

INSPECTION REPORT

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School
Horncastle

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique Reference Number: 120707

Inspection Number: 184587

Headteacher: Mr. T. J. Peacock

Reporting inspector: Mr. N. E. Power
2790

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708487

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	West Street Horncastle Lincolnshire LN9 5AD
Telephone number:	01507 522465
Fax number:	01507 527711
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. F. W. Walker
Date of previous inspection:	February 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. N. E. Power, Rgl		Attainment and progress
		Teaching
		Leadership and management
Mrs. A. Taylor, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Mr. G. Allison	Geography	
	Information technology	
Mr. K. G. Boden	Design and technology	
Mr. T. Brett	Modern foreign languages	Staffing
Mr. M. Butterworth	Physical education	
	Special educational needs	
Miss J. Johnson	Science	
Mr. B. Juxon	Mathematics	The efficiency of the school
Mr. W. Stoneham	Key Stage 4	Accommodation
	6 th Form provision	
	Business studies	
	Economics	
Mr. P. Legon	History	Curriculum and assessment
Mr. G. Price	English	
Mrs. J. Radford	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mrs. S. Schofield	Art	
Mr. P. Tidmarsh	Music	Learning resources

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
1 Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

01543 675027

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- High levels of attainment are achieved in every key stage
- An excellent ethos for learning is provided in which relationships are very good
- There is much good quality teaching with a substantial amount which is very good or outstanding
- Strong leadership gives clear direction for the future development of the school
- Excellent provision is made for pupils' cultural development
- Very positive attitudes to learning and excellent levels of personal development are encouraged enabling pupils to make good progress
- A stimulating and comprehensive range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided
- The school's finances are very well managed
- Very good attitudes to the use of information technology facilities are encouraged

Where the school has weaknesses

The school has no major weaknesses, although there are some areas to which it should give attention in order to improve further the good quality of education it currently provides. In addition to continuing with development in the priority areas identified in its plan for the current year the following matters should be addressed:

- I. co-ordination of the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education;
- II. enhancement of the provision for pupils' spiritual development;
- III. efficient use of time in the extended registration sessions;
- IV. enhancement of the provision in the library;
- V. revision or construction of certain items of required documentation.

The school has many strengths and no major weaknesses, although there are some minor points to which the school needs to give attention alongside the areas of development on which it is already engaged. The governors' action plan will set out how these points will be tackled and a copy of the plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in most of the areas identified as key issues. High standards have been maintained and the support for pupils with special educational needs has been effectively co-ordinated and developed. Several changes of personnel in middle management roles have enabled the school to develop a unified approach to school improvement. The health and safety issues identified have been dealt with. The provision for religious education in the upper school now meets statutory requirements, although the increase in the time allocation in Key Stage 4 has not yet reached Year 11. The legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not yet fully met and the overall provision for pupils' personal, social and health education could be more coherent. Non-teaching staff, although fewer in number than in many secondary schools, play an important function in the smooth running of the school. Specific improvements have been initiated in several areas including the use of information and communication technology, extension to the accommodation, greater sophistication in target setting and action on assessment. The identification of development priorities, action already implemented to achieve them, the commitment of staff and strong leadership provided by the senior management and governors place the school in a good position to make further improvement.

Standards in subjects

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

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

Standards of attainment throughout the school are well above average and good in relation to achievement in grammar schools generally. High levels of motivation and good, and often very good and occasionally excellent, teaching enable pupils to make sustained good progress and experience a high degree of success in GCSE and A level examinations. In 1999 all Year 11 pupils gained 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE and more than 40 per cent of entries resulted in A or A* grades. Very good A level results enabled students to achieve a very high average points score and half the subject entries resulted in A or B grades.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	History, religious studies	
Years 10-11	Very good	Business studies, history	
Sixth form	Good	Geography, religious studies	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is good or better in four lessons out of every five. In nearly one in three it is very good or excellent. Teaching is one of the many strengths of the school: it is particularly effective in Key Stage 4 as teachers prepare pupils for GCSE. There are no subjects where teaching lacks effectiveness, but there is some outstanding teaching by particularly able exponents in history and religious studies in Key Stage 3, in business studies and history in Key Stage 4 and in geography and religious studies in the sixth form. Teachers have extensive knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects, they have high expectations and motivate pupils by challenging them to think for themselves. They have effective class control and manage pupils well. Improvements could be made in a small minority of lessons by sharing the lesson objectives with the pupils and spending time at the end of the lesson by summarising what has been achieved and what will come next.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good: pupils act responsibly and in a mature manner around the school.
Attendance	Very good: pupils enjoy coming to school to learn.
Ethos*	Excellent: there is a very productive working atmosphere in the school created by highly responsible attitudes to learning amongst the pupils, good quality pastoral care and the dedication of teachers to help pupils to achieve high standards of work and behaviour.
Leadership and management	Strong: there is a shared vision for the future direction and development of the school, which is ably led by the headteacher with good support from governors and senior staff.
Curriculum	Good overall: sixth form provision is very good. Some subjects would benefit from amendment to lesson length. Good assessment procedures are being developed. Extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good: all statutory procedures are in place and becoming increasingly effective.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good provision overall; opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory, very good opportunities for moral and social development. Provision for cultural development is excellent.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Very good match of teacher expertise to the demands of the curriculum; some shortage in number of support staff; accommodation provides a stimulating working environment; good resource provision overall with effective use of computers; enhancement to the library and associated facilities would encourage better study skills.
Value for money	Good: high quality output using the resources available.

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

• The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
VI. It enables pupils to achieve high standards VII. It encourages pupils to get involved in the excellent extra-curricular activities provided by the school VIII. It encourages pupils to achieve high standards of behaviour IX. Pupils enjoy being at the school X. That they are kept well informed about their child(ren)'s progress	XI. The amounts of homework the schoolers that there is not enough.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views about the school. Standards are high, there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities provided in the lunchtime, after school, sometimes at weekends and in school holidays. Inspectors agree that pupils enjoy their lessons. Parents of Year 7 pupils have good opportunities to find out how their child is progressing and provision of parents' evenings is satisfactory for other groups. Twice yearly reports are useful in letting parents know pupils' attitudes to their work, but they do not always clearly inform them about the progress made or areas for development. The provision of homework in the school is very good overall. The school asks parents to let them know if homework is taking too long – some pupils are so conscientious and interested in their work that they take much longer on homework tasks through their own choosing.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

Key issues for action

There are no key issues for the school to address. However, in the context of its many strengths, the minor points for improvement listed below should be considered for inclusion in an action plan alongside the development priorities identified by the school, which are already receiving attention:

- ◆. To improve the quality of education further the governors, headteacher and staff should:
 - . enhance the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education throughout the school by providing a coherent programme that includes the elements currently covered by general studies, drug education sessions, careers education and guidance and form periods;
(Paragraphs: 32, 57, 80)
 - . enhance the provision for pupils' spiritual development throughout the curriculum, including more opportunities for reflection and compliance with the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship;
(Paragraphs: 27, 46)
 - . make more effective use of the registration time when there is no communal morning assembly;
(Paragraphs: 46, 51, 74, 81)
 - . upgrade the library to enhance its effectiveness as a resource centre to support research and independent learning;
(Paragraphs: 48, 87)
 - . revise or produce documentation relating to the school prospectus, the governors' annual report to parents, a policy and training on child protection procedures and a restraint policy.
(Paragraphs: 28, 56, 81)

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. The school is situated on the western side of Horncastle in Lincolnshire and draws pupils from the town and several smaller communities in a wide area of the central part of the county. Many pupils come to school by bus and several have journeys in excess of fifteen miles. With 766 pupils on roll the school is smaller than the average secondary school, but its sixth form of 185 students is larger than most other schools offering post-16 courses. The school selects pupils on the basis of performance in the standardised verbal reasoning tests (11 plus) that they sit in the last year of primary school. The attainment levels of the pupils who are selected to attend the school are above average, with a significant minority having the potential to achieve high levels of attainment. All those who enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 have achieved the national standard in English, mathematics and science, which is well above the national average. There are more girls than boys in most year groups. One per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 26 pupils, for a variety of conditions, have been placed on the school's register of special needs: statements of special educational need have been made for three pupils.

2. The home backgrounds of pupils, while generally very supportive, are quite varied and there is a significant proportion from homes where wages are low compared to other parts of the country. While many live in towns, there are others from small rural communities where there is a degree of rural deprivation. Less than one per cent of pupils have free school meals, but the number of other pupils who are eligible is unknown as parents' pride prevents them from claiming.

3. The school is justifiably proud of its heritage as a provider of education in the area for over 400 years. The governors have a clear desire to continue to offer high quality education suitable for the higher attaining pupils in the locality. It is the school's aim 'to provide an education, which is suited to the needs of individual pupils enabling them to discover and develop their full potential. It aims to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life'. The school's development plan details how the school intends to achieve its aim.

4. Following the previous OFSTED inspection the school devised an action plan for a four year period. This has now run its course and been replaced, as a natural evolution, with a new development plan to cover the period 1998-2002. As each year nears completion the development priorities for the following year are determined. Those set for the current year include:

- improved implementation of the school assessment policy at department level;
- the use of target setting to monitor learning outcomes and raise standards;
- refinement of monitoring and evaluation to include classroom observation on a whole school basis;
- development in the use of information and communication technology to secure a cross-curricular learning experience for all students;
- the improvement and development of guidance to support pupils' progress and welfare;
- the management of the introduction of new syllabuses for A/AS courses in the sixth form;
- a review of the structure of the school day to meet all the demands of the new developments, both internally devised and externally imposed;
- the management of progression to foundation status and the new funding regime associated with the new status;
- improvement in external links, particularly liaison with parents;
- the building of a new Arts Centre for the school.

The school is already well advanced with many of the above initiatives.

1.Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	53	59	112

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	53	53	53
	Girls	57	59	57
	Total	110	112	110
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (98)	100 (97)
	National	64 (64)	63 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	77 (91)	99 (96)	90 (93)
	National	23 (34)	35 (36)	20 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	53	53	53
	Girls	59	59	59
	Total	112	112	112
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (99)	100 (97)	100 (93)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	90 (91)	98 (96)	96 (91)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	23 (30)

¹

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	38	43	81

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	37	37	37
	Girls	41	41	41
	Total	78	78	78
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	100 (98)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	47.8 (44.6)	88.4 (89.8)	93.9 (95.1)

Note: Three pupils did not take any examinations as they had not completed the syllabuses – one through long term illness, the other two as they were still in Year 10

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

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

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	36	44	80

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	27.5	28.8	25.8 (24.2)	-	-	-
National	n/a	n/a	18.6 (16.5)	n/a	n/a	n/a (2.8)

Note: No candidates were entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

³ Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.1
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	4
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	32
Satisfactory or better	99
Less than satisfactory	1

5. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

5. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

5. Attainment and progress

2. Pupils achieve standards that are well above national averages overall and compare favourably with many selective schools. They make consistently good progress as they move through the school. There is no significant difference between the performances recorded by boys and those of girls.

3. Attainment levels at the end of Key Stage 3 are high when compared with national averages and in line with those achieved in grammar schools. All pupils achieved the nationally expected standard of level 5 in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. All pupils except one achieved level 6 in mathematics, but the proportion achieving that standard in English and science was not so high as a result of pupils not being entered for the extension papers available for the highest attaining pupils. About a quarter of pupils achieved level 7 in English: in mathematics and science the proportions were two-thirds and two-fifths respectively.

4. In GCSE examinations in 1999 all pupils, including those with special educational needs, gained 5 or more A* - C grades. There were three pupils in the age group who were not entered for any examinations, two who arrived late at the school and are consequently a year behind while the third was absent for most of the year with long term illness. Many achieved 9 A* - C grades, but none achieved more than 9 as the school policy has been to place a limit at nine on the number of subjects taken by any pupil. This limiting factor means that the school can be at a disadvantage when comparisons are made, on the basis of average points scored, with schools who allow some pupils to take more than 9 subjects and sometimes as many

as 12. Although for a significant proportion of any year group nine subjects is as many as they can comfortably cope with, and a few find that number a rather daunting task, there are some pupils who are capable of taking another subject or two without compromising their performance in the first nine. The senior management and the governors are currently debating the structure of the school day as part of a review of the curriculum and one of the considerations is the possibility and wisdom of offering more GCSE subjects to some pupils. Within the present system of allowing pupils to take nine GCSE subjects the performances in 1999 included A or A* grades in over two fifths of entries. Of all the GCSE entries in 1999 only 4 per cent resulted in a grade below C. In no subject could the results be described as weak in comparison with the school's overall performance.

5. Attainment in GCE A level examinations in 1998 resulted in students achieving an average points score of 23.5 which was well above the national average of 16.8 and above the average for grammar schools of 21.3. In 1999 the school improved on the performance of the previous year by achieving an average points score of 25.8. Only one other grammar school in the county narrowly achieved a higher average. Half the entries at A level in 1999 resulted in A or B grades and all but 4 per cent were at A to E pass grades. On the basis of their results a large proportion of last year's Year 13 (upper sixth) obtained places on degree courses in universities and other institutions offering higher education courses. There were good performances in all subjects with only one, where there was only one candidate, failing to record A or B grades. In chemistry, economics, English, French, geography and social biology, students gained distinctions or merits in special papers.

6. Pupils have good literacy skills. They read fluently and with expression and most write competent accounts in their exercise books, whether it be the findings from a science experiment or an imaginative piece in English. Pupils listen well, both to their teachers and

their classmates and, given the opportunity to do so, speak clearly with reasoned arguments. When participating in assemblies they read their lines well so that everyone can hear and understand. Numeracy skills and knowledge are also well developed and most pupils have little difficulty in constructing graphs in science or geography, or in measuring in technology. They handle data and record it in suitable ways to allow them to interrogate it when looking for trends or other information. Most pupils are adept in the use of computers and a significant proportion of them confidently use e-mails for transmission and receipt of information. They cope competently with computers or related equipment in lessons, whatever the subject.

7. Pupils are selected for the school on the basis of their performance the previous Autumn in standardised verbal reasoning tests in accordance with selection procedures established by the Consortium of Lincolnshire Grammar Schools. Although all pupils achieve the national standard level 4 in Key Stage 2 national tests, there have been a few in recent years whose writing ability is below the national standard. The attainment profile recorded on cognitive ability tests taken in the October of the first term in Year 7 suggests that the number who are well above average in attainment for their age is fairly small. The pattern of recent years has been for the proportion attaining well above average standards on entry to the school to be around one fifth of the cohort. The standard achieved by most pupils when they arrive in the school is above average, with a few achieving well above the national standard for their age.

8. Pupils in all year groups make good progress in maintaining their level of attainment and in some cases improve on their position. The progress pupils make is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and very good in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special needs make as much progress as their peers. Although there are pupils on the special educational needs register few have conditions that are a primary influence on their attainment. Many of the special needs are for physical or emotional and behavioural conditions with a few having specific weaknesses, such as facility in writing or mathematics.

9. The principal factors in helping pupils to make good progress and maintain their well above average attainment levels are their own motivation and interest and the good quality of the teaching they receive. Pupils want to learn and they are prepared to make the effort to do so: the vast majority willingly submit themselves to the discipline needed to sustain progress as they seek to ensure that they do not fall behind. The progress in lessons during the inspection was not quite so positive in Year 7 as in other years. This slight discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that pupils had been in the school for less than a term and some are still adjusting to a new regime and have not yet fully absorbed the strong learning culture in the school. The overall good quality teaching helps pupils to maintain their rate of progress.

10. The senior management team has established procedures for analysing the results of external tests and examinations to identify strengths and weaknesses in the provision and teaching in different subjects and there is increasing use of the information provided to quantify the value added during different key stages. A significant development that has implications for improving standards further is the use of target setting, by key stage, for the school as a whole and the identification of predicted outcomes for individual pupils in each of the subjects they study. School targets are set at the beginning of Year 8 for Key Stage 3 and at the beginning of Key Stage 4 and A level. The targets determined are realistically based on an analysis of the known performance of the year group and an estimation of the amount of value which the school can expect to add, together with an assessment of the success or otherwise of meeting targets set in previous years.

11. Teachers predict the expected performance levels of the pupils they teach about five terms prior to the external assessment. This activity is particularly beneficial for the teachers where it is undertaken as a departmental exercise. Teachers monitor performance during the year to check that pupils remain on course to achieve the predicted level, so that they can take action where they feel the necessary amount of progress is not being made. A level students are involved in the identification of their targeted grades or aspirations. It is made clear to them

that the aspirations will not be achieved without dedicated application on their part, but it does provide them with an indication of their assessed potential. This method of motivating students to try their best might usefully be extended in some form to other pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 4, who could then take additional responsibility for their own learning and have more involvement in monitoring their own progress.

15. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

12.The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good as is the quality of relationships in the school. Pupils' response to opportunities designed to enhance their personal development is excellent. These are important school strengths which are having a significant impact on standards. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour seen during the last inspection have been successfully maintained.

13.Pupils come to school with a thirst for knowledge. Parents agree that their children enjoy school. Pupils' attitudes are usually very good: in almost six out of ten of the lessons seen, pupils' approach and involvement in lessons were very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the challenges set by teachers. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils had found their own information about volcanoes beforehand and many were eager to share all they had discovered. Pupils will often stay behind after lessons to ask their own questions. Pupils use their planners well to organise themselves and work is thoughtfully displayed and neatly presented. Many pupils spend more time on homework than the school recommends, out of their keenness to do well. They show a very good capacity for undertaking their own personal research and learning. This significantly helps their rate of academic progress.

14.Behaviour is very good, both in lessons and during break and lunchtimes. Pupils display a natural ability for good behaviour. School property is well cared for and there is order in the school, even during busy times such as when queuing for the tuck shop and canteen. Pupils are polite and friendly; they offer to help visitors and hold doors open. There have been 4 fixed term exclusions over the last year and the school's rate for exclusions remains static. Most pupils respect one another's feelings and there is no mockery of wrong answers or incorrect guesses in class discussions.

15.Relationships are very good between pupils and between pupils and most teachers. There is often a good rapport between teachers and pupils based upon politeness and friendliness. In some lessons, teachers and pupils enjoy a shared sense of humour. Pupils work very well together in single sex and mixed gender groups. This was evident in a Year 7 form period lesson where pupils worked in small groups to organise and rehearse their presentation for a class assembly on school rules. Here, pupils took into account each other's suggestions and worked well to produce some good dramatic representations.

16.Pupils' response to opportunities provided for them to take responsibility, show initiative and become involved in community life, is excellent. The wide variety of different projects in which pupils have become involved, as part of the Parents' Association Challenge (for example, taking part in a sponsored parachute jump, work with the homeless, building a remote controlled robot, taking part in an International Scout Camp), is testimony to pupils' determination and appetite for adventure. All sixth form students play a major role in the organisation of school life, and as prefects, senior prefects, head boy and head girl and their deputies, they make sure there is order in school, help with form responsibilities and support Year 7 pupils settling in to school. The school's long-standing involvement in producing the weekly speaking newspaper, for the blind and partially sighted in the local area, involves all pupils at some point in their school life and they carry out these responsibilities very well. Many pupils successfully achieve their bronze Duke of Edinburgh award, with a significant number involved in the silver and gold awards. Pupils support a wide range of charities and have a voice in the running of the school, as elected form representatives at year group

meetings leading to a full school council meeting. Attendance at extra curricular activities is very good and pupils are keen to be involved in all aspects of school life.

20. Attendance

17.The school's attendance figure is well above the average for secondary schools nationally. This is a very good picture which is having a positive impact upon the quality of education by enabling pupils to take full advantage of all the educational opportunities the school is providing. The school has successfully maintained the high level of attendance seen during the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is virtually nil because parents co-operate in letting the school know the reasons why their children are absent and because the school has good procedures for pursuing any parents who forget. Timekeeping throughout the day is good and pupils often arrive early in classrooms for some lessons immediately after lunch. Punctuality to school in the morning is also good and there is only occasional lateness when school buses are delayed.

21. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

21. Teaching

18.The quality of teaching is most often good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. In four lessons out of every five the teaching seen during the inspection was at least good and in nearly a third it was very good and sometimes outstanding. The most impressive teaching occurred in Key Stage 4 where two-fifths of lessons were very good and 8 in 9 were at least good: in all the remainder the teaching was satisfactory.

19.When teaching their specialist subject, teachers display an extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers respond confidently to points or questions raised by pupils that relate to aspects of the subject outside the area of immediate focus. They have high expectations, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and plan their lessons expecting pupils to be interested, to want to work and to behave well: they are rarely disappointed in these expectations. Planning of lessons is thorough and teachers know what they hope pupils will achieve in the lessons, although in a small proportion of lessons objectives are not shared with pupils. Many lessons have good conclusions when time is taken briefly to check pupils' understanding, summarise what has been achieved, set homework and identify what are the next steps. However, such conclusions do not always occur where they would be appropriate, especially in some of the shorter lessons where, under pressure of time, teachers are sometimes surprised by the end of the lesson.

20.The methods teachers use are generally appropriate and more opportunities are being sought to incorporate the use of information and communication technology. Most teachers are particularly adept at using question and answer sessions to challenge pupils to think for themselves and to come to their own conclusions as they seek to understand the concepts they encounter. Some of the tasks set are demanding and require pupils to research information or, as in history, search a range of sources. Such activities are useful in helping pupils to acquire and develop study skills as a means of enhancing their learning. In a few lessons where there is a range of attainment or a significant difference in pupils' previous experience, as in music where the provision in the feeder primary schools can differ considerably or where pupils have had separate instrumental lessons, the tasks do not always take sufficient account of pupils' different initial knowledge or their capability.

21. Teachers are well prepared for their lessons with appropriate resources well organised and ready to use. The use of information technology is more frequent than on the previous inspection and indicates teachers' growing confidence and pupils' increased skills. In one highly effective business studies lesson Year 10 pupils used spreadsheets confidently to produce graphs and tables. As computer resources and associated peripherals become more plentiful further development in the use of information and communication technology as a teaching medium will enhance pupils' learning. The time in lessons is generally used effectively and some teachers set targets indicating how long pupils have for a specific task. Where such targets are not set, too much time is sometimes allowed with the result that pupils drift off task and the teaching lacks rigour. In some of the double periods, as noted in a few mathematics lessons, time could be used more effectively by revising the structure of the lesson so that momentum is sustained until the end.

22. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their interest and very good behaviour means that teachers do not need to devote lesson time to pupils' discipline. Generally, they manage pupils very well and ensure that all are encouraged to participate in discussions and also check that all understand the tasks set. Teachers also regularly assess pupils' progress by careful questioning during lessons to ensure that pupils understand their work and then, if necessary, adjust the focus of the lesson. Teachers also use homework effectively, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, to help pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding and to prepare for new topics.

26. The curriculum and assessment

23. The school has a clear statement of its curricular aims. It emphasises the broad and balanced nature of the curriculum. This intention is met by the programme offered to pupils, though the provision for their spiritual development does not feature so strongly. The curriculum meets all legal requirements. The school prospectus sets out the main points about the curriculum at each key stage.

24. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils study the full range of National Curriculum subjects. They commence the study of the second foreign language, German, in Year 8. The size of teaching groups does not create any difficulties except in art where there are some problems with 3D work. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups, though in mathematics they are set in Year 9. This fact is not disclosed in the prospectus.

25. The curriculum broadens appropriately at Key Stage 4. The school publishes an options booklet, which explains clearly the courses available. The common core of subjects ensures suitable breadth by requiring all pupils to study English, mathematics, science, design and technology, a modern foreign language, religious education and physical education. There is also a general studies lesson. Pupils then choose two further subjects from a list that includes the humanities and creative arts. The list of optional subjects also makes it possible to take additional science and/or a second foreign language. Pupils continue to be set for mathematics and there is some setting in English and science. Pupils who select media and theatre studies as their second English GCSE are not able to take English literature. The school is currently looking at this issue as part of its curriculum review.

26. In the sixth form, the curriculum is very appropriate for the students who, as a group, have much academic ability. Most students take three A level subjects from a list of around 22. Additional GCSE subjects are also offered. A few students take four A levels and many departments offer S-level papers for the most able. Breadth is provided by the requirement that all students take A level general studies, which includes religious education. Careers and physical education are also compulsory. At present, the school is planning amendments to the post-16 curriculum to fit the new national pattern of AS levels in Year 12 and a smaller number of A levels in Year 13.

27.The criticism in the previous inspection report that the allocation of time to religious education was inadequate has been met only in part. In Year 11, pupils have one lesson of 35 minutes per fortnight. The half-GCSE that is a feature of many schools is not offered. Other points made in the previous report have not yet been addressed. Drama is not available in Years 8 and 9 and there are no GCSE or A level physical education courses. The current curriculum review has been prompted not only by post-16 changes but also by the wish to offer individual pupils more than nine GCSE subjects. At present, the teaching week falls short by 25 minutes of the recommended length of 25 hours and this change is one possible option to enable more subjects to be taught. The loss of the 25 minutes does not appear to affect standards adversely.

28.As part of the current curriculum review the opportunity should be taken to look at the provision for personal, social and health education. Although the teaching programme is more closely monitored than at the time of the previous inspection, it is fragmented and lacks coherence. Pupils receive elements of personal, social and health education in their timetabled form period, in general studies, and in lessons designated for careers education and guidance and drugs education. The time allocation for the latter two areas is too short. The school meets the statutory requirement for sex education and the teaching programme for this area is comprehensive.

29.Pupils are set a considerable amount of homework as part of their studies. The vast majority tackle it with enthusiasm and the school has the support of nearly all parents on this issue. However, a minority of parents has raised concerns about excessive amounts of homework. There is also a view that occasionally it is set for the sake of it, rather than because it is relevant to the lessons being taught at the time. All the homework tasks seen during the inspection were relevant to pupils' development and progress.

30.The school has a well-defined policy on equal opportunities, which is the outcome of one of its aims: to "recognise and encourage talent of all kinds, and to all degrees, and to endeavour to stretch the intellectual and creative capacity of all pupils". All pupils and students have equal access to the curriculum and to resources. Examination results are analysed by gender at both school and departmental level. Some, but not all, departments make special provision for the most able pupils by providing extension work and by sometimes grouping them together.

31.Since the last inspection, the school has amended its policy on special educational needs. A part-time co-ordinator (SENCO) has been appointed and individual education plans (IEPs) have been produced. These are given to class teachers. The small numbers of pupils with special education needs have full access to the curriculum and are well integrated into their teaching groups. Some receive additional support in certain lessons. All departments have policy statements that carry out the school's objectives in the different areas of the curriculum. However, there is a slight concern that some heads of department are not sufficiently aware of the needs of individual pupils and it is under consideration that they should be given the IEPs, rather than, or as well as, class teachers.

32.There are sound liaison arrangements with feeder primary schools in the traditional catchment area to ease the transition for Year 6 pupils transferring at eleven plus. These include induction days in July, arranged in conjunction with other secondary schools, on the first day of the school year. Year 7 pupils also attend a weekend school camp towards the end of September. Pupils receive considerable advice about their choice of GCSE subjects and those entering the sixth form have an induction programme in July. This is of particular benefit to former Year 11 pupils transferring from other schools. Every effort is made to help the new Year 12 students settle into the sixth form and they, along with Year 7 starters, are required to attend for a further day's induction at the start of the Autumn Term. Also in September senior

staff undertake additional counselling. All departments carefully construct their programmes of study so that pupils can build on their previous knowledge and experiences.

33. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and is much appreciated by pupils and parents. There is a substantial amount of sport, in which many pupils participate both at lunchtimes and after school. Many teachers from departments other than physical education assist with sport. Other areas of strength include music, drama, chess and information technology. Clubs operate for various aspects of English, science, history, and technology. Visits to local churches and multi-faith centres are arranged by the religious education department. The languages department offers a further language, Italian, at Friday lunchtime. The school organises a four day residential experience for all Year 8 pupils in the Yorkshire Dales, during which each form undertakes a variety of field study activities. The art, history and languages departments also offer foreign visits. There are annual exchange schemes with schools in France and Germany. Pupils' physical development is enhanced when they participate in skiing holidays in the Alps, which take place most years. A large number of staff is involved in the very successful Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Many Year 12 students benefit from their participation in the Young Enterprise scheme.

34. Pupils receive careers education and guidance from Year 9 upwards. This reflects the school aim of giving pupils an understanding of the world and an appreciation of their potential to contribute to it. The careers programme includes advice from the local careers service. Work experience takes place for all Year 11 pupils after their GCSE exams. It is well organised, but is not repeated in the sixth form, which disappoints some students. Some also have some concern that there is pressure on them to move on to university without considering other options after their A levels.

35. The governing body is actively involved in curricular matters through its curriculum committee. Governors receive detailed information and meet regularly with individual heads of subject departments. The committee is involved in the curricular review and many of its members appreciate the need to offer additional GCSE subjects above the current maximum of nine.

36. All of the statutory requirements on the assessment and recording of achievement are met and some progress has been made in addressing the assessment issues raised in the previous inspection. A clear whole-school policy on assessment has been produced, but the opportunity has not been taken to recommend a common marking scheme across all subjects. Inconsistencies remain between and even within departments, although work is looked at regularly and subject mark schemes are explained to pupils. Very little use is made of National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3. Portfolios of assessed work enable teachers of English, mathematics, science, geography and modern languages to standardise the work of pupils. In other departments, this work is progressing. However, the reluctance to use National Curriculum levels of attainment in assessment at Key Stage 3 poses problems in standardising work in design and technology and other subjects. It also compels pupils and parents to translate the marks or grades awarded into these levels if they wish to compare the progress of an individual child with national standards.

37. Target setting for individual students is well established in the sixth form. Students are given grades to aim at when they take their A levels. Targets are also set in some subjects at Key Stage 4, but the practice is very rare in Years 7-9. This is in spite of the fact that the school policy on assessment recommends that this be done. The school has made this further improvement of assessment a target in the current action plan. Where annual targets are set they are rarely expressed in National Curriculum levels or reflect CAT (cognitive abilities test) scores achieved by pupils in the autumn terms of Year 7 and Year 9. At present, pupils can record their targets only in general terms on the back of their reports. The degree of involvement of form tutors in this process is not consistent.

38. Parents receive two reports a year which, at Key Stages 3 and 4, contain a substantial amount of information on effort as well as an examination result. Year 11 pupils are given detailed advice on the completion of their National Records of Achievement, which are continued in the sixth form.

39. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early in Year 7 so that they can receive the appropriate amount of support. The school has reviewed its practice after the previous inspection. The progress of the few children on the SEN register is carefully monitored. Other pupils with some weakness in literacy are also identified and then given additional help.

40. All teachers keep at least adequate records of pupils' progress and these are being monitored by senior staff in departmental reviews. Teaching programmes, including the content of lessons and teaching methods, are amended in the light of the information gained from teachers' records and a review, in some departments, of assessment results. In some subjects, a change of examination board has been made and new sixth form courses have been introduced.

44. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

41. The school makes very good provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this confirms the findings of the last report. However, the provision for pupils' spiritual development is not as strong as the other areas. Parents feel that the school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on their children.

42. Opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory. Religious festivals are celebrated throughout the year and pupils benefit from assembly presentations given by local clergy. In some of the formal assemblies during the inspection week, pupils were offered good experiences in spiritual development, but in others the available opportunities were missed, and on the days when there is no communal assembly the registration and form time is not used effectively for reflection or prayer. The previous inspection report noted that not all arrangements met the requirement for a daily act of worship for all pupils, and this is still the case. Some subjects offer good opportunities for pupils to explore spiritual themes. For example, in religious education lessons, pupils in Year 9 consider different arguments for and against a belief in God, and in science pupils' attention is drawn to remarkable fundamental ideas, such as genetics and cosmology. Music lessons provide pupils with opportunities not only to reflect on what they hear, but also to create their own interpretations of spirituality in music making through their original compositions. The school has a long tradition of performing religious music such as "The Messiah" in local churches. However, in general, opportunities for pupils to explore the spiritual dimension to life, are confined to a rather narrow range of topics within the curriculum, and there is no whole school planning to ensure consistent and progressive spiritual development for all pupils.

43. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils learn about the difference between right and wrong in the classroom, in assemblies, through the personal, social and health education programme and the daily routines of school life. Adults set a very good example, and there is a strong emphasis on good relationships, courtesy and respect for property and the environment. Achievement in all areas of school life is regularly celebrated, both formally in assemblies and also in displays around the school. Moral issues are well explored throughout the curriculum. In history, for example, pupils learn about the dilemma facing families at the start of the Civil War in 1642, and in geography they become aware of the conflict in land use, and the effect of forced migrations in East Timor and Kosovo. In food technology lessons, hygiene and safety concerns are discussed, and the ethics and values of the business world are examined in economics and business studies.

44. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils have many opportunities to work together in a variety of groupings in lessons, laboratory experiments, the games afternoon

shared jointly by Years 11, 12 and 13, and extra-curricular activities such as sporting events, concerts, competitions, and school productions. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility both collectively and individually. As members of the school council they discuss and put forward proposals affecting school life, and sixth form students take on duties as school prefects and ambassadors for the school. Project work provides a strong incentive for pupils of all ages to take responsibility for their own learning. However, although the library has a wide range of books, it is not equipped to be effective as a modern resource centre. Schemes, such as The Duke of Edinburgh Award and Young Enterprise, give pupils very good encouragement to show initiative and the school's local business links help older pupils to benefit from work placement schemes. Pupils develop a sense of citizenship through the regular cycle of supporting charities, and also through helping in the distribution of Christmas parcels to a large number of elderly people in the community.

45. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' cultural development. It offers a wealth of opportunities for pupils to appreciate their cultural heritage, and also provides an excellent programme of sporting activities. Pupils benefit from taking part in a wide variety of productions, and also by being able to watch performances by visiting theatre companies, and individual artistes. There are very good opportunities for music making, and for trips to theatres, concerts, art exhibitions, and science lectures. Visits to places, such as the battlefields of the First World War, impress upon pupils the destruction brought about by war, and the sacrifices made for the welfare of others. Pupils learn about European cultures through their modern foreign languages studies, and through visits to France, Germany and Spain. They have very good opportunities to appreciate the richness of other cultures in subjects, such as art, geography, English, and particularly in religious education, where they explore the major world faiths and become aware of the cultural diversity of modern British society.

49. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

46. The quality of support, guidance and welfare that the school provides for pupils is good overall. There is an atmosphere of academic achievement in the school, and it is a place where teaching and learning are flourishing. This is reflected in the high standards of work the pupils achieve.

47. The quality of academic guidance pupils receive is good. Form tutors play a key role in overseeing how pupils are progressing through the checking of planners, where any concerns of subject teachers are more formally recorded. Some of this checking of planners takes place during the morning registration times when there is no communal assembly for the form to attend. Rarely is the time on those mornings used for any form of collective worship and often there is little other productive use made of the time. The system whereby heads of school oversee pupil welfare through referrals from form tutors works well and is clearly understood. Teachers' marking in books provides good guidance for pupils on what they have done well and how they can improve.

48. Students set targets for themselves in the sixth form and this helps to focus their efforts into areas upon which they need to concentrate. The practice of identifying targets as aspirations is not so well established elsewhere in the school. A contribution to pupil involvement in target setting is made in the reviews of progress that pupils complete as part of the process of reporting to parents twice yearly. Certificates for good work and achievement are used well in some subject areas to reward and encourage; for instance at the start of one lesson a pupil was presented with a certificate and congratulated by the teacher on his work, to the applause of his peers. The monitoring of personal development is satisfactory and comments on written reports from tutors and heads of school reflect the fact that most staff know their pupils well and take an interest in their development.

49. The school's procedures for encouraging behaviour and discipline are good. All staff have high expectations of behaviour, which are realised. The behaviour policy provides appropriate guidance for staff and the responsibility the policy places upon individual teachers to provide their own methods of discipline is appropriate. The school has removed the inconsistencies in behaviour management seen during the last inspection. Prefects play an important role in encouraging good behaviour during breaks and in non-lesson time and the system whereby they award "orange cards" for transgressions is authorised and monitored effectively by a deputy headteacher.

50. In conversations with inspectors, pupils said there is little bullying in the school. There is a detailed anti-bullying policy in place which outlines procedures to be taken. Pupils said they were confident that if they reported any bullying, they would be listened to.

51. The maintenance of the school's very good attendance rates is given a high priority and procedures for promoting attendance are good. There are periodic reminders about the relevance of regular attendance from the headteacher in newsletters, stressing the importance of not taking holidays during term time. A graph prominently displayed on the lower and middle school noticeboards proudly celebrates those who have 100 per cent attendance and compares attendance between form groups. Attendance is monitored efficiently by administrative staff and all legal requirements concerning reporting and recording attendance are adhered to.

52. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. The school closely follows county guidelines and teaching staff have been recently reminded of the procedures to adopt. However, the Named Person, whilst experienced, has not received specific training in this role and there is no whole school policy. Compiling a school policy and training, to include all those adults who work with pupils, is an area for development. The school does not have a restraint policy, as required by law.

53. The school pays satisfactory attention to promoting the welfare and wider pastoral needs of pupils. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons provide pupils with a satisfactory level of guidance. All those lessons observed provided appropriate help for pupils on a wide range of issues. The school has moved significantly from the last inspection and PSHE lessons are now more accepted by staff as an important part of the wider curriculum. The appointment of key stage co-ordinators has influenced the organisation of PSHE and there is now a suggested programme for each year group, with appropriate resources in place. However, the delivery of PSHE is still dispersed throughout the curriculum in general studies and form period lessons and there is no assured progression as pupils move through the school. The need for a clearer focus and refinement, including closer monitoring of the programme, as mentioned in the last inspection report, is still apparent. Form tutors have the choice of which topics to include and with the time restrictions currently in place, delivery is often rushed and fragmented. The further organisation of the PSHE programme, to provide a coherent and structured programme, should be considered.

54. Outside specialists provide drug education for Year 9 pupils, as part of their Health Day programme and this is entirely appropriate. There is no member of staff who has had specific training in delivering drug education and no provision for other year groups. This is an area for development for the school, to ensure pupils are given relevant guidance to help them face situations they may meet as part of every day life. The quality of careers education and guidance is satisfactory. Pupils receive careers education as part of their middle school curriculum and there is a programme of work experience offered to Year 11 pupils at the end of their GCSE exams.

55.The school pays good attention to matters of health and safety. All health and safety issues mentioned in the last inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed; in particular, governors and staff continue to monitor closely the arrival and departure of pupils and the effects of shared pedestrian and vehicular access.

59. Partnership with parents and the community

56.The school has a good partnership with parents and, in turn, parents provide the school with very good support. The school's links with the community, which are helping to add interest and relevance to the curriculum, are also good. The school has successfully maintained the positive approach seen during the last inspection.

57.The quality of information the school sends to parents is good overall. The school has identified liaison with parents as an area they wish to develop and they are making good progress in this. A questionnaire was given to all parents who attended a parents' evening and the results are influencing the school's work in this area. Newsletters are welcoming and interesting to read. The frequency of newsletters has recently been increased - as part of the development of home and school relationships - and parents now know when to expect the next letter, as the intended publishing schedule is included. A recent introduction of helpful pastoral letters, from form tutors, explains to parents about routines and includes a pledge that tutors will try to respond to parents' queries on the same day. Specific information in these letters, relevant to particular year groups, helps to keep parents well informed about different aspects of school life. Parents use planners to confirm that letters have been brought home. This good quality communication is helping to keep parents up-to-date in order that they can provide informed support for their child(ren)'s education.

58.The prospectus portrays a positive image of the school and is currently undergoing a revision to bring it up-to-date with developments. The revised document should include a short explanation about the school's procedures for child protection. The governors' annual report is satisfactory and provides a broad over-view of the work governors have undertaken in the management of the school. Information about the school's admission of disabled pupils and facilities provided has been omitted. An appropriate home-school agreement is in place.

59.The responses to the parents' questionnaire and the views expressed at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection were generally positive about all aspects of school life. Parents are particularly pleased with the high standards achieved in the school and the encouragement given for pupils to get involved in the excellent extra-curricular activities.

60.The last inspection report highlighted the fact that parents of new pupils had to wait until half way through the year to meet their child's teacher. There has been a significant improvement in this area and parents of Year 7 pupils now have three opportunities to come into school and talk to staff. This is good provision. For other parents, one opportunity plus two written reports constitutes satisfactory provision. There is very good support at parents' evenings, with almost all parents attending.

61.Reports are useful in letting parents know about pupils' attitudes to their work, although some concentrate more on attitude at the expense of reporting on progress made. There are inconsistencies in the quality of comments and not all make it clear which areas pupils need to improve upon. Pupils complete an interesting evaluation of their own progress over the year, which is helpful in encouraging them to focus on areas for development. There is no space for parental comments in order to sustain a regular home and school link.

62.Parents provide very good support for the school. There is an active Parents' Association, the members of which work hard to raise considerable amounts of money for the school. Many parents have indicated they are willing to be contacted to help at functions such as the annual Summer Ball. The hard work of the Parents' Association enables the school to enhance its

resources - such as the sports equipment bought recently - and money is currently being saved towards the purchase of a new mini bus. Parents' hard work in fundraising and supporting social events is having a positive impact upon standards in the school.

63. Parents provide very good support for pupils' work at home. Many provide help and support for research work - for example the majority has computers at home, many with Internet access, which helps pupils in their search for information. Parents sign planners regularly and make special journeys to collect pupils from the varied after school activities.

64. The responses to the questionnaire indicate that a small minority of parents is not happy with the amounts of homework their child receives. There were mixed views from those parents who attended the meeting with inspectors, ranging from those who thought there was too much to those who thought the homework set was positive and helpful. Inspectors judged the provision of homework in the school to be very good quality. The school asks parents to let them know if homework is taking too long. However, they recognise that many pupils are conscientious and so interested in their work that they take much longer, through their own choosing. This was clearly evident when Inspectors looked at the quality of homework pupils had completed.

65. The school's links with the community, both locally and further afield, are good. There is a tradition of the orchestra giving performances, at local churches in the area, throughout the year. A long established link, of which the school is justly proud, is pupils' involvement in the weekly production of a speaking newspaper, through the Lindsey Blind Society. At Christmas time pupils distribute many parcels to senior citizens in the town. These relationships are having a positive impact upon the personal development of the pupils involved.

66. There are good relationships with a local bank and major brewery in the area, which provide support and personal advisers for the school's Young Enterprise schemes. A visit by the textiles department to a clothes manufacturer in the north of the county has proved inspirational in students' project work: clothes have been designed for toddlers using material provided by the company. These contacts with the outside world of business are valuable in adding variety and relevance to the curriculum and pupils' total experience.

70. Provision in the sixth form

67. The attainment of students studying A levels in 1999 was significantly above national averages. An overall pass rate of 96 per cent was recorded, with A and B grades accounting for 50 per cent of all A level successes. The attainment of higher grades shows a clear improvement, when the proportion of A and B grades was 35 per cent, on the previous year. Many subjects recorded 100 per cent pass rates and, though some subjects had small entries, a number can be identified as achieving results that were significantly in excess of national averages. Attainment of current sixth formers is similarly high. Students display a good capacity for independent study and they read, write and speak well. They enjoy their work and have the confidence, imagination and independence to explore problems and issues from a variety of perspectives.

68. Present sixth form students are making good progress and they succeed in sustaining the high levels of attainment recorded in their GCSE examinations. Progress is particularly good in lessons where students are presented with a series of challenges and where they are encouraged to undertake independent learning. Staff successfully employ these strategies in a number of subjects including modern foreign languages, history and physics. A significant number of students is also making progress in their use of information technology; both as a tool to present word processed assignments and as a mechanism to refine their communication and research skills through the use of e-mail and the Internet. At present the school is not able to offer a detailed statistical analysis of students' progress through the use of value-added data, though a scheme designed to provide such information is being

developed.

69. A broad post-16 curriculum based almost exclusively on courses of A level study is offered. Though some teaching groups are small, the school is successful in its aim of offering its students a range of subjects and the choice available has recently been extended with the introduction of media studies. Though some Year 11 pupils wish to see the range extended further with the introduction of subjects such as psychology, sports studies and theatre studies, the curriculum offered provides ample opportunity for choice, permits students to opt for a range of subject combinations and facilitates progression to employment and higher education. All students also sit for an A level in general studies. Enhancements are provided by the availability of AS levels in subjects such as geology, GCSE Spanish and Young Enterprise. A range of aesthetic and sporting extra-curricular activities for which students may opt enriches the curriculum further. The Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme is also offered. The quality of careers education and guidance is satisfactory. Ad hoc arrangements exist for sixth formers to undertake work placements and extensive preparation is offered to students aiming for university places. There is, however, no annual provision for students to gain an insight into the world of work, and management simulations and work shadowing schemes that further help to raise expectations are not routinely available. The school does host a biennial Industrial Society conference.

70. The school is successfully offering choice, although some A level groups have only small numbers of students, A financial analysis of sixth form provision indicates that there are no issues of inefficiency and all courses are appropriately staffed and resourced. The main weakness identified during the inspection concerned the arrangements for morning registration. Many registrations involved periods of time with little active tutorial work being witnessed. In the words of one of the students these sessions give students a time for social intercourse and an opportunity to recover from any excesses arising from the night before. The arrangements for morning registration need refining.

74. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

74. Leadership and management

71. Strong corporate leadership and very good management are features of the school. The governing body is well informed, knowledgeable and active in its support of the school and its development. In particular, governors keep a watching brief on standards and are involved in the determination of the targets set for each year group as they enter each two year cycle of their education. The headteacher is actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school and is prepared to take the decisions he feels are needed to benefit the school or the quality of pupils' education. He enjoys good support from other members of the senior management team. Middle managers are effective in their departmental or pastoral roles. Changes in personnel at middle management level since the last inspection have led to a more unified approach to school improvement. The greater awareness of the school's development priorities at middle management level places the school in a promising position for further and sustained improvement and an ability to cope with internally desired initiatives and externally imposed changes.

72. The school has a clear mandate for its future development and the governors are clearly determined to try to continue to provide high quality education for higher attaining pupils in the area. The development plan indicates the clear direction which the school intends to pursue. The school development plan, which has evolved from and replaced the previous plan, generated following the previous inspection, clearly identifies ten areas for improvement on which there will be focus in the current year. The plan is carefully constructed and well presented. It has been discussed with staff and approved, after consultation, by the governing body. However, the areas for development in the plan have been chiefly determined by the senior management team. Subject development plans reflect the priorities in the school

development plan. Although the process by which the present priorities and strategies for action have been determined were appropriate at the time they were identified, the changing culture in middle management towards greater ownership of the means for effecting institutional development suggests that the time is right for there to be adjustments to the planning procedures. Greater involvement of middle managers and governors at the commencement of the planning cycle, with the sharing of information about standards, external policy developments, predictions of pupil numbers and financial provision, would provide more opportunity for the various development considerations to be brought together in a strategy to increase coherence between subject development and the overall direction of the school. It would also help to enhance middle managers' vision of the school as a whole rather than leaving them to view it mainly from a departmental perspective. With the development of a collegiate approach, and a greater sharing of knowledge and understanding, discussions between individual governors and heads of department or pastoral leaders would be more productive.

73. An important feature of the improvements the school is seeking, relates to the procedures that are used to monitor aspects of its provision. During the week of the inspection the governors were presented with an account of the initial thinking of the senior management team about envisaged changes to the future structure of the school day. This is one element in the discussions which are taking place as part of a review of the school's curricular provision. Considerations that have been identified in the curriculum review include a desire to improve the value added from GCSE to A level, the pressure of league tables to provide more opportunities for examination entry at GCSE and some dissatisfaction with the length of lessons and the amount of flexibility within the timetable. It is clear that, whatever the outcomes of the deliberations, changes will be made, as far as possible, on the basis of educational priorities.

74. Following on from a previous system of teacher appraisal, action has been taken to increase the effectiveness of classroom practice by introducing a structured monitoring programme. All teachers must be observed teaching for a minimum number of lessons by their head of department and senior management personnel are also involved in the exercise. There is an appropriate intention to extend this monitoring to a revised appraisal scheme which is better focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The classroom monitoring carried out by heads of departments should provide a useful means of moderating standards and provide helpful information in the identification of targets for individual pupils. Such monitoring visits should also focus on the effectiveness of the methods used and the tasks set in enabling pupils to make the best possible progress towards achieving the agreed targets

75. The governors have a clear understanding of their role and, while very supportive of the school's endeavours, do not accept every proposal put to them without question. They ensure that any decision about the future direction of the school is fully thought through and can be justified educationally and financially. Through their efforts and the hard work of the staff the school achieves its aims of enabling pupils to discover and develop their full potential. The values and policies of the school are reflected in the way the school operates on a daily basis and the manner in which pupils conduct themselves.

76. The school has an excellent ethos with a very positive learning environment. Relationships are very good, pupils are well motivated and they want to learn, teachers are keen to see the highest standards that can be achieved and appropriate action is taken to ensure that pupils are happy in school. There is a proper concern for pupils' development into responsible citizens, although greater coherence in the provision for their personal, social and health education would enhance their knowledge and understanding and ensure that they are

able to play a full part in the lives of the communities in which they will find themselves in future.

77. With one or two minor exceptions the school satisfies all statutory requirements. There is a need to see that the opportunity, which is already available, for pupils to engage in a daily act of collective worship is matched by appropriate provision. The senior management of the school recognises that there is a need to revise the school prospectus: as this is done there is a need to check that all required elements are included. Similar action needs to be taken with the governors' annual report to parents. There are two matters on which the school currently does not have written policies, although understanding of the practices involved is generally secure. These relate to restraint and child protection. Arrangements should also be made for a senior member of staff to undertake training in the latter.

81. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

78. The match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is very good. A very high proportion of lessons is taught by specialist staff. More is spent now on teachers than at the time of the last report due to increased staffing as pupil numbers grow. The school has successfully managed the relatively high turnover of teaching staff over the last two years. There is a good balance of younger less-experienced teachers and those with longer teaching experience. A large team of visiting teachers of musical instruments supplements effectively the work of the music department and several part-time teachers make a valuable contribution to the Wednesday afternoon games sessions for Years 11, 12 and 13.

79. The match of number, qualifications and experience of support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. Levels of support have increased, as recommended in the last inspection report, but are still below average for the size of school. Administration and clerical staffing levels are average, and these staff play a significant part in the smooth-running of the school. Caretaking staffing is sufficient to ensure good upkeep of the school buildings. The amount of technician support for practical work is adequate in science and information and communication technology, but inadequate in design and technology. Levels of support for pupils with special educational needs are adequate.

80. Arrangements for the professional development of both teaching and non-teaching staff are good. There is a satisfactory policy document. Teachers, non-teaching staff and governors are all represented on the staff development working group. These arrangements allow effective and sensitive supervision of the process. Information on staff development appears in the annual report to governors. Good recording procedures allow effective monitoring of provision. In-service training is satisfactorily linked to both school and departmental development plans and the needs of individual teachers. A programme of lesson observation now makes a positive contribution to staff development. No new policy document yet exists for the appraisal of teachers, which is in phase two of a developing programme. Arrangements are thorough and well-organised for teachers, but still underdeveloped for non-teaching staff. There are good arrangements for the induction and supervision of newly qualified teachers and those new to the school.

81. Though the school is growing and some of the buildings are rather old, the overall standard of accommodation is good. They are well cared for, largely graffiti free and many classrooms are enlivened by good displays of work and stimulus materials serving to offer pupils a stimulating environment in which to study. The school also possesses extensive playing fields, which are maintained to a very high standard, and the available facilities will soon be augmented by a purpose-built arts' centre. The construction of this facility should be completed by the end of the present academic year.

82. The previous inspection report highlighted some accommodation issues that raised

questions of health and safety. These included corridors obstructed by pupils' bags, the problems of traffic around the school's entrance and the accessibility of parts of the school for the physically disabled. Though many corridors remain narrow, they are free of obstruction from pupils' bags. The school is aware of the traffic problems around its entrance, especially when a fleet of coaches ferrying pupils to and from school arrives. A one-way traffic system operates and, in the evenings, staff are present to ensure pupil safety. Most of the school is now accessible to physically disabled people but, where problems still arise, the school adopts pragmatic and flexible approaches to minimise inconvenience.

83. Most lessons are taught in good quality and lively accommodation and the opening of the arts' centre will further alleviate some of the present problems. A few inadequacies remain. The accommodation for design and technology is unsuitable for all specialist needs. There is only one specialist room for each aspect of technology. Thus, if two classes for the same aspect are timetabled in parallel, rooms have to be shared. Design and technology also currently share a room with the art department and this arrangement precludes the teaching of 3D-art work. However, the new arts centre should alleviate this difficulty. Problems are also encountered in science. Although accommodation for the subject has been extended by recent building, some of the rooms are not internally linked and staff have to carry chemicals and other materials between the various laboratories using external pathways. The new laboratories are located adjacent to the school playing fields and much mud was evident on floors during afternoon school. This poses a potential health and safety issue. The other area that has some inadequacies is the school library. This is located in a compact room and, though attempts have been made to enliven the learning environment, the library remains rather old fashioned with limited access. It does not offer the range of media that are found in other schools where resource centres have replaced traditional libraries. It is efficiently run with the help of a small team of pupils, open throughout the day, and well used, particularly by members of the lower school. There is, however, very little space available for further expansion, and there are only two computers with insufficient software at present to encourage extensive use for independent research.

84. The resources available for most subjects in the school are good. They are particularly plentiful in modern foreign languages, and physical education benefits from an extensive supply of quality equipment. Good use is made of information technology resources in mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, business studies, music and geography. Most departments have computers, and a significant number makes good use of their access to both the Internet and the school's own internal network. The number of computers in the information technology room, however, is restricted by the space available, and this results in pupils at Key Stage 3 having to share equipment. Resources in religious education have improved since the previous inspection. Those in music, however, still need to be increased with an appropriate range of good quality percussion instruments and more materials for the teaching of A level work. The library is adequately stocked with books and includes an attractively up-to-date fiction section.

85. The school encourages participation in a great number of trips and visits which are organised to enhance the work of a significant number of subjects. This valued extra resource includes lectures, visits to museums, galleries, businesses and theatres, residential field studies, and exchanges and trips abroad.

86. The school's achievements and its quality of life are enhanced very effectively with the many attractive visual displays of pupils' work and activities to be seen around the buildings. A particularly endearing feature is the provision of information about the identities of the people to whom rooms have been dedicated.

90. **The efficiency of the school**

87. The school receives an income per pupil that is slightly above that of similar schools. This

income is supplemented through the letting of the premises and sports facilities to local community groups. The school seeks to reduce expenditure by obtaining best value in all contracts and requiring quotations for major items of expenditure. The school accounts are at present in balance with income and expenditure identical. The school has taken a series of measures to reduce expenditure and increase income. It expects to have a reasonable surplus by the end of the next financial year. The auditors' report was favourable and the minor financial control measures identified are now in place.

88.The senior management team prepares the budget linking expenditure to the school's development plan. Targets and priorities are identified and there is careful financial planning. The governing body exercises effective control and all proposals are examined for their financial implications. Amendments or postponements may be suggested if sufficient funds are not yet available. The governors' finance committee meets regularly to monitor expenditure. It has a good relationship with the school. Most expenditure has been effective and has contributed to high standards. The school has adapted well to the recent change from grant maintained status. Targets and priorities have been reviewed to meet the present situation.

89.The school has comprehensive and effective financial administration arrangements. The bursar, assisted by efficient support staff, ensures the smooth day-to-day running of the accounts. There is firm control over all expenditure. Budget holders are accountable and must follow set procedures. Heads of subject departments must bid for funds and justify their planned expenditure. Up-to-date information and analyses of current and projected expenditure are prepared monthly for the governing body and all budget holders. This enables spending decisions to be taken quickly in response to changing circumstances.

90.The school makes good use of its accommodation. Teaching staff are deployed efficiently in accordance with their qualifications and experience. All departments use their capitation funds wisely and resources are well used and readily available to staff.

91.Taking account of pupils' attainment in relation to their entry standards, their progress and personal development, and the quality of education provided by the school, inspectors' judge that the school provides good value for money.

95. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

95. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

95. English

92. Levels of attainment compared with national averages are well above average at the end of both key stages and the sixth form. At the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils in National Curriculum tests for 1999 achieved level 5 or above and more than three quarters achieved level 6 or above. These results were below the average for similar schools, largely because no pupils were entered for the level 8 additional paper. At the end of Key Stage 4, over 95 per cent of pupils who were entered in 1999 for GCSE English, English literature, theatre studies and media studies achieved grades A* - C. At the end of the sixth form all students entered for GCE A level English literature achieved grades A-E and half achieved grades A or B. Boys' attainment, relative to that of girls, is higher than is the case nationally. Key Stage 3 pupils are fluent and confident when speaking or reading aloud. Pupils respond well to literature and write sensitively about character and motive, as seen in Year 9's play-scripts of interviews with Ralph from William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies'. Pupils' poems, such as those on 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' by Year 8, are well structured and imaginative. Key Stage 4 pupils are assured and resourceful in debates and performances, typified by Year 11 pupils' dramatic readings from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' and their lively and topical debate on moral issues in juvenile crime and punishment. Year 10 pupils' written work comparing Sojourner Truth's 'Ain't I a Woman?', written in the nineteenth century, and the modern poem 'The Choosing' by Liz Lochhead showed the analytical skills evident in much of the work at Key Stage 4. Writing generally is accurate and flexible. It shows a good sense of audience and purpose. Sixth form students use technical terms accurately in class discussion. Their reading is focused and deductive. Essays are carefully researched, well structured and clearly argued.

93. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They arrive at the school with well above average levels of attainment. From Year 7 on the pace of lessons is brisk and demanding so that existing skills and knowledge are rapidly extended and developed. In Key Stage 3 the choice of reading texts is often challenging. Writing explores many different forms; drafting and re-drafting become part of the process. Key Stage 4 pupils learn to think 'on their feet' in debate and discussion. They direct collaborative work with increasing skill and confidence. Pupils of all attainment levels handle texts, including film, with greater assurance. They set their reading of literary works, such as Jane Austen's 'Mansfield Park', against a social and historical background. Sixth form students become surer in their textual judgements and more assured when talking about literature – though there are only limited opportunities in some lessons to develop these skills. Progress in essay writing is rapid as they adapt to the rigours of A level study.

94. Pupils always behave well in lessons. They are highly motivated and seize opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge through independent study and extra-curricular activities. They are responsible and resourceful, supporting one another well when working in groups. Relationships with other pupils and with staff are very positive. There is a strong study ethos in lessons and real enthusiasm is evident in much of their work in English, both written and oral.

95. Teaching is good and there are no unsatisfactory lessons. Nine out of ten lessons are at least good and more than a third are very good. Teachers are very confident in their knowledge. Classroom management is very good and appropriate learning materials are carefully chosen to engage and challenge pupils. Homework is given a high priority and marking is conscientious – often with detailed comments to help pupils to make improvements in their next piece of work. In the best lessons pupils are encouraged to assume responsibility for aspects of their learning, through group activities, research, problem solving, presentations and performances. In some lessons, which otherwise are good, opportunities for reviewing

and reinforcing progress at the end of the lesson are missed. Though there has been some improvement in the pace of sixth form lessons since the last inspection, some lessons are still not structured with a view to encouraging students to make a major contribution.

96.The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is soundly based on National Curriculum programmes of study, but schemes of work do not provide an agreed framework of teaching units to ensure balance and continuity across each year. Although there is good use of information technology by many pupils in all years, it is not yet formalised in the schemes of work. The absence of separate drama lessons at Key Stage 3 narrows the curriculum. At Key Stage 4, placing GCSE media studies and theatre studies courses within the time allocated for English, rather than in the option blocks, reduces the number of pupils able to study English literature and places additional pressures upon teachers. Assessment is consistent and thorough, although there is only limited use of National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3. The department is well led and regular meetings are used for sharing ideas and planning. Teachers undergo valuable professional development. There is a general commitment to the welfare and support of pupils and staff are concerned to give them opportunities to make progress outside the classroom through school dramatic productions, links with local drama groups, frequent theatre visits, outside lectures, writers' workshops in school and language support clubs. Resources within the department are good, but accommodation for drama is limited.

100. **Literacy**

97.Across the curriculum levels of literacy are well above average. Standards of writing are generally high. There are varied writing tasks in history, geography and religious education and good examples of imaginative writing in science, of personal diaries in sixth form art, and of poetry in design and technology. Extended writing is found in history, design and technology and economics and business studies. Good presentation characterises much work, especially in modern foreign languages, and levels of accuracy are high in science, history, geography and religious education. Pupils' reading levels enable them to meet the demands of text books and worksheets in all subjects. Reading standards are high in mathematics, science, history, art, design and technology and religious education. Opportunities for reading are frequent in history but limited in design and technology and there is little reading aloud in science or religious education. There is no evidence in departments of any cross-curricular work on literacy, although some departments, such as history, have their own policy statements.

101. **Mathematics**

98.Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average when compared to the national average. They are an improvement over the results in each of the three preceding years, particularly in the number of pupils attaining level 6 and above. When compared to schools with pupils of similar backgrounds results are well above average. GCSE results in 1999 for A* - C grades are very high when compared to the national average of all schools. They are similar to the results for 1998 when they were just above the selective school average. They are also above the 1998 selective school average for A*-A grades. In the 1999 A level examination all pupils attained an A-E grade. There was also a significant increase in the proportion of pupils attaining A-B grades which has risen to above the 1998 selective school average. Results for further mathematics are above average although only a small number of pupils takes the examination. Boys and girls results do not differ significantly at any key stage.

99.In lessons and in other work the overall attainment of pupils is well above national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils can solve problems using fractions, decimals and percentages. They understand indices and use standard form confidently. All plot and interpret graphs, substitute in formulae and solve linear equations. Higher attainers solve quadratic equations. Graphical and data handling skills are well developed. Pupils

understand measurement and find areas and volumes of regular polyhedra. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils reach high standards across all programmes of study. They conduct investigations by formulating their own questions, generalising the results and testing their hypotheses. Higher attainers use calculus and other more advanced techniques to explain their reasoning and justify their solutions. They reach high standards in statistics and probability beyond the level expected in the National Curriculum. In A level lessons most pupils attain standards that are above or well above average. They have secure algebraic skills and reach levels in calculus and mechanics above those found in the majority of other schools.

100. Progress in lessons and over time is good at both key stages. In some lessons progress is very good but occasionally it is only satisfactory. In A level lessons progress is good. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Progress in lessons is enhanced by the positive attitudes of most pupils and their capacity to work independently without needing much attention. The best progress is made when lessons are planned with a mixture of class teaching and opportunities for pupils to work independently. New initiatives and a variety of activities assist pupils to sustain their interest and make the best use of the long lessons. Good collaboration between pupils in many lessons assists their progress as they help each other to overcome difficulties. Occasionally the progress of higher attaining pupils is limited as they spend too long on repetitive tasks when they are ready to move on to new work.

101. Pupils behave very well. They arrive punctually to their lessons and settle down quickly. They take pride in their work and are keen to learn. They are attentive during class teaching and respond willingly to questions. High levels of concentration are sustained in most lessons. Many higher attaining pupils appear to enjoy their work and show confidence when tackling difficult questions. Relationships within classes and with teachers are good and many pupils appreciate the help they receive.

102. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good in almost all lessons at both key stages of the National Curriculum. In other lessons it is satisfactory. In A level lessons teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers understand their subject well. They have good class management skills and control their classes effectively. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. This helps pupils to focus quickly on their work and make the best use of their time. Occasionally teachers spend too long teaching the class as a whole and pupils grow restless. Teachers make good use of resources in some lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils used a computer program to generate polygons. This helped them to understand the angle sum and hence to find the interior and exterior angle for any regular polygon. In another Year 9 lesson pupils "proved" Pythagoras Theorem by cutting squares and fitting them together appropriately. This process assisted their understanding and confidence. Teachers use assessment effectively to monitor progress and plan subsequent lessons. Homework is set regularly to extend the work undertaken in class. It is usually well marked, with comments which help pupils understand and correct their mistakes.

103. The department is well led. Relationships are good and all staff are committed to raising standards. Teachers are well monitored and supported. There is a positive ethos for learning in lessons. The curriculum is broad and balanced across all areas of the National Curriculum. There are sufficient good quality textbooks and resources.

104. The department has improved since the last inspection. There has been a rise in National Curriculum test scores, particularly in the numbers attaining the higher levels. GCSE results have improved with more pupils attaining grade A*. Lesson preparation has also improved, particularly the clarity of objectives. However, in some lessons there are insufficient extension activities for higher attainers to enable them to make the best use of their time.

108. **Numeracy**

105. Pupils enter the school with numeracy standards well above average. They continue to improve their skills not only in mathematics lessons but also by using mathematics in some other subjects. For example, in science they weigh and measure to find volumes and densities; they use equations and substitute in formulae; they use graphs and diagrams to interpret experiments. In geography and design and technology they handle statistical information using graphs and bar charts. In business studies they calculate exchange rates and business profits. In all subjects pupils use numeracy effectively. By the end of Key Stage 4 all pupils have secure numeracy skills which they use with confidence.

109. **Science**

106. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. In National Curriculum tests attainment is very high in comparison with national averages. In 1998, 97 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 or above, 93 per cent achieved level 6 or above, and 54 per cent achieved level 7. In 1999 results were broadly similar, with all pupils achieving level 5 or above, and over the 1996-8 period, attainment is very high in comparison with the national averages and above the national average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In lessons observed, although attainment is above average, the nature of the way schemes of work are linked to the programmes of study, the absence of work for extension tests, and class teaching which is not always linked to the varying abilities of pupils, mean that some pupils do not attain in line with expectations. At Key Stage 4 attainment is very high compared with national averages. In the last two years 95 per cent or more have achieved grades A* - C in double award combined science and in 1999 half of the passes were at grades A* or A. Attainment in science examinations at this level is very high compared with national averages and is slightly higher, in comparison with national averages, than in the other subjects pupils studied. In the three separate sciences, over a three year period, all pupils have achieved grades A* - C in biology and chemistry and over 90 per cent have achieved these grades in physics, with, on average, over half the passes in each subject at grades A* or A. At A level attainment is above average. Over a three year period all pupils have achieved a pass at grades A-E in physics, and over 90 per cent in biology and chemistry, with an average of over 50 per cent A or B grades in biology and physics, and over 40 per cent in chemistry. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In lessons observed, standards across attainment targets and between subjects are broadly comparable. Levels of attainment in practical work are particularly high. Pupils have high levels of competence in numerical aspects of the subject: for example, Year 8 pupils can draw lines of best fit to illustrate their practical work and A level biology students are able to perform statistical calculations.

107. Progress in lessons is good at all key stages and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The department has good records which show steady progress across Key Stage 3. The initial attempts to compare A level progress with prior attainment are worthy of more detailed exploration. Teaching which gives pupils the opportunity to experience practical work from their earliest science lessons is making a good contribution to progress. In Year 7, pupils learn to record observations accurately when examining the effect of heat on substances. By Year 8, pupils can predict the effect of changing conditions and those of higher attainment can explain the nature of the bubbles formed when yeast ferments with sugar. A teacher demonstration enabled Year 9 pupils to consolidate and develop their learning about moments in physics. In some cases higher attaining pupils could make more progress in the time available for class practical sessions as they work quickly, but are not given extra or alternative tasks. Notes on planning investigations assist pupils in their work in this aspect of science and GCSE pupils make good use of computer simulations of germination to assist them in planning investigations. In the sixth form teacher guidance on drawing plan diagrams enables students to make good progress in this aspect of biology. Both the work for Salters chemistry practical investigations and the organic synthesis for Nuffield chemistry enable students to consolidate work learnt in theory parts of their course. In physics,

students are gaining competence in the use of an oscilloscope to investigate wave behaviour, and benefit from making presentations to fellow students to explain their experimental work.

108. Attitudes to science are very good. Pupils behave well in lessons, carrying out practical work carefully and with due regard to safety. They handle all apparatus with respect and work together well on practical activities. During lessons, they listen attentively to the teacher and are also able to concentrate well on written tasks. Interest in science is displayed through the questions asked during lessons, and also by those studying for examinations who remain after lessons to ask questions or discuss further aspects of science. Similarly, there is considerable enthusiasm for the lunchtime Year 8 Salters Chemistry Club where pupils enjoyed working with the three teachers and technician to make 'mega bubbles' and were enthralled by the demonstration of a foaming mixture used as elephants' toothpaste. Uptake of separate science GCSE courses, and numbers studying A level sciences are indicative of the good attitudes to science. Throughout the school, the level of presentation of work is high.

109. The quality of teaching is good. All teaching is at least satisfactory and in three quarters of lessons it is good or very good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced, benefiting in several cases from membership of subject professional associations. In all lessons pupils are well managed and standards of discipline are very high. A strength of the teaching is the high proportion of pupil practical work. Homework is set regularly and carefully linked to lesson activities. It is always marked and graded but there is considerable variation in the extent to which teachers provide constructive comments. Where teaching is good, there is a variety of lesson activities which on occasions make use of videos, pupil presentations, comprehension tasks, or industrial simulation activities. In less successful lessons, albeit still satisfactory lessons, teachers plan in terms of subject content, with little identification of objectives, and do not share lesson aims with pupils. Work is not always targeted to the varying needs of pupils. Timing of lessons is not always planned to ensure an appropriate summing up and lesson conclusion.

110. The department has maintained the high level of attainment identified at the time of the last inspection, and in some cases has improved on results; for example, proportions of higher grades at GCSE. There is now appropriate equipment for pupils to gain experience of datalogging; use of CD-ROMs is incorporated into the curriculum at Key Stage 3. However, the very dated computers available in the biology and chemistry laboratories prevent effective use of computer software in teaching these subjects, particularly in the sixth form. Equipment for practical work in all sciences is good, and there is a good range of up-to-date textbooks. The limited range of science periodicals could usefully be extended. The department has made some progress in strategies for challenging very able pupils but needs to ensure that schemes of work at Key Stage 3 indicate appropriate opportunities to target teaching across the whole ability range. The development plan for the department does not have sufficient evidence on strategies for staff development in order to ensure that teachers keep abreast of rapidly changing areas of science.

114. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

114. Art

111. The attainment of pupils in art at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. Pupils are given the opportunity to draw from direct observation, express ideas and feelings and use art terms appropriately. They understand concepts and processes, apply technical skills competently and have a well developed knowledge of art and artists. In Year 9 pupils produce imaginative and interesting work using Surrealism as a base for perspective drawing and grapple successfully with complex compositions.

112. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of visual expression and confidently use a wide range of materials and processes to express creative ideas. High quality studies of artists and cultures are evident when pupils research areas such as the elongation of form as found in African sculpture and make inventive use of technology in the scanning and manipulation of images to work on self-portraits. The proportion of pupils which gained grades A* - C in the GCSE examinations has been well above the national average for the last two years. In 1998 they were slightly below the national average for selective schools but results have risen this year to the high level of 95 per cent.

117. In the sixth form students are working at well above the national average. Pupils work with a high degree of individuality and show in-depth analysis and exploration of ideas and style. Work is frequently large scale and some students' paintings are of exceptional quality. Studies of facial expression in acrylics show a high level of conceptual and personal response. A level results in 1998 were above the national average for grades A-E. There has been a significant improvement in the number of higher grades in the 1999 results, with 55 per cent of pupils gaining grades A or B.

118. Pupils make very good progress during their time at the school. They arrive with a wide range of experience and skills. At Key Stage 3 they make good progress and achieve sound gains in knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly in the area of technical skills in relation to observational and analytical drawing. The work at Key Stage 3 provides a good foundation for Key Stage 4 where pupils make rapid progress. The development of independent research skills is particularly significant in the positive effect it has on all work and consequently on examination results. Pupils carry out a range of experiments before selecting their final ideas, and study past and contemporary art whilst developing their own preferred style. Sketchbooks strongly support learning. Pupils of all abilities gain the confidence to channel their strengths into successful outcomes. In the sixth form progress is very good and students' work shows a growing depth of understanding and sophistication in concepts and in the handling of a wide range of media. Some students who have not followed a GCSE course have much ground to catch up but do so by the beginning of Year 13.

119. Attitudes and behaviour are very good in the majority of classes. Pupils enjoy their lessons and quickly get down to work. They are well motivated and respond very well to the challenges of the work. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form a climate of creative excitement prevails. Pupils discuss work with enthusiasm and are keen to describe how their personal ideas have influenced the decisions they have made. A high degree of pride is shown in their work and folders reflect a wide range of stimulus, which has been recorded and researched in the students' own time. They are confident in themselves as artists and aware of what they can achieve. The quality of work completed reflects a high level of commitment.

120. The overall quality of teaching is good and in half of the lessons observed very good. Teachers have a very good relationship with pupils based on mutual respect and the high expectations demanded across the age range creates an excellent learning ethos. Lessons are well planned and include a range of enjoyable and challenging activities for all levels of attainment. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and make frequent reference to artists and cultural influences. This is used to very good effect when planning lessons, which use a range of skills to stretch pupils. For example, in Year 8 work based on Georgia O'Keefe demanded close attention to the detail and control of enlargement that resulted in work of high quality. Homework has only recently been introduced at Key Stage 3 and is used to consolidate analytical skills. It would be of further benefit if directly linked to projects and used to extend pupils' research techniques. A major strength at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is the emphasis given to independent learning and thought. Planning is such that in Year 10 pupils follow a foundation course that enables them to pursue individual strengths and ideas in

Year 11. The high quality of individual attention and knowledgeable advice plays an important

role in raising standards. In the sixth form students are treated as individual artists and are very well supported.

121. This is a very good department which is well led: teachers are dedicated to improving attainment. Strong leadership provides a clear vision of the department's aims. Documentation gives good guidance to staff. General assessment objectives are built into all planning. These would have more meaning to pupils if they were linked specifically to projects. Pupils participate fully in assessment but, at Key Stage 3, they are sometimes unclear of the level at which they are working, as there are no separate grades for effort and attainment. The curriculum is enriched by visits to art galleries in Britain and abroad. Since the last inspection problems with accommodation have been addressed and the department is due to move into a new well-designed, purpose-built studio block. The department contributes to the life of the school with stimulating art displays around the building.

116.

Business education/economics

1. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE business studies is significantly above national expectations for grades A* - C and A* - G, with no candidates recording below a D grade. The attainment of A level students covers a much wider range. In business studies the number of students attaining A and B grades in 1999 was well below national averages, though A-E grades were broadly in line with expectations. The attainment of A and B grades in economics was significantly above national averages but, for A-E grades, it was well below. Higher attainers did especially well in this subject, with four students achieving either merit or distinction grades in their S level papers.

2. There is significant variation in the attainment level between pupils currently pursuing courses in Key Stage 4 and those of sixth form students. Standards are highest in business studies at Key Stage 4 where they are well above average. GCSE pupils show a good understanding of the subject. For example, in a lesson on international trade, Year 10 pupils know what exchange rates are, can calculate changes in exchange rates and can analyse potential outcomes. This represents a sophisticated level of comprehension. At A level attainment is not so high and achievement is less secure. Attainment is marginally better in business studies than in economics but overall is close to national expectations. Students frequently know basic ideas but cannot consistently offer the level of analysis that is associated with the attainment of the highest grades. For example, in a Year 13 economics lesson on exchange rates, students displayed a basic understanding of the terminology, but were unable to show with conviction that they fully understand why sterling is supplied and demanded and what outcomes might arise if the conditions of supply or demand changed. No variations in attainment based on gender or ethnic background was identifiable.

3. Progress is likewise variable, ranging from unsatisfactory to excellent, though in most cases, across all three subject areas, it is good. All pupils are making very good progress in their use of information technology in their business studies and economics lessons. For example, a Year 10 group used spreadsheets to plot various components of Britain's balance of payments. They then plotted line graphs of these values and some pupils were able to offer an analysis of the outcomes. Progress in the use of the Internet as a research tool is also impressive. In another Year 10 lesson, pupils used the Internet to calculate exchange rates for sterling against a variety of other currencies. In the majority of lessons seen, pupils at all levels are acquiring and applying new knowledge, they are developing their business and economics vocabulary and their ability to undertake research and solve problems is also improving. Progress is particularly good when lessons are well planned and where pupils of all levels of attainment are presented with interesting challenges.

4. The attitudes and behaviour displayed by all pupils are difficult to fault. They behave well in all lessons and their response is always good, often very good and, occasionally, excellent. Lessons are attended punctually, pupils settle promptly and have a good work ethic. The only criticism is that many pupils are compliant and are reluctant to ask questions. In all lessons observed all pupils acted responsibly. Books and equipment are well cared for and the teaching environment is respected; there is, for example, an almost complete lack of graffiti. Pupils are highly motivated, keep their concentration well and show a willingness to work both independently and collaboratively. They also show good respect for their teachers and for one another. Pupils listen to the views expressed by their peers and never ridicule the ideas presented by others.

5. Teaching is a strength of the department. In nearly 90 per cent of lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory. In nearly 70 per cent of lessons it was good or better and in 44 per cent of lessons it was either very good or excellent. Good, or better, teaching was found in all subjects offered by the department but it was stronger at Key Stage 4. Staff prepare well and have good subject knowledge which they are able to impart with enthusiasm and humour. Pupils are well managed and staff have high expectations being prepared to challenge the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of open ended questions, further challenging the pupils' comprehension. One minor weakness though, is that staff do not use praise sufficiently. Another feature of better lessons is that staff use a variety of strategies and informal assessment is utilised to determine the pace of the lesson. Better lessons are enlivened by the frequent use of good examples based in the local economy and by staff relating relevant and often amusing anecdotes. Other strengths include a most effective use of the Internet to encourage pupils to undertake research, good use and application of number and emphasis being placed on the necessity to use appropriate terminology accurately and in context. Where teaching is less effective, the pace is slower, challenges are less demanding and the lessons are more teacher centred, even down to notes being dictated. Overall, however, the quality of teaching offered is making a significant contribution to the attainment and progress of all pupils.

6. The previous inspection report highlighted the lack of shared teaching in A level classes. This still applies in both business studies and economics. Though the quality of teaching offered by the department is good, there is sometimes a lack of pace and variety in A level lessons. The sharing of classes will help to alleviate this problem, thereby offering students more varied challenges.

127. Design and technology

7. GCSE results, for the different disciplines within the subject are taken together, are well above the national average. Food technology, textiles technology and systems and control each achieved a 100 per cent success rate of A* - C grades in 1999. For food technology this represents a consistent pattern over the last four years. Textiles has shown a steady improvement over the same period. Resistant materials and graphics products had a success rate of 70 per cent and 72 per cent respectively in 1999 – still well above the national expectation but providing a less favourable comparison with other school subjects. Changes to syllabuses and methods of examining design and technology are a factor in these results and direct comparisons with earlier figures are not reliable. A level results are very good. Home economics, textiles and design technology each achieved a 100 per cent pass rate in 1999, an improvement on 1998 figures.

8. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the level expected nationally for pupils aged 16. Pupils have a good understanding of the processes of designing and can confidently use a variety of sources to research their projects. For example, in a Year 11 systems and control class, pupils were seen using computers for word processing text, e-mailing to request information and seeking ideas from the Internet. Pupils skilfully employ a range of techniques to present their folders. High quality research work and graphic skills can be seen in many

GCSE project folders throughout the faculty. Folders are enhanced by well-written extended text demonstrating that pupils have a good understanding of the subject content. The effective use of note-taking during class demonstrations encourages the development of independent learning skills. In most areas of technology pupils produce practical work of a high standard. Practical work in resistant materials is of a good standard.

9. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected standard for pupils aged 14. Carefully structured projects guide pupils through the skills and processes necessary for good design work whilst still allowing sufficient scope for them to make a unique contribution to the outcome. For example, pupils in a Year 8 resistant materials group had received a thorough grounding in how linkages and mechanisms work and were successfully using their knowledge to make individually designed mechanical coat hooks. Some resistant materials projects are less successful in making pupils think and do not demand sufficiently high levels of making skills. Attainment in the sixth form is good. Students use high quality graphic work to express their ideas and record their research. They engage in mature discussion about their work.

10. Progress at Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils make clear gains in both understanding and personal competence. For example, pupils in a Year 7 electronics lesson were introduced to the calculation of resistor values and developed a good understanding of the function of a resistor and the colour coding system. One pupil who normally experienced difficulties in setting his work down on paper was assisted by the clear layout of the worksheets and completed all the tasks successfully. Pupils using electronics in Year 9 use their knowledge of resistors in designing circuits. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good and is well documented by teachers, matched to course requirements and used to set targets for pupils. Progress in the sixth form is also good. Aided by good guidance from staff, students can adopt responsibility for maintaining their own progress through the course.

11. Attitudes to work are good. Pupils are attentive, respond well to questions and instructions and can work in a responsible manner. Behaviour is good. Pupils are well motivated and work independently. For example, where a Year 11 systems and control group was divided between the electronics workshop and the computer area, pupil levels of concentration and motivation were high, even when the teacher was not directly supervising them. Pupils enjoy technology lessons and this is evident in the purposeful way they conduct themselves in practical areas. For example, pupils in a Year 8 food technology lesson were absorbed in the task of preparing a one portion meal and sustained concentration throughout. Pupils take care with their work and have pride in their achievements.

12. Teaching at all key stages is good. Teachers have a good command of subject knowledge and employ an appropriate range of strategies to manage pupil activity in the work area. For example, in a Year 9 electronics lesson the teacher effectively managed pupils who were engaged in a wide range of practical processes. Pace and progress were maintained throughout and higher achieving pupils were challenged to enhance their work by using computers for graphic work or plotting electronic circuits. Teachers set clear targets for lessons, give good individual help and advice and use praise and encouragement where appropriate. Lessons are well structured and pace is maintained by varying pupil activity and teaching method. For example, in a Year 10 textiles lesson the teacher made clear what she expected the pupils to achieve and by a combination of direct teaching, individual help, well timed interventions and time checks, ensured that expectations were met. Work is marked regularly and thoroughly with constructive comments.

13. Leadership of the faculty is sound. Schemes of work are planned in detail and the head of faculty monitors teaching standards. Departmental priorities have been identified, although individual staff development needs have not been mapped and matched to the development plan. Teachers are appropriately qualified and their expertise is deployed well. Accommodation is insufficient and does not assist the effective delivery of the technology

curriculum. A shortage of specialist areas has resulted in some technology being taught in inappropriate rooms and some examination groups not having continuous access to a workshop. Plans are in place which should help to ease this problem. Technician time for resistant materials is insufficient to allow planning for effective deployment in a classroom support role. Learning resources are generally good and used efficiently. The faculty has maintained the high standards reported in the previous inspection.

134.

Geography

14. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. In 1999, 88 per cent gained A* - C grades; in 1998, 93 per cent of pupils reached this level. Attainment has been well above national averages over the last four years, never falling below 85 per cent A* - C grades. All pupils consistently gain A* - G grades. Pupils can use geographical terms accurately in their written work and in discussion. Year 11 pupils for example have a good understanding of the physical geography of rivers that enables them to give detail to their answers. Higher attaining pupils are particularly adept at providing pertinent examples to illustrate their work. Graphical skills both in terms of construction and analysis are high. Examination coursework is well presented, often being enhanced by the use of information technology, and it includes high standards of data collection and analysis.

15. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is also well above national expectations. In 1999, 86 per cent of pupils reached level 6 or better in teacher assessment. In 1998 this figure was 85 per cent. Pupils exhibit good geographical skills and knowledge. Year 9 pupils can clearly explain the link between plate tectonics and the location of volcanoes. Their understanding of the hierarchy of settlements is very good as is their ability to read and interpret Ordnance Survey maps. They also use information technology successfully in individual research tasks. Literary skills are well developed; pupils write in a detailed, accurate and relevant manner.

16. Attainment at A level is also well above the national average. All students have passed A level geography in the past two years. A large proportion achieves higher grades; for example in 1999 41 per cent gained A or B grades. They have a secure grasp of relevant knowledge and are able to apply this to new situations. For example, students in Year 12 can use their knowledge to analyse the complex issues surrounding possible ways of controlling the flooding of the Mississippi. Others fully understood the concept of overpopulation and could explain why this occurred in Nigeria. Students can interpret and critically evaluate well-researched material from a variety of sources. Essays written by the higher attaining students are particularly well structured and contain detailed analysis and amplification.

17. The progress made by pupils in all key stages is at least good and often very good. The stimulating teaching, and the positive attitudes of the pupils, are major reasons for this progress. Sixth form students' response to examination questions becomes more detailed and analytical as they move through the A level course. In addition they develop as independent learners by responding to the challenge provided by very good quality teaching and the use of relevant research exercises. At Key Stage 4 pupils are increasingly able to include explanation and detail in response to examination questions. Year 11 pupils, for example, have an improving grasp of the concepts associated with the reasons for the development of industry in specific locations. Similarly in Key Stage 3, pupils' depth of subject knowledge and understanding of the key skills in geography improve significantly. Year 7 pupils, for example, make good progress in associating contour patterns to specific landforms.

18. Pupils' attitudes to their work in geography are very good. Geography is popular with pupils and high numbers choose the subject at Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form. Many continue with their studies of the subject when they go to university. They work enthusiastically and listen attentively both to their teachers and to other pupils. The response to questions is enthusiastic. They work co-operatively and support each other well. Behaviour is very good and pupils are invariably courteous. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and question them readily. They are confident enough to express their own views in discussion and contribute readily. Pupils show initiative, particularly in their use of information technology to research topics via the Internet. They pay attention to detail such as ensuring that the corrections indicated by their teachers' marking are completed thoroughly.

19. Teaching is very good in most lessons and never less than good. The last report referred to insufficiently challenging tasks being set and a lack of pace in lessons, and suggested that pupils should be more active in their learning. All of these concerns have been fully addressed. Strengths of the teaching include excellent subject knowledge that provides detail and interesting examples to the lessons. The department's emphasis is on excellence: the teachers expect pupils to work to this level. Tasks given to pupils are varied and challenging both in class and through homework. There is a particular emphasis on developing pupils' skills of research, discussion and working with others. This is especially marked in the extensive fieldwork programme. Teachers also encourage pupils to become independent learners, especially through the use of information technology. Teachers are successful in communicating their enthusiasm for geography. Praise is used effectively. Pupils are encouraged to check their own learning and to ensure that deficiencies are corrected. Lessons are always orderly. Weaknesses in teaching are few, but there is insufficient attention to the provision of clear aims at the beginning of each lesson, together with a brief summary of the main learning points at the end.

20. There is excellent leadership and management of the department. This is characterised by a positive ethos for learning, achievement, equal opportunity and support. Teachers work as a team and give of their time unstintingly. The department reviews its performance effectively. Monitoring of pupil and staff performance is thorough and effective. Links with academic bodies, such as the Geographical Association, are strong and contribute significantly to the pupils' learning opportunities. The geography classrooms are well equipped and, by excellent displays of pupils' work, provide a very stimulating working environment.

141. **History**

21. The attainment of pupils is much higher than the national average at Key Stage 3 and well above it at Key Stage 4. At A level, the results of students were comparable with the national average in 1998 but fell below it in 1999. Pupils at Key Stage 3 have a very good knowledge of all of the key elements of the National Curriculum. A Year 9 class, for example, analysed effectively a number of original documents about conditions in coal mines in the Industrial Revolution. A Year 8 class was able to reach a conclusion about the responsibility of Charles 1 for the English Civil War. Pupils of above average ability have reached a high standard of performance at the end of Year 9, which is an improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection. This improvement is in part because they are now given additional, more difficult, tasks in some lessons. Pupils with special educational needs attain levels comparable with those of other pupils. At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to look at historical evidence and answer questions based upon it. A Year 10 group was able to reach a decision about the value of three Renaissance figures to the development of medical knowledge. A Year 11 group compared the reasons why the Mormons moved to the western United States with those of other groups making the same journey. The quality of written work of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is high. Speaking and listening skills are developed well through debates and group presentations. The most able pupils achieve very high standards and are often grouped together. In the sixth form, students reach high standards of attainment. A Year 12 group worked well at the technique of planning essays

about the role of Bismarck in the unification of Germany. The ablest students in Year 13 produced an interesting analysis of the statutes of Edward I as part of their study of medieval documents.

22. At Key Stage 3, the progress of nearly all pupils is very good. They are extremely well taught and gradually master historical skills like the interpretation of evidence and the production of accurate summaries of events. In some lessons, they are able to practise their skills in information technology. The progress made by pupils at Key Stage 4 is exceptional and very many of them develop considerably their writing and speaking skills. Pupils with special educational needs make as much progress as other pupils, in part because the teachers are aware of their difficulties and provide appropriate support. In the sixth form, students make very good progress. In their essays, there is much evidence of thorough planning and accurate writing. The main reasons for the very good progress made throughout the school are the quality of the teaching and the high levels of motivation of the pupils.

23. In all lessons, pupils work well and, with the exception of a few in Year 7, they display much enthusiasm for their historical studies. Their levels of motivation are high. Group work is successful because the pupils work well together, showing respect for each other as well as for their teachers. This mature attitude extends to their homework, which is often of excellent quality and can take original forms, such as history websites on the Internet. In lessons where the topic includes consideration for the views and beliefs of others, pupils are sympathetic and often show genuine concern. The annual visit to the battlefields of the Western Front is the best example of an activity which makes pupils realise the human cost of war.

24. The quality of teaching is high. Of the lessons observed at Key Stage 3, all had at least satisfactory teaching and in two-thirds of these, it was good, very good or excellent. At Key Stage 4, teaching was good or better in four of the five lessons observed and satisfactory in the fifth. In all of the sixth form lessons observed, the standard of teaching was good or better. Both teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons carefully. In the best lessons, the pace at which pupils work is rapid with strict time controls placed on group discussions. There is considerable emphasis placed on getting pupils throughout the school to think about the historical issues rather than simply absorbing factual information. Many of the techniques used are rather innovative. One example was a "cocktail party" at which members of the Year 9 class pretended to be characters from all levels of society in the Industrial Revolution. This was followed by a discussion on the effects of this big change on both the rich and the poor. A conscious effort is made to ensure that as many pupils as possible, particularly some quiet girls, are actively involved in discussions. A full range of resources is used, including information technology, to maintain the interest of the pupils. Work is marked regularly, with many of the comments offering suggestions about how the pupils can improve their standards. Some of the criticisms about marking and assessment in the previous inspection report have not been fully addressed.

25. The head of department, in post for fifteen months, has had a considerable impact upon the standards achieved by the pupils. In particular, there has been an improvement in the standard of teaching and an increase in the amount of work in which pupils are actively involved. The comment in the previous report about a lack of challenge in some GCSE and A level work is much less valid now. The numbers of pupils opting for history beyond Key Stage 3 have risen substantially because of the changes which have been made. The current plans for the department include a further review of how pupils' work is assessed. Currently, there are no targets set for individual pupils below the sixth form and the teachers do not think sufficiently about the highest possible standards that each pupil can achieve when levels of ability are taken into account.

146. Information and communication technology

26. Attainment, on the basis of teacher assessments, at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. In 1999, 93 per cent of pupils reached level 6 or better in information technology. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, attainment is also above national expectations. Throughout the school pupils use information technology most effectively. For example, pupils in Year 10 use spreadsheets very competently in mathematics to develop their work on correlations. Pupils in geography produce newspaper articles on natural disasters by using desktop publishing. Pupils in Year 11 use 'crocodile clips' effectively to design and model electronic circuits. Year 11 pupils use good word processing skills to produce personal statements for their record of achievement. They can manipulate 'Windows' with real confidence. Pupils are also adept in the use of digital cameras and scanners. A particular strength is their facility in using e-mail. Many pupils transfer work from home to school using this method. The opportunities and encouragement given to pupils to develop their information technology skills are major reasons for the high standards of attainment.

27. Pupils make good progress at both key stages and in the sixth form. They become more autonomous users of IT as they progress through the school. In lessons pupils show good acquisition of skills. For example, Year 7 quickly learn how to format a word-processed document. Year 12 apply 'look-up tables' to their spreadsheets. In mathematics pupils develop very good information technology skills in using spreadsheets as a tool for ordering data and performing calculations. Pupils choose, and use effectively, appropriate software. Boys and girls make similar progress.

28. Pupils' attitudes toward the subject are very good. The specialist information technology room is fully used by pupils before school, at break and at lunchtimes. At these times pupils are invariably working on tasks set by their subject teachers. Pupils work together well and use the computers in an appropriate manner. Behaviour is always very good. They respond to questioning with enthusiasm. Their desire to learn is illustrated by their willingness to ask questions. They are not afraid to experiment and show initiative in their positive use of the Internet as a research tool. They assist each other willingly and apply themselves to their own work with diligence and concentration.

29. Teaching in information technology lessons is mostly good and never less than satisfactory. Strengths of the teaching include very good planning and the teachers' secure subject knowledge. This enables them to amplify points and to give examples readily as illustrations. Classes are well controlled and teachers move around continuously supporting and advising. Praise, humour and encouragement are used most effectively. Teachers insist on accuracy and encourage pupils to solve problems themselves. There is good pace in the lessons. The assessment of pupil progress is used constructively to modify teaching methods. However, not all lessons show clearly what the pupils are going to learn, nor is there always a clear review of the main learning points.

30. Most of the issues raised in the last report have been satisfactorily resolved. There is now effective teaching of information technology at Key Stage 3. The department is examining how pupils should be assessed at Key Stage 4. There is now appropriate use of information technology in mathematics and modern languages. A further concern was the low level of technician support. This has been addressed to the extent that support, both inside and outside the classroom, is one of the strengths of the department. Key Stage 3 pupils now have access to the control strand of the National Curriculum. Significant improvements in the level of equipment have been made in the past three years, including the installation of a network of modern computers and a forward-looking curriculum plan for the subject. However, in Key Stage 4 not all pupils have access to 'control'. In addition, a clear map of when and where pupils receive their information technology entitlement in Key Stage 4 has not been made.

There are inadequate computer facilities in the library and the restricted size of the main information technology room prevents individual access to a computer in some lessons.

31.The department is very well led and managed. There is a clear vision for the future of information technology in the school that is backed-up by good teamwork and clear development planning with a stepped programme of implementation. The importance that the school attaches to the further development of information and communication technology is illustrated by its prominence in the school development plan. There is a clear focus throughout the school on raising standards still further.

152. **Modern foreign languages**

32.In French, the main foreign language for all pupils, and in German, which is introduced in Year 8 as a second foreign language for all, attainment is well above average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. GCSE examination results in 1999 in both French and German are excellent, with all pupils gaining A* - C grades. This is very high compared to national averages, and well above average when compared to similar selective schools. There is a high proportion of A*-B grades. Over the last four years, GCSE results have shown consistently excellent standards, and compare very favourably with other subjects in school. Girls outperform boys in the highest grades in modern languages. Attainment in the sixth form and results in the A level examinations in 1999 are both well above average in both French and German. The results over the last four years are well above average in German, and above average in French. In GCSE Spanish, an optional two-year course for sixth-formers, results are very high with all students gaining A* - C grades over the last four years.

33.In Key Stages 3 and 4, the pupils' listening skills are generally well above average and higher attainers show quick response and good understanding. A significant number of pupils in both Key Stages 3 and 4 lack confidence in speaking in both French and German, but the majority reach good standards of fluency and confidence. Already in Key Stage 3, pupils use the foreign language for real communication showing good early fluency when, for example, describing friends and teachers. Pupils read for information with well above average understanding, and cope very well with longer texts in Key Stage 4. Writing and presentation are at a very high standard generally. Extended writing is very good in both key stages, with good coaching to meet GCSE examination requirements in Key Stage 4.

34.In the sixth form, the majority of students in both French and German are attaining levels consistent with higher grades. They cope very well with unfamiliar language when listening, and are confident in the use of the foreign language and its structures in speaking and writing. They can combine well different language skills. Others have more average attainment levels for the Advanced course. Overall, students have well above average knowledge of grammar, and use the foreign language effectively to express their opinions on their set texts for study and a range of current issues including drugs, environmental issues, sport and tourism.

35.Progress is good throughout. In Key Stage 3, pupils consolidate their learning, extend their range of topic vocabulary, and improve their confidence in handling grammar and language structures. Pupils improve their fluency, learning to use language for everyday purposes, as for example when Year 9 pupils converse about their leisure activities, or invent dialogues with parents arguing about going out in the evening. In Key Stage 4 there is good progress towards meeting the standards required by the examination courses. There is very good progress in both Key Stages 3 and 4 in the use of different tenses. In the sixth form, students make good progress, extending their skills and confidence in discussing complex issues, such as the different holiday-making habits of peoples across Europe, or the moral issues involved in crime and punishment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons in all key stages.

36. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good and sometimes excellent. In all key stages, pupils participate willingly in class activities and show considerable interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment. They develop early a mature approach to study and learning. Levels of concentration are very good. Pupils work well individually, sometimes making good use of dictionaries and text books for reference. They also work well in pairs or small groups in many

lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Occasionally these opportunities are insufficiently structured.

37. The quality of teaching is good, sometimes very good, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have at least good command of the foreign language and use it effectively in lessons. Occasionally too much English is used unnecessarily. Teachers' expectations are suitably high. Pupils are consistently challenged in lessons to attain high standards. Planning and preparation for lessons are thoughtful and thorough, management and control are very good, and feedback to pupils is regular and encouraging. Most lessons have good pace. Suitable homework is given regularly and used well to consolidate learning or as preparation for the next lesson. Opportunities in lessons for extended reading in Key Stage 3 are infrequent and insufficiently monitored, but overall teachers make good use of resources and equipment, including some very good use of information technology.

38. Leadership and management of the department are very good and create a very favourable ethos for learning modern languages. Staff morale is high and teachers work well as a team. Energy is effectively focussed on attaining high standards and success in external examinations. Assessment procedures are thorough, and very good use is made of information, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Recording is thorough but still insufficiently centralised to allow regular and easy access to information for analysis of provision. Planning is good, but lacks definition in the documentation regarding longer-term strategy and priorities. The department has responded well to the main issues in the last report concerning teaching methods and pupils' progress in speaking, but there is still work to do. The programme of European visits and exchanges is very good and benefits many pupils.

Music

39. The overall attainment of pupils in music is well above average. A level results in 1999 were above average compared to the national subject levels in similar schools for both A-B and A-E grades. The number of students gaining grades A* - C in GCSE in 1999 was well above the national subject average. The trend since the last inspection has been to maintain very good results and in every year except one all those entered gained A* - C grades. Attainment in lessons matches examination results. Many students attain high levels of instrumental and vocal performance, and do well in Associated Board examinations. Composing skills at both Key Stage 4 and post-16 become increasingly competent, helped considerably and effectively by the constant use of computers. Students write well-structured instrumental works, many of which reflect a mature understanding of more than one instrument. During the inspection, a woodwind quartet movement, composed by an A level student, was being rehearsed by a group of advanced players to a high standard of performance. Musical history is studied in considerable depth and students' aural and theory skills are generally above average.

40. The attainment of pupils in music at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average and has not changed over the last two years. Attainment in lessons matches teachers' assessments. By the end of the key stage, pupils can use a modest range of instruments to compose and perform confidently and expressively in ensembles, which combine melody, rhythm and harmony. They learn music as a language, and develop considerable facility with reading and using notation. This enables them to make their own arrangements from musical scores as well as improvise effectively.

41. Most pupils make very good progress with the help of good teaching and the positive attitudes that they have towards learning in general. They are engaged intellectually as musicians from the start of their life in the school. Their listening skills and knowledge of musical theory are applied well to performing and composing activities as essential aspects of their musicianship. At Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils quickly learn an awareness of the expressive qualities of the music they play and take account of the musical intentions of others in putting together group compositions. Many of them take the lead in directing the rehearsals of class ensembles. Lower attaining pupils make good progress by fully participating in these groups. GCSE and A level students generally make very good progress in composing. They all use computers confidently to refine their work, and to prepare their scores to a professionally high standard of presentation. The works they write are coherently structured in balanced musical sections. Students frequently compose with imagination in styles beyond what is conventional. For example, one GCSE composition explored the use of dissonance in a brass quartet movement written to accompany the narration of a war poem by Wilfred Owen. A significant proportion of the school takes advantage of the exceptional range of extra-curricular instrumental lessons available. Many of those involved make rapid progress and perform well as soloists.

42. Attitudes to work are very good. Pupils are well behaved and treat instruments carefully. They take a positive interest in learning about music and applying their knowledge through practical music making. They accept the intellectual challenge of musical theory and aural work, and enjoy applying it to their composing and performing. They work well independently, and are prepared to help one another supportively, sharing musical ideas when collaborating in groups. A good number choose to do GCSE and A level each year, and over ten per cent of the school regularly participates in a range of extra-curricular activities. Initiative is shown by the considerable number of groups and individuals who take on the responsibility of providing entertainment in an on-going programme of concerts each year, some of which are organised by the pupils themselves. About 50 pupils support the weekly activities of the Music Centre, and half of these also play in county orchestras and bands.

43. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Experienced musicians teach classes. Expectations are high. For example, pupils at Key Stage 3 are expected to be able to listen to music with the same level of technical skill and understanding as would apply to GCSE students. All lessons are well planned to contain a variety of practical and theoretical activities, and standards of discipline are high. Teachers need to share their objectives more frequently with pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, and ensure that tasks are sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils. This aspect is particularly well addressed in GCSE and A level classes where each student works according to individual musical strengths and needs. Teachers are adept at using computers to support and enhance composing skills, and should now consider ways of extending these facilities to Key Stage 3 work. The quality of peripatetic teaching and the support given to extra-curricular activities is very good.

44. The curriculum should be expanded to include greater recognition of musical cultures other than European Western traditions, and a supply of good quality percussion instruments is needed to further this end. More materials are also needed to enhance A level teaching. Stabilisers need to be fitted to the grand piano in the hall as a safety measure.

45. Music is a popular subject in the school. The department runs smoothly and is well organised, and its success could be maximised with some provision of suitable in service training. Teachers cope extremely well with the cramped conditions that prevail at present. Since the previous inspection, resources have been increased with more computers and keyboards, and new purpose built accommodation is at present under construction.

Physical education

46. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is well above average. It is very good in netball and gymnastics. Year 9 girls display very good skills in netball and pass the ball very effectively and are capable of maintaining possession if necessary. Catching and passing skills are well above expected levels. Year 7 girls show very good awareness of tension and style in gymnastics and create very good individual sequences largely stimulated by teaching which encourages them both to plan and to evaluate their work. Many are able to control their body weight on their arms and achieve results that are also above expected levels. Boys and girls attain well in hockey showing both stickwork and ball control of good standard. Year 7 boys have good basic ball control skills in soccer. Good attainment is seen at Key Stage 4 in table tennis where girls show effective hand eye co-ordination and in basketball where boys display skills, such as dribbling, passing and shooting, that are of good standard. In the sixth form attainment by both boys and girls is good in games. Students have well developed skills in badminton. Boys and girls perform well throughout the key stages as do pupils with special educational needs whose attainment is well in line with expectation and sometimes above.

47. The progress made by pupils is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is good. In Key Stage 3 it is very good. Girls show very good progress in netball and gymnastics at Key Stage 3. In netball, Year 9 girls show ability to grasp new strategies and tactics quickly and to apply them with very good effect in game situations enabling them to produce impressive standards of play. Refined performance in gymnastics is shown by Year 7 girls who, besides showing clear improvement in controlling their body weight on arms, quickly develop and link movements to form good sequences. Very good progress by Year 9 boys was observed in health-related exercise. In such activities, adherence to correct form in exercises is clearly improved and pupils enthusiastically plot their performances against previous ones. In a well-organised table tennis lesson girls rapidly learned and applied the correct scoring procedures for doubles and also clearly improved their ability to sustain the game with successful rallies. Occasionally, where the initial stages of lessons are slow to develop, the progress is not so good, although it is still satisfactory.

48. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Pupils are very responsible and behave extremely well both towards teachers and towards each other. Non-participation is unusual. When teachers request collaboration pupils respond unflinchingly. Mutual support for each other is spontaneous and unforced. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and there is always a keen sense of enjoyment and fulfilment. Good behaviour is seen in competitive situations where the decisions of referees are accepted appropriately and without question. Pupils willingly accept the high standards of dress required by the school. Pupils are very supportive of each other.

49. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Where it is very good teachers show enthusiasm and deliver well planned lessons with clear objectives which proceed with very good pace and purpose. These lessons have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and performances and result both in above average attainment and very good progress. All teachers have good subject knowledge and most are willing to demonstrate. In the best lessons teachers use a variety of teaching styles to reach different objectives in different phases of lessons. Invariably this encourages pupils to develop planning and evaluating skills and results in greater understanding of the subject. Expectations are always high in these instances and this again produces good performances from pupils.

50. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met. At Key Stage 3, games and gymnastics are supplemented by athletics and swimming. There is a good programme of all the major games and gymnastics. At Key Stage 4 students follow games and one other activity and some allowance is made, in single periods, for students to have some choice in their programmes of activity. Health related exercise is included as one of these options. In the sixth form all students have a compulsory double period session in physical education. In line with accepted practice there is a range of options at this level and this is enhanced by using

off-campus facilities. The games programme which involves Years 11 to 13 provides a good range of activities and caters well for students' social development. The department pays particular attention to non-swimmers and includes extra curricular provision for any who may wish to learn. Extra curricular provision is very good and students make very good use of it. Many teachers from other departments assist with the extra curricular activities.

51.The last inspection report observed that the omission of examination courses in physical education did not allow students to gain accreditation for their very good attainment and progress. This situation has not changed as the subject is still not included at either GCSE or A level.

Religious education

52.Examination results at GCSE in 1999 were broadly similar to those in 1998, and the small numbers of pupils who entered for the examination attained standards which are above average. All of the nine candidates who took the examination in religious studies in 1999 gained grades A* - C, and one pupil attained grade A*. In 1998 all but one of the seven candidates gained grades A* - C and three pupils achieved grade A*. Numbers of candidates at A level in 1999 were lower than the previous year. Four students took the examination in Christian theology and all gained grades A - C. These grades are similar to the results in 1998 when all nine candidates gained grades A - C.

53.Pupils' attainment at age 14 at least matches the standards expected for pupils at Key Stage 3 as defined in the Locally Agreed Syllabus and exceeds them in the depth of knowledge and understanding shown by the majority of pupils. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good grasp of the main beliefs, concepts and religious practices of Christianity and other major world religions, such as Hinduism and Islam. Higher attaining pupils display their knowledge impressively in oral presentations and in written work, and pupils generally are fluent in their use of specialised religious vocabulary. Pupils produce a wide range of good quality written work which includes personal viewpoints, such as arguments for and against the existence of God, research findings, narratives of Old Testament stories such as Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac, and descriptions of patterns of worship in Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. By the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils, who are not taking the religious studies examination at GCSE, attains standards which meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Their written assignments and discussions in class show that they have a sound knowledge and understanding of contemporary attitudes towards moral issues, such as the sanctity of life, wealth and poverty, and the injustices of racism. Pupils in the examination groups have a clear understanding of the significant events in the Ministry of Christ and a good background knowledge of the Judaic teaching of the time. For example, they can explain the Jewish attitudes to wealth and show how they contrasted with the teachings of Jesus. They are also very well informed about the origins of Islam and its religious practices.

54.In the sixth form, students taking the A level course attain standards which are well above average in depth of knowledge and the way in which they deploy their knowledge in discussion and written work. Much of the written work is of a very high standard. Students use technical language very accurately, and they are able to sustain their viewpoints using evidence from a wide range of sources. Religious education for the majority of students in the sixth form is provided as a component of general studies and no relevant lessons were seen during the inspection week.

55.Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress at Key Stage 3. Pupils come into the school with a sound basic knowledge of Christianity and some appreciation of different world religions. As they move through Key Stage 3 they develop their knowledge and understanding of different religious concepts and their thinking and research skills to a higher than average level. For example, pupils of all levels of attainment in Year 7

make very good progress in learning about their Christian heritage through project work on their local parish church. At Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, examination candidates are making very good progress in coping with the demands of their programmes of study. However, although pupils in the non-examination classes make good progress in Year 10, progress is slower in Year 11 because pupils only have one lesson in the two week cycle. When the teaching is of the highest standard pupils make excellent progress, as for example in a lower sixth lesson on the biblical concept of miracles, where the teacher's command of the subject and very high expectations of achievement enabled the students to make impressive gains in detailed textual commentary.

56. The attitudes of pupils are very good. Most pupils are very well motivated and show enthusiasm for their work. They are very attentive listeners and are keen to take part in group and class discussions. They take the initiative in planning and researching their own projects, often using information technology resources. Take-up at GCSE has improved and there are now seventeen candidates in Year 11 with a broadly similar number in Year 10. Behaviour in all years is very good.

57. The quality of teaching is very good. In 70 per cent of the lessons seen teaching was good or better, and in two lessons it was of the highest standard. In the most effective lessons teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and great enthusiasm for it. Expectations of work are very high, and pupils are stimulated to make a high level contribution to class discussions and to think creatively. There is a good range of activities that promotes pupils' communication skills in speech and writing. Resources, including artefacts and visits are used very effectively, and homework is skilfully planned to extend the scope of written work. In the most effective lessons pupils attain standards which are well above average and they enjoy their work. This was the case in a Year 7 lesson on Hinduism where the excellent teaching was reflected in pupils' very lively and well informed presentations on Divali. There are a few minor shortcomings. In the lessons where teaching was satisfactory, rather than good, there was sometimes a lack of structured support for lower attainers which resulted in responses which were not sufficiently well focused. In the marking of books the department does not have a co-ordinated approach to the correction of spelling errors. Overall the high standards of teaching have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and progress.

58. The school has responded positively to the concerns raised in the previous report about the quality of provision for the subject and good progress has been made. Time allocations for the statutory provision in Year 10 are now satisfactory and religious education is provided for the sixth form. The statutory provision in Year 11 is still unsatisfactory because of inadequate time, but the school is aware of this and is considering the issue within the wider context of overall curriculum planning. The issue of non-specialist staff has been addressed. The appointment of a second specialist who has experience of teaching in schools in multi-faith communities has added to the department's expertise, and the quality of her teaching has made a significant contribution to the enhancement of the status of religious education within the school. The subject is very well managed and offers very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

179. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

179. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

59. The inspection team consisted of 14 inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week, more than 180 lessons were observed and inspectors attended registration sessions, whole school and key stage assemblies and extra-curricular activities. All teachers were seen teaching at least once and most several times. Planned discussions were held with pupils, teachers, other members of staff and governors. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including a sample across the range of pupils' attainment from each year group. A large amount of documentation, including teachers' lesson planning, provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. A meeting for parents held prior to the inspection was attended by 55 parents, and 219 responses to a questionnaire about parents' opinions, provided opportunities for parents to inform the inspection team about their perceptions of the school.

60. Inspectors spent a total of 49 inspector days in school gathering first hand evidence. They spent over 130 hours observing lessons, more than six hours in discussion with pupils and in excess of 26 hours in evaluating pupils' work.

61.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	766	3	26	6

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	46.64
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.42

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked each week	194

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.1
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	27
	KS4	21

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	1 977 907
Total Expenditure	1 977 907
Expenditure per pupil	2 743
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	0

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	766
Number of questionnaires returned:	239

Responses (percentage of answers in each category)*:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	23	58	10	7	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	31	51	10	5	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	15	35	33	5	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22	54	13	7	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	35	50	9	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	54	41	3	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	45	47	4	3	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	33	50	5	8	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	37	46	8	5	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	38	52	8	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	39	48	8	5	1

* A few parents did not respond to every statement, so some percentages do not total 100.