

INSPECTION REPORT

**KESTEVEN AND GRANTHAM GIRLS'
SCHOOL**

Grantham

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120632

Headteacher: Mrs. A. Hopkinson

Reporting inspector: Christine Harrison
4145

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd March 2001

Inspection number: 184636

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Female
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. E. Chapman
Date of previous inspection:	27 th February 1995

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11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
4689	Monica Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology	
13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	History	
2597	Cheryl Jackson	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs Provision for students in the sixth form Equality of opportunity	
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12336	Malcolm Overend	Team inspector	Geography	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School is a selective girls' school educating 1067 students between the ages of 11 and 18, of whom 241 are in the sixth form. The school is larger than the average secondary school. The number of students has increased significantly since the previous inspection when there were 936 on roll. The school takes students from a wide area of Lincolnshire and parts of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, with many students travelling to school by bus. Students come from a wide range of social backgrounds but, overall, the socio-economic circumstances of students are well above the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is 1.9 per cent, well below the national average. The school has 30 students from ethnic minority backgrounds. 31 students speak English as an additional language, a proportion that is slightly higher than in most schools, but none of these students is at an early stage in learning English. The school takes students from the top 30 per cent of the national ability range and therefore students enter the school with attainment that is well above the national average. There are 16 students on the special educational needs register; this is 1.5 per cent of the school population and well below the national average. Three students have statements of special educational need and this also represents a proportion that is well below average.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for students with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with several outstanding features. Relationships within the school are very good. Teaching is good; students respond very positively and work hard. The school offers a very wide range of opportunities, some within and many outside the curriculum. Against this background, students attain very high academic standards and also make excellent progress in developing many personal qualities and skills. There is good leadership, notably from the headteacher, for whom the school's emphasis on developing the whole personality of each student is central. The school provides good value for money and the sixth form is particularly cost-effective.

What the school does well

- Students attain very high standards in GCSE and GCE A-level examinations.
- Students' enthusiastic attitudes enable them to take full advantage of the good teaching they receive.
- The school is well led and effectively managed with a strong emphasis on enabling each student to develop fully as an independent, responsible and confident young adult.
- The school provides a stimulating learning environment where students have the freedom to develop their intellectual and creative skills.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding.
- Sixth form students benefit from a wide range of opportunities and, in return, make a very valuable contribution to the life of the school and the experiences of younger students.

What could be improved

- Attainment in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds is not as high as it should be.
- Students do not achieve as well as they should in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11.
- There are weaknesses in both the monitoring of students' progress across the curriculum and in the assessment of students' work within subjects, particularly in ICT, music and religious education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in February/March 1995. Results in GCSE examinations have improved, particularly in terms of gaining a higher number of A and A* grades. GCE A-level results are now further above the national average. The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly. During the previous inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 75 per cent of lessons; it is now at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons. The school has responded well to the key issues identified in the previous report and made good progress with most of them. However, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is still not fully met. There is now more effective monitoring of the work of the school but there is scope for further improvement of monitoring systems. ICT is now used effectively to support learning in the various subjects but students' under-achievement in ICT remains an issue for the school.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A*	A*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

A* represents attainment in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally

- In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, results in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average for all schools but place the school in the lowest 5 per cent of grammar schools. Results were not as high in 2000 as they had been in previous years, mainly because of a fall in the English results. This school takes students with a wider range of attainment on entry than many grammar schools but, nevertheless, there was under-achievement in the tests.
- Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 placed the school in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally and results were average compared with grammar schools. GCSE results are rising in line with the national trend. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A and A* was broadly average for grammar schools. The best results were in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, psychology and religious education. The worst results, though still well above the national average, were in drama and physical education. The school sets itself appropriately challenging targets for GCSE results and came close to reaching its targets in 2000.

- GCE A-level results in 2000 were very high and placed the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. The best results were in biology, design and technology and economics and the worst were in German and psychology. A-level results have been consistently high in recent years.
- In work seen during the inspection, students' overall attainment at the age of 14 was well above the levels expected for students of the same age and better than the attainment indicated by recent test results. The overall attainment seen at the ages of 16 and 18 was very high and generally reflects recent GCSE and A-level results. However, students under-achieve in ICT at the age of 16 because they do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills. Attainment in A-level German is now better than that shown by last year's results.
- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are well above the national average. Students of all levels of attainment, including those who have special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, make good overall progress. At the ages of 16 and 18 they gain very high GCSE and A-level results. They therefore achieve better results than might be expected in relation to their attainment on entry to the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are interested and involved in their lessons and maintain high levels of concentration. They are enthusiastic about their work and other activities in school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students are self-disciplined and require only the minimum of supervision around the school. They are polite and welcoming to visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is excellent because students use their initiative and take on increasing levels of responsibility as they move through the school. Relationships are very good and students respect and value each others' talents and opinions.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average. Rates of unauthorised absence are extremely low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching in the school is good. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons, good or better in 81 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 40 per cent of lessons. Only 2 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching is of similar quality in most year groups in the school but there are fewer good and very good lessons in Year 9. The attitudes and behaviour of a few students in Year 9 are not as good as those of most students in the school. Teachers deal effectively with these students but the pace of learning sometimes slows slightly and becomes satisfactory rather than good.

The quality of teaching is good in English, mathematics and science. It is also good overall in all other subjects apart from art and design and design and technology where it is very good and geography and music where it is satisfactory. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. Across the school, the main strengths are teachers' knowledge of their subjects, their relationships with students and the expectations they have of them. Teaching meets the needs of all students in the school, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, so that all make good progress.

The quality of students' learning broadly matches that of teaching. However, students have very good learning skills and are enthusiastic and well motivated so they play a particularly active part in their own learning. In the best lessons, teachers take full advantage of students' skills. They use interesting ideas or resources to capture students' interest, provide a challenging task and then give students freedom to investigate, discuss and summarise. In the occasional unsatisfactory lesson, the work is not sufficiently demanding and students do not learn as quickly as they should.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. However, the arrangements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory and do not meet statutory requirements. Extra-curricular opportunities and links with the community are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Students with statements are well supported by learning support assistants. Other students with special needs receive the support they require in order to make progress that matches that of others in their group.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. All these students speak English well and most are fluent in the language. Nevertheless, the school is aware of their needs and provides effective support where needed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Opportunities for social development are outstanding. There is very good provision for moral and cultural development. Opportunities for spiritual development are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school provides an environment where individuals are valued, supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential. There are, however, weaknesses in assessment and the monitoring of students' progress.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents are pleased with the school. There are good opportunities to visit the school and consult staff. However, written reports to parents are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides good leadership, ably supported by other members of the senior management team. Management is good but monitoring and support are not yet sufficient to ensure that practice in all areas of the school matches that of the best.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body provides good leadership. Governors know the school well and provide a range of valuable expertise. They ensure that most statutory requirements are met. The school does not, however, meet requirements for: ICT in Years 10 and 11; reports; a daily act of worship for all students.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has recently improved its use of data to compare its performance with that of other grammar schools. Monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of data both vary between subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. All expenditure is used to support the broad aims of the school. However, the school development plan does not clearly identify the link between major priorities and the allocation of funds. The management team is energetic in seeking to obtain the best value for the school's expenditure. The school has good staffing; accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall but unsatisfactory in ICT.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effort and achievement the school expects • The good progress made by students • The good support provided for students' personal development • The wide range of opportunities outside lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information on students' progress • The partnership that the school has with parents • The amount of homework that is set • The curriculum arrangements in Year 12

Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by parents. This is a good school where students achieve well. Although the school provides much useful information for parents, inspectors judge that most reports do not contain sufficiently detailed information on students' attainment and progress. In general there are good opportunities for parents to work in partnership with the school. However, many parents make valid comments and suggestions and the school does not yet make enough use of this valuable source of feedback. Some parents feel that students are given too much homework. There are occasions when too much homework is set and others when students spend too long on particular tasks. Usually, however, the amount of homework is appropriate and the school makes good use of homework to support learning. Inspectors share parents' concerns about the workload in Year 12 being too demanding for some students.

A few parents expressed concern about teaching and learning in psychology in the sixth form. The subject was not part of the inspection contract but a limited investigation was undertaken at the request of the school. Inspectors agree that there are weaknesses in this subject.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are, overall, well above the level expected nationally. By the age of 14 they attain standards that are even further above the level expected for their age, and better than those indicated by the school's recent performance in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds. By the ages of 16 and 18, standards are very high compared with the levels expected nationally. Students achieve well at the school.

2. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, the average points score was well above the national average in all the three core subjects, English, mathematics and science. The proportion of students gaining levels 5 and above was very high in English and mathematics and well above the national average in science. The proportion of students gaining the higher levels 6 and above was well above the national average for all schools in all three core subjects. The trend in the school's average points score has been above the national trend over the past five years. However, the test results, both the average points score and the proportion of pupils gaining levels 6 and above, were very low compared with the average for grammar schools. There are three factors that contribute to this unfavourable comparison. Firstly, the English results for 2000 were lower than those normally obtained in this school. The school did request re-marking but, for technical reasons, their application was unsuccessful. Secondly, this school takes in students whose attainment covers a wider range than in many grammar schools. Thirdly, the total number of grammar schools is small and a relatively small difference in results can easily make comparisons particularly harsh. Nevertheless, even after taking account of these factors, the school's test results for 14 year olds are not as good as they should be, given students' attainment on entry to the school. The school does not prepare students sufficiently for these tests to enable them to gain results which are better matched to the attainment seen in their other work in school and to their attainment at later stages in their school career.

3. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C, and the average points score per pupil, were both very high in comparison with all schools nationally. The trend in the school's GCSE average points score is broadly in line with the national trend. This is more difficult to achieve for schools where results are already very high and indicates the good progress the school has made in raising GCSE standards. The proportions of students gaining grades A* to C and the average points scores are broadly in line with the average for grammar schools. The proportions of students gaining grades A* to G are well above the national average for all schools but well below average for grammar schools. This less favourable comparison was the result of two students having long-term health problems and so not achieving any GCSE passes. GCSE results have improved since the time of the previous inspection: they were well above the national average at that time; they are now very high.

4. The previous inspection report indicated that higher attaining students were not attaining as well in GCSE examinations as might be expected in a grammar school. Since that time, there has been a significant improvement in the number of A and A* grades gained by students. In 2000, the proportion of A and A* grades was similar to, or higher than, the average for grammar schools in almost all subjects.

5. In individual subjects, the proportions of students gaining grades A* to C were at least well above the national average and usually very high. Students' best results were in English,

mathematics, science, design and technology, history, psychology and religious education. The worst results, though still well above the national average, were in drama and physical education.

6. Students make good progress in all year groups and achieve results in GCSE examinations that are very high in relation to national averages and average in relation to grammar schools. The satisfactory comparison with other grammar schools indicates good overall achievement because of this school's broader range of attainment on entry than in some grammar schools.

7. The school sets itself appropriately challenging targets for performance in GCSE examinations. The particular target of every student gaining five or more grades A* to C has not yet been achieved, depending, as it does, on the continued good health and attendance of every individual student. The school came close to achieving its target for students' average points score in 2000.

8. In the 2000 GCE A-level examinations, students' average points score was very high in comparison with the national average. The average points increased from 23.9 in 1999 to 25.3 in 2000, thereby returning to the score achieved in 1998. Hence there is a good degree of consistency from year to year in the maintenance of high A-level standards. Over the longer term, the A-level average points score is now further above the national average than it was at the time of the previous inspection in 1995.

9. In individual A level subjects, most subjects had average points scores that were well above the national average and, of these, the best results were in biology, design and technology and economics. Points scores were above average in business studies, general studies, physics and theatre studies; they were average in French, history and music. However, results were below the national average in German and psychology.

10. The school's value added data indicates that students in the sixth form achieve well and gain better results than might be expected, given their attainment in GCSE examinations.

11. Evidence gathered during the inspection in several subjects indicates that students' attainment in lessons and in their written work is often well above the average for their age but not quite as high as the standards indicated by their GCSE examination results. The school places considerable emphasis on developing students' independent learning skills, thus enabling students to reflect on the work they have done, to study efficiently and revise thoroughly. In several lessons, students made spontaneous and very careful analysis of the detailed requirements of written questions so that they could be absolutely precise in their answers. Hence, students achieve even better examination results than might be expected from the evidence available in school.

12. In the work seen during the inspection, students' attainment at the age of 14 in all aspects of the three core subjects, English, mathematics and science, is well above the levels expected for students of the same age. More students are now on target to achieve the higher levels than achieved those levels in 2000. In other subjects, attainment is well above average in all subjects except for: design and technology where attainment is very high; geography, ICT and physical education where attainment is above average and music where it is average.

13. Although students enter the school with general levels of attainment that are well above the national average, there are variations across subjects according to students' experience of those subjects in their primary schools. For most students their attainment on entry in English, mathematics and science is better than that in other subjects. The attainment levels at the age of 14 indicate that students achieve well at the age of 14 in most subjects.

14. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that, at the age of 16, students are attaining very high standards in English, mathematics, science and design and technology. Standards are well above those expected from students of the same age in all other subjects except music where standards are above average and ICT where they are average. These standards indicate that students achieve very well, in relation to their attainment when they enter Year 10, in English, art and design, design and technology and GCSE physical education. They achieve well in all other subjects, apart from ICT where students do not have enough opportunity to develop their skills and achievement at the age of 16 is unsatisfactory.

15. In the current Year 12 and Year 13, standards in the A/S and A level courses are very high, in relation to the standards expected from students following such courses, in mathematics, art and design and design and technology. Standards are well above average in all other subjects except history where they are above average, music and ICT where they are average and psychology where they are below average. Standards generally reflect recent attainment in GCSE A-level examinations in 2000 but standards in French and German are now higher than last year's A-level results would suggest.

16. Students achieve well in the school because they respond enthusiastically to the good teaching they receive. Their high levels of literacy and numeracy, evident in all year groups, underpin their work in other subjects in the school. Students are skilful in discussions and make very good use of reasoned argument in developing their understanding of ideas. Students have particularly good skills in learning independently; they are enthusiastic and efficient in seeking out information and presenting it very carefully to provide clear explanations for themselves and others. Their skills in investigations, particularly in mathematics and science, are very well developed. Many students show flair and creativity across a wide range of subjects, notably in art and design and design and technology.

17. Students with special educational needs make progress which matches that of other students in their teaching groups. In this school, all students with special educational needs satisfy the criteria for entry to the school and therefore do not have major learning difficulties. Students with statements of special educational need are well supported by learning support assistants and enabled to take a full part in lessons. Teachers are aware of the needs of these students and others on the special needs register; they provide additional support where necessary to maintain students' progress.

18. Although around 3 per cent of students speak English as an additional language; all speak English well and almost all are fluent in the language. The school is, however, alert and sensitive to the subtle difficulties which these students can experience when working with complex language in a demanding learning situation. Three students receive additional support from a visiting teacher. The success of this support, and of the work of other teachers in helping students to develop their use of the language, is seen in lessons and students' written work where these students make the same good progress as their peers. There is no significant difference between the progress, and eventual achievement, of students from different ethnic groups.

19. Students who are gifted and talented flourish in this environment and make good progress in relation to their individual levels of attainment and skill. Expectations of what

students can achieve are high; teaching often offers a degree of independence so that more talented students work at their own pace. The extra-curricular programme provides much opportunity for special skills and talent to develop. The progress of gifted and talented students is excellent in art and design, and the outstanding work of these students provides an inspiration to others in the display around the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Students have very good attitudes towards their work and other activities in school. Transition from junior school to secondary school is intellectually exciting for Year 7 students who experience real pleasure in learning. Students from all year groups are interested, involved and sustain high levels of concentration. They especially enjoy challenging lessons. For example, Year 10 physics students were fascinated by the teacher's demonstration of electromagnetic force and asked many intelligent, well-directed questions. Students can work well together. During an English lesson students worked in groups in order to prepare a presentation about the novel 'Roll of Thunder, Hear my cry'; they were able to include some very challenging material.

21. There are very small numbers of students who are less interested and committed. Most of these pupils are in Year 9. Their attention can wander and they sometimes indulge in idle chatter when not being directly watched. The attitudes of these few students have an impact on learning in lessons in Year 9, where there are fewer lessons than in other year groups where learning is good or better. Nevertheless, the vast majority of students of all ages are extremely conscientious about their work. Written work is neat and well presented; students often do more work than teachers expect.

22. Students are extremely enthusiastic and their level of participation in the wide range of activities outside lessons is excellent. Their commitment to sporting activities is exemplary. Students of all ages are keen to take on responsibility for organising events outside lessons. For example, Year 10 students organised a netball tournament involving many other schools.

23. Behaviour is very good. The school's philosophy is to encourage students to develop self-discipline and a strong sense of responsibility. This approach is extremely successful for the vast majority of students. Behaviour is very good and often excellent and this has a very positive effect on learning. Behaviour in the corridors and around school is very good. Students need the minimum of supervision. They have very good manners and are polite and welcoming to visitors. Physical bullying does not occur. Occasionally younger students are thoughtless and call each other names. Parents report that teachers quickly sort out any difficulties.

24. Relationships are very good. Students respect each other's viewpoints. In business studies lessons, students can express opinions that are respected by others even when they do not agree. Students of different ethnic origins and various religious beliefs are well integrated. Students have exemplary, positive attitudes towards their peers who have special educational needs so that these students are fully included in the life of the school. Relationships between younger students and sixth formers are very good. There is a great deal of contact through the house system where older students organise events that involve younger pupils. In contrast with the situation described in the previous inspection report, there is now clear evidence that the very good relationships between staff and pupils are used effectively to raise attainment.

25. Personal development is excellent and students of all ages are encouraged to use their own initiative. To prepare for a 'probability fair' Year 8 mathematics students were encouraged to develop probability games. Year 7 pupils tested the games during their

lunchtime and reported back to their own mathematics classes. The students who created the games worked really hard to develop the games and Year 7 pupils were very enthusiastic about trying the games. This is a good example of how the school encourages students to develop their own initiative, fosters good relationships between year groups and uses enjoyable lunchtime activities to extend students' skills.

26. During the inspection week, inspectors were privileged to observe the house choral speaking competition. Sixth form students had chosen the material, coached younger members of the house and took part in the final performance in front of the whole school. Prior to the competition, sixth form students could be observed supervising impromptu rehearsals in many areas of the school. During the competition itself the atmosphere in the hall was electric; this was the culmination of many weeks of hard work and preparation. Behaviour during this exciting event was excellent and the level of respect for each performance was faultless. The quality of the performances of spoken word, drama and music was a testament to all the students involved, and illustrated the successful application of the school's philosophy of encouraging each student to develop fully as whole person with a range of talents, experiences and responsibilities.

27. Attendance rates are very good; they are well above national averages. Attendance rates in Years 7 and 8 are excellent. Most absences are due to illness and rates of unauthorised absence are extremely low. Students are usually very punctual to school and many arrive early. Tutors are now usually punctual to registrations and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. The quality of teaching, and of the learning that such teaching promotes, is good in all year groups. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons, good or better in 81 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 40 per cent of lessons. Teaching of the very highest standard was seen in 6 per cent of lessons. Overall, these figures indicate a very significant improvement on those noted in the previous inspection report. In that inspection, teaching was sound or better in only three quarters of lessons. The quality of teaching has improved because of the high priority it has been given by the school's senior management team, the introduction of better monitoring arrangements and the additional training provided for teachers.

29. Teaching is of similar quality for most year groups. In Year 9, however, the proportion of good and very good lessons is lower than it is for other years. Within Year 9 there are a few students whose attitudes and behaviour fall below the very high standards seen elsewhere in the school. These students tend to lapse into low-level chatter from time to time instead of maintaining full concentration on the lesson. Teachers deal with these incidents but not always sufficiently firmly to stop the chatter re-surfacing. In these circumstances, the pace of learning of the class is reduced and progress is satisfactory rather than good.

30. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in art and design and design and technology; it is good in English, mathematics and science and all other subjects apart from geography and music where it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in art and design, design and technology and physical education; it is good in English, mathematics and science and all other subjects apart from geography where it is satisfactory. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in English, mathematics, the three science subjects, art and design and design and technology; it is good in all other subjects apart from geography and history where it is satisfactory and psychology where it is unsatisfactory.

31. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and use that knowledge to plan lessons carefully. Most lessons include a good variety of activities to hold students' concentration and interest and to maintain a brisk pace in their learning. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and these expectations are usually fully realised. In lessons that are very good or excellent, teachers make the best use of students' skills in learning and give them much freedom. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on formal and informal letters, the teacher provided clear instructions and a framework for the task, along with a wide range of interesting letters. Students were then asked to discuss, in small groups, all aspects of those letters and present their findings. All enjoyed and took a full part in the discussion, were thoroughly absorbed by the activity and rapidly gained a broad and detailed understanding of the major features of letters.

32. Teachers make a good contribution to developing students' basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Many teachers strongly emphasise the technical language of their subject but this emphasis is not consistent across all teaching groups and all subjects. Teachers in several subjects make very good use of the numeracy skills that students acquire in mathematics and provide opportunities for students to practise and enhance those skills. Teachers make use of ICT successfully to support learning in their subjects but they are less effective in developing students' specific skills in using ICT.

33. The relationships between teacher and students are very good and based on mutual respect. Hence, there is usually little need for overt management of students and lessons proceed in an atmosphere of co-operation and shared purpose. Teachers take particular care with the groupings in which students work, often, for example in science, enabling higher attainers to support and encourage lower attainers thus reinforcing the learning of both groups. Similarly, in design and technology, teachers re-group students during the lesson when needs and circumstances change.

34. In most lessons, teachers give students considerable independence in their learning and this enables students to learn at a pace that matches their needs. Students who are gifted and talented enjoy rising to suitable challenges. Teachers are well aware of the individual needs and targets of students with statements of special educational need. These students receive effective support from learning support assistants and are enabled to learn at the same rate as others in the group. The needs of students who are on the special needs register, but do not have statements, are less well known to teachers but, nevertheless, they generally receive any additional support they need and their learning again matches that of their peers.

35. In some lessons the teaching is genuinely inspirational. In an introductory general studies lesson on ethics for Year 13, the teacher used very good quality materials to provoke passionate discussion and enable students to explore difficult concepts and develop an understanding of how these could be applied in specific situations. In Year 10 mathematics, immaculate planning, coupled with very careful questioning to test students' full understanding of the task, ensured that students gained a real 'buzz' of satisfaction from the early stages of an investigation. In a Year 7 design and technology lesson on smoothing

wood, the teacher's demonstration was extremely skilful so that students were given a real understanding of the tools they were using, coupled with enthusiasm and confidence in applying the methods themselves.

36. In a significant number of lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In such lessons there are both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of those lessons are similar to those described in the better lessons. The weaknesses include too much time spent on low-level tasks that do not produce enough learning and a slight shortage of challenge so that students are not learning at the best possible rate. In the occasional lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the aims of the lesson are sometimes not sufficiently clear and there is not enough attention paid to making the best use of time and providing sufficiently demanding activities to ensure that students learn enough during the lesson.

37. Teachers generally mark students' work carefully and give good indications of how the work could be improved. In some subjects, notably mathematics, science and physical education, teachers use day-to-day assessment of students' work very effectively to inform and enhance students' learning. However, students do not receive regular feedback on their attainment in ICT and the marking and on-going assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in music and religious education. In many subjects, teachers do not make as much use as they could of National Curriculum levels to indicate to students their attainment in terms of national standards.

38. Teachers make good use of homework to reinforce and extend students' learning. Many homework tasks are imaginative and stimulating. Students respond particularly enthusiastically when asked to investigate a topic for themselves; they produce project work of high quality. The amount of homework is usually appropriate but there are occasions when students' are given too much homework or spend a disproportionate time on certain tasks. Students and parents require more encouragement to report any such difficulties with homework as soon as they occur.

39. The quality of learning is good overall for students in all year groups. Learning follows broadly the same pattern as teaching for the various year groups and in most individual subjects. However, there are deviations from that matching pattern. In geography, for students of all ages, learning is good and, therefore, better than the teaching that students receive. There is a similar difference between teaching and learning in English in Years 10 and 11. Even in other subjects, there are often lessons where, although they share the same overall judgement on quality, students' learning is slightly better than the teaching. The reasons for these discrepancies, whether significant or minor, are the same. Students have very good attitudes towards their work; they are well motivated and expect to work hard and make progress. They also have very good skills in learning; they are analytical and perceptive, prepared to seek out subtleties in meaning and to question where things are not entirely clear. Clearly these skills are partly the result of students' innate abilities but they are further developed by the school's effective fostering of such skills in subjects across the curriculum. The overall development of students' learning skills is a strength of the school; it has a positive effect on learning in all subjects and on students' eventual achievement.

40. Students work very hard and maintain very good levels of concentration in their work in all subjects. They have clear strengths in absorbing information and developing understanding. Even more impressive, however, is the energy and creativity that abounds within and beyond the curriculum and enhances learning across a broad range of activities. Art provides some of the best evidence of students' enthusiasm for creative activities and the various ways in which their talents develop. Students learn by experimentation, by looking at

the work of older students, by setting themselves challenges and by helping each other and as well as by making full use of the advice and expertise offered by their teachers.

41. The school has made very good progress in improving teaching since the previous inspection. Most of the weaknesses identified at that time have been overcome. The next stage in the development of teaching and learning is to provide more training and support for teachers in order to ensure that teaching is at least good in all lessons, particularly in Year 9.

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

42. The curriculum is mainly broad and well balanced across Years 7 to 11, providing a good range of learning opportunities. The wide range of GCE A and A/S levels available in the sixth form is a very good provision. Students benefit considerably at each stage of their education from an excellent extra-curricular programme. The curriculum is socially inclusive and meets individual needs very well.

43. The curriculum provided for Years 7 to 9 is good. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. In addition, all students are able to study a second modern language in Years 8 and 9 and an effective programme of personal and social education is provided. There are good opportunities for students to gain a range of knowledge, skills and values, which prepares them very well for the next phase of their education. There are, however, some weaknesses in time allocation in mathematics and English in Years 8 and 9, where a shortage of time limits the detail and depth of coverage of the programmes of study. The timetabling arrangements for music, art and design and drama also put constraints on the time available for each unit of work and the arrangements in which students rotate around these subjects creates problems in maintaining the continuous development of students' learning. The main impact of this problem is seen in music where students' achievement by the age of 14 is satisfactory but not as good as in many other subjects in the school.

44. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is also good. In science, students have the choice of either the three separate subjects or double award science at GCSE. In addition to the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education, a number of other subjects such as business studies, economics and psychology are also available, providing an effective range of choices to meet students' individual needs. There is, however, a breach of statutory requirements because not all students receive their full entitlement to the programmes of study for ICT. Students who do not choose GCSE religious studies, do not receive sufficient teaching time for the Agreed Syllabus in religious education to be fully covered. This issue was also raised in the previous report. A lack of computer-aided design and making resources in design and technology limits the range of activities available for students.

45. The sixth form curriculum is very good because it offers a wide range of academic subjects, a number of vocational courses and excellent enrichment activities. Opportunities also exist within the consortium with King's School and the Grantham College to widen the potential choice of subjects for students. The development of an effective key skills course is enhancing students' communications, application of number and computing skills. The curriculum is well managed and the provision of an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances the richness of the learning and developmental opportunities available to students. Religious education is taught as a unit within the A level general studies course, but as was the case at the time of the last inspection, too little time is allocated to the subject to enable all units of the Agreed Syllabus to be fully covered.

46. There is concern expressed by both parents and students about the pressures placed upon students by the requirement to take five A/S level courses in Year 12. Some students are finding these requirements too onerous and the demanding schedule restricts their involvement in other aspects of the life of the school. The inspection team agrees with the concerns expressed. The management team is aware of these difficulties and has made some adjustments to the curriculum for individuals. It has, however, not yet been successful in adjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of all students in Year 12.

47. All students in Years 7 to 9 follow a guidance course, which is well planned and includes personal and social education as well as the development of a range of learning and inter-personal skills. The Year 7 foundation course is also effective in developing students' learning and thinking skills and preparing them for other aspects of education. The Year 10 and 11 programme provides very good opportunities for students to acquire a range of skills to prepare them for adult life. Topics include health education and substance abuse, rights and responsibilities and the development of understanding of issues associated with marriage and the family. The sex education programme, delivered in personal and social education and in science, has been agreed by the governors and is of good quality.

48. The school has made some progress in the development of whole school literacy and numeracy strategies. There are not yet specific policies on these aspects and there is still a need for some teachers to be more aware of both numeracy and literacy needs within teaching strategies. Literacy and numeracy skills of most students are very high but there are, for example, occasions when students misunderstand or mis-spell words if the teacher does not put enough emphasis on the subject's specialist vocabulary. Individual departments' schemes of work are generally good and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. There are, however, weaknesses in some subjects, particularly English, geography and religious education.

49. Students with special educational needs have full access to the school's curriculum. Where appropriate these students receive very effective support from learning support assistants and are enabled to take a full part in learning activities.

50. The school provides good opportunities for students who are gifted and talented so that they can make good progress in developing their talents. Many lessons provide stimulating opportunities for independent learning so that students can exploit their individual strengths and make good progress in relation to their own initial understanding. Special arrangements are made for students who are gifted in languages to take GCSE examinations in earlier years. The extra-curricular programme is extremely important in providing many opportunities to develop individual interests and talents. In particular, the 'summer school' has been introduced to provide extra challenge and opportunities for particularly able and talented students.

51. In most respects the school provides, and actively encourages, full equality of access for all students to all aspects of the school's curriculum and the extra-curricular programme. However, there are inconsistencies in students' opportunities to develop their skills in ICT in Years 10 and 11. There are plans to indicate that students gain an appropriate variety of such experiences within the various subjects. In practice, however, the opportunities provided for different groups vary significantly depending on the skills and attitudes of individual teachers and the availability of resources.

52. The school has been very successful in forging links with the local and wider world community. These include an active link with a school in Japan, which involves regular visits to and from Japan. Through the World Challenge programme, students have visited Mongolia and in the near future a trip to Madagascar will take place. The links provide opportunities for

students to extend their skills and expertise in a wide range of activities. There are also improving links with the main feeder schools, which enables a smooth transition to take place on entry in Year 7 socially and academically. There are very good links with the world of work and higher education. Students and parents are able to attend events relating to higher education. The provision for careers education and guidance is very good, helped considerably by a very well organised and stocked careers library, which provides up to date information on careers and further and higher education. The department has a good relationship with the local authority careers partnership. Students are provided with good advice at times of transition between Years 9 and 10, on entry to the sixth form and at the transition to employment or higher education. All students in Year 8 take part in the successful 'Take our daughters to work' scheme. There is work experience in Year 11 and in the sixth form, which effectively informs and prepares students for the world of work.

53. The school's provision for extra curricular activities is outstanding. There are a number of visits and exchanges with Europe and the rest of the world. Sport, drama and music provide many opportunities for involvement and the development of interests, skills and responsibility. There is an excellent range of other school clubs associated with subjects, which play a very important part in extending learning opportunities and giving students new cultural, leisure and sporting experiences. In the case of many clubs and activities, students, particularly but not exclusively the sixth form, are encouraged to show initiative and leadership potential by accepting responsibility for organising activities, working together with the staff. Parents quite correctly express strong support and approval for the school's extra curricular provision.

54. The school has made satisfactory progress in developing the curriculum since the previous inspection. Links within the sixth form consortium have improved. The extra-curricular programme is even wider than it was. However, weaknesses in the timetable arrangements for art and design, drama and music persist. The arrangements for ICT, although improved, still represent a key issue for the school.

55. Overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. The aims of the school and its general ethos strongly support this aspect of students' personal development. In line with the findings of the previous report, the school continues to provide a secure and motivating environment in which students can develop their personalities and express their individuality.

56. Provision for students' spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and is now good, particularly outstanding in art and design and very good in religious education. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop an awareness of something greater than the "here and now" and engage in a search for purpose and meaning in life. English continues to provide reflective work on poetry, for example, powerful spiritual elements were observed in a lesson on Wordsworth's poem 'On Westminster Bridge'. In music, there are opportunities for students to reflect upon their own and others' performances. Assemblies provide some opportunities for reflection on spiritual matters. However little reflection or discussion of spiritual issues takes place in form periods and in many, the 'thought for the day' is purely a token attempt to meet statutory requirements for collective worship. Frequently there are no opportunities to develop discussion or allow time for reflection on the issues raised by the particular 'thought'.

57. Teachers, by their own example and expectations that students will behave considerately, act as good role models for students. The school aims to develop values such as honesty and fairness and students are clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. They are required to show respect for each other and for accepted codes of behaviour. The personal and social education programmes cover a number of topics that

raise students' awareness of rights and responsibilities, the law, conflict and anger and prejudice. Moral issues continue to be explored effectively in religious education, English drama and physical education. In addition, frequent opportunities are now provided in science, ICT, art and design and modern foreign languages. Students consider complex relationships and humanitarian issues, for example, racism, prejudice, slavery, the sanctity of life, genetic modifications and cloning. Students benefit from working in orderly classroom environments with accepted and predictable responses, rewards and sanctions. Physical education makes a positive contribution through valuing positive behaviour and reinforcing good relationships and mutual respect. Provision for moral development is very good.

58. The ethos and daily activities of the school provide a caring and secure environment where relationships are founded on mutual respect and co-operation. Provision for the development of social skills is excellent. The school provides a wide range opportunities for students to show initiative and accept responsibility. These include the school council and its associated committees, activities in forms, clubs and sport and the scheme in which Year 8 act as 'buddies' for new Year 7 students. The school council, with its associated committee structure, provides valuable experience in contributing to discussions and decisions on school matters. Opportunities are provided for students to work collaboratively in many subjects, developing teamwork skills and learning to value the contribution of their peers. In the previous report, science and history were judged to give little support to social development. This is not the case today, as both subjects contribute positively. History makes an important contribution to the development of citizenship and, in both subjects, there are good opportunities for interaction in the classroom, enabling students to work together on tasks developing their social skills. Issues such as relationships, friendships and the development of inter-active skills are covered in the personal and social education programme. Social interaction is also promoted through an excellent range of extra curricular activities, field study trips and visits both in this country and abroad. Work experience in the Year 11 and in the sixth form provides valuable experiences of the world of work. Students' awareness of the needs of the less fortunate in society is developed through many charitable fund-raising events, which raise considerable sums of money annually. Students with disabilities are well integrated into the school and social inclusion is highly effective.

59. The sixth form has its own committee which meets regularly to discuss issues and concerns. There are three head girls, elected annually, who are voted for mainly by students but also by staff, who chair the sixth form committee. The head girls meet regularly with the head of sixth form. Sixth formers, as senior members of the school community, are offered extensive opportunities to develop their qualities of initiative, leadership and independence. The school's house structure relies heavily on sixth form participation and the students excel themselves as motivators and organisers and give their time and effort willingly to the benefit of all.

60. The provision for students to develop an understanding of their own and other cultures is very good. There are many visits to places of cultural interest in this country and abroad including art visits to Venice, Florence and Berlin. In English and in the library, multi-cultural literature is evident in fiction books, set texts and poetry. In art and design, multicultural and western cultures are very well covered and in English there are good cultural elements in literature and poetry, from a range of cultures and over time. Contrasting cultures are effectively covered in geography and contrasts between the major world faiths are explored in religious education. There are exchanges with schools in Germany and France and a teacher exchange with Germany, all of which widen experiences for students and effectively enhance learning. In physical education there is a very good provision in dance with a study of dances and music from other countries and cultures. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for multi-cultural education since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. The school has created an atmosphere where individuals are valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Parents appreciate the caring nature of the school. Form tutors and heads of key stages are effective in supporting individual students. Students are confident that they can also approach the head teacher if they have a problem they cannot resolve. Good practice regarding students' support and welfare has been sustained since the previous inspection. Arrangements for child protection are good and the school has effective procedures in place to ensure that students are safe.

62. The school has a well-established, good quality induction system. Year 8 students act as 'buddies' to Year 7 students. This encourages good relationships across the year groups and helps Year 7 students quickly to feel an integral part of the school.

63. Students who are having difficulties with their academic work are well supported. Teachers are readily available to students to provide extra help when needed. In mathematics there is a mentor system where capable sixth formers assist younger students who lack confidence in mathematics. This works well and promotes contact between younger and more mature students. Students who are making very good progress are also well supported. For example, students who are attempting the National Curriculum extension paper in English are offered additional lessons. In science, sixth form mentors help to prepare students for attaining the highest National Curriculum levels.

64. Students' progress in the sixth form is regularly monitored. If a student's progress review raises serious concerns, the head of sixth form contacts home and a meeting is arranged with the student and parents so that appropriate strategies can be put in place.

65. The monitoring of personal development is good. The responsibility for this monitoring is shared between form tutors and the students themselves and includes a review of many aspects of students' development including their relationships with classmates, their involvement in activities outside lessons and their attitudes to work. This helps to ensure that students take full advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities available. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are responsible for completing their mid-year reviews and setting their own targets for improvement.

66. The school's programme of guidance provides students with appropriate information and guidance about many aspects of growing up. Students especially appreciate the high quality of information that they receive from health experts and the thought-provoking drama presentations. The careers programme helps equip students with the skills needed to make informed decisions about their future. Sixth form students appreciate the help and assistance they receive with their university application forms.

67. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Attendance is especially well monitored in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form where Year 13 students have time for individual study and there is more potential for problems to develop. Much of the responsibility for monitoring attendance rests with the form tutor and many aspects of the monitoring are informal. These arrangements are appropriate for this school where there are very few attendance problems. Students who are absent from school for long periods or who are considered likely to develop attendance problems are well known to the school. Students who cannot attend school for long periods due to illness are well supported.

68. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school's behaviour policy describes an educational philosophy of encouraging students to develop self-discipline and a sense of responsibility. This works well for the vast majority of students and they mature into likeable, well-balanced, self-disciplined adults. There are few school rules and students are expected to behave in a civilised way. Teachers usually manage behaviour very well. However some hard-working students are aware that there are few sanctions that can be applied to the small minority of girls who are less well behaved in lessons and they feel that this is unfair. Cases of bullying are rare and are restricted to name-calling. Most parents felt that these matters were dealt with promptly and sensitively and the inspection team agrees. Occasionally parents feel that better systems are needed for dealing with these issues. This parental perception is related to lack of a clear hierarchy of responsibilities for pastoral matters in the senior management team.

69. The existing arrangements for assessing, monitoring and supporting the attainment and progress of all students are unsatisfactory although pockets of very good practice exist in subject areas such as science, mathematics, design and technology and drama. Weaknesses in the school's systems for collecting, storing, retrieving and using assessment data were highlighted in the previous inspection report, as also were inconsistencies in assessment practice between departments regarding the marking of students' work and the use of assessment to aid teachers' planning. A co-ordinator for assessment has been appointed from the start of the current academic year and a sound draft policy has been agreed for the monitoring and evaluation of students' academic and social attainment and progress. A computerised system has been installed with the intention of aiding access to, and more efficient use of, assessment information in, for example, tracking the progress of various groups of students and considering their particular needs. However, this system is not yet in use. The needs of the gifted and talented have already been identified and these students have benefited from early entry for GCSE mathematics or from enrichment activities such as the summer school. The school has a more complete record of assessment data for the majority of the current Year 7 students than for other groups in the school. It has identified a need to track individual students across the school and share information with all departments. Team leaders have failed, however, to agree a common marking policy for the school.

70. Unsatisfactory assessment procedures currently exist in ICT, music, religious education and psychology. In other subjects, procedures for monitoring, assessing and supporting students' attainment and progress vary from satisfactory to very good. Where practice is very good, assessment is used consistently within the department to inform teaching, as for example in science where it is used to group students appropriately in classes and within teaching groups. In mathematics, teachers mark according to an agreed scheme and students can see how they are making mistakes and what they need to do to improve. In design and technology Year 11 GCSE course work is completed early so that teachers can 'trouble shoot' and ensure that students perform as well as possible in the examination process. In drama, excellent use is made of assessment to inform lesson planning. These strengths are not reflected consistently in other subject areas. The awarding

of National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 is not currently in place in art and design and music; levels are not moderated in ICT and modern foreign languages does not take sufficient account of National Curriculum levels in planning for different ability groups within classes. English teachers use different systems of marks and grades for different year groups and are reluctant to use either National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, rather than marks, on students' work. Religious education has no structured and evaluated assessment and recording systems, which would allow for the recognition of 'added value' or under-achievement of students or differences between teaching groups. In physical education, assessment does not enable students to measure their own progress in developing skilful performance and extending their knowledge and understanding. Targets set by students in geography are not challenging enough and could be more effectively used to raise attainment. Assessment systems throughout the school are currently too inconsistent to ensure that all students in every subject make the best progress and reach the highest attainment possible.

71. The school appropriately assesses and monitors the progress of students with special educational needs using the annual review procedures for those with statements and termly reviews of the individual education plans. The targets for students with statements are of good quality and teachers make good use of them in their planning. Individual education plans contain appropriate numbers of targets but these targets are often too general and lack clear criteria for success. In these circumstances, it is difficult to determine whether targets are being met and exactly what progress is being made. Not all teachers are equally aware of the targets within individual education plans; targets are well used in planning for lessons in mathematics and science but not in English. Students with special educational needs make good progress but there is scope for further emphasis on refining the targets and meeting their specific needs more precisely.

72. The school has made some improvements in the assessment and monitoring of students' academic progress since the previous inspection. In particular, there are now appropriate procedures for assessing the progress of students with special educational needs. The progress has, however, been insufficient and assessment issues remain an important area for improvement within the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

73. Parents continue to have a good opinion of the school, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. Parents report that their daughters are expected to work hard and do their best and that they make good progress. They are pleased that the school provides a wide range of activities out of lessons and they value the caring nature of the school. One or two parents had experienced difficulties when contacting the school. This is because the responsibility for contact with parents is not entirely clear within the school's senior management structure. Parents who have experienced difficulties at home that have had an impact on their daughter's education have found the school very supportive.

74. Information for parents is satisfactory. Parents have ample opportunity to come into school and discuss their daughters' progress with teaching staff. There are tutor evenings early on in the school year followed later by subject consultation evenings. These are supplemented by information evenings about option choices and moving on into the sixth form. There have also been meetings to inform parents about aspects of the guidance course including sex and drugs education.

75. A significant number of parents were concerned about the quality of information that they received about their daughter's progress. The inspection team agrees with these parents and judges the written reports to parents to be unsatisfactory. Reports vary

considerably in quality and format between year groups. They do not meet statutory requirements because progress in ICT is not reported for all year groups. Reports in Year 9 give parents better quality information than those in other year groups. In particular, they provide parents with details of the topics that have been covered in each subject. Reports in Years 7, 8 and 10 have a restrictive format and this affects the quality of the reports. National Curriculum levels are rarely referred to in Years 7 and 8 and parents are often not given a clear indication of how well their daughters have attained. Often there is insufficient focus on progress. Although many teachers do use the report to tell students how they can improve, this is not consistent across all subjects. Many reports do not give parents sufficient information about what has been taught. Reports in Year 11 contain students' personal statements that are negotiated with teachers and often of high quality. These reports reflect the school's emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, there is still a need for a clear statement from the teacher on the student's attainment and progress. Reports in the sixth form are satisfactory.

76. Parents are extremely supportive of their daughters' education. They all sign and return the home-school agreement and the school's behaviour policy. Parents provide practical support for theatre visits and sporting fixtures. They provide their daughters with high quality materials for practical lessons such as food technology. This has a very positive impact on the quality of the finished product. Many students have access to high quality ICT equipment at home and this is reflected in the superb pieces of work that they often produce as part of their homework. Parents of students with special educational needs are appropriately consulted and kept well informed by the school; they take an active part in the annual reviews associated with statements.

77. A significant number of parents were concerned that too much homework is set for students. The inspection team found that the school uses homework well to extend students' learning. The school's good use of homework makes a significant contribution to the high standards of attainment seen. The majority of students spoken to during the inspection felt that the amount of homework set was reasonable. Very occasionally, homework timetables are not kept to and students find the load heavy. Students are extremely conscientious about homework. They often produce far more work than is expected and this can significantly increase the amount of time spent on homework tasks.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

78. The quality of leadership and management of the school is good overall.

79. The headteacher provides good, effective leadership. She has a clear vision of what the school should provide for its students and what can be achieved. There is a strong focus on meeting the needs of each individual student. To this end, there is a sensitivity to any problems or difficulties that students face and a determination to overcome them. There is an appropriate emphasis on ensuring that these capable students achieve as much as possible in terms of high academic attainment. However the vision is much wider than that. The aim is to provide the broadest possible experience for students so that they have every opportunity and encouragement to develop into mature, responsible and confident young adults with a wide range of skills. The vision of the headteacher, shared by senior management team, teachers and others, strongly influences the whole ethos of the school and has a genuine impact on the learning and personal development of students.

80. The school was previously inspected in 1995. The inspection report came as a shock to the school and teachers were unhappy with the findings. In these circumstances, it would have been possible for an over-subscribed school that was felt to be generally successful, to have paid scant regard to the key issues for action and merely go through the motions of

planning to overcome them. It is to the credit of the leadership, particularly that of the headteacher, that the school was energetic in tackling the weaknesses the report identified and approached the latest inspection positively, confident in the improvements that had been made. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. High standards have generally been maintained and there has been a significant improvement in the performance of higher attainers in GCSE examinations. There has been very good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning. There has been satisfactory improvement in the opportunities for spiritual development, multicultural education and the use of numeracy. Monitoring of the work of the school has improved but requires further attention. There has been satisfactory progress in the development of teaching and learning in ICT, particularly in the use of ICT to support learning in subjects, but it remains a key issue for the school.

81. The senior management team includes two deputy headteachers and four assistant headteachers, in addition to the headteacher. These teachers have a range of individual skills and experience and work conscientiously in support of the aims of the school and its continued improvement. However, the team has only been in its present structure since September and the roles and responsibilities within it are not yet entirely clear. There is a need for some clarification and consideration of possible changes in allocations of responsibility. At present, some functions associated with senior management are not being fulfilled as effectively as they should be, notably in the monitoring of, and support provided for, the middle managers in the school. Some areas of the school, particularly ICT and special educational needs, do not receive enough involvement from senior management. For example, not all staff are aware of the importance of the individual education plans, and the targets that they contain, for those students who are on the special educational needs register but do not have statements. Such improved awareness cannot be achieved by the special needs co-ordinator, who has limited non-contact time for such work, without more senior management support. There are other areas of the school's practice where arrangements are inconsistent across subjects or year groups. Reports, for example, have different formats in different years. Assessment of students' attainment, the use of assessment data, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the quality of development planning all vary between subjects. The management team does monitor the experiences of students in a valuable 'student shadowing' exercise. Further systematic monitoring is now required to bring all areas of the school into line with the practice seen in those where it is most effective.

82. The Governing Body provides good leadership. Governors know the school well and are aware of many of its strengths and weaknesses. They provide the school with expertise in various important areas. Several Governors, particularly the Chair and Vice Chair, are extremely enthusiastic and energetic in their involvement in all aspects of school life. The governors hold the headteacher in high regard and value the information and suggestions she provides for them. However, there are occasions when they disagree with proposals and vigorous debate then ensues. The Governing Body fulfils most of its statutory responsibilities with regard to the school. However, it does not ensure that all students receive their full entitlement to ICT. Students' reports and the arrangements to provide a daily act of collective worship also fail to meet the full legal requirements.

83. The quality of middle management in the school is good overall but there is considerable variation, particularly between subjects. For example, the monitoring of teaching within subject departments varies from very good in science, art and design and modern foreign languages to unsatisfactory in music and ICT. The sixth form is well led. The head and deputy head of sixth form provide clear educational direction for students. The curriculum arrangements in Year 12 are not yet entirely appropriate for all students but the school is aware of the concerns and has made some adjustments to the curriculum for individual students.

84. There is satisfactory planning for the future development of the school. At whole school level there is a thorough review to establish a substantial list of appropriate areas for improvement. Subject departments then draw up their own development plans with due regard for the school's list. The quality of these departmental plans varies but, in the better examples, there are clear indications of what the department will do, alongside likely costs and staff development needs. This approach is broadly satisfactory in moving the school forward but the school development plan has weaknesses. It lacks clear priorities, statements about what is to be done by the school as a whole and criteria against which progress can be judged.

85. There has been significant improvement in the arrangements for students with special educational needs since the previous inspection. The school's arrangements now meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, there is not as much awareness as there should be of the precise needs of students who are on the register but do not have statements.

86. The school has sufficient teachers to meet its requirements and they are well matched, by qualifications and experience, to meet the demands of the curriculum. Their contribution, particularly in the extra time they give to students outside lessons is rightly appreciated by both students and their parents. The school is also well served by a cheerful, loyal and efficient team of non-teaching staff. Learning support assistants provide skilful and effective support for students with statements of special educational need. Good support is provided for newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school. The school has successfully implemented performance management so that all teachers receive regular reviews leading to the writing of curriculum and personal targets with measurable learning outcomes. These targets are appropriately linked to the aims of the school development plan and are used to determine staff training needs.

87. There is generally sufficient accommodation and the school has satisfactory resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The school is in the middle of a building programme that will overcome some weaknesses in accommodation, particularly for English. Accommodation is, however, unsatisfactory in art and design, design and technology and ICT. In art and design there is a shortage of teaching and storage space which affects the activities that can be undertaken. In design and technology, some of the rooms are too small for the groups that use them and in ICT there is no computer room large enough to allow individual use of machines by a whole class. There is also a weakness in the accommodation for physical education where there are insufficient dedicated areas for indoor activities. Off-site facilities are used to overcome this difficulty but there is a loss of time due to travelling. The library is too limited in size to allow expansion and development to meet fully the needs of all students. Accommodation is adequate to meet the social requirements of students in Years 12 and 13. Harrowby House is no longer large enough to accommodate all the tutor groups but students are proud of their base and care for it well.

88. Most subject departments have supplies of textbooks, apparatus and other learning resources that are at least satisfactory. The exception is in ICT where the number of computers available is well below the national average and is insufficient to meet the requirements both to teach the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in ICT and to use ICT within other subjects. The library has a satisfactory stock of relevant books and materials of good quality; it is efficiently managed and well used by students.

89. The school receives broadly average funding for a school with a sixth form. Financial planning is satisfactory with appropriate matching of funds to the school's educational priorities. For example, the recent over-spend on the budget for supply teachers was

carefully considered and judged to be essential to maintain the quality of provision for students. The school has since taken steps to eliminate this deficit. There is careful financial control. The recommendations from the recent auditor's report are being implemented by the school. The school's funding for students with special educational needs is spent appropriately to meet the specific needs of those students. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. There have been some good innovations, including the school's employment of its own catering and cleaning staff, in order to gain better value from expenditure. The school has begun to use assessment data to compare its performance with that of other grammar schools.

90. Students achieve better GCSE and GCE A-level examination results than might be expected in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. In addition, they receive very good pastoral support and experience a very wide range of opportunities for personal development. In relation to its average income, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

- (1) improve students' attainment in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds by:
 - ensuring that schemes of work include appropriate preparation for these tests;
 - ensuring that the time allocation for English and mathematics in Years 8 and 9 is sufficient to prepare students fully for the tests;(Paragraphs: 2, 92, 96, 104)

- (2) raise standards in ICT by:
 - ensuring that all students receive their full entitlement to the ICT programmes of study;
 - increasing the teaching time for ICT in Years 8 to 11;
 - increasing the support provided by the senior management team for the ICT co-ordinator and the network manager in developing ICT across the curriculum;
 - ensuring that all subjects contribute to the accurate assessment of students' progress in ICT;
 - providing reports to parents on students' progress in ICT in all year groups;
 - improving the opportunities for students to gain qualifications in ICT;
 - providing a development plan that identifies, with appropriate costings, the necessary improvements to accommodation and the equipment required to bring the number of computers up to the national average.(Paragraphs: 32, 44, 51, 82, 151-153, 155)

- (3) improve the monitoring of students' academic progress by:
 - introducing effective assessment procedures in ICT, music and religious education;
 - making more use of National Curriculum levels in the assessment of students' work in Years 7 to 9;
 - involving students in monitoring their progress through the National Curriculum levels and using levels to set targets for future attainment;
 - introducing a secure system for monitoring students' progress across the curriculum.(Paragraphs: 37, 69, 70, 106, 128, 143, 150, 156, 172, 188)

In addition to the key issues above, the governors should consider the following minor points for inclusion in their action plan:

- Monitoring by the senior management team is not sufficient to ensure consistency in implementation of policies across the school. (Paragraphs: 81, 156)
- The school development plan does not identify the major whole-school priorities and lacks a clear indication of how improvement is to be achieved. (Paragraphs: 84, 156)
- The curriculum for Year 12 is proving too onerous for some students. (Paragraph: 46)
- Reports to parents are unsatisfactory. (Paragraphs: 75, 128, 156)
- There are weaknesses in teaching and learning in psychology in the sixth form (Paragraphs: 10, 194-196)
- Students do not all experience a daily act of collective worship. (Paragraphs: 56, 82)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	189
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	35	41	16	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	826	241
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	16	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	175	175

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	170	170	165
	Total	170	170	165
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (99)	97 (99)	94 (97)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (83)	89 (97)	68 (70)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	175	175	175
	Total	175	175	175
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (97)	87 (95)	84 (86)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	158	158

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	154	156	158
	Total	154	156	158
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	97 (97)	99 (99)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	61.4 (60.9)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	117	117

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	N/A	25.5	25.5 (24.1)	N/A	6.0	6.0 (6.5)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	3
Indian	11
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1010
Any other minority ethnic group	12

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	331.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.9
Key Stage 4	21.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2 623 269
Total expenditure	2 685 505
Expenditure per pupil	2 526
Balance brought forward from previous year	42 220
Balance carried forward to next year	(20 016)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1067
Number of questionnaires returned	555

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	50	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	47	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	50	4	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	56	14	3	2
The teaching is good.	35	57	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	54	19	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	48	7	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	23	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	51	19	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	41	49	3	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	47	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	37	3	1	3

Other issues raised by parents

The inspection team received 80 comments or letters along with the parents' questionnaire responses. Many parents, while generally pleased with the school, had some suggestions or criticisms which they wished to make known. Most of these comments are valuable to the school in monitoring and assessing its work. The inspection team judges that there are, in fact, good opportunities for communication between the school and parents. Nevertheless, there is a need to work to improve the perceptions of parents so that they all feel suitably consulted and involved and so that their suggestions can be taken into account by the school.

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

ENGLISH

92. The 2000 National Curriculum tests for students at the age of 14 showed that average points scores and the proportions of students gaining levels 5 and 6 were well above national averages, but very low compared with the results achieved by students in grammar schools. Results in English were similar to those in science and mathematics. Over the last four years test results have been inconsistent but there is an upward trend, which matches the national improvement in English results. There is, however, a need to ensure that students are appropriately prepared and gain the best possible results in these tests. In the 2000 GCSE examinations for English and English literature students gained very high results compared with national averages, both in the numbers of students gaining grades A* to C and in students' average points score. In comparison with grammar schools, the proportions of students gaining the highest grades A and A* were well above average in English and average in English literature. Students gained better results in English than they did, on average, in their other subjects. GCE A-level results for 2000 in English literature and English language were well above average compared with all schools nationally and above average for grammar schools.

93. In work seen during the inspection standards are well above average in Years 7 to 9 and higher than those indicated by recent test results. Standards are very high in Years 10 and 11 and well above average in the sixth form. By the time they reach the age of 14 students are competent speakers with a good range of vocabulary and expression. Discussing the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Year 9 students were able to describe precisely how she manages to change his mind about killing the king. Reading skills are well advanced. Students read a wide range of fiction both in and out of school and make much use of the school library. They are able to collect data from a range of reference sources, including the Internet. Writing is accurate, well structured and shows good control of language, as seen in responses to the essay titled, 'Old People are Boring! Discuss.' Students at the age of 16 deliver oral presentations confidently. When four Year 10 students talked to the rest of the class about their thoughts on Tamtakula Afrika's poem, 'Nothing's Changed', they conveyed their ideas clearly and responded well to questions from other students. Reading skills are refined to include effective skimming of texts for information and detailed analysis of language and structure to detect writers' subtler messages, as seen when Year 11 students closely examined sections from Mildred Taylor's novel, 'Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry', for evidence of racial bigotry. All students are competent in their use of ICT as part of the drafting and re-drafting process for preparing and presenting their work. Students write at length with a clear sense of audience and good control of language, very evident when they wrote letters as Scout Finch's schoolteacher from Harper Lee's novel, 'To Kill a Mockingbird', in which they managed to capture convincingly a tone very appropriate to the character. By the end of the sixth form, students are mature and effective speakers. Though confidence varies, all students are composed when speaking and express complex ideas and thoughts with good choice of language and appropriate expression, as seen when Year 13 students talked about poetry issues arising from their reading of Louis MacNeice's poem, 'Prayer Before Birth'. Analytical reading, whether to explore writers' techniques in literature or to see how language texts work, is rigorous and backed by very good background knowledge. Students' note making is thorough and methodical and there are good examples of independent approaches to format and organisation. Essays are carefully researched and display a clear line of argument, with very good examples seen in the responses to Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Personal writing and the accompanying commentaries are also of a consistently high standard.

94. Students come into the school with levels of attainment that are well above average. They continue to work hard to maintain this high standard until they reach the end of Year 9 where they achieve better standards than might be expected, given their attainment on entry. Recent National Curriculum test results do not accurately reflect the standards and achievement at this stage. Students with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and those for whom English is as an additional language all make good progress. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good and students' standards of work at the age of sixteen show significant gains on levels seen when they entered Year 10. This very good progress is maintained in the sixth form and once again levels of attainment at the end of Year 13 show significant advances on those with which students entered the sixth form. This very good achievement by students is the result of good teaching and students' very positive attitudes to work.

95. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 students build on good teaching with very high levels of commitment and independence to learn very effectively and, by the end of Year 11, they achieve very well. In the sixth form teaching and learning are very good. Of lessons observed all were at least satisfactory, nearly three out of five were good and one in four was very good. All teachers in the department have good subject knowledge and work very hard to give pupils lessons that have a brisk pace and offer real challenge. Qualities of the best teaching include planning which enables students to take responsibility and become fully involved in organising aspects of their learning. A good example was seen when groups of Year 10 students responded very positively to being asked to prepare notes on different chapters of a novel for the rest of the class. The best teaching makes very good use of students' high levels of commitment and resourcefulness. Relationships with students are usually very good and particularly so in GCSE and sixth form teaching, where teachers give very valuable support to students' learning outside the classroom. Where teaching is not quite so successful, there are weaknesses in lesson planning. Additional burdens are placed on individual teachers because agreed, balanced and progressive programmes of study for pupils in each of Years 7 to 9 do not yet support their teaching. In planning each lesson, teachers do not always focus clearly on the key learning steps that pupils need to make and, as a result, lesson objectives remain unclear and students do not then make the best possible progress. Just occasionally teachers allow the behaviour of livelier students in Years 9 and 10 to fall unacceptably below the normal very high standards. In the sixth form, students and teacher usually work together around a table in a relaxed atmosphere and this absence of formality has a positive impact on the pace of learning as students feel able to offer ideas and ask questions in a very supportive learning environment.

96. The department is well led and management is satisfactory. Teachers work well together, sharing common ideals. Work on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is a very strong feature. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. GCSE and A-level results have improved. Teaching remains good in Years 7 to 11 but is now very good in the sixth form. However further work needs to be done on introducing better assessment and monitoring procedures across the department to track students' progress and identify those who may be underachieving. The use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in marking could be more effective here. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements although the allocation of teaching time in Years 8 and 9 falls significantly below national average levels, which limits the time available for ensuring that students attain the best possible levels in the National Curriculum tests. Extra-curricular activities, including a literary magazine, debates and public speaking help to enrich the curriculum. The department can build on its good teaching by focusing, through in-service training and shared best practice, on ways to increase the proportion of very good teaching.

Literacy across the curriculum

97. Across the school levels of literacy are very high. Reading skills are well refined and thus students have no problem in meeting the reading demands in all subject areas. Writing too is of a very high standard with levels of accuracy, vocabulary and range of expression all well above average. There is no whole school literacy policy at present, although the school is moving towards having one in the near future. Despite the absence of a coherent policy there are many examples of good practice in the teaching of literacy across most subjects. There is a good range of opportunities for writing in modern foreign languages, geography, art and design, history and design and technology. Support for using technical vocabulary is evident in modern foreign languages, history, geography, physical education, design and technology and, to a lesser extent, in business studies. However, occasionally teachers do not sufficiently emphasise the words they use and misunderstandings then arise.

MATHEMATICS

98. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests the proportions of students attaining level 5 and above was very high in comparison with the national average and the proportions achieving level 6 and above were well above the national average. The average National Curriculum points score in 2000 was well above the national average for all schools. When compared with other grammar schools, the National Curriculum average points score was far below average. The results in mathematics were in line with those in English and science. There is a steady trend in results at this stage, broadly in line with the national trend after a sharp increase in 1998.

99. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C and the average points score were both very high compared with the national average. The proportion achieving grades A* and A was average compared with other grammar schools. Results have been improving faster than the national trend. Students achieved results in mathematics that were significantly better than the average across all the subjects they studied.

100. Results attained in mathematics at GCE A-level in 2000 were well above the national average. The proportion of students achieving A and B grades was above average. There is an improving trend over the past four years. All students who were entered gained passes at grades A to E.

101. At the age of 14, students are achieving standards well above the levels expected of 14 year olds nationally. In the early years, students tackle quite complex problems. They find algebraic rules to describe patterns, for example, in an investigation into the arrangement of matchsticks. Lower attaining students solve simple simultaneous equations by elimination, while higher attainers progress to solving complex inequalities. They use ICT effectively when investigating solutions of quadratic equations by trial and improvement. Students were very successful in calculating the volume of prisms. They understood how to calculate the area and had good recall of areas of triangles, trapeziums and circles and of compound shapes. Students have a good understanding of correlation and the higher attaining students draw in the line of best fit.

102. At the age of 16, evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students are achieving standards far above the levels expected of students of the same age. In completing investigations, higher attaining students are beginning to develop very good techniques when applying rules to numbers. Students use mathematical language and symbols effectively. They give detailed justification and proofs for their solutions. Lower attaining students have a good understanding of mathematical notation and use it correctly in problems. Others can solve demanding simultaneous equations. Higher attaining students carry out excellent work

when calculating resultant forces using vectors. They apply the rules of trigonometry accurately to calculate the magnitude and direction of the resultant forces. In data handling, students calculate standard deviation in order to compare distributions. They calculate conditional probabilities of dependent events using the appropriate notation.

103. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that students in Years 12 and 13 are now achieving standards that are far above course expectations. The results in the modular examinations and work seen during the inspection week indicate an improving trend. In lessons generally there are high levels of expectation and achievement illustrated by very effective use of challenging questions. Students are encouraged to think about answers and thus they develop very good skills of analysis. This was evident in pure mathematics when using iterative methods to find approximate solutions of equations. They have a good understanding of the conditions for convergence. In mechanics, teachers pose challenging questions to deepen students' understanding and improve their technique in solving problems. Students can apply moments of a force about a point and progress to solving problems involving laminas on slopes. In statistics, students represent data very well. For example, when investigating frequency polygons, they construct good, clear and accurate frequency diagrams. From these they are able to estimate the mean and interpret the interquartile range. Understanding of correlation is very good. Students use the product-moment correlation coefficient accurately to make judgements on the degree of scatter.

104. Overall, students' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11 and in Years 12 and 13. Students achieve well in mathematics in the school overall. The shortage of curriculum time for the subject in Years 8 and 9 limits the depth of coverage of the National Curriculum and has an effect on the number of students achieving the highest National Curriculum levels. Students concentrate very well in lessons and their behaviour is very good. This has a positive effect on their learning and eventual achievement.

105. The overall quality of teaching is good in Year 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11 resulting in good learning. It is very good in Years 12 and 13 leading to very good learning. There is a high proportion of very good lessons and there are examples of excellent teaching. Overall teaching is good and it is never less than satisfactory. There are many very good features of the teaching and teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics in Years 7 to 11. It is very good in Years 12 to 13. This is illustrated by very clear explanation of tasks and the confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms. This promotes respect from the students. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is very good and there is appropriate use of ICT. Teachers plan lessons well. There are clear learning objectives providing the basis for an effective structure to the lesson. Teachers generally set a brisk pace that motivates students and sustains their interest. Students concentrate very well and work at a good pace so that they quickly acquire new skills and understanding. Teachers generally assess students' understanding very effectively. Teachers' expectations are high, for example, in investigations where they set difficult problems that challenge students to use their knowledge of powers of numbers. In other lessons, teachers expect students to use the mathematical terminology correctly. Teaching methods are generally good. Teachers use an effective combination of explanation, discussion, and individual work. In the better lessons, there are good introductory and final whole-class sessions that consolidate understanding. The management of students is very good and, as a result, students' behaviour is very good enabling them to make the best progress in the better lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and are polite and courteous. The very good relationship between teachers and students promotes a good working atmosphere in the classroom. Consequently, students are keen to progress and they make gains in understanding and experiencing new mathematics. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, make good progress alongside others in their groups.

Teachers plan homework well so that it consolidates and extends learning. Marking is thorough and teachers write constructive comments that help students to see where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

106. The subject is very well managed and the quality of leadership is very good. Leadership by the team leader and deputy ensures clear educational direction. Examination results are rising. Teachers are well qualified in mathematics and work very well together. The whole department places a high emphasis on raising achievement in mathematics. There are good schemes of work that guide teachers effectively through the National Curriculum and in A-level work. There is, however, no department handbook. This needs to be developed so that it provides teachers with comprehensive support. Students' work is regularly assessed and there is very good monitoring and evaluation of their performance in mathematics as they progress through the school. Examination results are thoroughly analysed and effective action is planned to improve standards. Effective use is made of ICT to analyse and present results. The procedures for assessing students' attainment are very good with regular tests. The subject provides very good support to students and students generally have a good understanding of their level of achievement in Years 10 to 11 and in the sixth form. However, in Years 7 to 9, students are not always aware of their National Curriculum levels in relation to their work. The department uses assessments effectively to guide planning when reviewing the schemes of work and setting students in groups. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance are very good and the observation, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject are good. All teachers are eager to play a full part in moving the department forward. For example, teachers have introduced the 'Probability Fair' where students in Year 8 organise, create and present probability games during the lunchtime. A proportion of Year 7 students are invited to take part and then these students have the responsibility of feeding back their findings to their groups. The recent fair was very well attended by both students and teachers. There are very good displays around the classrooms of students' achievements and this provides stimulation in mathematics.

107. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, resulting in better achievement by students at all stages.

Numeracy across the curriculum

108. Levels of numeracy across the curriculum are very high. There is a provisional whole school strategy in place and this is being developed and improved so that it can be used to develop and co-ordinate numeracy across the whole school. Students demonstrate very high skills in numeracy in science and make good use of the skills they learn in mathematics. For example, there is very good application of graphical representation to display results. Students use and develop their problem-solving skills in coursework for GCSE and their algebraic skills when calculating equations of speed and density. Examples of numeracy were seen in physical education when students in Year 13 were exploring the variation in the volume of oxygen consumed. They understood the equation and how to make calculations. In geography, many examples were seen of data collection from fieldwork evidence, for example, surveys and stream profiles. Data is analysed statistically to make and test hypotheses and it is represented in a variety of forms. In design and technology, students measure accurately and to a high degree of accuracy. In control technology, students convert numbers between binary and decimal systems. In business education, students use their numeracy skills to support their understanding of the use of inflation as an economic indicator.

SCIENCE

109. In the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2000, the percentages of students reaching at least level 5 and at least level 6 were both well above average for all schools nationally. The average points score was also well above the national average. Test results were very low compared with the average for grammar schools. The overall performance in national tests has changed little in the last three years but the proportion of those reaching very high levels has risen. Overall attainment in GCSE examinations is very high in double award science and in biology, chemistry and physics. In comparison with other grammar schools, the proportion of students gaining grades A and A* is above average in biology but slightly below average in chemistry and physics. Comparison of GCSE results in science with those in other subjects is complex because of the variety of science courses followed. Standards in all GCSE science examinations have risen steadily over the last three years. GCE A-level results in 2000 were very high in biology, well above average in chemistry and average in physics. Results in A-level examinations have also improved steadily over the last three years.

110. Work seen during the inspection confirms that attainment at the age of 14 is well above national expectations. In Years 7 to 9, all students acquire knowledge, understanding and skills equally well across all four attainment targets. By the age of 14, students can competently carry out experiments, although students with relatively low attainment find difficulty in drawing conclusions from their results and show more limited understanding of key concepts. Standards of literacy and numeracy are universally high and all students have a secure knowledge of scientific vocabulary. Students working at the highest levels of attainment show good understanding of, for example, chemical equations and the process of photosynthesis. They confidently carry out calculations on speed and pressure, some from Year 8 onwards.

111. At the age of 16, students' attainment in lessons and in their written work is very high compared with standards expected nationally. There is some exceptional work in experimental and investigative science in which students carry out investigations with flair and produce coherent, immaculately presented accounts written in excellent English. In other attainment targets, higher attaining students understand, for example, the concept of empirical chemical formulae and have a secure working knowledge of the structure of the periodic table. As in earlier years, students with lower attainment show less detailed understanding but almost all acquire knowledge and skills at least in line with national expectations.

112. Students in the current sixth form reach standards that are well above expectations in biology, chemistry and physics. Attainment in physics, which had lagged behind the other two subjects, is rising quickly. Two-thirds of students entered in January 2001 for the first module tests of the new A/S syllabus in physics reached grade A. Work in all three subjects is characterised by further development of students' already competent skills in experimental science and very high standards of literacy and numeracy, all of which make a large contribution to their acquisition of knowledge and understanding.

113. The achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, is satisfactory at the age of 14, good at the age of 16 and very good in the sixth form. Students arrive in the school at the age of 11 with well above average attainment and, in recent years, have made expected progress through Years 7 to 9 and achieved appropriate results in national tests. However, in the current Year 9, there are now more students achieving the higher levels. All students make good progress in Years 10 and 11, irrespective of whether they are following double or triple science courses. More students achieve higher grades in GCSE examinations than is predicted from their test results at the age of 14. In the sixth form, recent GCE A-level results show students achieving grades in biology and chemistry substantially above those predicted and recent

performance in A/S physics shows that students are making better progress in this subject than in recent years.

114. Teaching and learning are good overall. Almost four lessons out of five were judged to be good or better and more than one-third of all lessons were very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and all the satisfactory teaching was in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have high expectations of their students in almost all lessons. Learning is very good when lessons begin with challenging questions to establish baseline knowledge and continue with well-structured activities that develop understanding. For example, students in Year 11 developed good understanding of solubility curves in a well-constructed lesson that had a good mix of theory and practical work. Lesson planning and preparation are uniformly good and a wide range of different teaching methods is used. Students in Year 8 made good progress in developing their understanding of rock structures after examining local structures in a walk around town, followed by a laboratory lesson in which findings were discussed. The follow-up activity for pupils to use their new knowledge to identify rock types in a range of samples was very effective in securing further understanding. Good use is made of short project work such as "Science Challenge" in Year 7. Carefully chosen questions effectively prompted students to apply their knowledge of the particle structure of matter to try to explain why some methods of cooling a drink were more effective than others.

115. Teachers use knowledge of students' prior attainment very effectively to modify the grouping of students within lessons. Groupings are determined very thoughtfully by the needs of specific lessons and are used to benefit all students, particularly those with special educational needs. Students make a very significant contribution to their own learning. They enjoy science and the challenges it brings and show very mature attitudes to their learning. The interest shown in science is reflected in the progressively increasing numbers studying science subjects in the sixth form. Students of all ages are adept at using external resources such as the library in school and the Internet in school or at home. The very good relationships that exist between teachers and students generate, in many lessons, an atmosphere in which the development of students as independent learners is carefully nurtured. The involvement of students in assessment and evaluation of their own work also has a very positive impact on their learning. The setting of their own targets, which they then have to justify and review at regular intervals, is a very positive influence in the drive towards raising standards.

116. In a few lessons judged to be satisfactory in most respects, some aspects of teaching fell a little way short of the standards described above. A few lessons lacked shape because questioning was not always used effectively at the start of a lesson to check students' baseline knowledge and understanding, nor at the end to establish gains in learning. Sometimes, this was because the amount of work to be covered was too large. Work is marked regularly and there are many helpful comments giving encouragement and praise where it is due. There are some inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers make comments to help students improve their work.

117. Leadership and management in the department are very good. The head of science, who has been in post since September 2000, has a clear understanding of how to take the department forward in the future. Administrative systems are well-documented and clear policies are followed by all staff. Assessment and its use are a very substantial strength. Results of tests and examinations are thoroughly analysed and the information obtained acted on in a variety of ways, for example to determine the grouping of students within classes. The teaching programme for Years 7 to 9 is being revised with the aim of raising standards by including more stimulating material, particularly for students with very high attainment.

118. The curriculum is well constructed and, within it, there are good opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development. The freedom of choice students have in choosing double or triple science course in Years 10 and 11 has substantial benefits for motivation. Extra-curricular activities, such as the Year 7 Science Quiz, the chemistry club and the sixth form mentoring of students in Year 9 all promote additional interest in and enthusiasm for science as well as helping to raise awareness and standards. Good use is made of ICT. For example, the use of a colour mixing simulation in Year 9 enabled students to investigate the effect of filters on light with a clarity that would have been unachievable in the laboratory. Staff development is clearly linked to teaching programmes. The monitoring of teachers' marking and classroom performance has been in place for some time and is having a good impact on performance by allowing teachers to share good practice and identify strengths and weaknesses.

119. Learning resources, including books and equipment, are good and very well-managed by the hard-working technical staff. The laboratories, which are heavily used due to rising numbers in the sixth form, are well-furnished and provide an attractive environment for teaching and learning. The appearance of the department is particularly enhanced by striking murals on the walls of the main corridors, designed and executed by several students.

120. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection and all the weaknesses identified in the last report have been overcome. Standards have risen significantly and the quality of teaching is much higher. Good use is being made of ICT and this continues to develop. Assessment and its use, considered weak at the time of the previous inspection, are now a significant strength.

ART AND DESIGN

121. Over the period 1998-2000 the proportion of students gaining grades in the range A* to C in GCSE examinations was very high compared with all schools and above the national average for grammar schools. During the past three years a larger proportion of the cohort have taken the subject than might normally be expected nationally and of these half have achieved the higher A* and A grades. This proportion of high grades is above the average for grammar schools. Students' performance in the subject in 2000 was below average when compared with their other school subjects.

122. In the sixth form, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B in the GCE A-level examination in 2000 was well above the national average with numbers taking the subject more than doubling over the three-year period to 2000.

123. By the age of 14, students' attainment is above average overall. Students achieve well. They have above average standards in drawing from observation and very good understanding of technical skills. They quickly make links between artists' work and their own studies. They can abstract ideas and develop processes but, instead of creating a pastiche of the original, use the source to create new but related ideas. This was apparent as Year 9 students studied Islamic pattern, interrogated their teacher about his experiences of living in Tehran and used a range of techniques such as hand-made paper to create rich pattern and surface texture.

124. By the age of 16, students' attainment is well above average. Talented students achieve particularly well having benefited from summer school art experiences. The highest standards are achieved by girls who combine sensitivity for surface decoration with clear understanding of materials and techniques. They also have an ability to form links with an artist's work as well as to find inspiration in the natural or man-made world. All students are largely working independently and their workbooks clearly reflect both logical thought and risks taken when trying to solve problems. Quality photography, very good use of the Internet for research purposes and of computers for scanning and multi-layering images all add to the richness of the work seen and in turn the standards achieved.

125. By the age of 18, students' attainment is often exceptional. Students are visually literate and able to reflect on processes covered. They are able to express both their internal aesthetic struggles as well as the technical successes and problems encountered. Current students' work is highly individual and expressive of personal interests and experiences. One student's miniature studies in blue delight the eye as well as involving other senses such as touch. Students' personal studies embrace both the past and present world of art. They use computers well. At least one student has benefited from work experience in a graphics design office and this has positively affected her future career aspirations. Internet facilities are used frequently and compliment the available library resources.

126. Students enter the school with a wide range of art experiences but generally with below average skill development particularly in painting. They achieve well in the lower school, although the carousel arrangement with music does lead to a fragmented experience and slows progress in each individual area such as ceramics or print-making. Their literacy needs are not always as well-considered as they might be, with teachers occasionally presuming that students do not need a visual reference when meeting a new technical word, as a result Cezanne became Suzanne for one Year 7 student. By the age of 16, with more time to develop particular interests, students' achievements are very good and this continues to the age of 18 for those students pursuing the course into the sixth form. The older students work from their strengths and benefit from the team teaching approach developed in this department. Students with special educational needs progress well throughout the school because teachers work closely with learning assistants and tasks and equipment are adapted for each individual student's needs. Ethnic minority students achieve as well as their peers. In one Year 10 class, an ethnic minority student showed very good knowledge and understanding and well above average verbal communication skills as she explained to the class the choices she had made in developing her work. The gifted and talented achieve very well within art and design.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is always at least good and, in over three-quarters of lessons seen, very good or excellent. As a result students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good in the main school and excellent in the

sixth form. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of specific art and design areas such as ceramics, print-making and art historical sources. They act as very good role models for their students. One teacher who has herself enrolled in the new A/S photography course understands the developmental process her students are going through. The students appreciate her empathetic understanding of their needs. Teachers work very well as a team, by supporting one another in their professional development and inspiring their students with a love for the subject. Their first hand experiences of such places as America, Tehran and Ireland enrich students' multicultural experience. Students enjoy art and design and many drop in, outside lesson times, seeking advice or a space to work. Teachers are very generous with their time and try to provide the best possible resources; as a result the numbers opting for the subject at examination level are increasing. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience is excellent. Lack of a technician and limited accommodation puts undue strain on teachers and pupils. It is very difficult to maintain a ceramics studio, extend the scale of work undertaken to meet the raised expectations of students and run an art and design department with no extra help and cramped working conditions. The sixth form has no dedicated space for working and storage for the volume of work produced is a real problem.

128. The leadership and management of this subject are very good. There is a vision and commitment, which has raised standards as well as the popularity of the subject in recent years. Very good progress has been made with those issues raised by the previous inspection report and both teaching and examination results have improved since that time. The use of National Curriculum levels has yet to be implemented. There is a recognised need to improve reports to parents. In Years 7 to 9 the time for the subject is less than might normally be expected, as a result of the carousel arrangement. Accommodation is inadequate for present needs and consumable resources are low.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

129. The proportion of students attaining A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2000 was very high compared with the national average for all schools. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A and A* was broadly average for grammar schools. Results have fluctuated slightly over the past four years. When compared with other subjects in school, students' results in design and technology are among the highest. Students have only been entered for GCE A-Level in design and technology in the last two years. In that time, the number of students gaining grades A and B has doubled. The average points score is now very high compared with the national average, entry numbers have trebled and the results are now among the best for subjects in this school.

130. Students' attainment in design and technology at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. The results of teachers' assessments show that, in this school, 91 per cent of students attain level 5 and beyond. This proportion is nearly 20 per cent higher than the average for all schools nationally. In students' files of work and in lessons seen during the inspection, standards are very high in both designing and making and confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Students research thoroughly, show inventiveness in creating things and skill in making them. By the time they are 14, students have gained knowledge about materials and how they are made and used. They have gained skills in cutting, manipulating and joining on in practical tasks and an understanding of the design process. For example, students in Year 9 often examine items that are sold commercially. They determine faults in design and manufacture and improve the product using ingenuity. Projects about air line foods, bags, containers and packaging and fabric books for pre-school age children have all brought about high quality work. Students have freedom to decide what to make, which allows those who are gifted the scope to show their talents and provides opportunities for all to be creative. Portfolios contain many, high quality pages on research,

original and final ideas, product development and detailed analysis of the work as a whole. Numeracy features strongly in many projects, as students mark and measure carefully, calculate costs and use computer spreadsheets for comparisons. Students usually like what they have created, although they are very self-critical in evaluating their work against the initial set brief.

131. Work seen during the inspection shows that, by the time they are 16, the attainment of students is very high compared with that expected for students of the same age nationally. Students' capability in practical and theory work is of a very high standard. Students use hand and power tools confidently, are meticulously careful in measuring and calculating, spot errors easily and rectify their mistakes with the minimum of adult suggestion. Their portfolio work is usually very attractively presented, often with finely drawn illustrations and computer-generated pages. Students, especially the highest attaining ones, use ICT effectively. Skills in word processing, desktop publishing, use of graph-making packages and the Internet are high. Literacy is well developed as students write their own specifications and have to justify their decisions to the teacher in oral sessions. Currently, in Year 11, students are designing promotional packaging, creating healthy diet foods, devising electronic systems and casings and making clothes for theatre productions. In most instances, students have disassembled existing artefacts and created a range of worthwhile and innovative products.

132. Standards are very high in all aspects of work in the sixth form. Students spend much time gaining knowledge and understanding in the subject and their main theory core work and accompanying files are of very good quality. They undertake research, identify gaps in the market, sample and test prototypes at all stages of development. Portfolio work is very well presented and annotated. As part of evaluation, and in order to maintain high literacy standards, students assess their own work against existing products, defend their decisions and explain their intentions to groups of their peers.

133. As they start school in Year 7, students' literacy and numeracy levels are well above average, but their knowledge, understanding and skills in design and technology are low. Students have done simple stitches, made small buns and cakes and built models from recycled media, but have had few, if any, opportunities to work on designing to order and using a more durable range of materials and tools. Their achievement by the end of Year 9 is very high as they have had to work extremely hard to acquire the skills in working with a wider range of equipment on increasingly complex designing and making tasks. Achievement is particularly high in systems and control and electronics as few students experience these aspects before entering this school. Achievement by end of Years 11 and 13 is also very high, as students use their understanding and skills in practical and theory work and bring the necessary critical, organisational and analytical skills to sophisticated projects. Students with special educational needs make good progress in the subject because, where necessary, they are closely overseen by support assistants when doing practical work. Students who speak English as an additional language are not disadvantaged in the subject as much of it is of a practical nature. Students who are gifted and talented make very good progress as the carefully written tasks can be interpreted in ways that allow students to show and use their advanced thinking skills.

134. The quality of both teaching and learning is very good. In the lessons observed during the inspection, half were either excellent or very good and none were unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good technical knowledge and practical skills and ensure these are passed on to students. Students learn by hearing correct information, listen and watch attentively and enjoy seeing demonstrations. Planning is very good. Teachers use the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and devise interesting tasks that will not only interest and motivate the students, but also challenge them and allow them to achieve highly. Lessons usually proceed as originally planned, but teachers are alert to the response that

students make, use questions and answers effectively and appropriately alter the direction of the lesson if it is beneficial. Students have good attitudes to the subject, they behave very well and therefore all can concentrate and obtain the help they need without interruptions. Teachers ensure that students set themselves appropriately demanding work and the one-to-one help ensures that potential is reached. Teachers intervene at opportune times, make suggestions, show students what to do and give appraisal. Their marking of classwork and homework clearly indicates to students how well they have done and where additions or corrections are needed. A few less confident students benefit particularly from close supervision, as they occasionally need reassurance and persuasion to try things out. The more capable students help each other, showing sensitivity and maturity.

135. Leadership is strong. The department works as an efficient team and members enjoy the support of a skilled technician. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection. In addition to overcoming the weaknesses identified in the last report, the department has made other significant changes. There is a new scheme of work that has helped to raise standards throughout the school and a wide range of examination courses is now available. All students have revision sessions and course booklets to reinforce their learning. Marking, assessment, target setting and student profiling have been successfully introduced. New teachers have been appointed and the teaching quality has improved. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory as one workshop is in a temporary building at some distance from the other workrooms, and both the design room and the adjoining practical area are too small for the group sizes in Years 7 to 9. The allocation of funds for resources is meagre. It has to be used for replacements and repairs and does not allow for additions. There is a shortage of CAD/CAM equipment that restricts the breadth of curriculum for students in and beyond Year 10 and there are too few modern computers to support students' research and presentation.

GEOGRAPHY

136. In GCSE examinations in geography in 2000, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was very high compared with the national average for all schools. Almost half the students gained grades A or A*. Results in GCSE examinations have risen steadily since 1998. This trend is in line with, though at a higher level than, the national trend. In GCE A-level examinations, results have been above national averages for the past three years but they have fluctuated, with a significant drop in performance in 1999. Overall, however, results have risen from 1998, when 88 per cent of students achieved a pass grade, to 2000 when all students did so. The number of students gaining the highest grades A and B also rose significantly during the same period. At all stages, the attainment of students in examinations matches that of students in other grammar schools. Students gain results in geography, in both GCSE and A-level examinations, that are broadly average in relation to all subjects in this school.

137. In evidence gathered during the inspection, students' attainment at the age of 14 is better than expected for students of the same age nationally. Assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9 indicate that all students are reaching National Curriculum level 5 or above and a few are reaching levels 7 or 8. Students' attainment at the age of 16 is much higher than expected for students of the same age. In the current Years 12 and 13, standards are well above those expected for students following A/S and A level courses

138. Students of all ages have a good knowledge of the elements of geography they study and they use this knowledge well to explain why things happen, to test hypotheses and to give reasons for their decisions. In this respect their skills are well in advance of those expected of students of the same age nationally. For example, students in a Year 7 group showed good understanding of the issues involved in a planning application for a new retail park and others indicated a clear understanding of how and why patterns of shopping change. Students in Year 8 recall the features of tropical forests and learn how Brazil is trying to preserve the forests through promoting tourism. In Years 7 to 9 students' written work shows a good understanding of topics such as migration and urban hierarchies and they have a good knowledge of geographical vocabulary, which they use effectively. In Years 10 and 11 students have a good understanding of locational factors and the way these change over time. They investigate well how tourism brings changes to human lifestyles in Kenya and demonstrate an understanding of more difficult ideas, including the 'multiplier effect', in their explanations. Students' fieldwork shows good attention to detail, good skills of data collection and good analytical skills. In the sixth form, students make good use of source material to answer external examination questions and exhibit very good understanding of geographic models.

139. Most students make good progress and achieve well by the age of 14 in relation to their attainment in geography on entry to the school. However, not as many students achieve level 7 as might be expected, given that students' general level of attainment when they come to the school is well above the national average. This weakness is overcome as students move through Years 10 and onwards and students achieve well at the ages of 16 and 18.

140. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall for students in all year groups. The quality of learning is, however, good. Students learn effectively and make good progress because most teachers are skilled at enabling students to learn for themselves through the use of appropriate resource material and simulation exercises such as the Year 7 'public meeting' to discuss the development of a retail park. Teachers encourage students to acquire the appropriate skills they should use in their work and develop techniques to make them reflect on what they are about to undertake. Students then apply their skills in other, less stimulating, lessons. Students also learn effectively because they are motivated, interested and industrious. Only very rarely are they not fully focused on the lesson. Most lessons are interesting and students clearly enjoy many of the tasks they are asked to undertake. Much work in lessons is reinforced by appropriate homework that consolidates and extends learning. Teaching approaches are often well planned; the lessons have good pace and instructions are clear. However, in the occasional lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, planning was weak and time was not well managed. In this lesson, the good learning skills that students had previously acquired enabled them to maintain satisfactory learning despite the weaknesses in teaching. Occasionally, in lessons that are broadly satisfactory, some of the tasks provided are mainly low level colouring and pasting. These activities do not provide sufficient challenge or encourage students to learn as quickly as they should.

141. The department responds well to the needs of students with special educational needs and these students make progress which matches that of others in their group. Care is taken to ensure that physical difficulties do not prevent students taking a full part in the

lesson and that large print materials are available for students with visual impairment. No students have learning difficulties but, where students are not achieving at the same rate as their colleagues, extra support is provided by teachers as they move round the class. Students who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress.

142. The subject makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Opportunities are built into schemes of work and full advantage is taken of topical issues, such as the current foot and mouth disease epidemic, to consider the social and moral issues that arise and to reflect on the feelings of those most closely affected. Social and moral issues are raised through fieldwork that investigates the development of brown field sites, studies of comparative economic prosperity in Italy and consideration of the implications for people affected by flooding or drought. Work on Kenya, Brazil and Japan enhances students' cultural development.

143. The department is effectively managed and learning and attainment are monitored on a regular basis. Insufficient use is made, however, of the levels of the National Curriculum in guiding and assessing the work of students in Years 7 to 9. There is a marking policy, followed by all humanities subjects, which ensures that work is regularly marked and that students are given an indication of the standards they are reaching through marks and grades rather than in terms of National Curriculum criteria. A comprehensive and varied programme of fieldwork for all year groups enhances learning and there is good use of the internet and the school's intranet for research and for the presentation of work, much of which incorporates good examples of numeracy. Students set their own targets for their future attainment but these targets are often not sufficiently challenging for students with levels of attainment that are well above average. Some lessons also lack challenge. Existing procedures to provide schemes of work to meet the new programmes of study of the National Curriculum are not satisfactory and there is no secure indication that students will fully complete all aspects of the requirements by the time they reach the end of Year 9. Development planning for the department remains short term and is still not sufficiently systematic. The current plan does not include the essential task of re-writing schemes of work to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum and does not incorporate appropriate strategies for raising standards.

144. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Results in external tests and examinations have improved, there is a firmer basis for development planning, fieldwork is well developed, the department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and satisfactory attention is now paid to mapping skills. Planning is still short term, academic targets are not challenging enough and criteria for assessment in Years 7 to 9 are still not sufficiently matched to the level descriptors of the National Curriculum.

HISTORY

145. In the GCSE history examinations in 2000, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was very high compared with the national average for all schools. This proportion had risen by five percentage points compared with the previous two years, to come close to the national average for grammar schools. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A* and A was above the average for grammar schools. Students did better in history than they did on average in their other subjects. In GCE A-level examinations, the results have fluctuated in recent years, rising above the national average for all schools in 1999, and then dropping below in 2000.

146. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 are well above those expected for students of the same age nationally. In their written work, Year 9 students show

imagination and historical accuracy in their reconstruction of life in the trenches during the Great War, and their essays on Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s are strong on historical analysis, reaching substantiated judgements. In a lesson on Nazi tactics for removing opponents, students demonstrated their ability to assimilate and analyse information from a range of historical sources to compare the methods used against internal and external rivals. Equally, in Years 7 and 8, students use historical evidence intelligently to reconstruct events. In one outstanding Year 7 lesson, students produced short plays on the Black Death, which showed thorough research and deep understanding of the effects of the tragedy on communities. Such opportunities for students to work independently and develop their ideas creatively are enabling them to achieve high standards of work. They give scope for gifted pupils to excel. An area where attainment is not as strong is in students' ability to analyse and explain different interpretations of people and events in history.

147. At the age of 16 standards are well above average. Students make good progress through Years 10 and 11, gain very good levels of knowledge and understanding and achieve well. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress in line with others in their groups. Students keep a detailed note record of topics studied and their essays are extremely well written, exploring effectively both the long and short term causes of events. Their coursework assignments on the history of medicine display the same attention to detail and a close analysis of the changing roles of women in the medical profession. Students' ability to evaluate historical evidence is also of a high order. In a stimulating discussion of the Cuban missile crisis, students were quick to assimilate the American and Russian views of events from the historical sources and analyse the attitudes portrayed in them. Thorough revision of knowledge at various stages in the course consolidates their understanding and they develop good examination techniques through regular practice of test questions.

148. At the age of 18 the standard of work seen was above average, resembling attainment achieved in 1999 rather than the lower standard of last year. Students keep excellent files of their work, showing detailed coverage of topics. Teachers structure their work well but there is a degree of over-reliance on teachers for information, and not enough note-taking from a range of texts and reference books, except in researching their personal study. Students achieve a good standard of analysis in their written work, as was evident in recent 'timed essays' on the extent of support for Mussolini, but they do not show sufficient evidence of wider reading, by making reference to the views of historians. Overall, their level of achievement is satisfactory, and improving as they start to focus on preparing for the examinations.

149. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. In three quarters of lessons, teaching and learning were good or better and, in the remainder, they were satisfactory. The teaching is consistently of a good standard in Key Stage 3, where teachers set challenging and creative tasks that allow students to exercise their intelligence and imagination. Very effective use is made of drama to gain deeper insights to historical events and this approach is very popular with students. Their enthusiasm for the subject is reflected in the increasing number of students choosing to study the subject for GCSE. Teachers know their subject well and have much expertise in preparing students for GCSE examinations. They direct their lessons purposefully, engaging students in discussion, and assessing students' work constructively, making it clear how they can improve. Sixth form teaching maintains the high level of academic challenge but is more directed by the teacher. The range of teaching methods is too limited and students are insufficiently involved in their own learning.

150. New leadership and effective teamwork have produced a big improvement in teaching and standards since the previous inspection. The monitoring and development of teaching

are proving effective. Teachers are using a greater variety of methods to challenge and enthuse their students. The one critical area for improvement is performance at A-level, where planning needs to be more rigorous to ensure success. Satisfactory procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are now in place in Years 7 to 9, but the assessment criteria of the National Curriculum still need to be made explicit for students. Changes to the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are being implemented in new schemes of work. They include the use of ICT, but its potential for pupils' independent learning in history has yet to be realised.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

151. Standards in ICT for students at the age of 14 are above average for students of the same age nationally. In 2000, on the basis of teacher assessments, more students were judged to be at level 6, which is above the national average, than at level 5. Standards for students at the age of 16 are average. Students do not have the opportunity to be entered for GCSE examinations in ICT. However, in 2000 several students voluntarily attempted, and successfully achieved, Key Skills level 2 in ICT. In the sixth form, students following the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in ICT at Grantham College are achieving standards that are above the standards expected nationally for students on this course.

152. Students display confidence and competence in the use of software. Most students make satisfactory progress and a few make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The main reasons why students' progress is restricted, especially in Years 10 and 11 where achievement is unsatisfactory, are the absence of a planned programme to develop students' ICT skills and the lack of timetabled opportunities to develop their ICT skills after Year 7. Many subjects effectively use ICT to support learning in their subjects but, in many cases, this use only reinforces and gives students practice in existing skills. Such use often does not adequately enable students to develop ICT skills as quickly as they could do. Those students who make good progress in developing their ICT skills are, in the main, self-taught and often have access at home to more modern and up-to-date computer facilities than those available in school. Good use is made of ICT to communicate information but the use of databases and spreadsheets is weak in Years 8 to 11. Students take advantage of accessing the Internet and use the school's computers to improve the presentation of their work. Most students are confident in using e-mail. The use of e-mails is not effectively monitored to ensure that the equipment is always used appropriately by students. There is good use of desktop publishing in religious education lessons. Several subjects encourage students to access the Internet for individual research and this method of obtaining information is used particularly effectively in this school. Students are keen and eager to develop their own knowledge. They make particularly good use of the Intranet in geography. Most other subject areas have yet to realise the potential for their subject in developing materials for the Intranet. Science teachers make a major contribution to developing students' skills in using ICT effectively. They enable students to use the Internet, desk-top publishing and along with modern foreign language teachers, they encourage them to use appropriate software to make professional presentations of their work.

153. Students enter the school with attainment in ICT that broadly matches the levels expected for students of that age. They make good progress in the ICT lessons in Year 7 but, after that, there are too few genuine opportunities for developing their skills. Overall, they make satisfactory progress and, by the age of 14, attain better standards than those expected nationally for students of the same age. This represents satisfactory achievement by students. However, during Years 10 and 11 the shortage of opportunities for systematic development of skills becomes even more significant and students under-achieve because standards in ICT at the age of 16 are only average for their age.

154. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are generally better in the sixth form than in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is good when students are presented with challenging tasks. When ICT is used within other subjects, teaching and learning are often good. Teachers who are confident in the use of ICT make effective use of computers to support learning in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and general studies. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Instructions for students are clear and lead students to meet the objectives set for the lesson. Teaching is less effective where the task selected does not extend students' capabilities. The pace of learning is sometimes restricted by the inordinate length of time it takes for web pages to be found on the Internet. The quality of students' learning is enhanced by the positive and confident way in which most students use ICT. They are not frightened to try different ways of presenting information and it is rare for students to need individual support from their teachers.

155. The school does not have sufficient computer equipment. The ratio of students to computers is nearly twice the national average. Accommodation for ICT is unsatisfactory. There is no equipped area within the school that has sufficient number of computers to allow individual use by students in a full teaching group. There are many computers in subject areas around the school but the analysis of usage shows that greater use is made of computers that are grouped together compared with the use made of individual machines in classrooms. ICT is taught as a separate subject for less than a term in Year 7. It is a weakness that further opportunities are not provided in other years to develop ICT skills.

156. An experienced member of staff manages the network, ably supported by a technician. Curriculum use is managed by the ICT co-ordinator and she has effectively mapped the uses that subjects can make of ICT to support learning in all year groups. There is, however, a weakness in the management and leadership of the subject. There is a shortage of clear leadership from the senior management team in identifying a clear, long-term development plan for ICT and in monitoring and ensuring that all teachers use ICT. The result is that not all students are receiving their full entitlement to ICT because such access is dependent upon the interest and commitment of every teacher and this is not consistent across the school. The quality of assessment of ICT is unsatisfactory. The ICT co-ordinator relies on the quality of teachers' assessment in determining the National Curriculum levels that students have reached by the age of 14. The quality of information is poor and the judgements made on students' levels of attainment are insecure. The school is failing to report students' progress in ICT for all year groups except for Year 9. Records of the levels at which pupils are working are not kept up to date and assessment information is not being shared among teachers in order to help planning and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can do. Information and communication technology usage is not consistent across all subjects. Science, mathematics, art, design and technology and geography make particularly good use of ICT but there is little use in history, music and physical education. Even within individual subjects, there is considerable variation in the use made by different teachers.

157. There has been satisfactory progress in ICT since the time of the previous inspection. In that inspection, standards of attainment in ICT were judged to be unsatisfactory for students at the age of 14 and low by the age of 16. There has been a significant improvement and standards are now above average by the age of 14 and average by the age of 16. Teachers' confidence in using ICT was low but, with the additional training that teachers have received since that time, the confidence of most, though not all, teachers in using ICT is now high. There were weaknesses in teaching all strands of the National Curriculum but this is no longer the case. Assessment arrangements remain unsatisfactory. Resources for ICT have improved significantly but they are still unsatisfactory for a school of this size.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

158. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the percentages of candidates achieving grades A* to C in French and German were very high compared with national averages. When the results are compared with those for all grammar schools, the proportion of students gaining grades A* and A was average in French but below average in German. In comparison with other subjects in the school, students gained above average results in French and average results in German. GCSE results were slightly better in French than German because there is a trend for students with skills in languages that are less well developed to choose German rather than French in Years 10 and 11. In the GCE A-level results in 2000, students' average points scores were average in French but below average in German.

159. Teacher assessments at age 14 indicate that students attain standards that are well above those expected for students of the same age nationally, with all students gaining level 4 or above. The work seen during the inspection confirms these very good standards. Students describe events in the past, present and future in speech and writing, with higher attaining students constructing their own sentences from memory, giving more detail and justifying their views. The majority of students have very good understanding of patterns in the languages, explain verb endings and agreements and apply them successfully. Overall, pronunciation and intonation are good because students have frequent exposure to excellent role models in their teachers. All students identify the main points and specific detail from short texts and extracts of speech at near normal speed, higher attainers requiring little repetition or guidance. They write short accounts and letters on a variety of topic areas, such as their home, school and family in the languages being learned, higher attaining students manipulating the languages successfully to meet their own needs.

160. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 16 in modern languages are well above the levels expected for students of the same age nationally. Students attain standards that are above national averages in all four skills and they achieve particularly well in listening and writing. Listening skills are very well developed; students respond with little hesitation to questions and instructions. Higher attainers respond in detail, drawing on vocabulary and structures from a variety of topic areas and adapting the languages to suit their own needs. All describe events in past, present and future tenses and express opinions on a variety of topics, such as future plans or past actions. Writing is well presented and usually accurate. Higher attaining students write and speak at length on a variety of topics and for a variety of audiences. They have a very good understanding of grammar and use it effectively to adapt the language to communicate their own ideas. All are efficient in using dictionaries or glossaries to find and check meaning. Higher and average attaining girls deduce the meaning of some unfamiliar language and report back what they have understood.

161. By the age of 18 students attain standards that are above those expected on A-level courses. Standards seen in the current Year 12 and 13 are higher than those indicated by last year's A-level results. Students understand and respond with little hesitation to instructions and questions in the languages being learned. They speak and respond spontaneously with a good degree of fluency and the majority with very good pronunciation and intonation. They command a good range of vocabulary and structures and have a very good understanding of grammar. They can understand, explain and use idiomatic phrases accurately and appropriately. They skim and scan texts from a variety of sources and report back on their findings. Students identify the main points and detail from extracts of speech at normal speed. They are given the opportunity to use ICT to extend their learning and they use dictionaries and reference materials effectively and efficiently. They have a very good understanding and grasp of grammar and apply rules successfully in their speech and writing. They write for a variety of audiences and purposes, both formal and informal, and have a good understanding of register. They debate contemporary issues, such as racism or the role of women, with understanding and with a good knowledge of appropriate terminology.

162. All students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well in relation to prior attainment and this is due to the consistently good quality of teaching together with the positive attitudes of students towards their learning.

163. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good for all age groups in the school. In more than 9 out of every 10 lessons, teaching was good or better and in almost half the lessons it was very good. Lessons are well planned with appropriate and well-sequenced activities enabling students to build successfully on previous learning. Very effective question and answer techniques enable students to contribute successfully to class oral work. Teachers make clear presentations using the overhead projector, notes and the board and, as a result, girls rapidly identify and apply patterns in the language for themselves. Good use is made of resources and a good variety of activities maintains interest and motivation. For example, the overhead projector is used to clarify meaning and games consolidate learning. In more effective lessons, students are given frequent opportunities to practise informally in pairs and rapidly increase in confidence and independence when they are asked to use the language to gather and give information in realistic situations. These opportunities are, however, sometimes missed. Teachers' subject knowledge is at least very good and often excellent. Lessons are conducted effectively, and often exclusively, in French or German, indicating teachers' high expectations. This is effective in reinforcing the languages and in developing students' listening and speaking skills. In many lessons, activities are organised to enable students to work independently at their own pace. For example students work individually developing listening skills using personal stereos or listening centres. In Year 13, students are given tasks to complete under examination conditions with strict deadlines and this is very effective in preparing them for A-level examinations. In Year 12, choral speaking is very effective in increasing students' confidence and competence in speaking and in applying patterns in the languages.

164. Students are very well behaved and display positive attitudes towards their learning. When asked to work together in pairs they do so sensibly, concentrate on tasks set and organise themselves well. They are keen to contribute to oral work and listen attentively. All students have very good relationships with each other and their teachers. Students in the sixth form are very well motivated and operate almost exclusively in the language they are studying. Work is very well presented with attention to accuracy and detail.

165. The department is committed to raising standards and analyses results effectively, identifying how they can be improved. The department makes a valuable contribution to students' moral, cultural and social development. It is fully involved in providing support and encouragement for students outside lessons, for example in offering extra classes for gifted

and talented linguists and to provide additional examination practice. Curriculum provision is very good with all students having the opportunity to study two languages throughout Years 8 to 11. Latin is taught in Year 7 in order to develop language awareness and introduce students to basic grammar. Exchange visits with France and Germany and attendance at sixth form conferences enhance the subject curriculum. All staff are appropriately qualified and well deployed. Resources and accommodation are very good; all specialist rooms are very well equipped.

166. The department has made very good progress since the previous report. Standards have improved. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now a high level of consistency across both languages. Assessment has been developed and is now used effectively to track progress. There is, however, still scope for more use of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 to assist in more detailed planning for the progress of groups of differing ability within teaching groups. The use of ICT is being developed successfully. Management of the subject is very good; teachers work very well together as a team so that policies are implemented consistently across the department.

MUSIC

167. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2000 was far above the average for all schools nationally. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A* and A was well above the average for grammar schools. Students gained better results in music than they did on average in their other subjects. Too few students studied the subject at GCE A-level to make reliable comparisons with national data but all seven students achieved a pass at grades A to E.

168. In work seen during the inspection, students are attaining standards that are at the level expected of 14 year olds nationally and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. They perform vocally and instrumentally, with an awareness of their own contribution such as taking the lead or providing the accompaniment. They use various musical devices in their compositions and analyse and compare features and devices within pieces of music using appropriate musical vocabulary.

169. In the work seen during the inspection, students are attaining standards above those expected of 16 year olds nationally. This represents a good level of achievement in relation to students' attainment in music on entry to the school but does not match the achievement in recent years, which was very good. The achievement of current groups has been adversely affected by staffing difficulties in the department but these problems have now been resolved. Students compose using a wide variety of forms and ideas and also use improvisation, using the common conventions and with implied cadential progression. In their analyses, they compare and contrast different examples of music, using both musical and descriptive language. They perform with confidence on their chosen instruments or with their voice, displaying both empathy and an awareness of the other performers.

170. GCE A/S and A level courses are offered in both traditional music and music technology. Students are attaining at an appropriate level for the courses and this represents a good level of achievement in relation to their attainment at the age of 16. Students can place music within its social, historical and geographical contexts. In this, they use a range of appropriate vocabulary to describe and expand their ideas. They recognise conventions used in composition and performance and can hypothesise and describe the effect of music on listeners and the intentions of the composer. Music technology students use the full range of ICT in their arrangements and compositions and can recreate the ideas of composers, refining and arranging to create the desired end result.

171. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in examination groups. This quality of teaching results in students' satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 and good achievement in other years. A feature of the teaching is that lessons have clear targets for attainment, behaviour and effort. These targets are demanding in what students have to learn and have a positive impact on the students' behaviour and attitudes. Students are well motivated and maintain high levels of concentration, enabling them to learn effectively and achieve well. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they make effective use of questioning to test students' understanding. This confident teaching results, notably in a Year 7 lesson, in students working efficiently both on their own and in groups. Teachers' planning and management of lessons enable students to work effectively at their own level. This ensures that students with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented all make progress which is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in other years. Teachers have positive relationships with students and this means that students become confident in their own ability, are able to discuss and answer with conviction, and take an active role in developing their learning. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students took a major role in organising and contributing to the lesson. All lessons end with a review of the work covered and, in a Year 11 lesson, this was used to revisit the work covered and set targets for homework that would reinforce and extend learning. The majority of lessons feature tasks to challenge all abilities, but where this does not feature, as in a Year 7 lesson, students' concentration lapses and they do not therefore make optimum progress. Teaching at all stages is making a positive contribution to the personal development of students and they are encouraged to appreciate the wonder of music and how it can be used to portray emotions. For many students, these experiences are enhanced through the good range of peripatetic lessons and extra-curricular activities offered by the department. Culturally, students are able to experience and appreciate, through performance and listening, a full range of European and World music.

172. There is sound leadership of the subject and an appropriate quality of learning opportunities for all students. However, the department does not effectively assess attainment at age 11, and data from assessment is not used to effectively track, monitor or set targets in Years 7 to 9. There is a strong commitment to improvement throughout the department and the recent improvement in staffing is now enabling students, irrespective of ability, to achieve well.

173. Overall the department has made satisfactory progress since the time of the previous inspection. However the discontinuity to study caused through the teaching of music within a rotation of the timetable in Key Stage 3 is still a weakness because there are long gaps when students do not have a chance to practise and reinforce the skills they have gained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

174. In GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A and A* was slightly below average for grammar schools. Students did not gain as good results in physical education as they did on average in their other subjects. These results are not as good as those for the previous year when the average points score was in line with the average across all subjects in the school. The fluctuating results over the last three years reflect the relative practical strengths of the different year groups. The department has taken steps to monitor more closely the borderline C/D candidates and seek ways to boost their practical performance grades. In the GCE A-level examination in 2000, there was only one candidate in physical education. In previous years, the number of students following A-level courses has been too small for meaningful comparison with national averages. A-level students are currently being taught off site within a partnership arrangement with the neighbouring college of further education.

175. In work seen in the inspection, by the age of 14 many students are attaining standards that are better than expected for their age. Standards are at least in line with nationally expected levels in a variety of games and gymnastics. In net games, students' performances exhibit a range of shots and skills but these are not always accompanied by technical accuracy when employed in the game situations. Knowledge and understanding of rules are well advanced. Performances in gymnastics exhibit a positive approach where students rise to the challenge of vaulting and are prepared to try new moves on apparatus. The majority of students recognise how to prepare for activity and some are able to lead groups of colleagues. Students' progress is good in Years 7 to 9 and they achieve better standards than might be expected in relation to their attainment when they enter the school.

176. Students' attainment at the age of 16 is generally well above the standards expected for their age in GCSE physical education and in netball, hockey and badminton. During the inspection, there were no lessons in the National Curriculum physical education course in Years 10 and 11 so it is not possible to make a judgement on standards in that course. Standards in the GCSE course are better than those indicated by last year's examination results and represent very good achievement for students following that course. Some individuals are performing at a very high level. Students' ability to evaluate their own and others' performance is a strong feature at this stage. A number of students make good use of this ability to coach younger students in dance, netball and gymnastics in extra-curricular time. Attainment in the A-level course is above the levels expected for students following this course.

177. Many students extend and refine their skills further in the extensive inter- and intra-school sports programme. The high level of students' involvement in this programme makes a significant contribution to the positive ethos of the school. A significant number of gifted and talented students make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment and achieve representative success at local, regional and national level in both team and individual activities. Team achievements in competition with other schools are particularly noteworthy in several sports.

178. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. They are integrated within the groups and participate in most games and in gymnastics where specific tasks with appropriate challenge are offered. Incidence of non-participation is minimal and where it exists students are involved in appropriate skill observation tasks.

179. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. In a significant number of lessons teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge

allied to accurate knowledge of their pupils enabling them to promote realistic expectations. This is helped by the policy of staying with one group through a number of activities. It enables both high and low attainers to be set appropriate targets in order to achieve their potential, particularly in games. Appropriate objectives, planned progressions at brisk pace and sensitive challenge are evident in the very good teaching. However, assessment criteria are not yet used as effectively as they might be to enable students to monitor their own progress. GCSE practical teaching is particularly strong. Limitations set by indoor facilities are often overcome by strong teacher creativity and initiative. Teachers provide very good role models and teamwork is evident. Very positive relationships exist between teachers and students and enable all lessons to take place within an ethos of mutual encouragement. There are not yet enough opportunities for teachers to share their individual teaching strengths with each other.

180. The department is well led and there is a clear vision for the future that, in turn, has been translated into realistic aims and objectives. Although facilities are adequate overall, the good quality of the curriculum is only possible through travelling to off-site facilities which limits the time available for learning. There are good relationships with the neighbouring college of further education and students in Year 13 learn effectively and make good progress when being taught in the college.

181. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Attainment has improved, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Improved time allocation and the widening of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 have improved the balance of activities provided for students.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

182. GCSE results in 2000 were very high in comparison with the national average for students in all schools, in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C grades, the proportion of A* and A grades and the average points score. Candidates performed better in religious education than they did on average in their other subjects. The proportion of students gaining grades A* and A was broadly average for grammar schools. A similar pattern of results was achieved in 1999, although the number of A* grades increased last year. Results indicate an upward trend over the period since the previous report. In the GCE A-level examination in 2000, students' average points score was well above the national average. Attainment at the higher A and B grades has steadily improved over the last three years.

183. By the age of 14, students' overall attainment is well above the level of expectation of the Agreed Syllabus. Students display good knowledge and understanding of rituals, beliefs and symbolism across a number of world faiths. There are however, some weakness in students' knowledge and understanding of Christianity. This was also mentioned in the previous report. The problem has been recognised by the new head of department and it is currently being rectified. Higher attaining students' knowledge is very good and they are beginning to develop an understanding of key ideas and issues shared by the religions they study. They are also able to relate their knowledge of religions to other spheres of influence, for example the environment and the growth of a social conscience. A significant majority understands the influences of a religious faith upon the life and actions of an individual. Good examples of this were seen in lessons examining the importance of the Shema within Judaism and of festivals to a Sikh.

184. By the age of 16, attainment of students on the GCSE course is well above the national average. Higher attaining students in particular write very well. There are examples of very well written essays and carefully compiled notes, where higher order skills of analysis and evaluation are evident. A very good example was seen in a lesson on the sanctity of life

and the Christian response to a number of current moral issues. Students on the core religious education course are achieving well in those parts of the Agreed Syllabus that are covered in detail, but the low time allocation limits potential attainment across the whole syllabus. Students on the A-level course are attaining at a level well above the national average. Their essays indicate an ability to argue a case well and most students provide a balance between argument and sound judgements and factual information. This was particularly well exemplified in work on Christian theology and work on ethical models.

185. By the age of 16 the achievement of students on the GCSE course is good and indicates good progress compared to their attainment on entry in Year 7. This is also true of a majority of candidates on the A-level course who are achieving well and are likely to gain similar high grades to those achieved in 2000. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented are also making good progress.

186. Learning overall in lessons and over time is good in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE and A-level groups. Teaching is good with a significant proportion of good and very good practice. Enthusiastic teaching and subject security contribute to effective learning, which is assisted by the very positive attitudes of students in most groups. There are frequent opportunities for students to write in a range of styles and develop independent thinking and research skills. The use of topic work, for example, on beliefs and practices in Islam and Sikhism effectively helps develop information gathering and analytical skills. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and are fully involved in lessons. Learning is helped by the use of homework, which integrates with classwork and assists pupils to develop writing skills. Lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace and are engaging and interesting in content. Very good classroom management, in the majority of lessons, enables all pupils to learn quickly. Learning is also enhanced by careful marking, high expectations and by the setting of an effective range of learning objectives. In a very small percentage of otherwise good lessons, a tendency for the teacher to be too directive in teaching and not to allow students enough independence, has a limiting affect on learning. Teaching at A-level provides a balance between the more structured nature of GCSE and the freer demands and expectations of higher education and the workplace. A very good example was observed when students were studying the Eucharist.

187. The amount of time allocated up to the age of 14 enables the programme of study of the Agreed Syllabus to be covered. The lack of discrete time for non-GCSE students results in less than full coverage of the syllabus in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, although religious education is included in the A level general studies course, the time allowed is short and does not allow full coverage of Agreed Syllabus units.

188. The department is enthusiastically and well managed by a relatively new head of department who took up the post at the beginning of the academic year. Appropriate priorities for action have been identified to improve standards even further. These include rewriting schemes of work to meet the needs of the new Agreed Syllabus. Assessment of students' work has been neglected in the past but is now being tackled and appropriate assessment tasks are being introduced. Currently Agreed Syllabus levels have not been used to inform students of the standard they achieve. Monitoring of teaching and learning has a low profile and although teaching is good, sharing good practice and the identification of weaknesses would have a positive affect on standards. The subject makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, only confined by the limited timetable allocation in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. A limited visit programme is in place with lower school students visiting a gurdwara and a synagogue. Too little contact is made with the local Christian community.

189. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Attainment at the age of 14 and 16 has improved. There was no overall judgement on teaching in the previous report but most of the weaknesses in teaching identified at that time have been overcome. The shortage of time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form still has an impact on the breadth of curriculum that can be provided for students.

Brief inspections of the following subjects were also conducted at the school's request

Drama

190. Standards of attainment in drama are well above average. In the 2000 GCSE results the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C was well above the national average. In the A-level GCE theatre studies examinations the average points score per student and the percentage gaining A or B grades were also high. In written and practical work seen during the inspection, levels of attainment matched these high examination results. Students, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. Students at the age of 14 have a better than average basic knowledge of drama, including its classical origins. They use body language and facial expression to very good effect in dramatic performance. They show very good observation and control in their group work and they are able to evaluate their own and other students' performances. They have very good knowledge and practical experience of stage make-up. By the age of sixteen those who continue with drama as an optional subject can, in small groups and pairs, independently plan, rehearse and perform high quality dramatic scenes, with good movement, sound voice control and strong characterisations. A good example of this was seen when Year 11 students performed extracts from 'Little Women' and 'A Taste of Honey' for examination assessment. Students become familiar with some of the technical aspects and conventions of the theatre. They can work together effectively to produce improvised drama and they have good knowledge of the ways in which actors work to build a performance. Sixth form students who go on to follow the A-level theatre studies course, extend this work. They maintain high standards with emphasis on performance skills and on staging performances. There were outstanding examples of written work in students' commentaries on building improvised scenes and in their work on designing costumes for particular characters. Levels of commitment and professionalism are high.

191. Teaching and learning in the department are very good. There is some excellent teaching, as seen when Year 9 students were learning about stage make-up. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons carefully, usually with clear objectives. Relationships with students are strong.

192. Schemes of work have been carefully devised to give a balanced programme for pupils in each year but also to provide continuous development from year to year and from lower school to GCSE and on to A-level programmes. The department consists of one full-time and two part-time drama teachers who work very closely together under the excellent leadership of the head of department who is tireless in his pursuit of ever higher standards across the department. The department has made the very best of temporary accommodation to provide a satisfactory drama studio. A further measure of this commitment are the annual play productions which achieve very high standards, typified in the recent performances of an adaptation of Muriel Spark's novel 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie'. Systems for assessing and monitoring students' progress are rigorous, effective and very well organised. Departmental documents are focused and evaluative and clearly reflect the high standards of the department.

Psychology

193. The first cohort of students to follow a GCSE course in psychology took the examination in 2000 and the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was very high compared with the average for all schools nationally. Students' average points score was better than the average across all their subjects. However, the proportion of students gaining grades A* and A was lower than in most subjects in the school.

194. In the GCE A-level examinations in 2000, students' average points score was below the national average. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B was significantly below the school average. There have been no A grades in any of the 5 years that the school has been entering students for this subject.

195. In work seen during the inspection, students at the age of 16 attain standards that are above the national average. They make particularly good use of correct specialist terms. However, students at the age of 18, and those who are following the A/S courses in Year 12, are attaining standards below those expected for students following the same courses nationally. These standards are reflected in the January A/S module results for the current Year 12. Students do not have a secure knowledge of the topics that they are studying and lack the understanding expected for students of this age.

196. Teaching and learning in psychology are unsatisfactory. Lessons do not provide sufficient challenge for students; they are poorly planned and organised and time is often wasted. As a result, students in the sixth form are not developing skills of enquiry and analysis to an acceptable level. However, students of all ages behave well in lessons and have a desire to learn and achieve. They are courteous and respectful towards staff and their peers. Students form constructive working relationships with each other and respect each others' feelings, values and beliefs. These positive attitudes, together with the effort that students put into their learning, are sufficient to produce broadly satisfactory achievement in GCSE examinations at the age of 16. However, in Years 12 and 13, the deficiencies in teaching have too great an impact and students under-achieve.

197. The department lacks well informed and organised leadership and there is not enough drive to raise standards.