

INSPECTION REPORT

Cotham School
Bristol

LEA area: City of Bristol

Unique Reference Number: 109289

Inspection Number: 184608

Headteacher: Mr. James Wetz

Reporting inspector: Mrs. Susan Chamberlain
7661

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708470

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
Type of control:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Neville Jones
Date of previous inspection:	February 1995

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		Teaching
		Leadership and management
Mrs. J. Buncher, Lay Inspector	Equality of opportunity	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and students' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Ms. V. Banks	Geography	
Mr. K. Boden	Design and technology	
Miss. J. Brookes	Physical education	Accommodation
	Dance	
Mrs. P. Caspari	Drama	
Mr. D. Gowland	Information and communication technology	Learning resources
Mr. G. Hunter	Mathematics	The efficiency of the school
Mr. D. Innes	English	
Mr. T. Osgerby	History	Curriculum and assessment
	Key Stage 4	
	6 th Form provision	
Ms. J. Peach	Modern foreign languages	
Mr. M. Pettitt	Art	
Mr. P. Tidmarsh	Music	Staffing
Mr. R. Wilkins	Religious education	Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr. R. Woodhouse	Science	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- . Students make good progress during their time in school
- . Behaviour and relationships are very good.
- . The school ethos is very good.
- . Music is a strength in the school.
- . The teaching is good.
- . Social education and moral education are very good.
- . Cultural education is excellent and the provision of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- . Curricular provision in the sixth form is very good.
- . Procedures for supporting all students are very good.
- . Links with the community are very strong.
- . Financial planning is excellent.
- . The governors and principal provide an excellent and clear direction for the school and the vice-principal and senior management team ensure that the aims are realised in practice.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Standards in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory.
- II. Statutory requirements are not met in design and technology. Students do not receive their full entitlement.
- III. Individual education plans are inadequate to meet the subject needs of students with special educational needs.
- IV. Marking is inconsistent.
- V. School administration is not as efficient as it could be.

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

How the school has improved since the last inspection

There has been a substantial improvement in resourcing of information and communication technology. Use of these resources, however, is not yet sufficient, particularly in subjects across the curriculum. Statutory requirements are now met in science but not in design and technology. Department plans, however, are in place for design and technology, which features in the school development plan for major investment. Whole-school assessment procedures are better than at the time of the last inspection, but there is inconsistency of practice across the school. Development planning is now very good and indicates a very clear direction. Attendance figures are now computerised and the presentation of related statistics meets legal requirements. GCSE results have improved in geography, music, drama and art. The attainment and integration of students from minority ethnic groups are being well supported. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory even though there are still key issues to address. There are still inadequate opportunities for collective worship and a lack of provision of religious education in the sixth form. The new leadership has instigated massive change and has laid the foundations for significant improvement in the future. The school has realistic targets and is well placed to improve further.

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	E*	
GCSE examinations	A	E*	
A/AS - levels	C		

Results at the end of Key Stage 3 in statutory tests are well above national averages in English, mathematics and science. These good results do not compare well with those of schools of a similar type. It needs to be remembered, however, that despite its grammar school status, the school admits students of a wide range of ability; in September 2000 the school will go fully comprehensive. Results at GCSE are well above national averages but again compare poorly with those of other grammar schools whose entry requirements are more rigorous. In 1998 geography results were highest and art results lowest when compared with other subjects in the school. In 1999, however, results in art were much improved. A-Level results in 1998 were slightly lower than average but improved considerably in 1999. The average point score rose in 1999 to above the national average for 1998.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Music	Information and communication technology
Years 10-11	Good	Drama, dance, geography, food and music	Information and communication technology
Sixth form	Good	Art, geography, physics and music	Information and communication technology
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Overall teaching is good. 98 per cent of lessons seen were satisfactory or better, 66 per cent were good or better and 25 per cent were very good or excellent. Only two per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. In no subject was teaching less than satisfactory except where it occurs only sporadically and does not cover the programme of study as in the case of information and communication technology. Teaching is best in the sixth form and is marginally better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is currently good. Exclusions have reduced. Punctuality is unsatisfactory.
Ethos*	The ethos is very good.
Leadership and management	Leadership and management are very good overall.
Curriculum	The curriculum has some weaknesses but provision in the sixth form is very good. Assessment is good.
Students with special educational needs	Students with special educational needs lack support at Key Stage 4. Individual education plans need to be improved
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Moral and social education is very good. Cultural education is excellent. Spiritual education is unsatisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing is good; resources are satisfactory; accommodation has some very poor features, particularly the unsafe windows.
Value for money	Value for money is good.

* *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 children to achieve a good standard of work. VII. Parents find it easy to approach school. VIII. The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons. IX. Their children like school.	X. Some parents are not satisfied with the e. XI. Some do not feel they are kept

Inspectors agree with the positive comments that parents make. Homework is set regularly and in the main is appropriate but it could be more interesting. There is a need to strengthen communication at all levels, so inspectors believe that some parents might be justified in feeling ill informed. Parents believe there has been a substantial improvement in students' attitudes over the last two years.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to improve the school, the governors, senior staff and staff of the school need to take the following action:

- ◆. Improve students' attainment and progress in information and communication technology education at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
 - .providing training for all members of staff to give them the expertise and confidence to use information and communication technology in their teaching;
 - .ensuring that all aspects of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology are covered in the schemes of work and are taught to all students;
 - .monitoring the attainment of students at both key stages;
 - .providing the necessary computer software for subjects.(Paragraphs: 3, 16, 40, 44, 54, 94, 96, 104, 179, 195, 197, 199, 200, 210)

- ◆. Ensure that students receive their full entitlement in design and technology by:
 - .covering the full range of technology subjects, including subjects which are missing from, or under-represented in, the present curriculum, for example textiles, child development and systems and control;
 - .appointing an overall leader for this area of the curriculum;
 - .providing an improved ratio of full-time to part-time members of staff;
 - .reviewing the adequacy of accommodation for teaching a full technology curriculum and plan for improved provision paying particular attention to providing suitable accommodation for aspects such as systems and control and information and communication technology;
 - .improving the adequacy of resources for implementing an enhanced technology curriculum;
 - .rigorously implementing the recently devised schemes of work and monitoring their effectiveness.(Paragraphs: 19, 44, 46, 94, 96, 164-166)

- ◆. Improve individual education plans for students with special educational needs by:
 - .ensuring that the students know and understand their targets;
 - .ensuring that teachers have a clear understanding of students' targets and their specific needs;
 - .enlisting subject teachers to contribute to targets.(Paragraph: 59)

- ◆. Improve the efficiency of school administration by ensuring that staff are deployed in the most efficient way.
(Paragraphs: 97, 110, 114)

In addition to the above priorities the school should attend to the following matters:

- . Ensure that marking is consistent and useful. (Paragraphs: 57, 78, 123)
- . Improve the provision of religious education in the sixth form. (Paragraphs: 60, 239)
- . Improve arrangements for a daily act of collective worship. (Paragraph: 60)

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1.The school is located in Cotham, an area of Bristol. It is larger than average with 1157 students, including those in the sixth form. The school is oversubscribed; its roll has risen dramatically. The proportion of students who come from homes that are, in socio-economic terms, advantaged is higher than the national average. Entry is by selection but is not as rigorous as in most grammar schools. The overall attainment of students on entry is above the national average but there are many whose attainment is quite low. The school is moving towards a fully comprehensive intake. Places are in demand and the roll has risen since the last inspection. There are fewer boys (561) than girls (596). The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals, 9.4 per cent, is below the national average. Of these only 8.6 per cent claim their entitlement. The 7.2 per cent of students that speak English as an additional language is a higher proportion than in most schools.

2.The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs at assessment stage 2 or above is 7.3 per cent and is 15.5 per cent for all stages. This is broadly in line with the national average and is an indicator of the flexibility exhibited in the selection process. Those who have statements amount to 0.4 per cent, which is below the national average.

3.The school aims to ensure that students are put first and that it enables them to reach their potential. It sets targets that are regularly reviewed. In the year 2000 the school wants to achieve the following results:

Key Stage 3 (%)

English	Mathematics	Science	ICT
70	82	82	99

GCSE

5 A*-C	75%
1 A*-G	100%

Sixth Form (Point score for 2+ A levels) 16

Although these seem modest, in some cases, they reflect the changing nature of the entry and the potential of students as indicated at the end of the previous key stage.

The school's priorities are:

- Review the structure and cost effectiveness of school administration, and in particular the capture and use of data to inform planning at all levels.
- Ensure repair to windows in the main building.
- Design and technology; statutory requirement and investment.
- Focus on information and communication technology by implementing a training programme, addressing in schemes of work and ensuring its use in the classroom.

1.Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	74	91	165

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	53	62	51
	Girls	66	72	55
	Total	119	134	106
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72 (85)	81 (82)	63 (80)
	National	65 (65)	62 (60)	53 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	40 (55)	56 (66)	28 (54)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	55	68	61
	Girls	71	83	65
	Total	126	151	126
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (75)	90 (88)	76 (88)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	59 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	29 (36)	71 (70)	44 (54)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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	79	82	161

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	47	77	77
	Girls	60	73	73
	Total	107	150	150
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	66 (62)	93 (96)	93 (99)
	National	47.8 (44.6)	88.4 (89.8)	93.9 (95.2)

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	98	116	124

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16 (15.3)	19.8 (17.3)	18.2 (16.3)	4.4	3.8	4.0
National	N/A	N/A	N/A (17.6)	N/A	N/A	N/A (2.8)

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

	Number	% Success Rate
School	5	40
National		N/A

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	11
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.4
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	89
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	25
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

4. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

4. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

4. **Attainment and progress**

2. Students enter the school with levels of attainment above the national average. They are a selected entry but this selection is not as rigorous as for most grammar schools. Students of a wide range of ability are admitted, brothers and sisters, for example, are rarely denied a place. The school is moving towards a fully comprehensive intake in September, 2000.

3. The Key Stage 3 tests taken in 1998 show that attainment was well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Results in 1999 were slightly lower in English and science and very similar in mathematics. Over the last three years (1996-1998), boys and girls' performances were well above the national average in English and science. Girls' performance was well above average in mathematics whilst the boys' performance in mathematics was very high. In 1999 there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls in mathematics. When compared with similar schools for 1998 results in English, mathematics and science were very low.

4. The proportion of candidates gaining five or more grades A*-C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education is well above the national average. In 1998 61.7 per cent of the year group attained this standard. Results in 1999 were higher at 66 per cent. Over the three years, 1996-1998, 69.6 per cent of students gained five or more A*-C grades which was well above the national average. Girls marginally outperformed boys at this level. The proportion of candidates who gained five or more A*-G grades was well above the national average in 1998 at 96.3 per cent; it has been above the national average over the three years 1996-1998 when it averaged at 94.9 per cent. In 1999, 93 per cent of students gained 5 A*-G grades. Over the last four years, school averages have shown no trend whilst the national trend is rising. Results do not compare favourably with other grammar schools but in 1998 are best in geography and worst in art.

5. Results at A Level in 1998 show an average point score of 16.3, which was slightly below the national average. Over the three years, 1996-1998, the average point score has been close to the national average. Scores in 1999 were considerably higher with an average of 18.2. Results were best in geography, French and English literature and worst in design and technology.

6. Overall, students' attainment was above national expectations in inspection week. They make good progress over time. In the week of the inspection progress was generally good in lessons. Examination results show that the school adds value to students' prior attainment but this was not always obvious during the inspection. The number of new teachers, although competent and hardworking, have had an unsettling effect. Students are beginning to adapt to the new approaches and attainment and progress are improving daily. Students in Year 9 are beginning to respond well to the challenge of statutory tests as are those in Year 11 to GCSE examinations. The momentum is increasing but is not yet maximised. There are no significant differences

between the progress made by boys and girls or students of differing levels of attainment

7. Students for whom English is an additional language are well integrated and their attainment levels are rising. The extra support and counselling they receive contributes to considerably improved rates of progress. The large number of black students in low sets, noted at the last inspection, has been reduced and although the problem has not been completely resolved there has been considerable improvement in the expectations of teachers, the aspirations of students and consequently their attainment.

8. Attainment in English, overall is above national expectations at the end both key stages and in the sixth form. In 1998, Key Stage 3 statutory test results were well above average as were GCSE results in English language. In literature they were in line with national figures.

The 1999 results are similar across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At A Level students achieve in line with national figures in English language. In literature they were below national figures

in 1998 but considerably improved in 1999 particularly with respect to high grades. Students make sound progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This is linked to the positive responses of students to challenging and interesting work.

9. Students develop good skills of literacy and especially good speaking skills; these are encouraged by opportunities provided in most subjects. Students read confidently and with good understanding of challenging texts. Writing skills are of variable quality, particularly in the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and basic grammar. The quality of creative writing is good and skills of analytical writing develop to high standards as students progress through the school.

10. Overall attainment in mathematics is above national expectations at the end of both key stages and well above in the sixth form. In Year 11 coursework, for example, an investigation of the different ways in which slabs could be laid to make a path, demonstrated clarity of thought and expression, tenacity and a substantial depth of mathematical understanding. Students make good progress during Key Stage 3, gaining nearly two levels, and very good progress in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

11. The school has a newly formed numeracy policy that is, as yet, implemented only in design and technology. Students are numerically competent. They can use calculators well. There is evidence of good work on graphs in science and good use of data in geography but methods used are inconsistent.

12. Attainment in science is above national expectations at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form. In external tests and examinations students achieve well above national averages in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and in A Level physics but below in A Level chemistry and biology. Progress in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and good in the sixth form. Students gain new knowledge quickly in lessons at Key Stage 3 on the periodic table, at Key Stage 4 on the action of a catalyst on hydrogen peroxide and in discussions in the sixth form on fertilisation.

13. Although the school has a policy of teaching information and communication technology across the curriculum, this has yet to be implemented. Some subjects have included appropriate sections in their schemes of work, notably music, design and technology and mathematics but others have not. The tendency to rely on the individual teacher's capabilities and interests leads to unsatisfactory attainment at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. No formal audit has been conducted to identify where information and communication technology occurs in the curriculum, nor have specific subjects been allotted responsibility for covering parts of the programme of study.

14. The majority of students use computers with confidence but they attain levels below those expected nationally. Standards are higher in the sixth form where students use

word-processing and the Internet as a tool to promote learning. Progress is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3, poor at Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form.

15. The “performing arts” are a strength of the school. This incorporates music, drama and dance. In music attainment is well above average across the key stages and examination results and extra-curricular achievements are outstanding. Students make very good progress throughout the school. A mature understanding develops cumulatively from year to year. In drama attainment is also well above national averages across the key stages and progress is good in Key Stage 3, where students of all abilities reach a very good standard of invention, performance and response. Attainment is satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 4 when students can improvise imaginatively and have reached a very good standard of expressive movement and spatial awareness. Students in the sixth form make good progress. In dance, attainment is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 and well above at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Progress at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, but in one Year 8 lesson when insufficient time was spent on any activity students did not achieve high standards. It is very good by the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where students quickly demonstrate very good movement and expression.

16. Attainment in art is above national expectations at the end Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and well above in the sixth form. In 1998 GCSE results were slightly below average. Progress is good overall and very good in the sixth form. In design and technology students attain above national expectations where they receive their entitlement, but their limited experience of the range of activities normally available in most schools adversely affects standards. Progress is satisfactory given the limitations imposed upon the subject. Results for food are well above national averages.

17. In history attainment, overall, at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is above national expectations. In teacher assessments and GCSE, results are well above national averages. A Level achievements are above expectation in class but below in examinations. Progress is good across the key stages. Students gain good understanding of historical events including their causes and results. In geography standards are, overall, good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students make good progress across the key stages. In Key Stage 3 they soon make gains through exploration of the local area. By the end of Key Stage 4 they have understood topics like weather. At A Level, students make good progress by discussing difficult concepts in groups. In religious education attainment is in line with expectations of the Agreed Syllabus across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. GCSE results are well above national averages for all schools and improved significantly in 1999. At A Level results have been below average until 1999, when they rose considerably and compare well with those of all other sixth forms. Students make satisfactory progress across Key Stages 3 and 4. Those who receive their entitlement, in the sixth form, make very good progress.

18. Attainment in physical education has improved since the last inspection. Overall attainment is in line with national expectations; it is good in the sixth form and slightly below national standards in Key Stage 3. Progress is good in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4.

19. In modern foreign languages standards are above average in Key Stages 3 and 4,

and well above in the sixth form. Students achieve well in all areas but reading is weaker than other skills. Progress is good at Key Stage 3, at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but receive too little support.

20. In the sixth form subjects, psychology, sociology and law and in vocational courses, business and leisure and tourism standards are high. Students make good progress in law when they discuss the differences between murder and manslaughter, in sociology when they discuss the family and in psychology when they discuss Freud's ideas. General National Vocational Certificate courses are proving successful. Students are attaining well in courses on business and leisure and tourism and making good progress.

21. The attainment of students with special educational needs is generally at a level appropriate for their prior attainment. A few students with special educational needs achieve results higher than expected at both the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations. Overall, the progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Progress is more solid in Key Stage 3, where there is a higher level of support in lessons, and also withdrawal of small groups from lessons for additional help with literacy. There are more boys than there are girls in these withdrawal groups. At Key Stage 4, progress is also satisfactory. Students gain appropriate results at GCSE. Examples of students with special educational needs making good progress occurred in art, design and technology, drama, English (literacy), mathematics, music and science. They make unsatisfactory progress in information technology.

22. The school operates an open access policy in the sixth form, and a number of students with special educational needs benefit from the opportunity to further their education. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress, including success in A Level and GNVQ examinations.

23. The school welcomes students from the local school for the deaf who attend lessons in art, design and technology, mathematics, physical education, and science. They are supported by specialist staff and make good progress with their studies.

26. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

24. Students' attitudes to learning are good. They are able to sustain concentration and ask thoughtful questions. They use the library for quiet study and research. Older students become increasingly able at feeding back to the whole class. Students show respect for the buildings and the equipment is looked after carefully. They respect each other's views and are able to converse at a mature level, using correct technical terminology.

25. Behaviour in lessons, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and moving about the school is very good and a strength of the school. This very good behaviour happens automatically and is not because of fear of sanctions. The behaviour policy is printed in full in the prospectus, including rewards and sanctions, and bullying on which there are only five words. There is no separate anti-bullying policy as such. Parents say that bullying is no longer a problem.

26.The school is working hard to reduce the number of exclusions and is having some success. From Autumn terms 1998 to 1999 the number of exclusions have almost halved. More boys than girls are excluded in a ratio of approximately five to three.

27.Relationships between students and staff and between students are very good and a strength of the school. Students are able to work together in lessons and to support one another in other school activities. There is a high level of respect between students and staff and racial harmony exists within the school. The school has recognised the need to challenge black students more.

28.Students' personal development is good. Students respond well to opportunities for self-development. They are eligible to join the senior and junior student year councils and to help in a variety of monitorial roles. Year 12 students help younger students with their reading and Year 13 students run an "instructional techniques" club. There is some evidence of independent work in students' workbooks.

29.Students with special educational needs are well known to staff especially heads of year, form tutors and staff in the special needs support team. Their efforts to encourage students to work hard and to make them feel part of the school community give the students a sense of self-esteem, and result in the majority adopting a positive attitude to school life. Students with special educational needs generally form constructive relationships, work collaboratively, and gain a great deal from their time in the school.

30. Students with behavioural difficulties occasionally present challenging behaviour, but the non-confrontational attitude and managerial skills of teaching and support staff keep such instances to a minimum.

33. Attendance

31. Attendance has been good from early September 1999 until 20 October 1999, when it was above the national average at 94 per cent. This period has been used for reference because earlier figures were suspect owing to the malfunctioning of a new computer system. The present system is functioning perfectly. The attendance of students with special educational needs is generally in line with the school average. In some cases in Key Stage 3 it is above the average, but for a minority of students at Key Stage 4, progress suffers as a result of higher than average levels of absence. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Registers are marked correctly.

32. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. Some students are late when arriving at school and many others are late when changing classrooms, particularly when moving from the main school building to Charnwood annexe.

35. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

35. Teaching

33. Overall the teaching is good. Of the 205 lessons observed 98 per cent were satisfactory or better, 66 per cent were good or better and 25 per cent were very good or better. Only two per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. In no subject was teaching less than satisfactory overall. Teaching is best in the sixth form and is marginally better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. There has been an improvement in teaching since the last inspection, the proportion of satisfactory or better lessons being much improved. There were considerably fewer lessons with shortcomings.

34. Across all areas of the curriculum teachers demonstrate good knowledge of their subjects. In drama, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music their knowledge is very good. In music, for example, teachers are able to provide a very broad musical experience. In information and communication technology, specialists have good subject knowledge but other subject teachers' understanding of it varies and is sometimes unsatisfactory.

35. Teachers' expectations are high, particularly so in the performing arts. In music Year 7 students are expected to work on aural tests of a similar style to those in GCSE, in which several features have to be discriminated simultaneously. Planning is good except in information and communication technology, where it is not consistently incorporated in subject schemes of work.

36. Methods used to enhance teaching are at least satisfactory, although some teaching styles lack variety. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology to strengthen and influence learning. In modern foreign languages teachers make good use of the foreign language, with the benefit of improved pronunciation by students. In English, teachers use a good range of questioning techniques to engage

students in learning and to extend understanding. An example of good practice occurred in art, in the sixth form, when teachers challenged students, by incisive questioning and analysis of their work, to evaluate their work, relate ideas to theory and practice and make reference to other artists. Most lessons are well organised.

37. Teachers manage students well. There are very few instances when students do not engage positively in learning. On the rare occasions when this does happen it occurs as a result of poor use of timing. Resources are effectively used except in the case of information and communication technology, where a lack of expertise among teachers inhibits the use of resources.

38. The quality of day-to-day assessment is satisfactory overall, but in English and art and in history at Key Stage 3 it is unsatisfactory. While much of marking is satisfactory or good some of it is inconsistent, not always done, lacks detail and is often not helpful; this view is supported by a sizeable proportion of parents. Homework is set regularly but, in some cases, could be more interesting.

39. Students for whom English is an additional language are given effective support by a specialist to help them to make progress; this is proving very beneficial and gradually enabling students to reach their potential.

40. Teaching of students with special educational needs within the support team is always good, and sometimes very good. Throughout the school, teaching is generally positive and sensitive to students' needs. Many departments provide useful, additional help sheets for students with special educational needs when they are taught in classes with a wide range of attainment. In most subjects, departmental teams have developed a range of materials that enable students to have access to the whole curriculum. Teachers within most subject departments provide additional help for students by the use of suitably differentiated work. There is relatively little support available from support assistants or specialist teachers in Key Stage 4 despite some whole school consideration of special educational needs provision during a training day concerned with literacy. Whilst teachers are able to identify those students with special educational needs, they are not always aware of their particular needs or targets, and do not always include consideration of these in their planning of lessons. Subject teachers do not contribute proposed targets for discussion at review meetings.

43. The curriculum and assessment

41. The school curriculum is good overall. It has some very considerable strengths, but there are weaknesses too. It provides satisfactory breadth and balance at Key Stage 3 and good breadth and balance in the sixth form, although religious education is not provided at this stage, which was an issue at the last inspection. At Key Stage 4, statutory requirements are not met in respect of design and technology, which is not taught to all students. Statutory requirements are also not being met across both key stages by the provision of information and communication technology. School policy documents show that it is taught through the subjects of the curriculum, but staff have not been sufficiently trained, access to computers is difficult and the timetable is not flexible enough to achieve this. Overall time allocated to subjects is satisfactory.

42. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In addition, two modern foreign languages are studied, but the number of students who continue with foreign languages in Key Stage 4 is low, an issue which was raised in the last report. There are additional opportunities to study Spanish, Italian, Urdu and Latin after school. In response to the previous report, religious education now has sufficient time and

science has been reviewed to increase investigative work.

43.The Key Stage 4 curriculum is satisfactory. The number of subjects taken for GCSE has been reduced from ten to nine, which has had a beneficial effect on flexibility in the timetable. However, the curriculum is not balanced, as students can choose a similar type of study in each option block, for example, there are students studying art in three different option groups. Design and technology is an option choice, which breaches statutory requirements and the full range of the subjects are not available. All students study dual award science and its time allocation has been increased. The time allocation for religious education is now satisfactory.

44.The curriculum in the sixth form is very good, offering a choice of 43 courses but there is a statutory non-compliance with respect to religious education. Eighty per cent of the 290 students have come up through the school but an increasing number, attracted by the wide variety of courses and good examination results, are coming from outside. There are 29 appropriate and wide-ranging A Level courses. Most students follow three A level courses and some take four. Ten students are applying for places at Oxford or Cambridge, although only two out of thirteen were successful this year. As recommended in the last report, the provision of GNVQ courses has been reviewed and now consists of two options, Advanced and Intermediate levels in business and leisure and tourism. There are 12 one-year AS and 'fast track' GCSE courses and results are good.

45.The curriculum provides good equality of access and opportunity for all students. The current curriculum review is focused on raising attainment. The school now responds well to the cultural heritage of all students by paying attention to a wide variety of needs. Those, for example, for whom English is an additional language are given extra support to ensure they can access the curriculum effectively. This represents an improvement on the situation at the last report.

46.Provision for students with special educational needs is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. This is due to the inconsistent monitoring of individual education plans in departments. Subject staff consult the plans and there is good liaison with the co-ordinator, but many of the targets are general in nature and are not specific to particular subjects. Tasks now more closely match students' capabilities, an issue in the last report.

47.Planning for progression and continuity is good. Students understand their educational targets. Schemes of work provide a good basis for learning. Continuity in modern foreign languages is adversely affected for one class, which has all its lessons in week A and none in week B, which leaves a gap of ten days with no lesson. In physical education, the arrangement of double and single lessons within the two- week timetable also adversely affects continuity in the subject. The staff have all received training on the teaching of literacy but the application of the literacy programme is inconsistent from subject to subject.

48.The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Some activities, like the 'twilight' courses run after school hours, are academic in nature. Latin provides a good example, being taught to two voluntary groups of about twenty students each for one hour a week, with many aiming at GCSE grades. Other activities are connected to the

main curriculum, such as sport, in which the provision of games for girls, criticised in the last report has been improved. About 30 per cent of all students participate in extra-curricular sport in a typical year. Many students go on to represent their county at individual or team level. There is very good work in performing arts, where music is a particular strength, and effective fieldwork in geography and history. There are appropriate visits to theatres in English. There are also well-supported visits to France and Germany.

49.The provision of personal, social, careers and health education is very good. All students receive personal education, which covers topics such as bullying, drugs, smoking and sex education. Outside speakers come in at intervals to support the programme. There is a detailed scheme of work and close liaison between the subject leader and the teaching staff. Careers guidance starts in Year 9, with careful consultation about Key Stage 4 option choices. In Years 10 and 11, there is an effective scheme of work experience, which students regard as very valuable in guiding them into career choices. In the sixth form, guidance is concerned with future educational choices and GNVQ courses include work- related topics, an example of which was a talk in assembly from a Year 13 student about his 'working holiday' in Morocco during the summer. There is good liaison with the careers service.

50.The school has responded well to the curricular issues raised in the last report, although there are still some outstanding. The organisation of the curriculum has been thoroughly reviewed and the curriculum is now more relevant to the needs of students, as the school prepares for comprehensive status. The senior management team discusses curricular items regularly. The governors, who have a curriculum sub-committee also make a good contribution. They liaise effectively with the school and discuss matters with curriculum team leaders. Governors also attend curriculum training days alongside teachers and are involved in planning.

51.The school has responded well to the key issue of assessment and marking raised in the last report. Overall, assessment is good. There has been a thorough review of assessment procedures, which are now good, although there remains some inconsistent practice from department to department.

52.The school has installed a computerised assessment system, but as yet it is not working fully. Some departments are using a database which provides an effective means for storing assessment data on students. The entry of Year 7 cognitive ability testing score is planned for the future, but at present departments can enter individual assessment scores, Key Stage 3 and GCSE results. This enables an appropriate student profile to be built up to assist target-setting for the future. Students who underachieve can be given the required support.

53.The school prospectus makes the assessment policy clear to parents. Reports for parents have been reviewed and they are informative and give clear indications about students' strengths and weaknesses, as revealed by assessment in subjects. Assessment data is prepared for parents' evenings and is used to support educational decisions, for example the option choices for Key Stage 4.

54.The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is mostly satisfactory. Schemes of work show satisfactory progression for students of all levels of attainment

and the development plan has the aim of sharing good practice among the subject departments. The marking of students' work, however, remains inconsistent across departments, an issue which was highlighted in the last report. Scrutiny of work revealed instances of work unmarked, or marked with little, or no, indication of the link with external criteria. The curriculum team is developing a scheme of monitoring and evaluation, in line with curricular targets.

55. Links with primary schools are not well developed. The assessment of pupils' special educational needs is originally diagnosed through tests early in Year 7 based on spelling and reading comprehension. Increasing use is also made of numeracy tests. In order to monitor students' progress, further testing occurs termly for students identified as in need of additional help.

56. Individual education plans have been prepared for those students on Stage 2 or above. These are distributed to all departments and therefore to all subject teachers and provide information about the targets set for each student. The targets are largely based on behaviour and literacy levels. No numeracy targets are included, or targets for other curriculum areas. Students with special educational needs are not always aware of their individual targets. While the information included in individual education plans is now more detailed, and steps have been taken to distribute this widely to teachers, further development is required in the use of individual education plans, especially at Key Stage 4.

59. **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

57.The school's provision for the spiritual development of students is unsatisfactory. Students meet in their year groups for collective worship only once a fortnight. Although the school takes the conduct of assemblies seriously, and they have a number of strengths, the themes of the majority are primarily moral and social in tone, such as "achievement", "positive thinking", "self esteem", or "standards". They are lacking in the central characteristics of worship, or overtly Christian, religious or spiritual content. There are some elements of good practice. Thus a Year 9 assembly on key figures of this Millennium involved sixth-form students, and its content was thought-provoking. However, apart from brief reference to the importance of Buddha and his teaching, it was lacking in religious content, and did not provide students with opportunities to experience the spiritual through, for example, prayer or silent reflection.

58.Students' spiritual development is promoted well in music, English, geography, art and religious education. In music, for example, students encounter the spiritual in the works they listen to and create. Students and parents join together to perform sacred music by Tavener and Fauré. In English, students explore the human situation in writing verse of high quality. There is no whole-school approach to promoting students' spiritual development in the classroom, however, and where there is good practice, it is as a result of initiatives at departmental level.

59.The school makes very good provision for the moral development of students. It has clear values, which enjoy parental support and which find expression in effective policies and strategies for behaviour, race, gender, disability and drugs awareness. Teachers provide very good role models for students; they teach them to distinguish right and wrong, encourage good behaviour and promote very good relationships. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are now well integrated into the life of the school.

60.There is a well-planned programme of personal and social education, and students are provided with good opportunities to explore moral issues in a number of other subjects. In history, for example, they are challenged to think about slavery and the civil rights struggle in America, while in religious education they discuss human rights, peace and conflict. In English they consider questions of motive, and of relationships. In music, they explore the power of music to create and control emotions and influence behaviour.

61.The school also makes very good provision for the social development of students. Students' achievements are publicly recognised and their sense of self-esteem is enhanced through the system of merits, commendations and awards, and praise in assemblies. Students are given very good opportunities to take initiative and develop social and leadership skills through the junior and senior councils and through the school's extensive extra-curricular provision, including sports clubs and teams, and opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities, such as the "Rucksack" club.

62.Older students develop a sense of responsibility through supporting younger students. For example, sixth-form students help with the Year 8 and 9 dance clubs. Field study visits in subjects such as history, geography and biology promote the

development of students' social skills. In many subjects students are encouraged to learn the skills of collaborative working in pairs and small groups, and to show initiative in making presentations, for example in geography and religious education.

63. Students are challenged by social issues in a number of subjects in the classroom. In geography, for example, they explore values relating to economic and environmental priorities. In religious education they meet issues relating to wealth and poverty, and in information and communication technology confront the social implications of its applications.

64. The school makes excellent provision for the cultural education of students, the creative and expressive arts being a particular strength. Provision in music is outstandingly good, over a fifth of students being involved in extra-curricular activities through the choirs, orchestras, wind bands, steel bands, and instrumental ensembles. Over one hundred students are involved in music at county and national levels. Students have excellent opportunities to develop their performing skills in an ongoing programme of concerts, recitals and musicals. Their musical development is also promoted through visiting musicians, and workshops, and visits to concerts. The Cotham Musical Parental Support Group makes a major contribution to students' cultural development.

65. There is an exceptionally strong tradition in dance and drama. All students can attend a wide range of theatre visits, workshops and residences, including a three-day residential visit for all students in Year 7 to a summer camp in Exmouth with outdoor pursuit activities.

66. Students' understanding of other European cultures is enhanced through foreign language exchanges with Issoire, Bordeaux and Hanover, and through foreign travel, including skiing trips. Art also promotes an awareness of European culture through visits to arts centres in Europe, including, for example, Paris, Barcelona, Madrid and St. Petersburg.

67. Much has been done since the previous inspection to raise students' awareness of the multicultural diversity of contemporary British society. There is good practice in a number of subjects. For example, religious education promotes an understanding of Islam, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism. English draws on a rich vein of prose and verse from Afro-Caribbean, Afro-American and Indian traditions, and hosts black poets and storytellers in the classroom.

68. Geography values diversity by drawing on students' diverse backgrounds, and encourages them to appreciate the qualities of other cultures. Art introduces students to painting and artefacts from different cultures, whether they are African masks, Indian head-dresses, Indian miniatures, Japanese Batik or Aboriginal art. Students are now more aware of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European, to the development of present day civilisation.

71. Support, guidance and students' welfare

69. Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of students is very good and is a strength of the school. It helps to create a happy and secure environment. Teachers know their students well.

70. Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are very good. The senior teacher responsible for care and guidance heads a team comprising year heads for each age group, teams of tutors for each group who provide group and personal tutoring, the school nurse, an education welfare officer and a range of other professional support staff from outside agencies. Their brief is very wide-ranging. It is to make the school a happy and challenging community in which students can work to become confident and competent young adults.

71.All students have a personal tutor who offers educational support and advice. The tutor sees the student three times a year, and the parent and student once a year for a review meeting. Inspectors generally agree with some parents who say that the quality of tutorial time is good; however, some parents consider it poor.

72.Annual reports on students are well prepared, containing for each subject the details of the course, the students' personal qualities and subject-specific qualities, and staff comment and subject targets.

73.Procedures for child protection and promoting students' well-being, health and safety are very good. Parents rightly have a very positive view of the appointment of a school nurse, counsellors of the National Society for the Protection of Children, and of the peer-group support system. The child protection procedures are included in the school's prospectus.

74.The personal, social, careers and health education programme is generally good. Careers guidance is effective and starts in Year 7 with a visit to the computer room and access to the careers support programme. It later includes one week's work experience. Year 11 students are given interviews by the careers adviser. Impartial advice is given on academic and career progression and is offered to all students. Sixth-formers are given considerable assistance in applying for places on courses in higher education.

75.The school has a homework and marking policy which specifies how the homework should be set and marked. A significant number of parents said they were not satisfied with the homework set for their children. Parents expressed concern over lack of marking and supportive comments and feedback in some subjects.

76.Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. They are included in the school's prospectus. Students are clear what is required of them. Those with behavioural difficulties are largely monitored through the pastoral system, and there is regular liaison with parents/carers. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are also very good and are working well, after a difficult start with the new computer.

77.The poor condition of the windows in the main building is a serious concern; following incidents of falling glass, protective scaffolding and barriers have been erected. This is an unsatisfactory situation and has been reported by the school on several occasions. The level of risk has been assessed and a programme of repairs has begun to rectify this very serious situation. In two science laboratories the electricity supply is unsafe and therefore unusable, sinks cannot be used because they drain into rooms on the floor below and the gas isolation valves are inaccessible. These are major health and safety matters not yet resolved. The school has done everything it can to minimise risk.

80. Partnership with parents and the community

78.Links with parents are good. The majority of parents say they are encouraged to

play an active part in the life of the school, and many of them do so by helping in the library and with sports. The majority of parents say they find it easy to approach the school with problems to do with their children

79.The school publishes a school and community newsletter, which is excellent. It is published monthly and is filled with information about the curriculum and forthcoming events. It is very readable. A calendar is published for parents and carers. It is a useful document showing all school events, examination dates, governors' meetings and overseas trips for example. Drawings by students show the work of the art department and enhance the publication. The majority of parents say the school gives them a clear understanding of what is taught and highlights opportunities for parents to help in the school. Parents have good opportunities to discuss the progress of their children at parents' evenings. They receive detailed reports on which they are invited to comment. Communication is not always good, however. Parents sometimes, rightly, feel ill-informed.

80.The parent-teachers association is actively supported. It has recently been involved in a book donation scheme for the library and formalising the relationship between the association and the enrichment fund. The fund has raised a considerable amount of money, for which the school is most grateful, and this has been used for greatly improving two of the school's sports areas, for the refurbishment of classrooms and for other projects. This is evidence of the commitment of many parents to the financial wellbeing of the school.

81.The school has very good links with the community, including the local residents' association. It hosts community education programmes in the evenings and a school playgroup for primary school children, which involves support from sixth form students. The school uses the community as a resource to support the curriculum with considerable input from parents, businesses and other organisations. It is developing support groups with parents in each year group as well as curriculum action groups. The school also has links with the black community education support unit. It supports a number of charities and has recently sent aid to Kosovo. These various links help to promote students' awareness of their community and enables them to learn more about it. There is an employee assistance programme which includes access to free professional counselling for staff, adult career guidance, and a five day paternity leave for male staff, alongside professional development and training opportunities and a package of personnel and employment services.

82.There is sound liaison with external specialist support services such as the Bristol Special Needs Service, but the time allocated to the school is low. There are regular reviews of the progress of students with special educational needs, including review meetings for those students with individual education plans. Parents or carers are always invited to attend review meetings, but only about 50 per cent do so.

85. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

85. Leadership and management

83.Leadership is excellent. The relatively new principal and well-established governors

provide a very clear direction and purposeful vision for the school. The vice-principal, a very recent appointee, and a newly formed senior management team are strong and very supportive.

84.The evolving management is dynamic and innovative. Led by the principal, the pace of change has been brisk in order to bring about a shift of focus to one where the success of students is paramount. During his two years in post, the principal has concentrated on appointing the right people for the many posts that have become available. He has developed a school where high standards are expected, where the staff is aware of his expectations and where students feel happy and secure.

85.The governing body takes very seriously its role as a critical friend. It is very well-informed about practice within the school. Governors, in liaison with key staff, have made a very valuable contribution to the school with the instigation of a whole-school performance review that is in the process of implementation. To date, and most effectively, the principal has devoted forty per cent of his time, as part of an internal consultancy programme, to provide opportunities to look at ways to improve teaching and learning and raising attainment.

86.Heads of year and curriculum leaders perform their duties with interest and dedication. They are aware of the academic and pastoral needs of students and ensure that they are guided through their education in the most productive way taking into account their specific talents and particular needs.

87.Middle managers are effective in their roles. There is, as yet, no overall leader in design and technology, and there are many new staff across other areas of the curriculum, several of whom are in posts of responsibility. There is a need for some staff at this level to adjust to a new regime and be positive about their value in a school with enormous potential. The dedication and good will of key leaders are indisputable.

88. Monitoring of the teaching is in the early stages. The principal has conducted a programme of observations and discussions with teaching staff and with respect to curricular matters. He has used tracking of students as a key method to monitor teaching. This has been very effective in the way it promotes quality. The vice-principal, with curriculum team leaders, is shaping an innovative programme, identified in the school development plan, that ensures that when good practice is found it is shared; this is based on a "Teaching Quality Statement", involving direct observations and is linked to team development plans. Although the programme has only recently been implemented progress is already evident, not only through the obvious benefits of shared good practice, but also through the strengthening of lines of communication between senior and middle management that such a scheme engenders.

89. The school development plan is very good. It is well constructed with success criteria and evaluation procedures and it is costed. The plan effectively addresses all areas of the curriculum and other aspects within school, including all aspects of teaching and learning. There is a very comprehensive programme for the implementation of the school development plan and this is listed, month by month, and specifies realistic targets identifying key staff involved. The plan has clear evaluation criteria through which governors and senior managers ask relevant and probing questions about targets, for example, "Have we raised attainment of all groups of students at all key stages?"

90. The ethos of the school is very good. There is a very clear intention to empower all students and staff to fulfil their potential. Considerable emphasis is put on equality of opportunity. Racial problems are considerably reduced compared with the tensions which existed at the time of the previous inspection. If, on very rare occasions, they occur they are sensitively dealt with and are backed by practical help such as access to school counsellors. The school ensures that students for whom English is an additional language are given adequate help.

91. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed in part. National Curriculum requirements are still not met in design and technology, information and communication technology and, in the sixth form, religious education. Development plans, however, are in place for design and technology and information communication technology. A massive investment has been made in equipment for information and communication technology and further investment, is identified in the school development plan for design and technology. The school is placed very well to make further improvement.

92. Since the last inspection, the profile of special needs has been raised throughout the school. Individual education plans, however, are inadequate to meet the subject needs of students with special educational needs. A whole-school policy has been approved by the governing body, and implemented; it contains the details required by the special needs Code of Practice. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides positive leadership and there is a governor with responsibility for special educational needs. The governors' Annual Report to Parents contains very full details about provision for special educational needs in the school.

95. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

93. All subjects are taught by well-qualified and suitably experienced specialists. Only a few lessons are taught by non-specialist teachers, and this does not adversely affect students' progress. Staffing for the arts is particularly good in terms of numbers, professionalism and outstanding teaching skills. Although teachers of information and communication technology are suitably qualified, a significant number of other departments in the school do not yet have the necessary capability to develop its use across the curriculum generally. More specialist teachers are needed to support this area. In design and technology there is no specialist teaching of textiles and there are too many temporary and part time teachers generally to provide sufficient stability in the department's planning and development.

94. The number of learning support staff is barely adequate to meet the demand for support, especially in Key Stage 4. Administrative support is not as effective as it should be. Although staff work hard they are not efficiently deployed. The library, for example, needs more support in order to stay open longer.

95. Good induction procedures are in place for the large number of new staff. Teachers are supported well both by the school generally and within their subject areas. At the time of the inspection, satisfactory arrangements for appraisals were being made by many individual departments. A significant number, however, felt the need for more guidance and support. A full school programme is now planned with effective features to enable staff to share good practice and with the possibility of funded support for identified objectives. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. Opportunities for the training of team leaders' are well established and are being evaluated currently.

96. Accommodation has been considerably improved since the last inspection and rooms are no longer drab or poorly decorated. There is still a need, however, to review the school cleaning schedule to ensure that no areas are left dirty. The whole school looks much better since the redecoration programme has been completed. Carpets laid in rooms and the corridor on the ground floor of the main building have enhanced the teaching and learning environment by reducing noise levels. Fire doors were to be fitted along the main corridor the week after the inspection and a new circulation system for students using English and mathematics rooms put in place to relieve congestion, particularly on narrow staircases. The sixth form centre, temporary building that replaced the very poor accommodation seen during the last inspection, provides improved classrooms and common rooms to accommodate increased numbers of sixth formers, but it cannot remain on the site beyond the summer of 2000.

97. Good displays of students' work and subject related posters and photographs are a feature in most rooms and along corridors. Rooms for the teaching of English and science are now grouped together, enabling teachers to communicate more easily and to improve standards.

98. A bid for Arts College status has been made, which, if successful will not only increase and improve specialist accommodation for the performing arts but will also have a knock-on effect to other subjects. Students go to very good off site facilities for many lessons of physical education but the necessary transport takes up valuable teaching and learning time particularly in single lessons.

99. The majority of health and safety issues highlighted in the last report have been addressed, but some hazards mentioned earlier, such as the dangerous state of the windows and those in the science laboratories inhibit students' learning.

100. The Governors, principal and senior staff are rightly concerned about the health and safety issues surrounding many unsafe windows in the main block. As several windows have already broken and fallen from rusting iron frames the local educational authority has installed railings and scaffold to protect students and staff. It has been necessary to board up some of the windows and the ventilation and light in these rooms has been adversely affected. A programme of repairs has begun to deal with the considerable risks involved. At the time of the inspection the Local Education Authority

had failed to provide an assessment of risk or a plan of action to remedy this very serious situation.

101. The provision of books and other learning resources is satisfactory and supports most areas of the curriculum. Although there is an adequate number and range of books in the library, they are older copies that do not encourage the students to want to read them. Many of the non-fiction books need updating. The library has some resources on tape and CD, including some music. There is not always appropriate software available for subject teachers who wish to use information and communication technology to support their lessons. Among the various materials held in the library is a wide range of up-to-date resources for careers guidance and support. Most subjects have sufficient textbooks for their needs, but German, history, geography and religious education have insufficient textbooks. Some of the learning resources need replacing. For example, the gymnasium mats in physical education are old and worn and the tape-recorders used for modern foreign languages are of poor quality and reduce the effectiveness of teaching.

102. The school's two specialist information and communication technology rooms are well equipped, and the library and sixth form study areas have further computers for students to use in their work. These facilities are well used and enable the sixth formers to carry out research in their private study periods. All the computers are linked into a network and have access to the Internet for research purposes. Facilities include digital cameras, scanners and other equipment that enables students to access the facilities of the computers. Design and technology has a suite of older computers used for design and graphics work. Science has a small number of lap-top computers that can be used for data logging. Music has access to an excellent suite of computers that enable all students to have opportunities to compose and play their own compositions. The specific information and communication technology rooms are occupied for much of the timetable by sixth-form groups for business studies and information and communication technology courses. This restricts the access to computers for other subjects and reduces students' work in information and communication technology in Key Stages 3 and 4.

103. The school makes good use of resources beyond the school. Sixth-form students contact industry and commerce when working on major projects. The school offers students in Year 9 'master-classes' provided by the university. English makes good use of theatre visits and the geography uses field trips to good effect.

106. The efficiency of the school

104. Excellent strategic financial planning enhances the provision for students' learning. The governing body, alongside the principal, plays a leading part with energy and commitment. They are active in maintaining high standards of financial probity and ensuring that the school's resources are used to the best effect. The school development plan identifies the costs of future priorities and this practice is picked up on in subject planning. With the support of the local education authority, plans to establish the school as a centre of excellence for the performing arts at a cost of some £2.5m were agreed and shortly after the inspection the school gained Performing Arts Specialist College status.

105. Heads of subjects are well aware of the systems used to provide them with financial resources and are currently discussing changes in formula funding and the use of the bidding system for additional money. The fact that some areas lack resources, indicates that these systems should be kept under review. This overall positive picture shows improvement since the last inspection report when weaknesses were identified in monitoring cost effectiveness.

106. The use of teaching and support staff is good. Contact time between teachers and students is about average and if support time for individual students, which is allocated for personal and academic development, is included, then class sizes are reasonable. Efficient use is made of lunchtime assistants in the dining areas where they are effective in keeping order. Teachers, including the principal, were also assiduous in their duties at break and lunchtimes.

107. Almost every subject department makes good use of its accommodation. However, problems in some areas work against efficient teaching and learning. For example, although skilful timetabling arrangements enable best use to be made of unsatisfactory provision, inadequate accommodation in science necessitates the use of general classrooms rather than laboratories. Departments use their resources well, but the use of computers across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Many teachers of subjects other than information and communication technology lack the expertise and training necessary to enable them to make full use of the facilities when teaching their own subjects. The library has been recently refitted but is not as well used as it should be. It is under-resourced both in terms of staffing and in the quality of book provision.

108. Additional income from funding earmarked for students with special educational needs is spent appropriately, to support their learning. However 60 per cent of the special needs co-ordinator's time is currently allocated to teaching small groups, which is too high a proportion. More time should be set aside for monitoring and establishing the use of the students' individual education plans in classrooms. The school can show that it spends all the funding allocated for the purposes of special needs, but the figures contain a large portion of the co-ordinator's salary.

109. Funding for staff development is also appropriately used. Funding for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Project supports the school's commitment to improving target-setting for students, advancing plans for improved assessment of students, and their standards of literacy. It is also proving effective in reducing referrals and exclusions and improving attendance at school.

110. Financial control and school administration are good. In the temporary absence of the bursar due to illness the work of the assistant bursar is proving highly effective and efficient. The latest auditor's report commented favourably overall and such action as was needed has been taken. Expenditure is balanced against income for this year. Last year £38,000 was spent on essential health and safety work in the expectation that the money could be recovered from the local authority. This expectation was not realised at that time although there are hopes that it may yet be met. In addition to this the governors and senior management decided to bring forward urgently needed plans to reorganise the siting of departmental classrooms on the main site, to move the art department to the main site and to reintroduce pottery. A new photography studio was

installed and the surfaces of playgrounds, which were in very poor order, were restored. The cost for these necessary improvements was £41,000. If the local education authority is successful with its "New Deal" bid the original £38,000 will be returned. But even if it is not, the governors have prudently planned repayment of the full £80,000 this year to ensure a balanced budget which also includes a small reserve.

111. Administrative staff are not deployed in the most efficient way. Plans are in hand to review this position. The cost of the administrative staff is 50 per cent higher than in similar schools. Administration and clerical costs are high at 6 per cent of overall expenditure.

112. The caretaking is diligent and effective. The caretaker is a qualified builder and contributes to the school's efficiency by using his skills in this area to good effect. The standard of cleaning however, which is subject to competitive tendering, is poor.

113. Although the average cost per student is above the national average, the facts that students make good progress at the school, that their behaviour is very good, that the teaching is good and that the school is managed very efficiently mean that the school gives good value for money.

116. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

116. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

116. English

114. Attainment in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well above the national average in 1998 but very low when compared to selective schools. Provisional results for 1999 give a similar picture. In 1999 girls attained more highly than boys but by a narrower margin than applies nationally. The general trend in recent years has been one of improvement. Results in the GCSE were well above average in English language in 1998 and matched the average in English literature, for which a higher proportion of students than is usual was entered. Results in both subjects were well below average for selective schools. Provisional results for 1999 follow a similar pattern. In both subjects, in most years, girls outperform boys but the difference is less than that found nationally. At A Level in 1998, in English language, results matched national figures and exceeded them for the proportion of students gaining the highest grades. Results

for 1999 are similar. In English literature, the 1998 results were below national averages but exceeded them in 1999, notably for those gaining grades A and B.

115. In the mixed ability classes at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing is above average overall. For some students attainment in these skills is well above the expected level, whilst for a small number it is below. There is a growing momentum as students move towards statutory tests and GCSE examinations which is raising attainment daily. The attainment of students in the sixth form is above average.

116. Students listen attentively to teachers and increasingly to each other. At all levels, this represents a significant strength which makes learning efficient and supports effective group work. If unsure, students are confident in asking for further explanation. Speaking skills in all years are good and most students are confident, fluent and well able to express themselves clearly and at length when appropriate. Reading aloud is confident and expressive even when students are reading from complex texts. From early in Year 7, students are increasingly able to recognise significant detail and to understand implication. Increasingly, at the end of Key Stage 3 and subsequently, they support opinions by reference to evidence. A small but significant minority understand only the main sense without help from teachers or, when working in groups, from other students. Although generally good, writing skills are less securely established across the range of attainment. Most students take pride in the presentation of written work. They write appropriately for a range of purposes and increasingly become able to organise material and express it in extended form. They draw upon wide vocabularies and use an effective range of sentence constructions. They write creatively in response to texts read in class as observed in a Year 8 class writing verse after reading 'Lament' by Gillian Clark. The quantity and quality of verse writing are strengths. The writing of a significant minority at the end of both key stages is made less effective by the frequency of errors of spelling of common words, basic punctuation and elementary grammar. Students for whom English is an additional language have extra support and consequently their attainment is improved. They develop satisfactory skills which they

use to build their command of English effectively.

117. Students with special educational needs attain in line with their capabilities but do not reach national expectations over time.

118. Progress in lessons is satisfactory at Key Stage 3; in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form it is good. Very good progress occurred in a Year 11 class working in groups and discussing relationships and themes in a play, and also in a Year 8 group withdrawn for intensive work in basic literacy linked to bus timetables. Good progress in all years is linked to the positive responses of students to work which challenges and interests them and frequently has to be completed within testing time limits. They benefit in particular from opportunities to be active participants in their learning. Students with special educational needs make good progress in withdrawn groups and their progress in full classes is satisfactory even though many do not close the gap sufficiently to match expectations for their age in Year 11 at GCSE.

119. Students have good attitudes to their work. They are well motivated and behave in a mature manner. At both Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form they respond positively to challenge and relate well to their teachers and each other. Students are interested and become increasingly able to reach conclusions without undue teacher support.

120. Overall, the quality of teaching was good across the key stage. In lessons it was never less than satisfactory, good in half of the lessons and often very good. Teachers have high expectations of effort, behaviour and attainment; though in Year 7 this is not always based on full understanding of students' experience in primary schools. Teachers plan lessons carefully and structure them so that students are guided towards the main targets for learning at a crisp pace through a range of activities which support progress in each of the key skills. Lessons are linked to previous and future work and tasks are clearly explained. Most teachers use an effective balance of whole class, individual, pair and group work and know which students require additional help. The quality of group work is much improved since the time of the previous report. Homework set is relevant to class work. The marking of students' work is usually thorough and supportive of further progress but there are some inconsistencies and on occasions it is not done.

121. Leadership of the department is strong and determined to raise standards further. Not all staff feel valued and the quality of collaboration is reduced by some difficulties in relationships. Good progress has been made in addressing issues raised in the previous inspection especially those relating to the pace and challenge of lessons. Test data is analysed thoroughly to identify needs and strategies likely to support further raising of standards. Opportunities for the development of skills in information technology are currently too dependent upon suitable equipment being available to students outside lesson time or at home. Texts used in some units of work need to be shorter to produce a sharper focus for learning of students at all levels of attainment. The work of the department is beginning to be enhanced as the school's strategy for improving literacy is being developed and practised by some other subject departments.

124. **English across the curriculum**

122. The school is considering how it might build upon the experiences that new entrants have of the Literacy Hour now established in primary schools. Features of that experience are evident in some English and history lessons and most departments ensure that students learn the technical language required for study of their subjects. There is a need to implement a clear policy for the development of literacy skills involving all subjects of the curriculum. Good skills of speaking and listening are encouraged in most subjects, especially when students have frequent opportunities to take part in discussion and to collaborate in groups. Most students are well able to understand the texts they need to read but a significant minority is dependent upon teachers' help to gain satisfactory understanding. In Key Stage 3, students have too few opportunities to write at length except in subjects such as English and religious education. Most subjects contribute to the development of good note-making skills and the copying of teachers' notes is not common.

125. **Mathematics**

123. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is above national expectations and is improving as this year's (1999-2000) statutory tests approach. Students' attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 was well above the national average for 1998 both for students achieving Level 5 or better and for those achieving Level 6 or above. Over the years 1996 to 1998 the Key Stage 3 results have also been well above the national average for girls and

very high for boys. The pattern for 1999 is similar. When compared with those of similar (selective) schools the results are very low.

124. By the age of 14 higher achieving students are confident in finding areas of compound shapes. Middle attainers carried out investigational work in Year 9 accurately with the use of calculators and were able to apply Pythagoras' theorem to enable them to find the area of triangles. Lower attainers are competent at basic number work but have difficulty cancelling fractions; they can use a calculator with accuracy, and, as they demonstrated in investigational work on circles, many can apply Pythagoras' theorem as a step towards finding the area of a triangle.

125. Standards at Key Stage 4 are also good and are rising as students respond to the approach of examinations. Results in the 1998 GCSE exams were well above the national average, and the number of students gaining a grade C or better (62.6 per cent) was well above the national average. The trend from 1996 shows no particular movement either up or down. When compared with that of students from similar schools the number of students achieving A* to C is low. The proportion of students achieving a grade G or above is broadly in line with national figures. Higher attaining students in Year 11 showed themselves capable of solving quadratic functions of the form $ax^2 \pm bx \pm c$ by a variety of methods both manually and using a computer. Middle attaining students demonstrated a good understanding of motion geometry when coming to terms with the relationship between opposite and adjacent sides in right angled triangles as they relate to finding the sine, cosine and tangent of an angle. Lower attaining Year 11 students can draw and interpret distance-time graphs.

126. GCE Advanced Level results in the sixth form are well above national standards both for students achieving grades A to C and for those attaining A to E. There is an understandable variance from year to year for a relatively small number of candidates possessing a range of abilities but in relation to their attainment on entry to the course as observed during the inspection the students are achieving well. The students apply themselves to their studies and are well supported by good teaching from well qualified staff.

127. Student progress is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Regular testing and monitoring of work enables the students to maintain and focus their efforts. Across Key Stage 3, students improve their attainment by more than two levels in terms of National Curriculum levels of attainment. This represents an improvement of six months worth of work beyond what might be expected. At Key Stage 4 gains made between the national curriculum tests at 14 and taking GCSE are greater than those made by over 75 per cent of students nationally.

128. The mathematics curriculum is designed to ensure coverage of all the relevant attainment targets of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Students perform similarly across the range. This situation is similar for GCSE at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where full coverage of the curriculum is ensured and there is no evidence of uneven performance in any part of it.

129. These gains reflect good procedures for student assessment. Students are regularly tested at the end of each module of work. The results of the assessments are

given to the students and they are then set targets for improvement. This is good practice, which enhances student performance and motivation. Students with special educational needs achieve the targets set for them and in common with students of all abilities, progress well.

130. The students' behaviour and commitment to success in their learning are of a very high standard. In one lesson their behaviour was satisfactory. In every other it was good, very good or excellent. Books were, for the most part, neatly kept. Behaviour and application in lessons was excellent, reflecting the high standards set by the teaching staff as well as students own desire to do well. Relationships between the students and each other, and the students and their teachers were warm and cordial. The strength of these relationships does much to promote the culture of achievement, which pervades the work in the mathematics curriculum area.

131. Teaching at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory or better in all lessons. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form teaching was good. The best lessons seen were well prepared with work matched to individual student need and delivered at pace. A good example of this was a Year 7 lesson in which the students learned how to use Napier's Bones to do long multiplication. Another was with a middle ability Year 10 group being introduced to the principles of the trigonometry of a right angled triangle.

132. The mathematics curriculum area benefits from outstanding leadership and a well qualified team of teachers committed to building on the successful improvements recently made. Improvements in teaching are arising from monitoring of performance and from teacher in-service development. Monitoring arrangements both for teaching and marking are in place and are to be subject to further development. The curriculum area now works well together as a team, benefiting from the recent reorganisation of rooming, to improve the quality of their work in the classroom.

133. Numeracy skills can be seen to be well developed in mathematics lessons, and the first steps have been taken towards formulating a whole school numeracy policy but it is not yet fully in place. Planning for design and technology incorporates details concerning the implementation of a numeracy policy. Geography documentation includes advice on the progressive use of graphical and other techniques. Elsewhere evidence of a developing approach to numeracy across the school is scant.

134. The last inspection identified the need for improved departmental planning, better communication within the curriculum area, better provision for students of differing abilities and an improvement in the environment and in displays of work. All of these issues have been resolved.

135. Planning is a strength. Departmental meetings are focussed on improvement and all views and opinions are welcome from every member of the curriculum area. Teachers who have been on courses report back to the team on what they have learned. Most of the schemes of work have been thoroughly revised to include references to extra materials available. All students now have textbooks. Wall displays are an interesting and lively mixture of children's work, posters, photographs and other materials produced by teachers.

138. Science

136. Students' attainment in science is above the national average when they enter the school. The 1998 results of the national tests of 14 year olds were well above the national average, 80 per cent of the year group attaining at least Level 5, and over half reaching Level 6 or above. However, these results were very low in comparison with those of other similar schools. The average grades obtained by both boys and girls were also well above national averages. Boys' results were significantly better than those achieved by girls. In 1999 results show a significant reduction in the proportion of students attaining the higher levels, but they are still above national averages. Over the three years 1996 to 1998 results have been well above national averages.

137. In the GCSE examinations in 1998, nearly two-thirds of students attained grades in the range A*-C, well above the national average for all secondary schools, but well below the figure for similar schools. The proportion attaining grades in the range A*-G was below the national average. Boys obtained a significantly higher proportion of the better grades than girls. In

the 1999 GCSE examinations, girls outperformed boys. The overall pass rates stayed at about the same level, while the national average rose slightly. Performance in the GCSE examinations as well as performance in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was adversely affected by the level of students' absence from the tests and the examinations.

138. In the sixth form, results in 1998 at A Level were below the national average for those students attaining A and B grades in chemistry, above in biology, and well above in physics. The physics results are particularly noteworthy, over 60 per cent of students attaining A or B grades, well above the national average, and also above the national figure for all similar schools. Results in 1999 showed a slight reduction in the proportion of A and B grades in biology and physics, but a significant improvement in chemistry in which over half the students entered attained A or B. Overall pass rates in the range A - E in all three subjects in 1998 were above the national averages, and broadly in line with the figures for similar schools. Pass rates continued to be high in the 1999 examinations, with an overall pass rate of nearly 90 per cent.

139. The attainment of students, as observed during the inspection, was above the national average at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. High standards of attainment were observed in lessons at Key Stage 3 on extracting the energy from foods, at Key Stage 4 on the periodic table, and in the sixth form in a practical chemistry assessment. At all levels students considered the natural world. Sixth form biologists were able to question their teacher deeply about the process of human fertilisation. Students in Key Stage 3 successfully discussed how a mere ninety-two different elements make up all the materials in the world, and those in Key Stage 4 were able to discuss the origin of radioactivity maturely. However, there are not enough occasions when students are encouraged to wonder at the beauty and magic of science.

140. Overall progress is satisfactory, both in lessons and over time, but there are many examples of good and even very good progress, especially at Key Stage 4. Progress in the sixth form is good. Good progress was observed in lessons on chemical symbols at

Key

Stage 3, in the catalytic action on hydrogen peroxide at Key Stage 4, and discussing, at A Level, the structure of human ovaries and the process of fertilisation. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress; they are integrated into classes well. Although teachers are aware of which students are on the register of special educational needs, they are not always aware of their specific problems, or the targets on their individual education plans, and this restricts students' progress.

141. Attitudes of students to learning in science are good. Students are lively but generally amenable, and they respond well to good teaching. They normally work right to the end of lessons, their behaviour is good, and they are courteous and trustworthy. They enter and leave classrooms in a sensible manner. Relationships between teachers and students are based on mutual respect, and students work particularly well in groups when undertaking practical investigations. Most students listen carefully to their teachers. Listening skills are not so well developed in Key Stage 3, and in some classes students do not always listen carefully to each other. When provided with the opportunity, students use their initiative in devising tests and assembling equipment to undertake these tests. Take-up rates at A Level for biology, chemistry and physics are normally high, but only a few girls take A-Level physics.

142. The teaching in science overall is good. It is good at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, and very good at A Level. In over 90 per cent of lessons, teaching is satisfactory or better, in

over 70 per cent it is good or better, and 30 per cent of lessons contain very good or excellent teaching. In the 10 per cent of lessons in which the teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because students are not consistently made to think about their work, and they do not learn enough in the time available. In lessons where teaching is good or better, the pace of learning is maintained throughout, and all students, irrespective of their levels of attainment, are provided with the opportunity to make progress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are very good, and in-depth teaching occurs in all year groups, including Years 12 and 13. Teachers' expectation of students varies; occasionally higher attaining students are not stretched by the inclusion of more difficult work. The planning of the structure of lessons is very good, and teaching methods are varied. Lessons often include opportunities for students to become involved in investigations. Most lessons end with a summary of the work covered in order to consolidate learning. There are good examples of thorough marking, with constructive comments to encourage students to improve; overall, however, marking is not sufficiently regular, and it does not always comply with departmental policy. Homework is set regularly, but in many cases it does not make allowance for the different levels of students' attainment.

143. There has been a review of the curriculum since the last inspection, resulting in improvements in provision in Key Stage 3 and A-Level courses. All students, including those with special educational needs, are provided with the opportunity to obtain a GCSE science qualification. Information technology is being more closely integrated into the work of the department and the curriculum of all students.

144. The long-term assessment of students' work is thorough, and records are maintained of each student's progress. Full use is not made of these records in order to make annual value-added assessments of the work of the department. There are good

examples of assessment informing planning, as in the review of A-Level physics results leading to the inclusion of more practical assessments in the course. There are few extra-curricular opportunities, and no curriculum liaison with primary schools.

145. The science department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, and social development of students. For example students consider the implications of the growth in demand for energy, alternative energy sources, genetics, and a range of environmental issues.

146. The leadership and management of the science department are very good. The heads of each subject play key roles in overall developments. There is a positive ethos within the department, with a commitment to continual improvement. There is good teamwork, and an effective environment for learning. While some observation of teaching has taken place, not all teachers have yet benefited from this process. There is insufficient monitoring of exercise books within the department. The team of laboratory technicians are also hard-working and committed, and accept responsibility for providing support in each area of the work, including information technology and the department accounts. The science development plan is carefully costed, with delegation to members of the department for the various initiatives.

147. There has been some improvement in the accommodation since the last inspection all, but two laboratories still require modifications to improve their appearance and the safety of staff and students. The electrical supply in these laboratories needs urgent attention, and the emergency isolation valves for the gas supply are inaccessible. Bench tops and windowsills are not cleaned often enough, and there are too many occasions when laboratories are left unlocked. Apart from the safety aspect, many of these difficulties have a negative impact on the quality of education. Teachers and students prepare some good displays, which enhance the educational impact of laboratories and corridors.

148. Since the last inspection, curricular provision has improved for each year group. There has been a big improvement in the ability of students to plan and carry out investigations. The assessment of students' progress is now consistent across each year group. There has been a major investment in information technology, including training for teaching and non-teaching staff; a policy for information and communication technology has been drawn up, and further investment and usage are anticipated. Longer term planning is now more secure. The department has made good progress and has the potential to make further improvement.

151. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

151. Art

149. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C in 1998 was below the national average. In 1999 it was above the national average, a significant improvement which reflects above average levels of attainment noted during the inspection and the good standards in the examination in all other years since the last inspection. A Level results in the 1998 examination were well above the national average, and reflect consistently good standards over the past few years. At both GCSE and A level the

results achieved by boys have been lower than those of girls over the past few years. At the ages of 14 and 16 students' attainment in art is above average. In the sixth form attainment is well above average. There is no difference between attainment of boys and girls on the evidence of class-work inspected.

150. At Key Stage 3 students demonstrate confident investigating and making skills. Drawing skills are well developed and sketchbooks are used well, with good use of line and tone in a range of work on self-portraits, plants and animals. Students use paint to good effect in work on jungle paintings, in which imagination, technique and stimuli from the work of Rousseau are effectively integrated. Design skills are good and often very good in work completed in various media using good research on such topics as Aboriginal art and food. The quality of finished work is high and students are proud of their work. The majority of students has an understanding of the basic terminology of art but cannot always recall the work of artists they have studied. At Key Stage 4 skills in observational drawing are often very good, sketchbooks are effectively utilised and research skills are well developed. In projects on natural forms and masks many students produce a substantial body of ideas which inform their work progress through the use of written research, drawing, colour mixing, photographs and design to produce items of high quality for example Japanese masks. Students using photography display strong visual imagination in their photo-montage work. Only a small minority fail to follow their ideas through to completion. Few students can confidently recall and discuss the work of other artists. Attainment at the end of Year 13 is well above average. Students develop excellent working habits and work independently on a wide range of projects, the majority of which exhibit very good skills in their chosen media, for example in life size wire figure sculpture, oil paintings of Spain, fine detailed watercolours, self portraiture, photography and textiles. Students are highly articulate and can evaluate their work both practically and aesthetically to good effect. Their knowledge of artists and styles is secure.

151. Progress in art is uniformly good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Students of all levels of academic attainment make very good progress in the practical areas of the curriculum. Progress in observational drawing and designing is excellent throughout the school. Progress in the use of paint and the manipulation of materials is good. Progress in the acquisition of technical terminology, evaluative understanding and knowledge of artists is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. The progress of students with special educational needs is sound overall. They make good progress in practical work and satisfactory progress where research, evaluative understanding and knowledge of artists are required.

152. Students have very good attitudes to their work throughout the school and consequently progress well. The high quantity of finished work reflects students' pride in their achievements and large numbers proceed to the GCSE course. In all lessons inspected students worked with high levels of concentration, were respectful of teachers and resources, demonstrated friendly relationships and could independently work reliably. Standards of behaviour were excellent.

153. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3, satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject which is reflected in the very imaginative curriculum, which constantly seeks to stimulate

students' visual imagination through its use of photography, textiles and ceramics. A good range of multi-cultural topics in addition to the work of major artists is provided. In good lessons teachers set high expectations through a sequence of short-term goals which challenge students, as in the Aboriginal project in Year 7. In a minority of less effective lessons students lose some concentration where the teacher sets too many tasks for the time and resources available, for example in pop art in Year 9 and "mock" GCSE work. Teachers plan the majority of lessons effectively to provide students with an impressive range of experiences in their work, but the lack of use of information and communication technology to generate artwork remains a shortcoming since the last inspection. In the good lessons inspected, especially in the sixth form, teachers used effective questioning to reinforce students' understanding of terminology and the work of artists. Some teachers used questioning ineffectively and failed to ensure that all students understood the requirements expected of them. Students benefit from the good discipline and working environment established by teachers. Teachers provide helpful advice in lessons and students understand the criteria by which their work is assessed. Very good records are maintained. Teachers set an imaginative range of homework, but this is often inconsistently marked.

154. Standards in art are greatly enhanced by the meticulous leadership of the department and the excellent opportunities for visits to local and national museums and galleries. Sixth-form students benefit substantially from the annual international art trips provided.

157. **Design and technology**

155. For those students taking GCSE, results overall are above the national average for all schools but below average for similar schools. Results in graphics and textiles are above the national average for all schools but below those of similar schools. Results in food technology are well above the national average and in line with those of similar schools. They compare well with results in other school subjects. Results in resistant materials are below the national average. The 1999 results show an improvement across all subjects within design and technology. At A Level the majority of grades are in the middle and lower range.

156. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in food technology, textiles and child development is above average. In other components of design and technology it is broadly average. The generic skills for designing, making and evaluating are generally well established in students' working procedures. They are guided through structured projects which are designed to give them the knowledge and skills for good design work but which also enable them to extend the work on their own initiative. For example, in a Year 9 food technology lesson each student successfully planned and prepared a dish from an individual design brief. Many were then able to display their work attractively for assessment and justify their choice of ingredients. Students can answer questions accurately, usually have the graphic and written skills to express ideas clearly and can use a variety of sources for research. For example, in a Year 9 resistant materials group, students searched an internet web site for ideas for a mechanical toy project. Higher achieving students could sketch the ideas from the screen using good analytical freehand drawing. Lower attaining students were able to use two-dimensional sketching but with less clarity and technical detail. Students can

evaluate their work using a broad range of criteria and employ working methods which help to develop the independent learning skills needed for successful project work. For example, Year 8 students in food technology were able to discuss and evaluate the bread they had made against a wide range of sensory criteria and chart their findings.

157. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in the subjects offered is above average. No Year 11 work was seen in food technology, textiles or systems and control owing to the limitations of the curriculum offered: however, many students do not receive their statutory entitlement. Students are able to extend earlier knowledge and experience of technology to work in an independent way. For example, in a Year 11 graphics lesson students were able to give sound reasons for selecting their project and had supported their task analysis with photographic and computer generated images in addition to hand drawn ones. Attainment in the sixth form is above average. Students can engage in mature discussion about their work and generally have a clear understanding of its aim and progress.

158. Progress is satisfactory across all key stages. In some individual lessons, progress is good. It is greatest when lessons have a clear structure, set appropriate challenges and give students responsibility for the outcome of their work. For example, during a Year 10 child-development lesson students were guided through a series of group activities which required them to make collective decisions about their work. By the end of the lesson all had a clear plan of action. Students with special educational needs make good progress. For example, two deaf students in a Year 10 resistant materials class, who were fully included in the lesson by the teacher, had made progress by the end of the lesson similar to that of the rest of the group. Where progress is not as marked it is usually because the lessons lack clear structure. For example, in a Year 11 graphics lesson students working to the long-term goal of completing design folders, lacked a sharper focus for the immediate lesson.

159. Students' attitudes are good. They enjoy lessons and, in the main, are attentive and willing to participate in discussions and they behave well. Occasional lapses are usually dealt with effectively. Students are usually willing to accept responsibility for their own work, respond well to instructions and share tasks such as clearing up. They work well in groups, take a pride in their work and respond well when praise is given.

160. The teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Teachers have established good relationships with students, have good subject knowledge and, in the main, employ an appropriate range of teaching strategies. For example, the teacher of Year 8 students who were engaged in making bread effectively used whole class, small group and individual methods combined with a good balance of written and practical work. Interest was maintained throughout. Most teachers set realistic targets for their lessons, clearly explain them to the students and often involve them in class demonstrations. For example, in a Year 7 resistant materials lesson a student was invited to explain her answer by adding to the drawing on the whiteboard. Where teaching is less successful it lacks structure and pace.

161. Leadership is good. The lack of an overall curriculum leader for design and technology has adversely affected the status of the subject and hindered planning and development. The recent appointment of two subject leaders has greatly improved the

situation but students' progress is not, as yet, as good as it could be. Since the last inspection a great deal of work has been put into revising schemes of work and policy documents. These are now detailed and closely match National Curriculum Programmes of Study and school policies. This has already improved students' response and staff morale. Inspection evidence suggests that improvement is continuing. Assessment procedures give clear information to students about their current levels of attainment and what they have to do to improve.

162.The Key Stage 4 curriculum is inadequate and does not meet statutory requirements. Design and technology subjects are offered as options but there is no requirement for students to study a subject from this area. No food technology or textiles is being taught in Year 11 and no systems and control at all. This seriously limits breadth and balance of the curriculum and entitlement.

163.Accommodation is unsatisfactory and in need of refurbishment and, despite efforts by staff, does not provide students with a stimulating learning environment. Some technology is taught in non-specialist areas. Provision for the teaching of systems and control is inadequate and access to computers is limited. The school has plans to remedy these matters and funding will be available in the year 2000.

166. Dance

164. Attainment in dance is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3 but well above in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The A Level course is taught after school, not the most appropriate time for either students or staff. Despite that, in one of these lessons students quickly demonstrated very good movement and fluency in expression. The only candidate who took A Level dance in 1999 achieved an A grade. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are very good. The cohort of students taking GCSE in 1999 was small but the results were above the national average. In one Year 8 lesson insufficient time is spent on any activity to allow students to achieve high standards. Students encouraged to plan sequences of movement in two Key Stage 3 lessons showed imagination and a developing movement vocabulary.

165. Overall, progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. When students make very good progress this is often due to the way in which the teacher offers help with clear demonstrations and then guides students to observe and help each other. In lessons students gain in confidence and then their movement becomes more accurate and expressive. In the majority of lessons students enjoy dance. They have good attitudes to their work and they concentrate on the task. Boys and girls work together well, showing each other respect during group performance. It is only on a rare occasion that students do not listen attentively or remain fully focused on the activity.

166. The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and only satisfactory in Key Stage 3. In the very good lessons planning is meticulous and has a positive impact on students' attainment and progress. Effective praise and feedback in several lessons add to students' self-esteem. Where teachers show very secure subject knowledge their teaching is clear, confident and sensitive and they are able to give students responsibility to plan and evaluate their own work. In a Year 11 lesson the teacher had very secure knowledge of her subject and through her enthusiasm combined with very high expectations she enabled many students to achieve real quality of movement. In some lessons there is insufficient encouragement for students to express themselves verbally. There is a need to ensure that all the teaching is of an equally high standard.

167. The leadership of the department gives strong educational direction with a commitment to high achievement in dance. Very good facilities within the dance studio have a major impact on teaching and learning. The hall in the main school building in contrast, is not the most appropriate accommodation because of its location, its dual use and its lack of good sound reproduction and lighting. The dance curriculum is progressive and planned in detail.

170. Drama

168. The GCSE results in drama are well above the national average and in 1997 and 1998 were above the average for similar schools. Girls generally perform significantly better than boys. Results at the A Level examination are also well above the national average and in 1999 all candidates gained grades A-E, a significant majority gaining the highest grades. Examination results in the subject compare favourably with most others in the school.

169. By the end of Key Stage 3 students of all abilities reach a very good standard of invention, performance and response. Year 9 students can devise and perform very good monologues. Their speech is expressive but is sometimes too quickly delivered for easy comprehension by an audience. Many fine masks made by Year 9 students are on display in the department. By the end of Key Stage 4 students can improvise imaginatively and have reached a very good standard of expressive movement and spatial awareness. Their written work is very good and includes some very perceptive reviews of productions such as "An Inspector Calls" by Priestley or very good set designs for "Blue Remembered Hills" by Potter. One girl wrote especially well about the former, focusing on the scenery, the props, the themes and Priestley's interest in time. She also analysed the technical effects of the production and understood the symbolism employed. By the end of their time in the sixth form, students write good "skill notebooks" and very good "production diaries", often with the use of information technology. They perform their own imaginative scripts to a standard well above the national expectation. There were examples of very effective choral speaking and good diction and movement. Awareness of and response to others are well developed but there is a need to adapt the pace of speech more carefully to the requirements of the audience. At all key stages students with special needs perform satisfactorily within their groups, though their written work is variable.

170. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth-form and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 students realise that the subject requires them to make, perform and respond. They learn to interpret the language of music as was exemplified by a group transposing "The Jabberwocky" by Lear into movement. Later they learn how to develop characters for performance by methods such as hot-seating and thought-tracking. They also improve their physical control by use of mirror mime, creating tableaux to capture specific ideas based on themes such as "protest". Throughout Key Stage 4 students show increasing maturity. They explore their own powers of expression by such exercises as remembering the events of the previous day and expressing in mime their consequent emotions. The generally good standard of oracy and literacy enables them to display their skills in both the practical and theoretical aspects of the subject. By the end of Year 13 students exhibit marked increase in self-confidence both in performance and in critical appreciation of productions.

171. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They show developing motivation, interest and concentration as they proceed through the drama course. Many research capably for information when working alone. They form constructive relationships with the teachers and with each other, behaving well and understanding the need for direction in class. In all the lessons observed there was an atmosphere of goodwill and

students generously applauded the work of others. Students with special needs blend well with their peers and, both with and without classroom support, contribute usefully to the work in hand. At Key Stage 3 girls' concentration is better than that of boys when engaged in improvisation. The proportion of boys choosing drama as an examination option is declining.

172. The overall quality of teaching is very good in the majority of lessons and is never less than good. Where teaching is most effective the pace of the lesson is well maintained by use of a variety of strategies, and interest is stimulated through skilful questioning to suggest new lines of thought. The purpose of the lesson is made clear so that students know its relevance to their needs. Teaching is less effective when, at Key Stage 3, groups are too large for the teacher to monitor sufficiently closely and one or two boys waste a little time. The standard of marking is often very good and cogent remarks, questions and advice are often appended to guide the students. The teachers lay great emphasis on self-assessment and on evaluating the work of others. This is a significant factor in the standards and progress achieved at all key stages.

173. As yet, students are not making as much progress as they might, but the newly appointed head of department has made a good start and has this matter in hand. The department works well as a team within the faculty of the performing arts. In response to the last report the department has set homework more regularly and has housed half the lessons at Key Stage 3 in the drama studio so that the students may benefit from the superior equipment there. Schemes of work have been improved and made to include more performance activities. Older students are encouraged to use word processors and all are taken more often to see professional productions so that the demands of the examination boards may be better met. Results have continued to improve. The last report drew attention to the fact that learning was sometimes inhibited by background sound from adjacent music classes. This is unfortunately still the case and interferes with any dramatic activities requiring silence.

176. **Geography**

174. Since 1995, the proportion of students achieving A*-C and A*-A grades at GCSE has risen. In 1998, 87 per cent achieved A*-C grades, well above the average for all schools but below the average of 93 per cent for selective schools. Similarly the proportion of students achieving higher grades was well above the average for all schools but below average for selective schools. Results at grades A*-G are consistently above average. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving A*-C and higher grades rose to 91 and 45 per cent respectively. Students did better compared with similar students in most other subjects. They have benefited from the emphasis on practical coursework, the increased emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and the use of data to help them to improve. Since 1995, the proportion of A-level students gaining A and B grades has risen to well above the average for selective schools. All students achieved a pass grade. In 1999, 63 per cent of students gained higher grades.

175. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the expected level. Students have good practical skills and understanding of pattern and process. They show an informed concern for the environment, exemplified in work about energy. Their knowledge of

countries is sound but less detailed. They follow lines of enquiry well. For example, in a local investigation into the use of land, higher attaining students used data well to explain the issues. They suggested and justified their reasons for particular changes. Middle attaining students showed good understanding but their explanations lacked detail. The writing of lower attaining students was superficial.

176. At the end of Key Stage 4 and Year 13 attainment is well above average. Students' work is more detailed, the result of their good work on case studies. They remember previous work well. A-level students relate practice effectively to theory. Their numerical skills, when required, are sufficient to help them to do this successfully, as shown in their high-quality personal investigations. In all phases, practical and analytical skills are well developed through fieldwork. Students handle information well although information technology is under-used to facilitate this process.

177. Progress, in lessons and over time, is good at Key Stage 3. On entry, students are at different stages because they come from a large number of primary schools. They soon improve their knowledge and understanding of the local area through first-hand experience. As they progress through the key stage, the amount and quality of their work improves. Most write clearly to good purpose and use geographical vocabulary well. Lower attaining students show better understanding orally. In lessons they make good progress when they are interested, clear about what they have to do and well focused on the task; for example, in a Year 7 lesson about Bristol. They make slower progress in some lessons when the pace flags and teachers do not intervene to maintain the momentum.

178. Students make good progress in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, building effectively on previous learning. They improve their understanding of increasingly difficult concepts such as weather and climate. They also improve their ability to follow an argument. Studying motorway problems, for example, Year 10 students could evaluate different points of view competently.

179. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Most achieve a grade at GCSE. Geography teachers work hard to provide suitable activities but the level of support is only adequate.

180. Students have good attitudes to their work. They respond well to responsibility. Their positive attitudes contribute to their progress. Their enjoyment is shown in displays of imaginative, individual work. They are well organised and conscientious although some of their work is untidy. They are confident speakers but not always good listeners in Key Stage 3.

181. The teaching is good overall. It was always at the least satisfactory, good in over half the lessons and sometimes very good. It was most effective in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very secure and is conveyed with authority. Expectations are almost always high, and demanding but achievable tasks are set for higher and lower attaining students. In a few lessons in Key Stage 3, when the pace is too slow, some students waste time and the atmosphere is not always conducive to reflection. Very good lessons are notable for the teachers' lively and often imaginative approach and there is a good balance between instruction by the teacher and initiative by the student. The main strengths were shown in a Year 12 lesson. Two students presented the daily weather forecast to the rest of the group. Skilful questioning encouraged the group to apply what they had learnt previously to build up information. Amusing analogies reinforced knowledge and understanding. As a result, students made rapid progress.

182. Homework is set regularly and supports classwork well. Marking is regular but varies in its usefulness. Some comments help students to improve but others are cursory. Incomplete work is not always followed up.

183. The department is well led by an experienced head of humanities. Comprehensive documentation co-ordinates the work of the team. Good work schemes include information technology, but access to facilities is difficult and staff training has been inadequate. Assessment procedures are effective. Since the last inspection specialists teach all lessons and examination results have improved. Fieldwork remains a strength. Work still needs to be done to sustain the pace of work in some Key Stage 3 lessons.

186. **History**

184. The 1999 teacher assessments show 80 per cent reaching Level 5 and above, including 15 per cent at Level 8. This represents an improvement on 1997 (the last figures available), when the figure at Level 5 and above was 65 per cent, with 12 per cent at Level 8. In lessons seen, most students were performing at Level 5 and some were exceeding it. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are well above national averages. In 1999, 78 per cent of candidates obtained Grades A*-C, with 10 per cent gaining Grade A*. This was an improvement on 1998, when 68 per cent gained Grades A*-C, including two per cent at Grade A*, which was above the national average. In 1999 100 per cent gained Grades A* to G, which is an improvement on 1998, when the figure was 97 per cent, which was also above the national average. A Level results in 1999 showed 33 per cent gaining Grade A, an improvement on 1998 when the figure was five per cent. The average points score in 1999 was 6.7 per cent, an improvement on 1998 when the figure was 5.7, which was broadly in line with national averages.

185. The levels of attainment are above national averages at the end of Key Stages 3

and 4 and in the sixth form. Students have satisfactory factual knowledge, linking causes and events. Many have good skills in chronology and can competently investigate evidence, for example in Year 9 in the study of life in the World War I trenches. At Key Stage 4, students use historical sources effectively and evaluate events, recognising that there may not necessarily be a 'right' answer, as shown by their study in Year 11 of the League of Nations. In the sixth-form, students do effective individual research.

186. Progress of students across both key stages and in the sixth form is good. Students make appropriate gains in their ability to understand the past. They are developing a good knowledge of historical events, their causes and results. In Year 10 they are steadily learning the important skills of investigation and analysis of information, for example in the study of the aftermath of the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919. Appropriate extended tasks intensify knowledge, requiring students to think more deeply.

187. Students with special educational needs are provided with well-selected tasks, matched to their attainment. Class teachers are aware of Individual Education Plans and consult them regularly to monitor progress. There is limited classroom support for these students but they make satisfactory progress overall.

188. The attitudes of students to learning are good across both key stages. Students have positive attitudes to their work and are usually fully involved in lessons and concentrate well. Behaviour in class is good overall, with only a few instances of time wasting. Students mostly persevere, whether working on their own or in a group. There is much good individual research. In Key Stage 4, for example, two Year 10 students used the Internet to investigate further the effects of World War I. Students take satisfactory care of books and resources, although there have been some losses of stock. The presentation of their classwork and homework is generally satisfactory. Students usually respect the views of classmates in discussions. Sixth formers have good attitudes towards learning; they are mature and carry out effective individual research with interest and rigour.

189. The overall quality of teaching is good. At Key Stage 3 it is always at least satisfactory and is good in 70 per cent of lessons. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, it is good in 60 per cent of lessons and very good in 40 per cent. Where teaching is good, lessons are based on secure knowledge, good planning and high expectations of students. Stimulating questions challenge understanding, with satisfactory pace and variety in lessons. Classroom relationships are good. Control and organisation in the classroom are generally good, although there are instances of time wasting. Books are usually marked and constructive comments are added to help the progress of students, although there are some instances of unmarked work. Links with National Curriculum level descriptors at Key Stage 3 and projected GCSE grades at Key Stage 4 are being developed. Homework is effectively set and marked but varies in length and interest. Attendance is not always checked and many students are late for lessons.

190. There is effective monitoring of the curriculum in regular departmental meetings and an effective system of assessment and recording of attainment in student files is being developed. The management of the department is very good, with a clear vision of future development and appropriate concern for the progress of the students. Teaching usually takes place in specialist rooms, where there is attractive display of students' work but the standard of cleaning is only just satisfactory. Blinds have been installed since the last inspection and good use is made of video excerpts. The supply of textbooks is only just adequate and books cannot usually be allowed home, owing to losses. There is a growing use of information and communication technology when access to the computers is possible. Appropriate extra-curricular activities are available to students, for example the visit to Welsh castles in Year 7 and to World War I

battlefields in Year 10.

191. Standards have risen since the 1995 inspection and a thorough review of schemes of work has taken place. Tasks now much more closely match attainment. Planning and assessment have been developed and effective improvement has been made. Students now play a more active role in lessons especially at Key Stage 3. The department, which is an effective member of the Humanities team, is well led and has many good practices.

194. Information and communication technology

192. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the school assessed all students in Year 9 as being below the level of the national expectations. Statutory requirements are not met at this level. The school did not assess the students' capability in information and communication technology before this and does not assess students in Key Stage 4. In Year 12 in 1999, 37.5 per cent of students following the modular A Level computing course attained grades equivalent to grade A or B in A/S level. 62.5 per cent attained grades equivalent to grades A to E. There are no other assessment records for information and communication technology in recent years.

193. By the end of Key Stage 3 students' attainment is below national expectations. Although most students are confident in using the system, they do not systematically develop their information and communication technology skills. Some students use word-processing at a satisfactory level. The school introduces students to spreadsheets in mathematics and they know how to enter formulae into cells. In geography and science, students enter information into a database. Students at all stages make very good use of the information and communication technology facilities in music for composing and playing music. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are poor there being very little opportunity for students to receive their entitlement. They do not nearly cover the programme of study. An exception in history occurs when students use word processing to create a 'newspaper' style story successfully. However, there is little evidence of other work carried out. In the sixth form attainment is around average. Higher attaining students, following the A Level course, explore the structure of databases and build in search mechanisms. Most students create and modify databases and set up questionnaires for data capture and analysis. They analyse evidence, for example identifying underlying information from a credit card statement. Students following GNVQ courses and others developing their information and communication technology skills use the Internet for research but many do not use it selectively. Other work by these students is basic word processing. They begin to use spreadsheets with formulae. Some students following the design and technology A Level course use a specific program for ergonomic design effectively.

194. Students', including those with special educational needs, overall progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. The school has not yet developed the curriculum and assessment system to ensure that all students cover the increased ground. In Key Stage 3 the students carry out very little work that can be assessed for the subject. In the lessons where students use information and communication technology, they make good progress because of their interest and the teachers' good use of the facilities. Progress in Key Stage 4 is poor since the school does not develop the students' capabilities in any systematic way. Sixth form students, especially those following the information and communication technology course at A Level, make good progress from a very low level of prior skill. They are self-motivated and keen to use the facilities, especially the Internet for research. Lower attainers sometimes make no more than satisfactory progress. They waste time searching the Internet without effective strategies. On rare occasions progress in A level lessons is unsatisfactory when students show little interest in the work and they waste time talking socially.

195. In the main students' attitudes to the subject are good. They are interested and concentrate well when the teachers give them opportunities to use the computers. They behave well and have good relationships with the teachers. They discuss their work sensibly, and most ask for support when necessary. With the exception of lower attaining students, they discuss their work well in groups. Although most students take responsibility for their own work rate, some lower attainers need the teachers to help them to continue working at an appropriate rate. Sixth formers enjoy their work. They run an information and communication technology club for Year 7 students, and some students help to modify the school's web page.

196. Information and communication technology is not taught as a separate subject in Key Stages 3 and 4. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. The teachers of information and communication technology and business studies have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and the assessment systems required by the examination boards. They set work that usually ensures that the students' work at a good pace and at a level that extends their capability. They use the examination assessment systems to ensure that students know what is expected of them. In the lessons, they use questioning to develop the students' understanding and to check on it. In the good lessons, teachers use a range of strategies to ensure that the students are interested and concentrate well. In very good lessons, students discuss issues in groups and this enhances their understanding and progress. In unsatisfactory lessons, the students do very little work. They are left to their own devices for much of the time. Occasionally teachers fail to ensure that students do not waste time when using the Internet.

197. The curriculum for information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory; in Key Stage 4 it is poor and does not meet statutory requirements. The school does not teach Information and communication technology systematically through other subjects. Some subjects, notably mathematics, music and design and technology, include appropriate elements in their schemes of work. Assessment in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. It is poor at Key Stage 4 but good in the sixth form, where the teachers make good use of the external examination systems. The school is developing a system to enable teachers to assess the students' experiences in information and communication technology in other subjects. The school now has a clear philosophy for the subject but needs to carry out much more work before the students receive the experience they require. The school provides computer systems of good quality but lacks some specialist subject programs. Many of the teachers lack the expertise to develop the students' capabilities in information and communication technology in their subjects.

200. **Modern foreign languages**

198. At the end of Key Stage 4 most students achieve GCSE grades higher than the national average, although there has been some variation over the past three years, particularly in French. Seventy per cent of students who took French in 1999 achieved grades A*-C; in 1998 the figure was 37 per cent compared with a national average for all maintained schools of 43 per cent. In German the figure in 1999 was 59 per cent and in 1998 was 77 per cent, which is above the national average. In Spanish 71 per cent achieved these grades in 1999; 100 per cent achieved them in 1998, when the national average was 44 per cent. The number of students entered for Spanish was very small. Performance in examinations is below the average achieved in other selective schools. A-Level results in French are very high compared to national averages for maintained schools and good compared to selective schools. In 1999 all six students achieved an A or B grade. In German only two students entered and both achieved a grade C, which is slightly higher than the national average. In previous years results have been better than this and have been above the national average.

199. By the end of Key Stage 3 students achieve standards in French and German which are above national expectations. About three-quarters of students achieved at

least Level 4 by the end of Year 9 in 1999. Students are able to use several tenses correctly when writing and speaking and can understand a range of information on topics connected with themselves and their families.

200. By the end of Key Stage 4 students' attainment is above average. Students can use fairly complex language on a variety of topics and they express their opinions clearly. Higher attaining students produce some interesting and imaginative work as part of their written coursework. Generally written work produced for display or as coursework is of a much higher

quality than work done in class. There was very little evidence of students reading anything except short extracts from textbooks during the inspection.

201. Attainment in the sixth form is well above average. Students are able to understand a wide variety of texts, which cover topics such as the media and women's role in society. They speak at length and generally express themselves confidently in a range of situations including business contexts.

202. During Key Stage 3 students make good progress in French and German, especially in the first year of language learning. They improve their pronunciation and fluency in speaking and write at some length in diaries and for display. Students with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress in speaking but do less well in their writing.

203. During Key Stage 4 students make good progress in both French and German in their ability to understand the languages and they continue to increase their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. They make less progress in their ability to read a range of texts. Boys make less progress than girls, as they do nationally. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. In Spanish progress is rapid as students follow a two-year course and by the end of Year 10 they have covered a wide range of topics.

204. At Advanced Level students make good progress. In French they discuss a range of issues arguing their point clearly and making cogent remarks. Their progress in writing is not always as good. In Spanish and German progress in writing is generally better but in speaking it is limited.

205. In all key stages students have satisfactory attitudes to their work. They work well in pairs and groups and are keen to participate. Students are reluctant to work independently of the teacher in order to find out something they do not know or to read texts beyond those set in the classroom. Some students have no textbook to take home, which makes it difficult for them to study independently of the teacher. At A Level students show a degree of independence in that they research topics on the Internet and sometimes use the library resources, but in lessons they are often still heavily dependent on the teacher for ideas on how to organise their work and structure their answers to questions.

206. Teaching is satisfactory across the key stages and the sixth-form. Twenty five per cent was good or very good; 75 per cent was satisfactory. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach, including their second languages. There are often many tasks to challenge the more able but inadequate support for those with special educational needs. There was, nevertheless, some very good practice. This included the provision of short, clearly focused tasks and well set out worksheets with support that was gradually withdrawn. With some exceptions there is insufficient variation in teaching styles and this is often linked to a lack of suitable resources such as reading materials and cassette recorders with headphones or software. Students are encouraged to behave well and respectfully towards each other and to the teacher. Work is marked reasonably frequently but there are some inconsistencies across the department. For example, most work is corrected for grammatical errors but the marks awarded vary considerably; students are occasionally given comments in their books

about how they might improve their work, but they are more often given helpful oral advice on how to improve their spoken language.

207. Since the last inspection, results at GCSE have remained the same as they were reported in 1995 which was above the national average for all maintained schools but below that for selective schools. Results at A Level have improved dramatically and are now above national averages for all types of schools. There is a clear educational direction for the subject following a change in the curriculum leader two years ago and many positive changes have taken place. Writing skills have improved and students are given many open ended tasks to complete such as designing posters and writing poems. The development of tasks that meet the needs of learners who find languages difficult has not been sufficiently developed. Information and communication technology is still insufficiently used in teaching and there are few authentic resources available for Key Stage 4, especially reading. Accommodation is now much better and departmental policy is more closely monitored.

210. **Music**

208. GCSE results in 1998 were well above the national subject average for A*-C grades when compared with those of all schools, and above average when compared with those of similar schools. The trend over the last few years has been for all students entered to gain A*-C grades. In this respect, GCSE results in music are amongst the best in the school. A-Level results in 1998 were also well above the national average for A-B grades, and above average in comparison with those of similar schools.

209. Attainment in lessons in both key stages reflects examination results. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above average. Students have a very good understanding of the language of music, which enables them to compose and perform to a high standard. In the sixth form students' attainment is well above expectations. They have a mature knowledge of all aspects of music, and many of them perform at a professional standard as soloists – up to and beyond grade 8 (Associated Board).

210. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is well above average compared with the national expectation of students aged 14. By the end of the Key Stage, all students can use their voices, keyboards and other instruments with confidence to compose and perform. They all understand notation and are able to approach music as a language. Their technical knowledge and ability to describe in the correct musical terms the music they hear and play is impressive.

211. Progress is very good in all key stages because of outstanding teaching, very good resources, and an excellent curriculum. Students are treated and trained as performing musicians from the outset of their life in the school. By the end of Key Stage 3, most students play confidently and expressively in ensembles, interpreting moods and styles with conviction, and are able to discriminate detailed musical features with understanding. For example, in a Year 9 class, high attaining students could not only combine syncopated melodies and harmonies in ensemble performances of Brubeck's "Take Five", but could also improvise short sections in the appropriate style. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress; they

maintained individual parts well with sensitive control of basic musical elements. Students' progress steadily increases through Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Their skills in composing develop well, and a significant number of well-structured GCSE compositions are produced on computers. Students use their skills in information technology skills convincingly to supplement their musical knowledge. A-Level students enjoy the challenge of researching works and discussing them in considerable depth. They are frequently able to perform without prior rehearsal during class lessons the works they study historically. Their aural skills are particularly good.

212. Progress in extra-curricular musical activities is excellent. Extremely high standards of performance are achieved, particularly in the senior band, choir and orchestra. For example, the choir is able to tackle large-scale works like Fauré's Requiem and difficult unaccompanied choral pieces by John Tavener, and the orchestra and band play complex professional concerto scores with high attaining soloists drawn from the school.

213. Attitudes to music are very good. Students are interested in their work and get thoroughly absorbed in practising. They work well individually and when in groups, and take full responsibility for their performing and composing. Behaviour is very good, and the relationship they enjoy with each other and with their teachers is musically productive. The take-up for GCSE and A level is good. Greater numbers choose to do music at this level than in most other schools nationally. A significant number of senior students show initiative by giving support to Key Stage 3 classes in their music-making, and by organising and directing musicals, concerts and other musical activities. As many as 300 extra instrumental lessons are given each week, and there is a very good response to the extensive range of extra-curricular musical activities, in which over 250 students are involved. More staff time is now needed to ease the pressure created by this scale of involvement.

214. The quality of teaching is outstanding; all the lessons observed were at least very good and some were excellent. Music is taught by experienced musicians who have exceptional teaching skills. Expectations are high. For example, students at Key Stage 3 are expected to listen to music with the same level of technical skill and understanding as would apply to GCSE students. Musical tasks are supported by information of high quality, and all students have the benefit of having theory information already printed in their 'music note books'. The pace of lessons is well judged to achieve targets on time. Students are constantly challenged to think in musical terms and appraise their own progress. The curriculum is excellent in its planning to assess students' work with musical criteria and deadlines for the completion of assignments. The management of students is very good. Self-discipline is strongly encouraged, and an excellent ethos for work prevails in the department.

215. Since the previous inspection, more use has been made of singing and improvisation to enrich the curriculum, and resources for information technology have been increased. The nature of the accommodation, however, still presents many problems. Spaces are too small for large groups and there is no sound-proofing. The siting of the department in an annexe well away from the main site means that the potential of the curriculum is constricted as hour-length lessons are frequently reduced by up to a quarter of an hour through time spent in moving between lessons.

216. Music is a popular subject, and the efficiently run department is a high profile centre of musical excellence in both the school and the community. It is fortunate in being able to share resources through its association with the Bristol A-Level Music School, and also in the support it receives from the Cotham Music Parental Support Group.

219. **Physical education**

217. Attainment in physical education has improved since the last inspection. Statutory teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 reveals results that are slightly above national averages. GCSE results exceeded the national averages in 1998 and in 1999 have improved even further. Whilst the boys taking GCSE outnumber the girls by a considerable amount, the girls obtained more A* and A grades than did the boys.

218. Overall attainment is in line with national expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average in the sixth form. Students in Year 7 show good body tension in their forward rolls and comment well on each other's work. This results in sound gymnastic skill. Constraints of the two-week timetable meant that no physical education was observed in Year 9. By the end of Key Stage 4 students are achieving satisfactory standards in GCSE theory. Students lacked precision and fluency in their movement in one Year 10 aerobics lesson resulting in unsatisfactory attainment. In a parallel Year 10 aerobics class the attainment was good when students shared their sequences to their peers successfully. In the same lesson a profoundly deaf student, from a school for the deaf, not only enjoyed the activity but also achieved satisfactory standards. Students in a Year 12 'A' level theory lesson on feedback in sport, engaged in animated discussion using a range of examples from their own and others' sporting activities. The teacher provided a good balance between reinforcement of theory and development of further understanding that resulted in good attainment by the majority of students.

219. Approximately 30 per cent of all students take part in extra-curricular sport and a number represent the school with some success. In addition many students go on to higher achievement at county level in basketball, netball, football, cross-country, badminton, cricket and golf. Four girls in Year 12 came third in Great Britain in the national tennis championships. The very limited facilities for physical education restrict activities as the playing field and small hard paved areas are used for general recreation purposes at lunchtime.

220. Progress is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Teachers enable students to make good progress in Year 7 rugby when they provide increasingly difficult practices to develop confident handling of the ball. Similar progress was made during a Year 7 gymnastics lesson because the objectives for the lesson were explained well. Appropriately high expectations of students' ability to maintain vigorous activity enhances progress for most students in a Year 10 aerobics lesson. Progress was somewhat limited when teachers set only a moderate pace for the netball lesson in Year 7. Generally boys and girls make similar progress in lessons and those with special educational needs progress satisfactorily. Progress over time is adversely affected by the departmental organisation of the two-week timetable into single and double periods. However, the department has recognised this and intends to review the arrangement as soon as possible. Assessment criteria are shared with students in some lessons and when this takes place students are aware of their own progress. This is an improvement from the previous inspection.

221. Students' attitudes to their work are satisfactory. They generally enjoy physical education, concentrate on the task and respond well to the activity. In the majority of lessons students work hard to improve their skill and concentrate well even when not directly supervised. They make valuable contributions to lessons by answering questions thoughtfully. Behaviour is good, particularly when the pace, challenge and teachers' expectations are appropriate. Occasionally, students' response is immature and often they have to be reminded to listen. A major issue for the department to address is the large numbers of non-participants, particularly at Key Stage 4, and the inconsistent way they are involved by teachers in the learning. Many non-participants merely watch the lesson and are not required to observe or evaluate. This sometimes adversely affects the learning of the rest of the class.

222. The quality of teaching is good overall; it is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and sound in Key Stage 4. In some lessons teachers share with students what is to be taught which has a positive impact on standards. This practice, which was highlighted in the previous report, is not consistently carried out however. Teachers in some lessons help students to make progress by giving timely help but there is still a need to provide different tasks in order to cater for the needs of all students. This too was an issue in the last inspection. Consistently teachers provide many opportunities for students to plan their work. Good provision is made for students to evaluate their own work and that of others in many lessons. The experience of staff, several of whom have been heads of department, contributes to the attainment and progress in physical education. Their expertise and that of the new subject leader, in post for six weeks, together with newly defined roles should further enhance the standards in physical education.

223. Assessment procedures, which were also highlighted in the previous report, are

being totally revised currently by the new head of department to standardise procedures across the department and make secure the end of Key Stage 3 assessments. Accommodation for the subject has been substantially refurbished since the last inspection. It remains inadequate for the number of students but arrangements for the use of good facilities away from the school enhance teaching and learning.

226. Religious education

224. Students' GCSE results have been well above the national average for the subject for all schools, but well below the average for schools of similar type. The most recent results have, however, seen a very significant improvement, and the majority of students are now reaching appropriate levels of attainment. Results compare well with other subjects. Results at A Level in religious studies have been below the national average for all schools, and well below for schools of similar type. Here again, however, the most recent results have shown a very significant improvement, and students are now attaining appropriately for their age.

225. At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, the attainment of students following the Agreed Syllabus is in line with its expectations for their ages. Students have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and of Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism in the country, of the distinctive features of those religions, and of religious language, concepts and symbols. Their skills in exploring the experiential dimensions of religious belief and in understanding the beliefs of others are particularly well developed.

226. The majority of students make satisfactory progress between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. By the age of sixteen, for example, they are able to apply religious insights to complex moral and ethical issues. Students pursuing the GCSE examination course make at least satisfactory and in most instances good progress in their study of Buddhism, Islam and ethics. Sixth-form students pursuing the A Level course make very good progress in their study of Judaism and ethics.

227. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, the majority of students pursuing the Agreed Syllabus, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory and, in many instances, good progress in their work. During their first year in the school they acquire, for example, some insights into questions of self and identity, and questions of mystery and meaning. By their third year they have progressed to work demanding the ability to grasp and evaluate highly abstract concepts, such as those relating to the central tenets of Buddhism. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good progress in the sixth form.

228. Students' attitudes to their work are good. They come to lessons keen to learn, are interested in their work, and take pride in it. Most are attentive, listen well, and sustain concentration well. They are keen to ask and answer questions, and listen with respect to each other's views and opinions, for example, in a Year 7 lesson exploring the nature of humankind, and a Year 9 lesson on the Bar Mitzvah in Judaism.

229. Students are given very good opportunities for developing skills of collaborative working in pairs and small groups, as when, for example, prioritising and evaluating statements on human rights in Year 10. Students following the Agreed Syllabus are not, however, given sufficient opportunities for developing skills of independent learning, research and enquiry, leading to extended writing.

230. The very great majority of students behave well in lessons, and enjoy very good

relationships with their teachers, and with each other. The good response and behaviour of most students are a reflection of the overwhelmingly good teaching in the subject.

231. The quality of teaching is a strength of the department. It is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form very good. This good teaching is underpinned by the very good relationships which teachers have with their students. They enjoy being with them and respect and value them as individuals, while at the same time having high expectations of them.

232. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a very good command of their subject. They know clearly what they wish their students to learn, and plan their lessons effectively to achieve their aims, as in a Year 8 lesson on creation and creativity, which focused on Aboriginal myths of creation.

233. Teachers engage and hold their students' interests through a variety of interesting and challenging activities and tasks, which are well matched to their different needs. Year 9 students, for example, were led to explore Rastafarianism through its music and poetry, and the writing of their own lyrics and poems on its beliefs. Year 11 GCSE students worked in groups to seek out examples of the Buddhist concept of suffering in the local community, presenting their findings visually through display.

234. Teachers structure their lessons well, and strike a good balance between whole-class, group and individual work, and between written and oral work. They regularly set homework which extends students' learning, for example, by broadening out an exploration of self identity in Year 7 to consider self in relation to the family.

235. Work is marked regularly and conscientiously, and students are given very good opportunities to engage in self-evaluation of their own attainment and progress. In the few instances where teaching is less strong, teachers have less effective strategies for dealing with any inattentiveness by students, taking longer than necessary to regain their attention.

236. The head of department has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take, and since taking up post in September has made a successful start to developing schemes of work appropriate to the new Agreed Syllabus for Bristol. If the school is to raise standards of attainment further, it should provide students with more opportunities for developing skills of independent research and enquiry, supporting them with increased provision of textbooks. It should also address its statutory responsibility to ensure that the subject is taught to all students in the sixth form.

237. This is an improving department with a number of strengths, which has effectively addressed most of the issues raised in the previous inspection. Appropriate time is now given to the teaching of the subject in the main school, and the content of what is taught has been improved. Consequently, standards of attainment have been raised. There is still, however, no provision for the subject to be followed by all students in the sixth form.

240. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

240. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

238. Thirteen inspectors spent 51 inspector days gathering first hand evidence in school. In all, they observed 205 lessons or parts of lessons. Specialist inspectors evaluated students' work in all years. A full collection of work from at least six students in each year group was scrutinised and detailed discussions were held with the students.

239. Inspectors considered extensive documentation and statistical evidence and held numerous meetings with staff and governors. Meetings were also held with representatives of bodies that have links with the school. There was extensive coverage of extra-curricular clubs. A questionnaire was sent to all families and a meeting was held for parents which the registered inspector and another inspector attended.

240.DATA AND INDICATORS

Student data

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1157	5	84	100

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	71.45
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.86

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked each week	390

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	71.4
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	22.5
	KS4	22

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	2 724 126
Total Expenditure	2 835 628
Expenditure per student	2 550
Balance brought forward from previous year	30 478
Balance carried forward to next year	(81 024)

Figures in parenthesis indicate negative values

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	850
Number of questionnaires returned:	78

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	12	64	20	4	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	25	56	10	8	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	10	38	36	14	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	13	55	18	11	3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	20	51	10	15	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	26	51	11	8	3
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	46	15	13	3
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	14	47	13	19	6
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	19	45	19	15	3
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	10	39	35	13	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	37	46	8	8	1

Other issues raised by parents

Parents believe there has been a substantial improvement in student attitudes over the last two years.