pupils, are too dependent upon calculators. For some pupils weak linguistic skills have a detrimental effect on their achievement in numeracy. Mispronunciations and spelling can result in pupils apparently writing incorrect answers when their numerical work is correct. At A level, students' skills of numeracy support their studies well across the curriculum. Geography students are competent in using statistical methods to calculate correlation. In science, A level students are mostly able to judge the reasonableness of their answers. They apply graphs, calculus and other algebraic skills to their work. For many pupils, numerical skills are least secure when they are handling decimals or questions involving standard form. Plans to develop further a whole-school approach to literacy, and a similar programme for numeracy, are well conceived so as to improve standards across the curriculum.

9. Pupils of differing ability make good progress throughout the school. Higher attainers do well, in general. However, some pupils of average ability do not progress as well as they could at Key Stage 4 in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the targets set for them in individual education plans. The presentation of their work is very good. Many achieve beyond expectations. For example, pupils entering the school with very low levels of literacy achieve grades at GCSE, and some go on to succeed further in the sixth form. Pupils who receive additional support in withdrawal groups make good progress in those classes. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in mainstream lessons.

10. Since the previous inspection, attainment has improved at GCSE, and markedly so at A level, where standards are now regularly well above those achieved by most schools. In general, higher attainers now achieve the standards that they should. Progress throughout Key Stage 4 in science, for example, is now very good. However, standards in modern foreign languages, particularly those of boys in French and German, are not high enough. Although standards in information technology have greatly improved at Key Stage 3, they are not high enough for most pupils at Key Stage 4. The presentation of work of pupils with special educational needs has improved and is now usually very good. These pupils follow a handwriting course, and handwriting skills are reinforced during English lessons.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Pupils have very good attitudes to the school. They are enthusiastic in their lessons and want to do well. In a Year 7 lesson in art, for example, pupils worked independently, and urged themselves on at a good pace, making full use of the time available. In a Year 10 lesson in history, they showed enthusiasm and a readiness to take challenging roles in discussion and in brainstorming sessions. Pupils' attitudes improve as they move up the school, and are excellent in the sixth form. Lessons often take place in an atmosphere of total co-operation, in physical education for example.

12. Behaviour is consistently good in lessons. There are very few instances of disruptive behaviour in the classroom. Behaviour is also good as pupils move around the school, though standards are not as high as in lessons. There is some inconsiderate behaviour at lunchtime and in corridors. Although cases of bullying and oppressive behaviour do occur, they are rare. There were no permanent exclusions last year, though some pupils were transferred to a pupil referral unit run by the local authority. The number of fixed-term exclusions is average for a school of this size.

13. Relationships are very good among pupils as well as between pupils and members of staff. For example, in a Year 10 physical education lesson, the quality of relationships was very high. Pupils were very well organised with good working relationships. They worked very well together, and managed their roles as either performers or evaluators very effectively. Relationships between sixth form students and members of staff are excellent. Students praise the good atmosphere and sense of community which prevail in the sixth form. At all levels of the school, pupils exercise responsibility well. In a Year 7 library lesson, for example, pupils exercised the responsibility given them to select books sensibly. Year 8 pupils conscientiously supervise a reception desk at the school entrance. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils' willingness to accept responsibility and take initiative resulted in high quality discussion in which pupils respected each other's opinions, but also recognised their teacher's expertise. Sixth form students are successful independent learners. They use some of their private study time to help younger pupils in the school with learning.

14. Most pupils with special educational needs behave well and have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general. They make substantial gains in self-confidence and the ability to organise themselves as they move through the school. For example, Year 9 pupils enjoyed planning and successfully managed their trips to nearby towns in their work-studies course. Pupils in Year 11 who recently went on an expedition to Snowdonia gained confidence in working together as a team, and improved their communication skills.

15. Attendance levels at the school are satisfactory. The attendance rate for the 1998-99 academic year was 91.8 per cent, a figure broadly in line with the national average of 91 per cent. Authorised absence was 7.9 per cent. The rate of unauthorised absence was 0.3 per cent, which is below the national average of 1.1 per cent. The attendance rate for pupils in Year 11 is lower, because some pupils are being educated elsewhere, but remain on the school roll. Figures for the first half of the current academic year have changed little. Pupils arrive on time at the start of the school day. However, punctuality at the beginning of lessons is unsatisfactory and lessons often start late. This is because of the distance between some classrooms and the way the school day is organised.

16. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were already good at the time of the last inspection and have continued to improve.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, poor, very poor. "Satisfactory" means that strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

17. The quality of teaching overall is good. It is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good in the sixth form. About 72 per cent of teaching seen was good or better, and 31 per cent was very good or excellent. Seven lessons of the total of 180 observed were judged to be unsatisfactory or poor, making 96 per cent at least satisfactory. The quality of teaching seen varied over a range of excellent to poor. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching to ensure that it is of consistently high quality are not yet in place across the school. Almost half the sixth form lessons seen were very good or excellent, and no unsatisfactory

teaching of these students was observed. The effect of the good quality of teaching is that pupils successfully extend their knowledge and understanding, and gain skills in lessons, providing them with the opportunity to use their initiative in their learning.

18. The quality of teaching is particularly high in art, design and technology, music, science, and in lessons for personal and social education and careers. Pupils of wide-ranging abilities, including higher attainers, learn very successfully in these lessons. In no subject is teaching unsatisfactory, but some unsatisfactory lessons were observed in history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. In these lessons, teachers allowed the pace of learning to slow too much, and work was not well enough matched to pupils' needs. The teaching of drama is satisfactory but lacks enthusiasm. The teaching of literacy is good and, for example, enables pupils to extend their vocabulary well. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, but co-ordination of this across the curriculum is not yet in place.

19. Teachers' methods usually enable pupils to learn successfully. They help pupils to record what they learn very effectively, so that they can refer back to their own reliable written record, helping them to move on to the next stage of learning. Teachers use probing questions well, and their explanations and demonstrations much extend pupils' understanding, as, for example, in an excellent and enthralling Year 10 science lesson in which a teacher dissected a kidney with impressive skill. However, in some lessons, teachers do not provide enough guidance for the whole class, resulting in loss of time and pace when they constantly duplicate guidance and instructions for individuals.

20. In most lessons, teachers adapt work well for pupils' levels of attainment. They provide pupils with good challenge so that they are required to use their own initiative and develop confidence to work independently. This applies both to higher and lower attainers. In an A level lesson in physical education, for example, students were expected to organise the sequence of the eight parts of neuro-muscular transmission for themselves. They did so very successfully, following an excellent presentation on the subject by the teacher. However, in some lessons in mathematics at Key Stage 4, the work set was too difficult for the pupils of middling ability for whom it was provided.

21. Most teachers have good subject knowledge. In sixth form lessons in particular, teachers' subject understanding is very strong. They use this effectively to extend pupils' own knowledge and the ability to apply skills very well in their learning. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to provide pupils with a good range of well-chosen resources in many lessons. For example, in a very good Year 8 music lesson, in which listening and vocal and instrumental tasks were used, the choice and range of resources were exploited to the full to move learning on at a brisk pace.

22. Teachers usually plan lessons well. They make the aims of lessons clear to pupils, and enable them to evaluate their own performances against the stated aims. These judgements help pupils to progress rapidly in learning, because of the insights and understanding which they gain. In a Year 11 English lesson using poems from different cultures and traditions, the teacher provided pupils with the opportunity to think aloud and work towards their own understanding of the central metaphor of the poem they were studying.

23. Time is used well in most lessons. These run at a good pace with a suitable sequence of activities to maintain pupils' interest and extend learning. In an excellent Year 10 lesson in food technology in which pupils judged their final designs for their "ready, steady, cook" project, the pace of the lesson was very hot, and pupils were closely engaged in the process, responding well to the challenges that were presented. However,



in some lessons, too much talk from teachers results in too slow a pace for learning, and pupils become too dependent on their teachers to manage their learning for them.

24. Teachers manage pupils very well. They do so through very good relationships and subject enthusiasm which is conveyed to pupils very well. Pupils have confidence in teachers. This is shown in their willingness to ask questions and receive answers to extend their subject knowledge.

25. Teachers set homework which is usually challenging and appropriate to extend pupils' independent learning. However, some written homework and some classwork are not always marked well enough to provide pupils with sufficient advice on how to improve their work. This was particularly apparent in some work set in modern foreign languages, mathematics and geography.

26. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught in mainstream subject classes. In most cases, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their pupils' needs and tailor their teaching styles and learning materials to meet these needs. As a result, pupils learn with confidence and make good progress. Teaching is good in the small withdrawal groups because of high expectations and teachers' expertise in specialised techniques. Pupils are made well aware of their short-term targets in their individual education plans and can explain clearly what they need to do to improve. The very good relationships which exist among teachers and pupils and the effectiveness of classroom support have a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development.

27. Since the previous inspection, teaching now provides better challenge for higher attaining pupils, as required by the key issue of 1995. There is less unsatisfactory teaching, and considerable very good and excellent teaching. Homework, a concern of some parents, is usually but not always set to timetable. It is not always marked well enough to help pupils to improve the quality of their work.

### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

28. The quality and range of the school's curriculum are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. Pupils have equal opportunity to access the curriculum. The school's provision for minorities, such as travellers, pupils with English as an additional language, and gifted and talented pupils is good.

29. At Key Stage 3, all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. Drama is provided as an additional subject, and religious education meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Although there is satisfactory provision to develop pupils' numerical skills, there is, as yet, no co-ordinated programme across the curriculum. Both the whole-school improvement plan and that of the mathematics department indicate planning for the future formulation and implementation of a policy for numeracy across the curriculum. Provision for the development of pupils' skills of literacy is more advanced. However, all subjects are not yet contributing fully to the school's policy for literacy.

30. At Key Stage 4, the required subjects are provided with the exception of information technology and design and technology for all pupils. The pupils who do not take a course leading to an examination in information technology do not have adequate experience of the subject at this key stage, in contrast to the good provision they receive at Key Stage 3. Control technology is largely omitted from the Key Stage 4 curriculum. At this key stage, religious education contributes distinctively to modules of work in the personal and social

education course, but insufficient time is provided to meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education for all pupils. Only those who follow an examination course in the subject receive adequate provision.

31. In the sixth form, curricular provision is good. There is a good range of A level courses, and a wide range of GNVQ courses, at both advanced and intermediate levels. Students follow a non-examination general studies course, which extends their knowledge and understanding well across a wide range of subjects.

32. The school's provision for personal, social and health education is good. It includes sex education and drugs prevention. Work-related education for all pupils is strong, including a good range of GNVQ courses in the sixth form. Work experience is well organised and valued by pupils. Careers education is good, despite a recent reduction in support from the local careers service.

33. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils, including the gifted, and those on the register of special educational needs. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that pupils' particular needs are provided for and short-term targets in basic literary skills and general organisation and behaviour are well focused. Plans are now being made for the inclusion of targets for numeracy and for the involvement of subject teachers in the drawing up of targets. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who find the full range of GCSE courses too demanding benefit from being able to concentrate on a reduced number of subjects and at the same time develop their vocational skills and their skills of literacy through an alternative curriculum. This enables pupils to focus on work-studies, leisure-studies or home-studies, provides qualifications, and provides a strong additional contribution to the curriculum for lower-attaining pupils. In the sixth form, carefully planned provision enables students with special needs to pursue A level and GNVQ courses successfully.

34. The range of extra-curricular activities is good, with very good provision for games and sports. There is provision for all major games, and considerable numbers of pupils participate, many to a high level. Pupils are provided with a good range of musical activities, and many take up these opportunities. Many opportunities for residential experience are provided and taken up by pupils. Staff provide good support for pupils to extend their subject understanding in preparation for examinations.

35. Links with the community are very good. The leisure centre on-site is an important shared asset which the school makes very good use of to enhance the curriculum for physical education. The school's links with partner primary schools are of the highest quality, ensuring that pupils experience a smooth curricular transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, so that they make good progress in Year 7. The school's links with teacher-training institutions are very good, particularly with the University of Bath. Student teachers in training at the school appreciate the effectiveness of the school's very good links with their training institution. The local community also makes valuable contributions to the school, for example visits from speakers and links with companies through the design and technology department. Links with the local traveller community, some of whose children attend the school, are good, and teachers employed by the local authority provide good support for these children. Individual targets are set to help them integrate well into school life, and their personal and academic progress is closely monitored.

36. Since the previous inspection, the school has now provided suitable time for religious education at Key Stage 3. However, time for this subject remains insufficient at Key Stage 4. The sex education policy is updated, and this element is appropriately provided through personal and social education and the National Curriculum. Information

technology is well provided at Key Stage 3, but provision for most pupils at Key Stage 4 continues to be insufficient. Design and technology is not now provided for all pupils at Key Stage 4.

37. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. A well planned and well-thought-out programme of suitable monthly themes guides assemblies for the whole school year. The themes follow the Christian calendar, and clergy from different denominations are welcomed into the school and contribute to assemblies. Assemblies during the week of the inspection were of good quality for all years, and most assemblies were acts of worship. However, the school does not provide an act of collective worship for all its pupils on a daily basis. Most subjects do not contribute as much as they could to pupils' spiritual development. Those that do contribute, do so effectively. Opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development in art are now good and very good in the sixth form. They are much improved since the previous inspection. In lessons in religious education, pupils have opportunity to study different world religions and rites of passage in these major faiths. Geography makes a good contribution, with opportunities for pupils to enjoy and reflect upon the beauty of landscape on fieldwork in the Peak District, and through studies of physical processes, such as volcanoes. In some specifications in design and technology, notably in food technology, there is thoughtful evaluation of how design can improve a person's quality of life. In one lesson, pupils were asked to reflect upon the beauty of a particular outcome in food technology. In Year 9 dance, pupils produced movement much in keeping with the theme of the crucifixion and taking-down-from-the-cross, treating the subject with much respect. Provision for spiritual development in other subjects is not a marked feature.

38. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The themes for assemblies treat war and peace in today's world, examining the exponents of non-violence, such as Jesus, Gandhi and the Quakers. There are good opportunities in many subjects. For example, the sanctity of life is treated in religious education, environmental exploitation in geography and the Holocaust in history. The course in personal and social education makes good provision for discussion of rights and responsibilities in Year 7, and of racism and sexism in society in Year 11. Pupils are well aware of the high standards of rules and behaviour expected of them, and respond well.

39. Pupils' social development is very well provided for. The outcomes of this provision, shown in pupils' personal development and their relationships with each other and with staff, are very good. Pupils recognise and appreciate the value of residential trips, and comment on the friendly working atmosphere in the school. Teachers are very good role models for pupils. There are high expectations for pupils to attend school regularly and be courteous and trustworthy. Pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly from working in this situation. Pair and group-work takes place in many lessons, providing good opportunities for pupils to work well together, listening to others' opinions. In physical education, pupils work exceptionally well together. Pupils are given the opportunity to provide help in the reception area, and sixth formers assist with paired reading with younger pupils. Year councils meet regularly, giving pupils responsibility to speak and act on behalf of others. The excellent standards of display of pupils' work and other materials around the school celebrate and promote the communal life of the school.

40. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Subjects generally contribute well to this aspect of pupils' experience. It is now very good in art, which was criticised in the previous inspection. In German in the sixth form, students gain cultural insights from comparing the role of women in the Middle Ages with that of the present day. Visits abroad organised by the modern foreign languages department, work experience in Spain, a Year

12 trip to Morocco, and other extra-curricular activities provide pupils with good opportunities for cultural insights. A foreign exchange party was visiting the school during the week of the inspection. The provision for multi-cultural development is also good. There is very good display illustrating a range of cultures in the religious education department. Pupils visit the Hindu temple in Neasden and the London Mosque. In Key Stage 3 art, aboriginal and African masks are used as inspiration.

41. Since the previous inspection, provision for pupils' cultural and multi-cultural development has improved. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is still not as well advanced as for other aspects of their personal development, but is satisfactory. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Otherwise, the good standards of the previous inspection have been maintained.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

42. Standards of care are satisfactory overall. Pastoral support is good. Heads of year and tutors stay with their forms and come to know them well. The pupils' reception service which deals directly with parents' and pupils' concerns and well-being is an effective feature much appreciated by parents. Attendance is efficiently recorded and carefully monitored. There are good procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour. Members of staff already manage pupils well, but the school is not complacent. The behaviour policy is being reviewed by a working party to ensure greater consistency in its use. Staff manage the cases of bullying which occur well. Arrangements for child protection procedures are satisfactory, but largely oral. The written guidance in the staff handbook is insufficient. Despite a satisfactory health and safety policy, good departmental safety practice and regular routine checks, some health and safety issues remain unresolved and cause concern. For example, some windows are currently unsafe to open. The wooden floor of the gymnasium is buckling and uneven in one place. Some pupils' toilets are below standard. The large size of some classes in workshops is a potential hazard. The disused ecological pond is a risk to pupils and young children in the neighbourhood.

43. The school has satisfactory arrangements to assess pupils' attainment and progress. Exemplary liaison with partner primary schools ensures that the school has necessary information about pupils' attainment when they arrive in order to provide a good basis for future assessment, particularly so for pupils with special educational needs. Subject departments build on this analysis, by adding results of tests, reports and examinations. Subject assessments, guided by the present assessment policy which is scheduled for review, are mostly accurate. However, in both mathematics and science, teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 are well above those achieved in the tests. There are very good procedures for assessment in design and technology, with sensitive and constructive comments and targets for improvement provided for pupils at the end of each module. However, National Curriculum levels are not used enough in physical education, and pupils' self-evaluation is insufficiently used in drama. The school's assessment procedures satisfy all statutory requirements. The use which the school makes of assessment data to guide and adapt curriculum planning is satisfactory. Examination results are analysed in detail and trends identified. The analysis is used to review performance and set targets for future development. Subject departments also make satisfactory use of the information collected. As a result of its analysis of attainment and progress of lower attaining pupils, the school is planning for an alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4, to include GNVQ courses.

44. The school monitors and tracks the academic progress and personal development of pupils with special educational needs very effectively. Statements of pupils with special

needs are updated regularly, and the local authority is reminded of any outstanding. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils in need of extra help, and the arrangements for reviewing the progress of pupils with statements of special educational need are very good. The quality of the support for pupils with special educational needs is good, and has a positive impact on their learning and attitudes to work. The learning support department works well with subject departments in developing learning materials which help pupils to organise their written work successfully. Support in the classroom is good and learning support assistants make an effective contribution to the well-being of pupils with special needs through the good relationships which they have developed. Their daily records provide detailed information on pupils' academic progress and personal development. There is a very good liaison between the school and external agencies, such as the traveller education service, which provide specialist support and guidance. A particular strength is the support given by the educational psychologist who has monthly consultative meetings with the learning support department and heads of year; effective training courses are provided for sixth formers who volunteer to help younger pupils with special educational needs with reading and general support.

45. The procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress are good overall, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Heads of year regularly initiate checks on progress for their year groups with information obtained from all curriculum areas. Data is well used to monitor the value added to pupils' levels of attainment in each subject. One-to-one interviews between tutors and pupils encourage improvement and provide good personal and general academic support. There is good practice in targeting and mentoring underachieving pupils in Year 10. In the sixth form, students are regularly involved in their own assessment through discussion with their teachers and in recording of their potential examination grades. This is very supportive to their rate of progress. There is some effective use of assessment to help pupils on an individual basis within departments. The co-ordination of information across departments which would allow precise targets to be set for individual pupils is still at an early stage at Key Stage 3. Teachers' advice to pupils indicating precisely how their work could be improved is insufficiently detailed in many subjects, and does not contribute enough to pupils' progress.

46. Since the previous inspection, greater emphasis is now given to monitoring progress to raise achievement. The key issue of the previous inspection concerning update and review of statements of special educational need has been resolved. Pastoral support continues to be of good quality.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47. Parents are generally satisfied with the school and what it provides for their children. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire consider that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. Parents feel that they can approach the school with confidence if they have questions or problems concerning their children. Inspectors agree that the school expects much of pupils, who generally respond well and work hard. A few parents have concerns - for example, about homework or the information they receive about progress - and some think the school does not work closely enough with them. Inspectors agree that the school is receptive to parents' concerns. They found that homework is appropriate, and generally set regularly, but it is not always marked well enough to tell pupils how they can improve. Parents receive information about the progress their children are making through consultative evenings and in interim and annual reports. These are sufficiently detailed, except in information technology, where no extended written summary is provided at either of the key stages. All that is reported is the National Curriculum level at the end of Key Stage 3. This situation is unsatisfactory and

does not meet statutory requirements. Most subjects tell parents what their children know and can do and suggest how they can improve. Parents who attended the meeting held before the inspection expressed concerns about standards and provision in modern foreign languages. Inspectors agree that there are problems that affect this department, and that standards should be higher for some pupils, particularly boys.

48. The school has developed effective links with parents. It provides good information for them about the school itself. The range includes not just the compulsory prospectus and governors' annual report, but a calendar of events, a magazine, booklets on aspects of the curriculum for different key stages, and a website containing some information, mostly updated, of interest to parents. The school provides interest groups for Years 7 to 11 which meet each term to discuss particular topics. Parents who attend appreciate these occasions. The reception system, through which parents can communicate with the school or with their children, is very effective and much appreciated by parents.

49. Parents generally contribute well to the school and their children's learning. The Corsham School Association raises funds actively with a busy programme of events, besides contributing to consultations. Some parents help with reading and by providing work experience. Most parents sign pupils' organisers, and some use them as a means of communication with the school. The school invites parents to attend interest groups and information evenings and to work closely with them. Although for some occasions and for some year groups attendance is good, not all parents take up the opportunities available to them.

50. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Communications between home and school are very good. Parents contribute to the reviews of their children's progress. They often help their children at home with reading, and some parents are involved in listening to pupils read in school. Parents of children with special needs are pleased with the way in which their children are supported and encouraged to make a positive contribution to the life of the school.

51. Since the previous inspection, good opportunities for parents to be involved continue to be available. The key issue requiring reporting of information technology at Key Stage 3 has been technically met, with a level stated at the end of this key stage. However, information technology is not reported with other subjects annually, and parents lack necessary information about how well their children are progressing in the subject at both key stages.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

52. The school is well led. Governors, headteacher and leadership group, with other key staff, are strongly committed to the principal task of ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is high. Staff endorse this purpose and very good relationships between them and pupils give the school a very positive ethos. Overall, leadership has good capacity to take the school forward to achieve yet higher standards.

53. Governors are strongly committed to ensuring that the school is successful. They have a clear understanding of their role. They have recently selected the new headteacher and give him full support. They inform themselves very well about the school, and some governors visit the school regularly when it is in session. They have designated links with subject departments and pastoral staff. They meet with subject team-leaders and staff to find out for themselves about concerns and developments. Some governors come to the school for a half-day, and follow a pupil throughout that time, to get a good idea of the

quality of teaching and learning that prevails for that individual. Some governors accompany staff and pupils on visits, including residential extra-curricular activities, to be supportive and well informed. Governors give their time freely to school business, particularly through their committees, which enable them to specialise in aspects of the school. One committee comprises the chairs of the other committees and is led by the chairman and vice-chairman of governors. This system of a central committee is useful practice, and ensures effective planning and communication across the full governing body. Although most statutory requirements are met, all pupils do not follow courses in design and technology and information technology at Key Stage 4, and there is insufficient time for religious education at this key stage. Information technology is not reported well enough to parents at either Key Stage 3 or 4. Although assemblies take place regularly, all pupils do not have the opportunity of a daily act of collective worship. Appraisal of staff has ceased. Governors have not yet set targets for the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

54. The headteacher has been in post for less than one year. He has the confidence of governors and staff, and has already established good working relationships across the school. He is strongly committed to effective teamwork, engaging all staff in meeting the new challenges facing the school so as to ensure its continued success. With the endorsement of governors, he has consulted extensively with staff over his first two terms. Detailed planning and improved working practices have resulted which have now to be fully implemented, for example in the monitoring of teaching. The headteacher advised parents on how he intended to proceed following his appointment. Parents express approval that the good progress that the school has made in recent years has not been jeopardised by rash action. Some express appreciation of the headteacher's style and approach.

55. The leadership group has developed effective working practices. They are a good team and lead and manage the school well. They give thoughtful direction to its work, and have actively led the process of school development planning. They link effectively with teams of subject staff and pastoral teams. Most team leaders find these links helpful and supportive and, in general, they are.

56. Subject and pastoral team leaders are diligent, conscientious, effective and self-critical. They lead their teams well and work hard with their colleagues to ensure that standards are good. Some departmental teams are very effective, and have established very good practices, for example for the monitoring of teaching, as in English and science.

57. There is good practice in the monitoring of performance data. Examination results are closely analysed and trends considered, so that action can be taken to amend practice to ensure higher standards. A review of teaching and work in the modern foreign languages department was commissioned to identify reasons for underperformance. However, the outcomes of the review have not yet led to improved standards. The headteacher's extensive consultations with staff have resulted in targets for the school improvement plan. For example, plans to monitor, evaluate and review all aspects of the work of the school, including observation of teaching and regular scrutiny of standards of pupils' work, are in place. A whole-school approach to the monitoring of teaching was initiated some years ago, but it has not been established as normal working practice, as it should be. Good practice in monitoring teaching and learning currently exists in some departments, but this is not in place across the school. The implementation of current planning should enable governors, leadership group and team leaders to ensure that standards are consistently high across subjects and across the school. At present, for example, the quality of teaching varies across a range of excellent to poor and although, overall, it is predominantly good, greater consistency in quality of teaching should further enhance the quality of pupils' learning.

58. School development planning has greatly improved, and is now very good. Planning is detailed, and identifies key priorities well, such as the need for a whole-school system for monitoring, evaluation and review. Time scales and success criteria are given so that the extent to which targets are met can be more accurately evaluated. The planning process engages governors, the leadership group, team leaders and staff. However, although parents have the opportunity to attend information evenings about aspects of school, they are not involved in decisions about planned curricular changes, for example.

59. The learning support department is very well managed. The co-ordinator for special educational needs gives clear educational direction, promotes high standards, and ensures that daily routines run smoothly. The named governor for learning support monitors performance and is kept well informed of the needs and developments of the department. There is a good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum. Staff in the learning support department have a shared commitment to improvement, and work well as a team. Accommodation and resources are good for pupils with special needs and are used well. They enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. Statutory requirements concerning pupils with statements of special educational need are met, and documentation is exemplary.

60. Funding is used well. The school achieves good value for money, and provision for the sixth form is cost-effective. School development planning ensures that key priorities for spending are properly identified and funded. The principles of best value are applied well by the school. Pupils' achievements compare well with those achieved nationally. The school challenges itself well and provides opportunities for pupils beyond what are required, for example in the sixth form curriculum, and in the range of extra-curricular activities available. Thorough consultation within the school has informed the planning process, and has identified areas for development very well. Parents could be further consulted on curricular changes. Appropriate competition is well managed, ensuring that good value for money is achieved. For example, governors and senior staff chose the new catering contract after much advice and thorough consideration.

61. The organisation of the school day creates problems for the movement of pupils between lessons. Punctuality is poor because the distances which pupils must travel across the school are considerable. The result is a significant loss of lesson time, with many lessons beginning five to ten minutes after the stipulated starting time. Over a year, this amounts to the loss of several working weeks, with adverse consequences for teaching and learning. The length of periods should be one hour, but many lessons are little more than 50 minutes long. The school should find a more efficient way of maximising the time which is allocated for lessons.

62. Teachers are well qualified and their qualifications and experience are generally suitably matched to curricular needs. In the few cases where teachers are teaching lessons in subjects for which they are not formally qualified, the quality of teaching remains satisfactory and is often good. An effective induction programme is in place for newly qualified teachers. This includes observation of teaching, with valuable feedback provided for the new teachers by mentors in the school. Newly qualified teachers appreciate the support and interest of their mentors and the school. A good, well-established partnership is in place between the school and teacher-training institutions, particularly the University of Bath. However, arrangements for the appraisal of staff are in abeyance. Support staff are used well, and provide very good support both for the curriculum and for the smooth running of school administration. Caretaking staff are active and effective.



63. Accommodation is clean, free from graffiti, and generally well maintained. The security system is of a good standard. Good provision is made for pupils to enjoy recreational time outdoors, with benches and tables for breaks. Display of pupils' work is good overall, and pupils' work displayed in some subjects, for example in art, is most impressive. Accommodation is used well, but it has unsatisfactory features. Many lessons are taught in classrooms that are too small for the number of pupils involved. Sizes of classes using workshops in lessons for design and technology create potential risks to pupils' safety. Classrooms are too small for some art, English, modern foreign languages and music lessons. The little space available reduces the opportunity for the teacher to reach individual pupils so as to provide them with help with their work. It also reduces the range of work which can be undertaken. For example, a large class in music at Key Stage 4 cannot adequately manage essential composing and performing because of the numbers present in some lessons. In art, work with clay cannot be undertaken because there is insufficient space for pupils to manage this type of work. The changing rooms for physical education are of very poor standard. They are used by so many pupils, sometimes from different age-groups, that the use of showers is not possible, and pupils' hygiene suffers as a result. Some toilets are poor, but some have been refurbished to a very good standard with funding from the Corsham School Association. The sports centre, of which the school has shared use, has very good facilities, including a swimming pool and a sportshall. The school makes very effective use of this accommodation. For example, pupils' standards of swimming are very high. The popularity of the school and additional local housing are to increase numbers of pupils further from September 2000, when the school's problems of providing suitable accommodation will increase. Four additional temporary classrooms are to be provided by the local authority, but further permanent accommodation is urgently required so that pupils continue to make the progress in all subjects that they should.

64. There are significant deficiencies in the provision of learning resources, some of which adversely affect pupils' progress. In science, where resources were judged unsatisfactory during the previous inspection, the situation is worse. Because of insufficient equipment for work at Key Stage 3, pupils' practical activities often have to be replaced by demonstrations. Their loss of hands-on experience adversely affects their standards of attainment. In the sixth form, valuable time is lost as students take turns to use a single piece of apparatus. Provision of computers has improved latterly. Overall some deficiencies remain as the school recognises, but existing equipment is not used enough at Key Stage 4. In design and technology there is no provision for CAD/CAM work or for pneumatics and electronics, and the department has just four sewing machines for classes of 28 pupils. In modern foreign languages, there are some deficiencies of textbooks and dictionaries as well as insufficient audio and information technology equipment. In music, provision for music- technology is dated and unreliable. Many instruments and keyboards are in need of repair or replacement. Textbooks for A level history are in short supply. In art, resources are adequate because the department sells consumable materials which pupils buy and use.

65. Since the previous inspection, the key issue for the school to provide a development plan over a suitable time-scale, and that effectively identified costs to meet priorities, has been very successfully managed. Some statutory omissions have been resolved, for example a suitable sex education policy has now been implemented, but other statutory requirements are not in place. The leadership and management of the school continue to be effective. Staffing remains good. Deficiencies persist in aspects of the accommodation, and the school urgently requires additional accommodation to meet its growing needs so that the curriculum can be properly delivered. Computers are now used well at Key Stage 3, but they are underused at Key Stage 4. Previous concerns that statements of special educational need were not updated have been resolved. The local education authority has been reminded in writing of the few that are not up-to-date.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to develop further the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of educational provision, the school should:

- (1) Improve pupils' attainment in modern foreign languages. Enable the subject leader to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in the department, by observing teaching and ensuring that the standards of pupils' work are of consistently good quality. Provide sufficient time to accomplish this, with close support from the leadership group, and training for staff as required.  
(See paragraphs 3, 4, 10, 47, 132, 136, 137, 138)
- (2) Improve learning, and meet statutory requirements for information technology at Key Stage 4, by planning and involving all subjects in its use. Report pupils' progress in the subject more fully to parents at Key Stages 3 and 4. (This was part of a key issue of the previous inspection.)  
(See paragraphs 5, 10, 47, 48, 65, 106, 128, 129, 130, 131)
- (3) Find a more efficient way of maximising time for lessons, by reorganising the school day to reduce the loss of time caused by pupils travelling considerable distances between lessons.  
(See paragraphs 15, 61)
- (4) Extend and improve the quality and condition of accommodation, by all available means. Remedy the outstanding issues of health and safety within the school buildings and surroundings, by making safe windows which are currently unsafe to open; repairing the floor of the gymnasium; ensuring that all pupils' toilets are of suitable standard; reducing the large size of some classes in workshops; making safe the disused ecological pond.  
(See paragraphs 63, 78, 86, 103, 104, 106, 111, 141, 142, 146, 149)
- (5) Extend the monitoring and evaluation of standards of teaching and learning across the curriculum, by implementing current plans to observe the teaching of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' standards of work within and across all departments. Engage all staff in the process to ensure that standards are consistently high.  
(See paragraphs 57, 86, 106, 119, 122, 159)

67. In addition to the key issues listed above, the school should consider including the following other weaknesses in its action plan:

- Improve consistency and quality in the marking of pupils' work, including homework, providing all pupils with advice to help them to improve their work.  
(See paragraphs 25, 27, 45, 47, 81, 92)
- Use assessment data further to set targets for improvement for pupils so as to enable them to improve their standard of work.  
(See paragraph 45)
- Extend and implement the whole-school initiatives to improve pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy.

(See paragraphs 8, 94)

- Meet statutory requirements for: religious education at Key Stage 4; design and technology; a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; appraisal of staff performance, including that of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. (See paragraphs 30, 36, 37, 42, 47, 48, 53, 62, 146, 155, 157)
- Improve provision for learning resources where deficiencies adversely affect pupils' progress. (See paragraphs 64, 86, 98, 99, 100, 111, 136, 142)

## **SIXTH FORM**

68. Sixth form students are diligent, mature, perceptive and responsible. They achieve well above average academic standards. They have good opportunities for learning and are very well taught.

69. Students are admitted to advanced courses if they achieve five or more GCSE grades A\* to C. They are expected to achieve GCSE grade B or higher in the individual subjects they intend to study. They gain entry to intermediate GNVQ courses if they achieve four or more GCSE grades A\* to E. Attainment in the sixth form is well above the national average. The average points score per student at A level has improved considerably in recent years, and is now regularly well above average. Both boys and girls achieve highly. Almost all entrants usually at least pass their A level examinations, and the proportion of grades A and B achieved is regularly well above the national average, and was double that standard in 1999. Students' attainment in advanced-supplementary examinations is equally good. Achievements in GNVQ examinations are also above average. In lessons observed during the inspection, students were achieving high standards in line with their previous attainment, as measured by examination results.

70. Sixth form students approach their studies in an exemplary manner. Their attitudes to work and to the school are excellent. They are enthusiastic about the subjects they are studying. Relationships are exceptionally good among students and between them and their teachers. Students feel they work in partnership with teachers and are helped to develop successfully as independent learners by a balance of constructive support and encouragement. They are very mature and responsible. They are expected to become involved in the life of the school community and, in effect, to give something back, and they accept this obligation conscientiously. For example, they help younger pupils on the sports field, and with reading in the classroom. Some acquire extra qualifications because of their efforts, and all gain useful experience as a result of the help they give.

71. Teaching in the sixth form is of very good quality. No lesson observed was less than satisfactory, and over half the teaching observed was very good or excellent. Teachers have very good rapport with students, and provide challenging lessons in which students are expected to use their initiative. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they apply well in lessons, so that students' creative talents are released. Analytical skills are developed well, and students select reasons and present explanations skilfully and effectively. The quality of their learning is high.

72. The school looks after sixth form students carefully. The provision made for their personal development acknowledges their increasing maturity and allows space for the individual to develop. Students contribute to weekly assemblies, which are relaxed but purposeful occasions. In one held during the inspection, individual students shared their

reflections on what they had gained from taking part in an expedition trekking in Morocco. Students receive very good support and guidance, including advice on higher education and employment, from school. Their progress, both academic and personal, is carefully tracked and monitored and discussed regularly with them. Most students proceed at age 18 to higher education.

73. The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities for students. They have good choice of A level and GNVQ courses at different levels. Some parents have expressed concern at the likely withdrawal of modern foreign languages from the A level curriculum from September 2000 because of very low numbers of students opting for these subjects. This is a consequence of standards in foreign languages achieved lower down the school, a situation which should be improved. The school is well aware of parents' concerns, and is trying to balance curricular opportunities at A level for a minority of students with provision which is cost effective. Provision of sixth form courses is currently cost effective and does not deprive the lower school of its proper share of funding.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	180
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3.3	27.2	41.1	24.4	2.2	1.7	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	866	173
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	77	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	130	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	65
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	75	78	153

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	52	51
	Girls	65	50	48
	Total	121	102	99
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (68)	67 (65)	65 (60)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (36)	37 (43)	21 (28)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	64	60
	Girls	62	64	58
	Total	120	128	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (69)	83 (70)	77 (61)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	51 (39)	48 (50)	33 (33)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	68	85	153

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	32	56	62
	Girls	53	76	81
	Total	85	132	143
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (49)	86 (98)	93 (99)
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39 (40.3)
	National	37.8 (37)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	32	34	66

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	21.2	20.5	21 (19.2)	3.6	3.8	3.7 (3.7)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or Units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19	100
	National		82.5

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	786
Any other minority ethnic group	11
Those who opted not to be classified	238

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	36	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0
Those who opted not to be classified	2	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8:1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	359

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	23.9

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998-9
----------------	--------

	£
Total income	2186013
Total expenditure	2201624
Expenditure per pupil	2280
Balance brought forward from previous year	61546
Balance carried forward to next year	45935



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1039
Number of questionnaires returned	312

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	58	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	54	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	63	7	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	56	23	3	1
The teaching is good.	25	64	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	50	22	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	53	15	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	33	55	3	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	54	5	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	50	7	2	8

*Figures may not total 100 per cent because of rounding.*

### Other issues raised by parents

Some parents had particular concerns about standards in modern foreign languages. There was dissatisfaction with the school's likely decision to withdraw provision of foreign languages at A level for Year 12 students in September 2000.

The inspection team is grateful to all parents who expressed views. These were very helpful to the inspection process.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

*"Similar schools" throughout the report refers to schools which have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools providing education for pupils of similar backgrounds.*

### **ENGLISH**

74. In national tests, examinations and in work seen during the inspection, standards in English are above average overall and are well above average in the sixth form. On entry to the school, pupils' standards are average. The percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or above, and level 6 or above, in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests was well above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. The trend of results at Key Stage 3 over the last four years has been one of improvement, at a greater rate than nationally. Results in English compared well with those which pupils achieved in mathematics and science in 1999. In GCSE English in 1999, 63 per cent of candidates gained a grade A\* to C, compared with a national average of 55 per cent. In GCSE English literature, 68 per cent of pupils gained grades A\* to C, compared with 60 per cent nationally. Boys perform less well than girls in both GCSE subjects, reflecting the national trend, although the school gap is less than the national difference. Recent work on raising boys' achievement has begun to have a beneficial impact on results. Results at GCSE are in line with those achieved by pupils in most of their other subjects. At A level, over half the candidates achieved grades A and B in 1999, a standard much higher than that achieved nationally in the language and literature course. The recent trend has been one of improvement, with significantly higher proportions of top grades and of pass grades than nationally. Results are in line with those achieved by students in their other subjects in the school.

75. Pupils' attainment in lessons at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is above the level expected nationally. In Year 13, students attain standards that are well above average. Pupils read with fluent expression and very good understanding. For example in Year 9, they make sophisticated responses to the text of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' written work is of good standard and, for example, they make concise notes to reinforce their growing knowledge of the literature that they study. Pupils' skills of speaking and listening progress equally well with those of reading and writing. By Year 9, they can devise and present improvisations based on contemporary situations derived from the literary sources that they read. By Year 11, high attainers read fluently with good understanding. They recognise meaning and the effect of words in poetry very well. Average and lower attainers in Year 11 understand the central messages of what they read and use detail to support their ideas effectively. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils of different levels of attainment write competently for a wide range of purposes and for different audiences. They plan, draft and revise their writing well. Pupils give clear oral explanations in class. In Year 10, for example, they identify and explain writers' techniques well, and how these may need to be adapted for different media. They successfully compare the text of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with Kenneth Branagh's film of the book. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because teachers adapt work and teaching methods appropriately for them. Pupils talented in English make very good progress, inspired by the range of materials and methods used, and by the expert subject knowledge of teachers. Much of the writing of A level students is of high quality, analytical and shows sophisticated insights into texts. For example, students of all abilities in Year 13 confidently prepare presentations on aspects of George Eliot's technique and ideas in *The Mill on the Floss*, using a variety of approaches to extend their understanding. Pupils and students at both key stages and in the sixth form make good use

of word processing and desktop publishing to enhance their planning and presentation of work

76. Improvement in the department since the previous inspection has been very good. Key Stage 3 and A level results have improved, and GCSE standards have been well maintained. The needs of the least and most able are now well catered for. Reading for different purposes is embedded in the schemes of work, and is supported by helpful leaflets which remind pupils of the different approaches and skills involved. The department's focus on literacy is well planned and successful in equipping pupils to cope with the demands of the wider school curriculum. Individual plans for lessons are good, and ensure that schemes of work are taught consistently across year groups without curtailing teachers' individuality and personal enthusiasms.

77. Teaching is good overall. It is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. The consistent quality of teaching is the major reason why pupils and sixth form students achieve such good standards in English. Teachers have high expectations, making pupils think for themselves and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to new situations or demands. Marking of work is thorough and helpful, with clear indications of what pupils and students need to do to improve their attainment. Homework is set regularly, is relevant to classwork and is appropriate to individual needs. The pace of most lessons is brisk, activities are varied and teachers use skilful questions to probe and develop pupils' responses, both orally and in writing. In most lessons, pupils are encouraged to show initiative in planning and presenting their work, and so develop a sense of responsibility for what they do and pride in what they achieve. Teachers manage behaviour unobtrusively through the quality of the tasks that they set, which engage and sustain pupils' and students' interest. Relationships are very good throughout the department. The sense of mutual trust which exists in classrooms enables teachers, pupils and students to share experiences, feelings and beliefs in ways which enhance their personal development. For example, Year 11 pupils and their teacher talked about objects of personal significance as a background to studying poems from other cultures and traditions. In a very few lessons, there is too much direction by the teacher and tasks are insufficiently demanding, so that pupils become chatty and restless, particularly towards the end of lessons.

78. The department is well led. There is a clear sense of direction, and the whole team shows very high levels of shared commitment to improving standards still further. There is effective monitoring of teaching and moderation of standards in assessment, but there is no formal record of the monitoring of teaching. Some accommodation is cramped, which restricts the range of teaching approaches which can be comfortably used in certain rooms. In turn, this limits the potential for some pupils to develop further their already impressive repertoire of responses.

#### *Literacy across the curriculum*

79. Standards of speaking and listening, reading and writing are good in many subjects, but this is not consistently the case. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are generally good throughout the school, and have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are able to promote and support points of view in English and religious education. However, lower attainers struggle to explain mathematical concepts. Pupils listen sensitively to each other, showing respect for different ideas and opinions. Sixth form students take part in detailed and sophisticated discussions in lessons in English and physical education, for example. Speaking and listening skills are supported well in drama lessons.

80. Reading demands on pupils vary considerably. In English and history lessons throughout the school, there is good emphasis on developing skills such as skimming, scanning and comparing texts. In the sixth form, many students read widely for pleasure, and library lessons are an effective feature of the English curriculum in Year 7. Some form tutors encourage a weekly private reading session during afternoon registration. In other subjects, however, for example, design and technology and mathematics, there is no reading other than that directly related to classroom tasks. The limited use of information technology in some subjects results in pupils making insufficient use of texts from the Internet, although CD ROMs are increasingly used for researching information.

81. Pupils are expected to write for a good range of different purposes and audiences in English, geography, history and religious education. In these subjects, they write in varied forms and styles, including fiction, poetry, drama-scripts, newspaper reports and accounts. A level candidates in physical education make good use of notes, and produce successful longer pieces of writing, and geography students use their writing to advance and debate hypotheses. Extended writing is less well developed in other subjects, for example, in the explanatory parts of GCSE mathematical coursework and in design and technology. Key Stage 3 pupils do not present clear accounts of scientific experiments, but Year 11 pupils and A level students compile good notes. Lists of subject-specific vocabulary are displayed in many classrooms, and they are referred to frequently by teachers. Standards of presentation generally, and of handwriting in particular, vary too much in quality, and some is unsatisfactory. The presentation of work by less able pupils is often good. In most subjects, pupils' presentational skills improve as they progress through the school. However, teachers have inconsistent expectations regarding presentation, and sometimes accept unsatisfactory or incomplete work from pupils. Marking does not always emphasise the importance of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar, nor does it always give advice about improvement. Marking generally, and advice about improvement, is good throughout the English department.

82. There are a number of separate approaches to developing pupils' and students' skills of literacy throughout the school. Many of these are effective, but there is no strategic overview to ensure that maximum effect is gained across the whole curriculum. However, a support programme to improve literacy and reading, and a whole-school approach towards literacy, are included as priorities in the school improvement plan for 2000-2001. These detailed plans are well presented, with appropriate time-frames, costings, success criteria and monitoring procedures.

#### Drama

83. In 1999, 44 per cent of candidates achieved grades A\* to C in GCSE drama, compared with a national figure of 67 per cent. Results in recent years have been inconsistent in relation both to national figures and to the grades obtained by candidates in other GCSE subjects. This is largely explained by the fact that drama is an optional subject at Key Stage 4, so that the overall ability of groups, and the size of groups, varies from year to year. However, there has been a downward trend in GCSE results over the past three years. There have not been any recent candidates for A level theatre studies, but there are currently small groups in each of Years 12 and 13. The standard of their work is satisfactory, and candidates for the examination in summer 2000 are predicted to obtain grades appropriate to their abilities.

84. Attainment in lessons is satisfactory overall at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in Year 13. Pupils and students are able to plan and perform together, using scripts or

developing their own improvisations. Relationships are good, and pupils are generally sensitive to others' needs. They take opportunities to display initiative and responsibility when devising their own work, and persevere when faced with difficulties, for example in linking a series of scenes in Year 7 improvised melodramas, or in blocking significant moments in Year 12 scripted performances. Pupils and students sometimes fail to be sufficiently critical in evaluating their own and others' work, and are too easily satisfied with adequate but unchallenging outcomes, for example in Year 9 improvisations and Year 13 practical examination scenarios. Since the previous inspection, drama has continued to support the development of pupils' and students' skills in speaking and listening. Links with the English department are insufficient to make the most of shared approaches to developing common skills in literacy, particularly responses to dramatic texts.

85. Teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages and in the sixth form. All teaching displays good subject knowledge and understanding, and expectations of sixth form students are appropriate, so that they work hard and make a sustained creative effort in their work. Teachers' judgements about the quality of work in lessons are insufficiently searching, so that pupils and students are not always clear about the need to improve, or how they might improve. Teachers do not intervene often enough to make clear to pupils the standards required. Some lessons with younger pupils lack challenge and pace so that they become restless and lose concentration. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4.

86. Management of the drama department is satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work in the subject to enable a focused approach to meeting targets for improvement set by the department. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. The studio and hall have poor acoustics, and lighting and staging equipment is insufficient to allow pupils following examination courses to develop their technical skills to the highest levels.

## **MATHEMATICS**

87. On entry to the school, pupils' standards of attainment are broadly average. Standards achieved in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above and sometimes well above the national average over the last three years. Teachers' assessments were considerably higher than the standards which pupils achieved in the tests. Key Stage 3 test results are below average when compared with similar schools. In 1999, pupils' test results in mathematics were slightly higher than those which pupils gained in science but below those which they achieved in English. Over four years, there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the tests. Attainment in GCSE mathematics in 1999 was just above the national average in the achievement of grades A\* to C. This was an improvement on the 1998 result, but below that of 1997. GCSE results are below expectations based on the value added between the average point score achieved at Key Stage 3 and pupils' later GCSE results. Results in GCSE mathematics are broadly in line with what pupils achieve in their other subjects in the school. Boys' results at grades A\* to C appear better than girls', but girls obtain more grades A\* and A than boys. At A level, a very high proportion of A and B grades are achieved and all candidates regularly pass the examination. The higher than average number of A\* and A grades at GCSE in 1999 resulted in a much increased uptake of A level mathematics, particularly among girls.

88. In lessons observed, standards are above the nationally expected level by the end of Key Stage 3. Higher attainers have very good algebraic skills and good skills in using tree diagrams in probability. They apply factors of scale to problems of enlargement well. Pupils of average and just below average attainment are often insecure in their algebraic

skills. Their work in shape and space is satisfactory, as for example, when they use angles and recognise nets of solids. Pupils with special educational needs work systematically in tabulating data, but have difficulty with standard methods of long multiplication. Pupils of all levels of attainment are weakest when explaining their results orally.

89. In lessons by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain average standards. Pupils of high ability at Key Stage 4 achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. They show good facility in trigonometry and the geometry of circles. However, lower attainers are uncertain in using decimals. Pupils of average ability underachieve in algebra. Their recall of topics previously learned is weak, as shown in a lesson on linear graphs. Pupils with special educational needs have some skills in pattern spotting, but are sometimes hampered by their levels of competence in using language to understand questions and to explain their methods of working.

90. Attainment in sixth form lessons is above average. Students in Year 12 build well on their GCSE skills in statistics. Those in Year 13 satisfactorily consolidate their manipulative algebraic skills on logarithms and extend their understanding of elasticity and decision-making mathematics. In both Year 12 and Year 13, students show good technical skills, but find difficulty in setting their work in context or in explaining their findings.

91. The department has achieved satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, although teaching is not, overall, above satisfactory. Then A level results were 20 per cent below the national average. They have improved significantly to above average, and the proportion of A and B grades is well above average. Numbers of students studying A level mathematics have increased threefold. GCSE results are similar to those at the last inspection, but the proportion of A and A\* grades has increased. Girls' and boys' results are now more equal.

92. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some lessons seen in the sixth form were good. A few lessons were unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers are knowledgeable, technically correct and relate work well to the requirements of examinations and the National Curriculum. Pupils are confident in their teachers' guidance. Good relationships among teachers and pupils encourage positive attitudes to work. In all lessons observed, pupils behaved well. At both key stages and in the sixth form, students benefit from individual attention from teachers, and good, immediate, oral feedback to clarify their misunderstandings, as in A level statistics and pure mathematics lessons. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is well supported by good individual attention, and satisfactory co-ordination between teachers and special needs assistants. Information technology is used well to enhance pupils' work, as in Year 8 work with databases. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, much lesson planning is unimaginative and leaves pupils regarding mathematics as merely a collection of skills. In the unsatisfactory lessons, pace of work is too slow because a large part of these lessons constitutes individual work without enough overall direction from the teacher. Often pupils wait a long time for help and consequently lose concentration, albeit quietly, as in a Year 9 lesson on enlargement. In other lessons, by contrast, teachers talk too much. Pupils' progress is not sufficiently rigorously assessed in lessons. In some lessons, teachers set activities for pupils, but the intended aims and outcomes for learning are unclear. For pupils of average and lower attainment, underachievement often results from work that is ill matched to their needs, as in a Year 11 lesson on angles. These pupils' written work showed poorly understood algebra set at too high a level. Much marking of pupils' work is superficial and there are few written comments to enable pupils to improve. Exercise books are not always used well as an additional source of reference. Homework is set, but mistakes are rarely followed up enough.

93. The present good leadership of the department has improved teamwork and has resulted in raised attainment for high attaining pupils. However, teaching and pupils' work are not yet sufficiently monitored, and there is still underachievement among pupils in the middle range of ability. The very good analysis of examination results is gradually informing the work of the department and highlighting such areas for improvement.

#### *Numeracy across the curriculum*

94. Although within mathematics there is satisfactory provision to develop numeracy, there is no co-ordinated planning for it across the curriculum. There is no policy in place, nor audit completed to confirm the use of numeracy across all subject areas. Some links have been established between science and mathematics to enhance pupils' skills to manage formulae. In geography, data handling and graphical presentation are encouraged well at both key stages. Work in design and technology reinforces pupils' skills of measurement. However, there are lost opportunities in other curricular areas, such as modern foreign languages and physical education. The whole school improvement plan and that of the mathematics department recognise the need to formulate and implement a policy for numeracy across the curriculum.

95. Most pupils' numerical skills used across the curriculum are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. However, many pupils, including the most able, choose to be dependent on calculators, even when this is unnecessary. Many pupils are least secure in numerical skills involving decimals. For pupils with special educational needs, weak language skills have a detrimental effect on their achievement. Mispronunciations and poor spelling result in pupils writing apparently incorrect answers, when their number work is correct. At A level, numerical skills support students' achievements well. In geography, students are competent in using statistical methods to calculate correlations. In science, A level students can judge the reasonableness of their answers; they apply graphs, calculus, and other algebraic skills to their work successfully.

## **SCIENCE**

96. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average. In end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1999, pupils attained above average standards at level 5, but not at level 6. Attainment in science matched that in mathematics, but was below that in English. The trend is of steady improvement over the last three years at a level above average. Results are below those for similar schools. In GCSE double science in 1999, pupils' achievement of A\* to C grades was well above average. Almost all candidates regularly achieve a grade. Pupils usually achieve better results in science than in most of their other subjects. Most of the small number of pupils entered for single science achieved GCSE grades. At A level in 1999, most students passed the examinations, and the proportion of A and B grades was well above average in chemistry and physics. The small numbers of candidates for GNVQ advanced and intermediate courses passed the examinations, many with merits or distinctions.

97. Attainment in lessons is at the nationally expected level at Key Stage 3. It is above average at Key Stage 4. Written work is good and is neatly presented as a logical record of results with clear, labelled diagrams. Laboratory discipline is good and pupils take responsibility for collecting, assembling and using their apparatus. The skills of planning, executing and evaluating practical investigations are well developed from Key Stage 3 onwards. Although no complete investigations were attempted during the week, records of past work and pupils' responses in class indicate steady development of investigational

skills. High attaining pupils in Year 11 discussed the *Big Bang theory* and *red shift* with perception and confidence. By contrast, lower attainers at Key Stage 3 spend much time consolidating earlier work before they can tackle new material. At Key Stage 4, pupils show unusually high perception and grasp of new topics in some lessons. They make excellent progress at this key stage. Pupils with special educational needs, particularly when supported by classroom assistants, match the achievements and progress of their classmates. When they do not have this support, their difficulties in describing what they have done sometimes result in an unfinished record of their work. Pupils tackle GCSE investigations with confidence and competence. Attainment in lessons in the sixth form is above average. Students benefit from working in small groups where lessons proceed at a good pace. Teachers give attention to students' individual needs and present good challenge to higher attaining students, enabling them to progress well.

98. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Teaching is now very strong, and much improved. Management of classes has particularly improved. Assessment and monitoring have been developed effectively, and influence standards for the better. A major outstanding issue is the low level of resources that restricts the range of activities and depresses standards. In all other respects the department has made considerable progress.

99. The standard of teaching is very good overall. Over half the lessons seen were excellent or very good. Lessons contain a variety of activities and plenty of challenge, well matched to the levels of attainment of pupils. Good planning, brisk pace and good challenge are hallmarks of good lessons. In a GCSE lesson on inheritance, the teacher linked theoretical content to human characteristics present among pupils, involving the class in an absorbing experience. Pupils come to lessons interested in science, and this is heightened by the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, especially when they are teaching their own specialisations. They set high standards of behaviour and effort. Relationships are very good. All teachers are patient, and have a good sense of humour especially with lower attainers. The quality of learning that results is extremely good. Classroom assistants are well briefed and know what pupils will be attempting well in advance. Their presence greatly benefits the pupils. Lack of resources sometimes restricts activities to demonstration only, but teachers make good use of the apparatus available. Homework is relevant and achievable, but it is not always marked well enough to guide pupils on how to improve. As an outcome of good teaching, pupils enjoy learning science. They behave well, volunteer ideas and experiences willingly and politely and are cheerful and well motivated. Practical work is a particular enthusiasm and there is sensible competition to complete tasks and to achieve results. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups.

100. The department is well led. Staff work as a team. There is effective monitoring of teaching, which ensures that standards are good. The technicians are extremely efficient, and apparatus is deployed and collected unobtrusively. The department is extending automatic data-logging and data-base work. There is insufficient apparatus for group work, for example the use of oscilloscopes in sound and electricity. The lack of hands-on experience adversely affects pupils' standards of attainment. Work on optics, from simple demonstrations of the phases of the moon in Year 7 to refraction experiments at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, is hampered by lack of effective black-out. Good use is made of visits and involvement with local organisations such as the Neighbourhood Engineers in science-technology days. The displays of work are a source of pride for pupils, and provide good reinforcement of earlier work.

## **ART**



101. In 1999, a very high proportion of pupils achieved GCSE grades A\* to C. Almost a quarter of candidates attained A\* grades. Results compare very well with the national average. Standards have been sustained at this high level year-on-year since the last inspection. A level results are regularly very high. In 1999, almost all students gained A grades. GNVQ advanced results were also all distinctions. Pupils' and students' examination results in art are ahead of those in their other subjects.

102. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected level. Boys achieve particularly well. Attainment in two-dimensional media is high from Year 7 onwards. Work in pupils' large, well-kept art books shows good understanding of different artistic styles, which they can interpret well and use in their own practical work. Attainment in three-dimensional work is only average by the end of Year 9, because of lack of storage space for pupils' work. Some very large classes in small classrooms also make three-dimensional work impracticable. Where three-dimensional work following Picasso's style was undertaken in Year 7, as in homework models and a few examples of prior classwork, outcomes are sometimes very good. Pupils do not use information technology in their work at Key Stage 3.

103. Painting and drawing in current Key Stage 4 work are well above average and often excellent. The chosen examination for Key Stage 4 is a painting and drawing option so all work is in two dimensions. Pupils whose skills lie in three-dimensional work have no opportunity to pursue this to GCSE, because of constraints of accommodation. In almost all pupils' work, their technical skills and standards of mark-making in a rich variety of two-dimensional media are very high by Year 11. Many pupils' work shows individuality and imagination. Far less difference exists between the standards of boys and girls than is usually the case, with all pupils showing similarly high levels of competence. A few pupils have produced too little coursework to be entered for the examination. Standards in the growing sixth form are very high. Here, too, the course is painting and drawing. Students show excellent technical skill, combined with very high levels of creativity and flair. Personal studies seen in Year 13 are often extremely imaginatively presented, and standards are very high. GNVQ students also attain extremely high standards in their practical work and in their log-books.

104. Since the last inspection standards have risen significantly, particularly at Key Stage 3. Some weaknesses beyond the control of the department remain. Single periods are unsatisfactory, particularly for the sixth form. The growth of the sixth form has increased pressures on accommodation. Insufficient space is available. The situation is only acceptable because of the extremely tolerant, co-operative attitudes of all those using it. Three-dimensional work and information technology are still insufficient.

105. Teaching is very good. It is characterised by an enthusiasm for the subject which transmits itself to pupils, giving them confidence to achieve highly. Skills, especially two-dimensional techniques, are very effectively taught through Key Stage 3, providing a firm basis for GCSE work. Very good relationships underpin the department's work, culminating in exceptionally mature responses from sixth formers. Humour enlivens many lessons, creating in most pupils a sense of enjoyment in their developing competences. Teachers' methods are particularly successful in raising the attainment of boys to a position of parity with that of girls. Where necessary, discipline is firm and fair, with most pupils responding well to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and of their standards of work. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners from an early stage, and most accomplish this well. Teachers stretch pupils of all abilities very well, so that their achievement is often very good for their underlying ability. Gifted pupils and those with special educational needs

do well, with teachers' own expertise used very effectively to challenge them at different levels.

106. The department is well managed. There is a strong focus on pupils enjoying their work without losing sight of the high standards they can achieve. All resources are very well used to promote the excellent standards described. The quality of pupils' experience, however, is severely compromised by unsatisfactory accommodation, which both pupils and staff manage exceptionally well. Formal monitoring of teaching, combined with feedback to teachers through an appraisal process, is lacking. The department does not use computers enough in the curriculum for Key Stage 3 pupils. Some staff require more training in information technology.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

107. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\* to C has been significantly above average. In 1998, the proportion of girls achieving GCSE grades A\* to C was significantly below the national average, with boys attaining average results. In 1999, results were much higher and above those which pupils achieved in most of their other examination subjects. In recent years with the exception of 1998, all pupils entered for a GCSE in design and technology have achieved an A\* to G grade, a situation which is well above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils achieving at the highest grade of A\* is broadly similar to the national trend over three years, and in 1998, it was twice that of the national average for this grade. The proportion of students achieving an A or B grade at A level in design and technology is regularly above the national average. The overall pass rate for students in A level design is also well above average.

108. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils attain the nationally expected levels. A very small minority attain below expectations. However, the making-skills of these pupils are satisfactory, and stronger than their knowledge and understanding of designing. Most pupils' design work in food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles shows satisfactory, and often good, creativity. Objects made show flair and imagination, as for example in the kite project in Year 7 graphics, and in the tie project in Year 8 textiles. Pupils' skills of presentation and graphicacy are good overall. A small proportion of the work of mostly lower attainers is not enhanced by poorly executed use of felt-tip coloured pens. Higher attaining pupils show good levels of fluency in the use of technical terms, but lower attaining pupils are often hesitant and unsure of correct terminology. Product outcomes are well matched to the initial design specification. Pupils make good progress in developing a good understanding of the process of design throughout the key stage.

109. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils attain standards that are well above average. A small minority attain very high standards. Work seen in all subjects reflects above average GCSE results. Pupils show good understanding of the principles and processes of designing in all material areas. They carry out their designs well in food technology, and apply industrial practice successfully. Good skills in analysis of products is shown, for example, in the disassembly of pizzas in Year 11 food technology. Pupils show good understanding of nutritional, sensory, chemical and physical properties of food. In resistant materials most pupils show much flair and imagination in their design solutions. In all areas, outcomes are of a good standard. Almost all pupils show good skills in using tools, equipment and machinery, and are very conscious of the need for safe working practices. Pupils' standards of technical writing and graphical communication are very good, with clear and detailed annotated sketches used to explain design ideas. In all design areas, most pupils use information technology well to complete coursework. Although this is mostly only word processing or desktop publishing work, it is of a good

standard, and in food technology incorporates digital photographs of product outcomes. With the exception of some basic work in Year 10, pupils' skills in using computer-aided design software or computer-aided manufacturing equipment are very much underdeveloped.

110. Standards in the sixth form are high. Students produce innovative and imaginative solutions to design problems. Their standards of graphical presentation are very good, shown in outstanding work in many students' design folders. Projects incorporate outcomes that reflect clients' needs and clearly fulfil the design criteria set out in the original specification. Students' products are well crafted and reflect high competence and levels of confidence in using tools and equipment in fashioning a range of materials.

111. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved. Higher attainers no longer underachieve at GCSE. Teaching is now very good. Space in workshops has become a problem. Large classes in cramped workshops are a health and safety concern. The quality of the accommodation in some materials' areas adversely affects the quality of learning. Resources are generally unsatisfactory, with insufficient suitable equipment to fulfil the control technology requirement of the National Curriculum for design and technology at Key Stage 3. Not all pupils follow a design and technology course at Key Stage 4, as required by current statutory orders.

112. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3, and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. All teachers have very secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Most use a range of designs well. These are displayed on workshop walls or in folders, to support and guide pupils effectively in their designing. Worksheets provide clear guidelines for projects, and the work effectively challenges higher attainers. Some worksheets are insufficiently adapted to meet the needs of the lowest attainers. Most pupils are clearly aware of what they need to do and are well informed and motivated by the teaching. Most pupils work hard and make satisfactory progress in the completion of their designs in lessons. In many lessons, good humour prevails and an atmosphere conducive to positive learning is established. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, respond well to the teaching styles adopted, show considerable interest, sustain concentration for long spans of time, and make good and often very good progress in lessons. Homework is regularly set to extend the curriculum. The technician in food technology provides an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning. Technical support is insufficient overall, but is used very well, given the very large size of classes seen in many lessons. Teachers provide good verbal feedback to pupils on their progress, and the assessment system very effectively enables pupils to understand how well they are progressing.

113. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and have ensured good progress in resolving most of the issues identified in the last report. The commitment to further improvement by the team of teachers is excellent.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

114. Over the last four years, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE A\* to C grades has been above the national average, except in 1998. Results were above average in 1999. Over a quarter of candidates achieved GCSE grades A\* and A, a proportion above the national average. Although girls outperform boys in gaining the highest GCSE grades, there is little difference between their performance at the A\* to C grades. This is a result of the department's efforts to reduce boys' underachievement. In recent years, the proportion of A level students gaining A and B grades has been well above average and all students have obtained pass grades. In 1999, six out of seven students achieved A grades. Pupils

and sixth form students attained higher standards in examinations in geography than in most of their other subjects in 1999.

115. Pupils achieve above the standards expected nationally in lessons at Key Stage 3. Teachers support progress by insisting that pupils use technical vocabulary correctly, and enable them to develop their ideas orally and through detailed writing. As a result, Year 7 higher and middle-attaining pupils, for example, expressed their ideas clearly when writing about China's one-child policy. By the end of Year 9, pupils show good understanding of patterns and process and have a well-developed sense of place. This is evident in work about the Mount St Helen's volcanic eruption, when most pupils established good links between the causes and the effects. Lower-attaining pupils have more difficulty matching cause to effect. They have poor levels of literacy and struggle with writing, but show better understanding orally. At Key Stage 4, pupils attain above-average standards in lessons. They build effectively on previous learning and improve their understanding of increasingly difficult ideas. By the end of Year 11, most know more about places. They handle information competently although information technology is under-used.

116. A level students achieve well above average standards in lessons. They have a very good grasp of ideas. They work with a high degree of independence and adapt their work well for different purposes. Their ability to construct logical and coherent arguments is evident in Year 12 planning inquiries and Year 13 individual presentations. These are well researched and show much creative and intellectual effort. Most students remember previous work well. Their practical and analytical skills are progressively developed through fieldwork. Their numerical skills support their work well.

117. Since the previous inspection, pupils' standards of attainment have been sustained at above, and often well above, average. Key Stage 3 pupils have benefited from teachers' use of improved work plans that give increased opportunities for independent thinking and learning. The use of data to identify and target underachievers has helped Key Stage 4 pupils, particularly boys, to do better. Techniques to aid revision have been used effectively. As yet, such information is not sufficiently used at Key Stage 3 to correct weaknesses in planning and to help pupils to improve. Individual targets in geography have yet to be introduced to support further improvement.

118. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is most effective at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers use their expertise particularly well to respond to pupils' questions, stimulating their intellectual curiosity and extending their understanding. Overall, expectations are high, and teachers set demanding but achievable tasks. They plan lessons well, and make a brisk start. Pupils are given clear guidance about what they are doing, and so know what they are to aim to achieve. Key Stage 3 work schemes support non-specialist geographers well in their planning. Most teachers use a variety of methods and resources to interest and involve everyone. Use of pair and group-work enables pupils to consolidate and develop their learning well. Occasionally, some teachers miss an opportunity to test pupils' understanding before beginning the next activity, or spend undue time helping individuals at the expense of keeping the rest of the class fully focussed. Then learning is slower. Teachers' good management of behaviour leads to a working atmosphere where all pupils feel secure enough to make suggestions and take the initiative in their learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, with the teacher's guidance, pupils confidently explored different theories about the effects of population growth. Good verbal feedback in lessons helps pupils to improve. Homework supports classwork. However, much marking is unhelpful and incomplete work is not always followed up. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They benefit from being taught in small groups where teachers give good support. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work, and

sixth form students are strongly committed to do well. Most concentrate, and listen attentively to the teacher and to each other. They enjoy lessons and are prepared to use their initiative and take some responsibility for their learning. The high quality of their learning is shown in projects and individual studies completed for homework. Much individual work, particularly in the sixth form, is of high quality, often presented very well with the use of information technology.

119. The department is well led and managed by the acting team leader. Teachers work closely as a team. The department would benefit from a permanent appointment as leader, so that clear educational direction continues to be provided. The monitoring of teaching to ensure consistent practice is not yet in place.

## **HISTORY**

120. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSE A\* to C grades has remained above the national average for the last three years, but in 1999, no pupil achieved the highest grade. Pupils' GCSE results are usually in line with those that they attain in their other subjects. A level standards are regularly high; most students achieved A or B grades in 1999.

121. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils achieve in line with national expectations. They make good gains in knowledge and understanding of the main events in the historical periods they have study. Higher attaining pupils are able to analyse reasons and understand different interpretations of historical events. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, make good gains in knowledge, but their understanding lags behind. At Key Stage 4, achievement is above average. Pupils can think critically, and analyse historical events, effectively identifying causes and consequences. They link factors together well to form an overall view. Pupils produce well-planned extended writing, which shows balanced views and rational argument; some coursework on local history is a good example of this. In the sixth form, students achieve well above average standards in lessons. They think and analyse independently very well. For example, during a lesson on the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler, students grappled with the psychology of Hitler very well. They think critically, marshal evidence and argument, and grasp complex concepts and ideology. Their standard of essay writing is very good.

122. Since the previous inspection good standards have been maintained at both key stages and in the sixth form. The use of key words and glossaries, especially at Key Stage 3, helps pupils to improve their literacy, and the subject makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' skills of literacy. Although some progress has been made in the use of information technology, lack of access to good quality facilities has restricted development in this area.

123. Teaching is mostly good, and is very good in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, it is satisfactory, but with some very good teaching. Teachers use a range of teaching techniques including video clips, group-work and clear exposition, which enable pupils to learn successfully. The use of timelines and key dates enhances pupils' understanding of chronology. A Year 7 class was captivated by the use of apples to help them understand the size of pustules caused by the Black Death. Although teachers set homework regularly, more detailed marking of both homework and classwork is needed to help pupils to improve their work. At Key Stage 4, teaching is good. This enthuses pupils and sets high expectations for their quality of work. Teachers have good command of the subject. Their expositions are lively, knowledgeable and sprinkled with humorous anecdotes. In the sixth form, teaching is very good. Teachers' depth of knowledge and passion for the subject

result in high expectations and high achievements by students. Independent thinking is encouraged through challenging debate and discussion.

124. Teaching was unsatisfactory in three lessons. There was over-direction and a lack of an adequate range of teaching methods. Pupils did not make gains in knowledge and understanding, as they should. In one lesson there were weaknesses in management of pupils. Assessment data is now being used well to track the progress of Year 10 pupils. However, this good practice has not yet been sufficiently extended to other years.

125. The history department benefits from enthusiastic and efficient leadership. Although the head of department has only been in post since September, significant improvements have already taken place, including some monitoring of teaching and learning. This is an improved and improving department with the vision and capacity to continue to improve.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

126. National comparisons for the subject are not possible at present because GCSE information technology courses have only recently been introduced. A small cohort of pupils in Year 10 is following a short course in GCSE information technology. The school plans to introduce an A level information technology course in the coming academic year.

127. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment of most pupils are broadly in line with national expectations in all required strands of the National Curriculum for information technology. A very small minority of pupils attain above expectations. Some pupils attain below this standard. With the exception of Year 7, where information technology is taught as a discrete subject, information technology is taught within other subjects across the curriculum. These arrangements are mostly effective, although some subjects have yet to adopt appropriate strategies to support the development of pupils' skills. In Year 7 timetabled information technology lessons, pupils show good skills in using desktop publishing to establish a log for organising a school trip. During one Year 7 lesson, pupils used the school's intranet to link to the Internet to research the project. However, technical difficulties outside the school's control restricted the exercise, but pupils showed satisfactory and developing skills in accessing this resource. By the end of the key stage, most pupils communicate information successfully through word processing and desktop publishing. Most pupils show a good understanding of the hardware and the software used. Almost all pupils have satisfactory keyboarding skills. They use the mouse well to negotiate icons, menus and functions when loading the required software from the network. Oral communication and the application of numerical skills through the use of spreadsheets and databases are satisfactory. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their work, and most are able to use the correct technical vocabulary for the subject. Pupils' achievement in control technology is not satisfactory, with work at a basic level only.

128. At the end of Key Stage 4, in the GCSE information technology course, standards are in line with those achieved nationally. However, for most pupils, the lack of opportunities for them to develop their skills through planned, systematic provision depresses standards, which are below average overall. Some subjects have yet to identify National Curriculum requirements for information technology in their schemes of work. Other subjects make good use of information technology in support of learning, and pupils make good progress where it is used. Where information technology is used, it is currently word-processing and desktop publishing. The widespread use of CD ROM for research, spreadsheets for modelling or graphical work, and research using information obtained from external sources such as the Internet remain underdeveloped in most subjects throughout Key Stage 4. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are average. There is

good communication of information through word-processed or desktop published text. Very good standards of information technology were seen in students' design folders in design and technology. Many students make good use of electronic sources of information to research their projects in most subjects.

129. In all the timetabled lessons for information technology, teaching is good. The specialist teachers are enthusiastic about their work and effectively stimulate pupils' interest and motivation. They explain software concepts clearly and provide straightforward, effective demonstrations of the applications, using a large screen linked to a computer, so that all pupils can clearly see the processes involved. Teachers provide challenging and interesting tasks which are well matched to pupils' abilities. The problems posed build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge and conceptual understanding of the subject. Teachers provide high levels of individual support and guidance, working with pupils at computers. Teaching styles and methods used impact positively on pupils' learning. Most pupils respond well to the teaching, show interest, sustain their concentration, and make good progress in lessons. Teachers are good at testing pupils' understanding of the required task. Key Stage 3 course worksheets, produced within the department, successfully identify learning objectives, list new, relevant terminology, and fully reflect requirements of the National Curriculum. Some tasks and written instructions within the worksheets are insufficiently modified to suit the needs of the lowest attaining pupils but, overall, teachers enable pupils with special educational needs to progress satisfactorily, particularly in the Key Stage 4 non-GCSE options. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. The technicians provide very good support to teachers and pupils alike and contribute very effectively to pupils' learning. However, most teaching across the curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not sufficiently include use of information technology.

130. Current leadership of information technology is very good and has assured the significant improvement in standards since the last inspection. The school has made a major investment in resources for information technology including the introduction, at Key Stage 3, of innovative software, which is beginning to have a very positive effect on pupils' interest, motivation and attainment. The subject now fully reflects the requirement of the National Curriculum for information technology at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 provision does not fully meet statutory requirements. There has been improvement in use of information technology in some subjects but its use is uneven within these, with weaknesses remaining in many other subjects.

#### *Information technology across the curriculum*

131. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject in Year 7 where standards are good. It is taught across the curriculum for the other two years of Key Stage 3 and standards are satisfactory. The arrangements are effective, with many subjects using applications to advantage to enhance pupils' learning in their own subjects. Occasionally, for example in lessons in mathematics, the development of skills in information technology becomes a higher priority than the mathematical skills being developed. In English the use of information technology to draft and redraft work effectively enhances pupils' skills of literacy. In most subjects, at Key Stage 4, insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to enhance their learning through the systematic and sustained use of applications of information technology,

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

132. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\* to C in 1999 was just above the national average in French and just below in German. The proportion of girls gaining these grades was well above the national average in French and just above in German. In contrast, the proportion of boys gaining these grades was well below the national average for boys in both languages. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\* to G in 1999 was in line with the national average in French and just below in German. In both languages, the overall trend for boys' attainment over three years has been downward and should be higher. The department has taken effective measures to identify under-achievers among boys in the present Year 11 and plans to raise standards through target-setting and consultation with parents. Girls performed well in 1997, dropped below national averages in 1998 and improved in 1999. Pupils perform better in some other GCSE subjects than they do in German, and in most other subjects than they do in French. For boys, however, French and German are their weakest subjects. The GCSE results at grades A\* to C in Spanish for a smaller group of second language learners were substantially above the national average. A small group of three A level students in French all gained a pass grade in French in 1999, but did less well than in their other subjects. In the previous year, larger groups in French and German gained results that were above the national average.

133. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in lessons and in work seen in French is average overall. The consistent use of the foreign language in the classroom by teachers ensures that pupils' understanding is satisfactory. Pupils' oral skills are satisfactory and are developed in many lessons. A Year 7 French class sang very confidently and with enjoyment at the end of one lesson. Year 7 pupils' exercise books show some good written work at the nationally expected standard. The standard of written work in Year 8 varies considerably. Some is of very poor quality because of inappropriate teaching methods, and some is of a high standard, with pupils using the perfect tense correctly to write about visits to different countries. By Year 9, most pupils use the perfect tense competently. However, some of the work seen consisted either of copying or translations in English. Extended writing is insufficiently well developed.

134. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment overall is broadly average in German, average in French and above average in Spanish. Pupils' understanding is developed well by teachers with their use of the foreign language and exercises in listening. Pupils' oral skills are being effectively further developed now that their written coursework has been completed, but Year 11 pupils are not yet confident speakers. They are, however, being encouraged to extend their oracy by challenging teaching. For example, higher attainers in a Year 10 French class spoke confidently, using different tenses correctly in conditional sentences. There is a good range of writing in each language involving relevant vocabulary, but pupils are not always consistently accurate.

135. Students' attainment in the sixth form is above average in French, and average in German and Spanish. Students in a French class seen spoke confidently, and used the language successfully among themselves. They had good knowledge of their set literary text. Students in German and Spanish read authentic texts and answered questions successfully, both orally and in writing. All sixth form lessons are conducted in the relevant language.

136. Since the previous inspection, improvement has not been satisfactory overall. All pupils have been required to study a foreign language to the end of Key Stage 4, making accurate comparisons of GCSE results not possible over the five years. However, attainment at GCSE has been broadly at the national average, but boys' performance has been weak. Few pupils are choosing to study a second language at GCSE. So few want to



study at A level that courses for Year 12 in French and German may not be provided in September 2000, a great concern for some pupils and parents. At the time of the previous inspection, teaching resources were considered to be good. Now the department is under-resourced for dictionaries and textbooks. Some of the equipment is old. The lack of resources is adversely affecting the standards that pupils achieve.

137. The quality of teaching, overall, is satisfactory. It is better at Key Stage 4 than elsewhere. One lesson seen was poor, one unsatisfactory, and of the remainder just over one third of the lessons were good. In most lessons, teachers make good use of the foreign language to challenge pupils in their learning, and this helps to develop pupils' understanding. Teachers' planning is good, providing a good variety of tasks and skills. In the best lessons, teachers' expectations are high, and pupils are well challenged. For example, lower attainers in a Year 9 French class extended their vocabulary effectively into a role-play, with prompts from the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory, and sometimes good progress at both key stages. In some lessons, pupils' oral skills are developed well. For example, in a Year 10 German lesson, middle attainers were expected to say a sentence that they had learned before they left the classroom. In other lessons, pupils are required to speak in complete sentences. Management of pupils is good, as are relationships in many lessons. Homework is set regularly, but is not always marked well enough by all teachers to help pupils improve their work. The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory in most lessons seen, at all ages. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills and to consolidate vocabulary, grammatical constructions and tenses. For example, a Year 11 Spanish lesson began with oral revision of all parts of different verbs. The perfect tense is well drilled in Key Stage 4 classes. In lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, pupils are unsure of what to do and there is a lack of whole-class teaching, with the result that they make little progress and many mistakes. There is too much dependence on English in these lessons, and insufficient reliance upon what pupils can remember. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are never less than satisfactory and are usually good; even in lessons where teaching was less than satisfactory, pupils were not disruptive. Pupils work well together in pairs in many lessons. In one Year 9 lesson of lower attainers in French, boys in the class worked particularly well and responded to good teaching. However, much written work, particularly that of boys, is left unfinished and teachers do not ensure that pupils complete corrections.

138. The head of department is diligent and hardworking, but regular monitoring of teaching is lacking, resulting in an inconsistent quality of experience for pupils.

## **MUSIC**

139. Pupils' attainment at GCSE grades A\* to C was well above average in 1999 and 1998, although no A\* grades were achieved in 1999. In 1997, results were well below average. During the last two years, pupils' GCSE results have compared well with what they achieve in their other subjects. There were no A level candidates in 1999.

140. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment match those expected nationally. Significant numbers of pupils of higher attainment exceed this level. Pupils have good listening skills and most can confidently perform independent parts in ensemble work. However, their composing lacks a sense of unity and many do not use musical judgement to refine their work. Across the key stage, achievement is improving. Younger pupils are developing good aural skills and compose with imagination, sensitivity and coherence. Most pupils accurately use simple technical language, but their non-technical descriptive vocabulary is underdeveloped. Standards of singing are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. However, in classes with several

such pupils there is insufficient support to ensure that they can proceed confidently in independent work.

141. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. Higher attainers create imaginative pieces using a wide variety of resources with great sensitivity. Many perform at a level well above the required standard. Pupils of average attainment compose attractive, properly structured pieces, and confidently perform moderately demanding repertoire. However, pupils of lower attainment do not always receive sufficient support; because groups are large and the accommodation is congested, these pupils do not always attain at the level of which they are capable. Achievement in sixth form lessons is above average overall. Classes are small and vary widely in ability, but attainment matches the abilities of individual students. Higher attaining students produce thoughtful and exciting work, and perform at levels which exceed the requirements of the examination. Students' written work is well researched.

142. Since the previous inspection good standards of attainment and teaching have been maintained at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and have improved at Key Stage 3. The inadequacies of resources and accommodation identified in the last inspection have not yet been remedied.

143. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, almost all teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is characterised by an imaginative approach which stimulates pupils and students and encourages them to experiment with ideas which break free of convention. A sixth form lesson skilfully demonstrated techniques with a computer for creating an entire arrangement from a single idea. At the same time, the emphasis on the development of aural skills encouraged pupils to develop musical discrimination and discipline. In one Year 8 class, pupils very quickly understood and could operate alternate bars of simple and compound rhythms. They then composed and performed short pieces with asymmetric time signatures, displaying great panache. Teachers have a very good understanding of how pupils develop their musical skills, and enthusiastically share their considerable expertise to provide a lively, creative environment for pupils at all levels of ability. Occasionally, not enough time is allocated to allow pupils opportunities to review their progress in the lesson. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and extend opportunities for learning well. Levels of co-operation and concentration at all stages are high and a great deal of enthusiasm for musical activities is shown at both key stages and in the sixth form. Younger pupils in particular are very supportive of each other, listening closely to one another's performances, keen for individual players to succeed. Equipment is handled safely and pupils move around and control noise considerately in crowded conditions.

144. The quality of instrumental teaching to around eighty pupils is good and many perform at a high level. The department is making strenuous efforts to establish a range of instrumental ensembles. These groups play interesting repertoire well. However, not enough of the school's instrumentalists support these activities and the take-up of these opportunities is low. Choral work is developing well, and is well supported.

145. Departmental leadership is good and the commitment to improvement is excellent. The department has made a good start in creating a useful handbook, but it does not yet include schemes of work for all key stages. Long-term aims are not sufficiently specific. Planning of lessons does not clearly identify methods by which objectives can be achieved. The department has a good system for assessing attainment within particular topics but criteria for assessing progress over time are not precise. Liaison with primary schools has been established, but is not yet fully effective in ensuring continuity across the curriculum.

146. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. In the over-resonant acoustics of the ground floor room, pupils cannot hear their work properly, and provision for separate spaces for group-work is inadequate. As rooms are on separate floors, it is difficult to share equipment safely. The upstairs room is in a poor state of decoration. Resources for music are unsatisfactory. Provision for music technology is out of date and unreliable, but the school plans to redress this situation in the near future. There are not sufficient keyboards to meet the needs of pupils at Key Stage 4 and, of those in use, many are in need of repair. The department's present level of funding is inadequate to meet the costs of replacing worn-out equipment. In some lessons, staffing levels for classes at Key Stage 4 are too low to ensure that all pupils make the progress they could.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

147. In 1999 and in recent years, pupils achieved well above average standards at GCSE grades A\* to C. There were few A level students in 1999, but the five candidates all passed the examination, and two achieved A and B grades. In 1998, A level results were very high with 9 out of 12 candidates gaining A or B grades. Results in physical education compare favourably with those of other subjects in the school.

148. In lessons, pupils achieve above national expectations at Key Stage 3. They have well-developed skills in games, swimming and dance. There are very few non-swimmers. Most pupils are able to use the major strokes on both front and back. Some girls in Year 7 can already swim the butterfly-dolphin stroke efficiently. By the end of Key Stage 3, girls show application and sensitivity in dance and they appreciate the need to perform movements with style to enhance the quality of their work. They plan and evaluate their work well and become increasingly creative. In hockey, both boys and girls show control, producing good standards of play. At Key Stage 4, pupils attain above average standards. Their skills in games are well developed. Boys and girls show good understanding and apply their skills well in soccer, badminton, hockey and netball. Girls produce flowing play in netball, showing efficient passing and catching skills. They clearly enjoy physical education. Pupils referee when necessary and do so effectively. Good practical standards in swimming are achieved at GCSE. There is marked improvement in performance when pupils analyse each other's work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are very well integrated into lessons at both key stages. Students achieve well above average standards in lessons on the A level course. They have very good subject knowledge and express themselves confidently. Standards of note-taking and writing are very good and homework, which is well marked and promptly returned, is of good quality.

149. Since the previous inspection pupils' attainment at GCSE has improved further. Students achieve highly on the A level course. There has been clear improvement in pupils' abilities to plan and evaluate their own performance in dance, games and swimming. Teachers now emphasise opportunities for pupils to respond individually very well. However, assessment does not make enough reference to National Curriculum levels. Pupils are not yet made aware of the criteria which enable them to attain particular levels of performance. Difficulties of accommodation continue. Changing facilities are still very poor. They are far too small for the numbers using them, and make showering difficult. There is still no designated subject teaching room to support the very successful examination courses in physical education. The floor of one indoor area is lifting and raises concerns over pupils' safety. The accommodation in the sports centre used by the school is very good.

150. Teaching is very good. Some lessons are excellent and none less than satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned. Aims and objectives are clearly thought out. Teaching styles are flexible enough to give pupils responsibility for their own learning. Lessons proceed with good pace and purpose and pupils are highly motivated and interested. This was seen to particularly good effect in A level theory, in swimming at Key Stage 3 and in games at both key stages. Teachers are all specialists and they have very good knowledge of the subject. Most are prepared to demonstrate when the circumstances require it, and do so very well. In many lessons, objectives are shared with pupils at the outset. Homework is carefully considered and designed to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly so in the sixth form. Marking is often thorough and informs pupils how they can improve. In lessons, pupils show confidence, raise searching questions and produce good practical work. Behaviour is never less than good and frequently very good or excellent. Pupils are polite, listen carefully and concentrate well. Rates of non-participation are very low.

151. The department provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities in which many pupils and teachers participate. Extra-curricular provision is strong in games for both boys and girls, and many enthusiastically support the activities. Some pupils achieve very high, representative standards in games. There are good links with sport clubs locally, further enhancing pupils' skills. Extra-curricular provision extends pupils' learning well, for example, teachers provide a highly structured weekend revision course for A level students.

152. The department is well led and managed, has good morale and functions efficiently as a team. Efforts are being made to monitor pupils' progress continuously, but systems are not yet fully in place. Pupils and students do not make enough use of information technology, for example either for information retrieval or word-processing.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

153. Since 1995, there have only been two years in which pupils took the GCSE full-course examination in religious studies. In both years the number of candidates was relatively low. Results in 1998 were above the national average, and boys did better than girls. In 1996 results were well above average with no significant difference between boys and girls. In both years, results compared well with results in other subjects. At A level, there have been no candidates in recent years. Students in the sixth form receive their basic statutory entitlement to religious education through elements of the general studies course, in themes on the human condition and philosophical issues.

154. Pupils' achievements in lessons by the end of Key Stage 3 match and often exceed expected outcomes set out in the Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and of other world religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. They also have a good appreciation of how religious belief affects daily living, for example in the rituals of worship in the home, for Hindus and Moslems. Most pupils express their ideas well in discussion. For example, pupils in Year 7 gave clear explanations of the Hindu concept of one God in many forms, and illustrated their answers with a wide range of examples. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment use religious terminology accurately and have a good understanding of the importance of symbolism. Most pupils produce good quality written work which is usually attractively presented. They record their information effectively in a variety of ways. For example, parables and life-histories are told in cartoon-style, and research on local churches is well documented in individual booklets. Charts are used efficiently to record factual evidence. Spider graphs vividly illustrate a complex network of relationships, such as those that sustain and enrich the local community. Pupils explore

spiritual themes thoughtfully through their personal viewpoints on religious faith and their reflections on the purpose of suffering. Wall displays are informative and imaginative, and pupils use information technology to good effect, as for example, in the Year 9 newspaper articles on Buddhist beliefs and descriptions of the visit to the Hindu temple at Neasden and the Mosque in Central London.

155. At Key Stage 4, religious education is provided within personal and social education. However, there is not enough time allotted to the subject within the overall programme to cover the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Nevertheless, the quality of the work done on the available modules is satisfactory and, by the end of Year 11, the standards of attainment of the majority of pupils match expectations of the syllabus for the work which they do. For example, discussions in a Year 11 lesson on social harmony showed that pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of Christian attitudes towards prejudice and discrimination. In the GCSE class in Year 11, most pupils attain above average standards. Their written assignments show that they have a good grasp of Christian perspectives on the sanctity of life. For example, pupils of all levels of attainment have a clear understanding of basic issues on the subject of euthanasia. Higher attainers produce balanced essays of considerable length which are very well written and carefully researched. The viewpoints of different Christian denominations are recorded objectively, personal opinions are cogently argued and pupils make good use of evidence from a wide range of sources. Although the essays of middle and lower attainers are not as fully developed, and do not give enough information on different viewpoints, they are clearly written, show sound basic knowledge and are interesting to read. Pupils make good use of word processing so that essays are well presented.

156. In the sixth form, little work was seen during the inspection because of the sequence of syllabus topics. However, Year 12 students showed good understanding of aspects of Cartesian thought in discussion.

157. The school has made good progress in responding to the concerns raised in the last report. At Key Stage 3, the allocation of time for the subject has been increased and this has resulted in an improvement in standards so that pupils in Year 9 are no longer hampered by lack of knowledge. Provision for religious education in the sixth form has been strengthened and will be further developed in the newly structured programme for general studies within the revised curriculum which is to be introduced in September 2000. Resources have much improved. The department now has an adequate supply of artefacts and textbooks at Key Stage 3, and also a good video collection. The provision of religious education at Key Stage 4 is still inadequate but plans are in place to remedy this by introducing a short course in religious studies at GCSE in September 2000.

158. The quality of teaching is good. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is shared within the humanities department where there is only one specialist in religious education but, with his support, teachers work well as a team. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and an enthusiasm for it. In the lessons seen, there was no unsatisfactory teaching, and in most lessons the teaching was good, with one example of very good teaching. Pupils respond well to their teachers and the quality of learning is good. Pupils usually listen carefully, concentrate on their work, and behave responsibly. The strengths of the teaching lie in the way in which teachers prepare and organise their lessons and in their high expectations of pupils' attainment. For example, teachers help pupils to make good progress by giving them clear objectives and move lessons on at a purposeful pace. Good class management enables teachers to use their time effectively in giving individual support to pupils in some of the lower sets, and in mixed-ability classes there is a good match of tasks to the pupils'

different levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with their learning, along with their peers. Teachers make effective use of resources, such as video recordings, to challenge pupils' thinking and to deepen their spiritual and moral awareness. A good example of this was in a Year 11 lesson on human rights, where the teacher ensured that pupils grasped the key issues by taking the video in stages with breaks to discuss the main points. There are a few shortcomings. Sometimes teachers do too much of the work, so that explanations take up too much of the lesson, and pupils do not have enough opportunity to find out things for themselves. Occasionally, some pupils make insufficient progress because they need more guidance than they receive in tackling their written assignments. Unfinished work in exercise books is not followed up, and therefore pupils have gaps in their knowledge of a particular area of the curriculum. However, the strengths of the teaching far outweigh the weaknesses.

159. The subject is well managed and there is a strong ethos for learning which contributes to good attitudes and appropriate standards. Although limitations in non-contact time have made it difficult for the head of department to monitor teaching, pupils' progress is regularly assessed to ensure that standards are maintained.