

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BLAKE SCHOOL

Bridgwater

LEA area: Somerset

Unique Reference Number: 123878

Headteacher: Mr D Akers

Reporting inspector: Mr C Sander

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 3rd December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708243

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hamp Avenue Bridgwater Somerset TA6 6AW
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Martin
Date of previous inspection:	April 1995

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr C Sander Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Ms J Goodchild Lay Inspector	Equal opportunities	Efficiency of the school Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Assessment
Mr B Smith Mr D Innes	Mathematics English	
Mr J Creedy Mr I Hodkinson	Special educational needs Science Information technology	Learning resources
Mr G Histed Mr G McGinn Mr J Knight Ms W Burke Mr T Payne Mr B McCann Mr P Quest	Design and technology Modern foreign languages History Geography Art Music Physical education Religious education	Staffing Curriculum Accommodation Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Consistently good teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress in lessons.
- Attainment by the age of 16 is improving and is currently well above average for similar schools.
- There are very good arrangements to assess pupils' work and to set targets for improvement.
- Pupils are very well supported and receive very good guidance to help them in their studies.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- Provision for information technology is much improved.
- Very good leadership encourages very good teamwork in the management of the school.
- The school's ethos is very good.
- It gives good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Weaknesses in literacy and numeracy continue to restrict attainment in many subjects.
- II. Standards are not high enough in French and religious education.
- III. There are still too few planned opportunities for pupils to use their skills in information technology in all their subjects.
- IV. Accommodation for music, art and modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory and no alternative is available.
- V. There are insufficient books, materials and equipment in religious education, music and geography.
- VI. The school does not meet fully the legal requirement to provide for all pupils a daily act of collective worship.

The strengths outweigh the weaknesses. The school is working resolutely to raise standards. Improvements in provision over the last two years, particularly in teaching, are starting to raise standards in lessons and the very good leadership of the headteacher has brought renewed confidence and a shared will to succeed. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent out to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made a good degree of improvement since the last inspection, most significantly in the overall quality of teaching. This is now much more consistent. The school has made this a priority for improvement in its development plan. In response to the key issues identified at the time of the last inspection, much has been achieved, mainly in the last two and a half years, since the appointment of the current headteacher.

- VII. Parental support has improved, the parent teachers' association is thriving and parents and governors now work more closely with the school to improve attendance and raise standards.
- VIII. Pupils are now well supported in their studies, including a highly effective mentoring programme, regular reviews and target setting.
- IX. Many very effective arrangements, including a School Council and Year Councils of pupils, have helped to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour by giving all pupils opportunities to contribute to the daily life the school.

- X. The management and organisation of the school is now much better. Job descriptions are clear and all policies have been revised.
- XI. The school has made some progress in provision for religious education but the time given to the subject between the ages of 14 and 16 is still insufficient.
- XII. Despite considerable improvements in provision for information technology, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum.

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• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14- and 16-year-olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	K
Key Stage 3	D	C	<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
			<i>average</i>	C
GCSE Examinations	E	A	<i>below average</i>	D
			<i>well below average</i>	E

In the 1999 statutory national tests, taken by all pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment was in line with the national average for all schools in English but well below average in science and mathematics. When compared with the average for similar schools, standards were well above average in English but below average in mathematics and science. Pupils' levels of attainment are very low in these subjects when they join the school. These results represent a good degree of progress.

Thirty per cent of pupils gained 5 or more grades A*-C in the general certificate of secondary education. This was above the average for similar schools but well below the average for all schools nationally, 48 per cent. Results were 5 per cent better this year. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A*-G, 91 per cent, was well above the average for similar schools and above the average for all schools nationally. The percentage gaining 1 or more grades A*-G was very high. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics, design and technology and expressive arts. The 1999 results exceed the school's own challenging targets. Results have risen since the last inspection. These results represent a good degree of progress by the age of 16.

Quality of teaching

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	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Information technology, science, mathematics	German
Years 10-11	Good	Mathematics, science , geography	
English	Good	Year 11	
Mathematics	Good	Year 8, Year 9	

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

Consistently good teaching is a strength of the school. During the inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons, good or better in 73 per cent of lessons and very good in 31 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 2 per cent of lessons. The school has worked very hard to achieve a consistently good standard of teaching.

At least 70 per cent of teaching was good or better in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, information technology, modern foreign languages and music. Excellent teaching was observed on two occasions in science and in mathematics and on one occasion in information technology and history.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. Behaviour in lessons is sometimes excellent. Pupils approach their lessons in a positive manner and work well with each other. Bullying is not an issue.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and the percentage of unauthorised absence is now well below that of similar schools. Levels of absence are higher currently in Year 10 and this is affecting the standards of their work.
Ethos*	Very good. The school's expectations are made very clear to all pupils who take pride in their school and show respect for each other and for their teachers. They regularly show in lessons a commitment to achieve the challenging targets that have been set.
Leadership and management	Very good. In eight terms the headteacher has established a clear long-term direction for the school, raised expectations, set and already exceeded challenging academic targets, and worked closely with his governors to define a clear strategic plan for further improvement. Highly effective team work is a strength.
Curriculum	Good provision overall. The developing work-related curriculum at Key Stage 4 and very good provision for extra-curricular activities are important strengths. Some weaknesses remain in the amount of time available for German and religious education.
Special educational needs	Good provision overall. All teachers have sufficient information to support pupils' particular needs. This enables them to make good progress. Funding is well managed and governors are kept well informed.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection. Social and moral development are very good. Cultural and spiritual development are satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall. The experienced staff are well qualified and there is a good level of support staff to assist them in lessons. The new learning resource centre is a real asset but aspects of the accommodation for music, modern foreign languages and art are unsatisfactory.
Value for money	Good. The school has a well planned strategy to overcome its current deficit budget and financial planning is good. The school uses its available resources well. Good teaching and high expectations enable pupils to make good progress and achieve good standards of behaviour.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

XIII. It encourages them to play an active part in school life and they find it easy to approach the school when they have questions about their children.

XIV. It enables their children to achieve a good standard of work and also get involved in extra-curricular activities.

What some parents are not happy about

XV. A small number of parents were concerned about the school's policy.

Approximately 14 per cent of parents returned the questionnaires and 17 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Nearly all responses and comments were positive and parents appreciated the hard work of many staff who did their very best to help pupils of all abilities to succeed.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To continue to raise standards, the governors, headteacher and senior management team should:

1. Raise standards further in the key skills of numeracy and literacy to support higher attainment in all subjects. Such action might include:
 - providing additional time and similar teaching methods in Year 7 to build on the national literacy and numeracy strategies;
 - the rigorous identification of literacy and numeracy needs and opportunities in each subject of the curriculum;
 - clear reference to increasingly more challenging key objectives for literacy and numeracy in each subject's scheme of work;
 - explicit reference to relevant literacy and numeracy objectives within lesson planning;
 - assessment arrangements to monitor progress in these key skills through each subject of the curriculum;
 - developing expertise in the teaching of reading, writing and spelling through professional development.

[Paragraphs: 6,16,17,18,20,21,27,100,105,106,112,113,114,119,125,134,135,141,142]

1. Raise attainment in music at Key Stage 3 and in religious education and French at Key Stage 4. Such action might include:
 - the precise identification of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in these subjects when they start at the school;
 - a clear description of the expected standard in each subject for the end of each year;
 - indicating the 'stepping stones' towards these standards in the scheme of work, expressed in terms of what pupils will know, understand and be able to do.
 - extending current 'best practice' observation beyond the school in order to revise current targets for attainment in these subjects.

[Paragraphs 10,15,19,150,154,170,171]

1. Provide planned opportunities for pupils to use their increasing skills in information technology to raise standards in all subjects. Such action might include:
 - identifying the development and application of skills across each year to ensure that there is balanced coverage of the different skill areas and that tasks are increasingly challenging between the ages of 11-14;

- identifying in schemes of work for pupils between the ages of 14-16 how information technology might be used to help pupils to raise their standards in different subjects.

[Paragraphs 18,51,52,115,144,146,147,155]

1. Seek additional provision to improve accommodation in art, music and modern foreign languages and book resources in religious education, music and geography. Such action might include:

- identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current accommodation;
- identifying the accommodation requirements to assure at least satisfactory standards;
- creating a long-term accommodation development plan, in consultation with the appropriate agencies, to meet these requirements.

[Paragraphs 88,93,162]

1. Ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils. Such action might include:

- monitoring more closely the current 'thought for the week' arrangements.

[Paragraph 77]

INTRODUCTION

- Characteristics of the school

1. The Blake School is a maintained comprehensive school for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. It is situated on a local authority estate at the edge of Bridgwater and most pupils come from the immediate area. There are 540 pupils on roll, of whom 263 are boys and 277 are girls. The size of the school is below the national average. Nearly half of the pupils previously attended the local junior school. One hundred and fifty one pupils have special educational needs; as a proportion of the total number of pupils this is above the national average. The average level of attainment on entry to the school is very low. Twenty-five per cent of pupils are in receipt of free school meals. This is above average. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. As part of a national initiative, the school has recently been involved in a successful bid to be part of a local education action zone, starting in January 2000.
2. There have been many changes at the school in the last three years. A new headteacher has been in post since January 1997. Since that time there has been a thorough revision of the school's organisation and a much greater emphasis on strategic planning and school improvement. The school has now started to grow in size and gain in popularity. The school's aims are now expressed as statements of intent and concentrate on raising attainment by improving teaching and learning. Its declared vision is that all pupils will have 'the confidence and skills to succeed in life'.
3. The school sets challenging targets that are above those recommended by the local education authority.
4. Its targets for the year 2000 are:
 - .39 per cent of pupils to attain 5 or more grades A*-C at GCSE
 - .92 per cent of pupils to attain 5 or more grades A*-G at GCSE
 - .98 per cent of pupils to attain 1 or more grades A*-G at GCSE
 - .GCSE average points score 32
1. Each subject department has agreed targets linked to the above percentages.

5. **Key indicators**

5.

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	53	59	112

5. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	30	28	22
	Girls	44	19	16
	Total	74	47	38
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	66(53)	42(47)	34(41)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	25(23)	23(27)	6(12)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

5. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	17	28	22
	Girls	29	40	25
	Total	46	68	47
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	42(50)	61(42)	42(40)
	National	64(61)	64(64)	60(59)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	16(21)	28(24)	16(12)
	National	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	56	41	97

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	15	50	56
	Girls	14	40	41
	Total	29	90	97
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	30(25.2)	93(85.4)	100(91.3)
	National	47.8(46.3)	88.4(87.5)	93.9(93.4)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of such pupils who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
School	17	65
National		N/A

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

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

Attendance

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

Authorised	School	8.8
Absence	National comparative data	7.7
Unauthorised	School	0.8
Absence	National comparative data	1.1

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Exclusions

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

Fixed period	95
Permanent	3

1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is: %

Very good or better	31
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

1 PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

1 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

1 Attainment and progress

1. Attainment when pupils start at the school is well below the national average. This has been a consistent feature since the last inspection. Approximately 80 per cent of pupils achieve below average scores in standardised reading tests before they start in Year 7. Many achieve scores that are well below average. Standards are much lower than the County average. Detailed information concerning levels achieved in statutory national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 was not available during the inspection. However, available evidence indicates that only a minority of pupils achieve the national expectation, Level 4, in English, mathematics and science and the percentage of pupils with identified special educational needs, 28 per cent, is nearly twice the national average. By the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, overall attainment is below the national average. However, judgements on the attainment and progress made by pupils need be seen against this background of very low levels of attainment when pupils first join the school.
2. In the 1999 statutory national tests, 66 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation, Level 5, in English. This was in line with the national average for all schools and well above the average for similar schools, representing a significant achievement and reflecting very thorough preparation for the tests. The test results were higher than the teacher assessments and a significant improvement on the 1998 results. Attainment in mathematics and science was well below the national average for all schools and below average for similar schools. In mathematics, 42 per cent of pupils achieved Level 5 whereas 62 per cent did so nationally. Attainment was lowest in science, where 34 per cent achieved Level 5, well below the national average of 55 per cent. Girls achieved higher results than boys in English but boys did better than girls in science and mathematics.
3. The percentage of pupils achieving higher than the national expectation was above the national average in English but well below the national average in mathematics and science. When comparisons are made with similar schools, attainment at levels higher than the national expectation is well above average in English, above average in mathematics but below average in science. Teacher assessments were relatively higher in science and mathematics and lower in English. The work seen during lessons and that completed previously indicates that currently attainment is below national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Within the top sets in these subjects attainment is frequently above the national expectation.
4. Since the last inspection there has been a slightly improving trend in English but a slightly declining trend in statutory national test results in both mathematics and science as a result of lower levels of attainment on entry. Over time, the standards achieved by boys and girls have improved at a similar rate in English. In both mathematics and science, boys' and girls' attainment has fluctuated. Overall attainment in these three subjects has been steady since the last inspection at a time when results have been rising nationally. There is no evidence to indicate that levels of attainment are below reasonable expectations, given the very low levels of attainment on entry.
5. In the 1999 statutory teacher assessments attainment was above the national average in art, in line with the national average in information technology and only just below it in history and geography. Standards were below the national average in physical education and well below in music, modern foreign languages and design and technology. Standards in religious education are below those indicated in the Somerset Agreed Syllabus. Over the last three years there has been an improving trend in information technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages and art and standards have remained steady in physical education.

6. By the end of Key Stage 3, over the last three years, girls have achieved higher standards than boys in design and technology, geography, art and music. Girls and boys have achieved similar standards in information technology, history and modern foreign languages. Standards broadly in line with the statutory assessments were seen in lessons although in physical education these were closer to the national expectation whilst in art standards were slightly lower. In just over half of the lessons seen at Key Stage 3 attainment was in line with national expectations. Attainment was above average in the top sets but well below national expectations in the lower sets.
7. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average for all schools. In the 1999 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, 30 per cent of pupils gained 5 or more grades A*-C. This was well below the national average of 48 per cent but above the average for similar schools. It also indicates an improvement of 5 per cent on the previous year. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A*-G, 91 per cent, was above the national average, 88 per cent, and well above the average for similar schools. The percentage gaining 1 or more grades A*-G, 98 per cent, was above the national average of 94 per cent, and also well above the average for similar schools. Overall, the pattern of results was well above the national average for similar schools. Results since the last inspection indicate a rising trend, broadly in line with the rising trend nationally. Whilst results remain below the national average, good teaching is helping pupils to make good progress. The 1999 results exceeded the school's own targets that were themselves 5 per cent higher than the target proposed by the local education authority.
8. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in English, 36 per cent, was well below the national average of 58 per cent. Results were significantly higher in mathematics and broadly in line with the national average, representing a very good degree of progress. Forty-six per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C compared with the national average of 48 per cent. In science, 32 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C. This is below the national average for all schools, 50 per cent. Standards of work seen in lessons at Key Stage 4 were in line with national expectations and slightly above in Year 11 in mathematics. They were below expectations in English and science. Standards in these subjects are higher in Year 11 than the most recent public examination results. When comparisons are made with the average for similar schools, attainment in public examinations is very high in mathematics, well above average in science and above average in English.
9. A higher percentage of girls than boys gained grades A*-C in 1999 but the difference was smaller than in 1998. Boys improved particularly in English, and to a lesser extent also in science and mathematics. However, girls continued to achieve higher standards in English and mathematics. The standards of boys and girls have been broadly similar in science for the past two years. Since the last inspection, girls have regularly achieved higher standards than boys in English literature and expressive arts but less consistently so in many other subjects. The pattern of grades indicates that pupils of different abilities make good progress to achieve these standards. Lower attaining pupils, including those who have special educational needs, achieve particularly well in these subjects.
10. Within design and technology, attainment in GCSE was above the national average in 1999 in graphic products, resistant materials and food technology. Attainment was also well above the national average in expressive arts and in drama. Within the information technology key skills course attainment exceeds national expectations. These are all areas of developing strength. Results were well below average in textiles technology, English literature, German, history, geography, visual art and French. Within the school's developing vocational courses 80 per cent of candidates achieved 3 units in GNVQ business and 71 per cent did so in manufacturing, all at foundation level. Sixty per cent of pupils achieved Level 2 key skills in information technology.
11. Standards are low in both numeracy and literacy. Weaknesses in these key skill areas restrict

the levels of attainment of the majority of pupils. Skills in numeracy are very low when they enter the school, although there has been some small improvement recently. Currently, between one half and two-thirds attain below the national expectation in statutory national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The school has worked hard to raise standards through a whole-school numeracy policy that gives guidance to all subject areas concerning numerical work. The mathematics department does make special efforts to raise the numerical competence and confidence of all pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. Every opportunity is taken in a range of topics to improve mental arithmetic. At present, overall standards of numeracy remain low. This inhibits progress and attainment, particularly in mathematics, but also in the mathematical aspects of other subjects, such as in science and geography. Improvements have been made in design and technology where pupils can make accurate measurements and in information and communication technology where they can carry out simple data work.

12. The literacy skills of a minority of pupils are well above average but the majority have restricted vocabularies and limited language skills when they enter the school. These weaknesses limit their ability across a wide range of subjects to read with understanding and to write with sufficient clarity and accuracy. Many can communicate the quality of their knowledge and understanding only with considerable help from teachers. Progress is made during both key stages, especially in the widening of vocabularies, but errors in the spelling of common words, a limited range of sentence constructions and elementary errors in grammar persist. The school recognises the need to raise standards of literacy, identified in the previous report. Strategies have been introduced to ensure that text books used are written in appropriate language and to increase pupils' confidence and ability in reading. The importance of encouraging pupils to develop their skills in spoken English is recognised by the provision of opportunities for discussion and group work in most subjects. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils become confident in the use of technical terms. There is a planned strategy to raise standards that includes the development of the reading and note-making skills required for research and the ability to re-present information accurately and effectively in extended writing. These strategies need to be more clearly linked to pupils' prior experience of the National Literacy Strategy.
13. Skills in information technology are significantly higher than those in literacy. Many pupils of all abilities show a good understanding of purpose and audience when presenting information and demonstrate a confident command of office standard applications by the end of Key Stage 3. Keyboard skills are well developed and they can build and use databases well. However, within the recently introduced GCSE course, standards are below expectations since weaknesses in literacy and numeracy restrict pupils' ability to explain systems and processes. There are insufficient planned opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their skills and understanding in information technology, particularly in the use of computers for control and measurement tasks, and for creating and manipulating spreadsheets.
14. In modern foreign languages only a minority of higher attaining pupils achieves the national expectation, Level 4, by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils' lack of confidence in using the target language is a significant weakness. They experience great difficulty in applying their skills in listening, reading and speaking for more than a short period although higher attaining pupils are starting to write more complex sentences at Key Stage 4. Progress overall is satisfactory but only a minority of pupils achieve the national expectation.
15. In geography at Key Stage 3 approximately half of the pupils are working at the expected standard for their age in order to reach Level 5 by the end of Year 9. These pupils have the necessary literacy skills to gather information from a range of texts and make notes on what they read. Many have the necessary numeracy skills to draw bar graphs. Many lower attaining pupils lack the skills and confidence to write at length and this weakness severely restricts their attainment at both key stages.
16. In history, most pupils develop a range of elementary historical skills by the end of Key Stage 3 but only a minority of higher attaining pupils can handle several ideas and appreciate a range of

interpretations. Literacy skills are weak and this limits the quality of their note-making and their ability to select relevant information when reading. As a result, less than half of pupils achieve the national expectation by the end of Year 9. Attainment is similarly low by the end of Key Stage 4. Only the small minority of higher attaining pupils have the necessary research and organisational skills to complete more complex assignments. Lower attaining pupils, and those who have special educational needs, lack the necessary skills to write at length and cannot easily recall basic historical concepts.

17. Higher attaining pupils' skills in drawing and painting are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 but attainment overall in art is below the national expectation. Lower attaining pupils find it difficult to discuss their work and apply what has been learned previously to current tasks. This restricts their progress. Attainment in lessons by the end of Key Stage 4 is below national expectations although a minority of higher attaining pupils achieve above average standards in large pastel studies and animation sequences.
18. Attainment in design and technology is below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and is in line with expectations by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' skills in making products are a strength and they develop a good understanding of design. However, their ability to pursue research on their own is limited and their knowledge and understanding of electrical and pneumatic systems by the end of Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory.
19. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards overall in drama by the end of Key Stage 3. They acquire the essential disciplines of performance but only a minority can comment critically on their work and that of others. Standards in expressive arts, including music and drama, have been very high for the last two years. In 1999, 98 per cent of candidates, the majority of whom were girls, gained grades A*-C.
20. Attainment in physical education is currently in line with national expectations at the end of each key stage. Most pupils develop a satisfactory range of skills in games by the end of Key Stage 3 and gain further in confidence and show a readiness to officiate in games by the end of Key Stage 4.
21. In religious education attainment is below the standards described in the Somerset Agreed Syllabus by the end of Key Stage 3. Most pupils develop a broad knowledge of Christianity but their knowledge of other religions is very limited. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are well below the levels set out in the Somerset Agreed Syllabus because pupils have insufficient time to develop a wider knowledge and understanding of different religions.
22. Progress is good at both key stages in lessons but less evident over time. Many pupils do not retain knowledge and understanding over longer periods of time. Pupils made good progress in two-thirds of lessons seen during the inspection. Progress was very good in one in every four lessons. Very good progress was evident in many lessons in mathematics and good progress was frequently made in design and technology, geography, information technology and music. Good teaching contributes significantly to good progress in many subjects, including the effective use of target setting in English and very good organisation of lessons in mathematics. This helps to motivate pupils and give them confidence, as a result of which they frequently make very good progress in lessons at Key Stage 4. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in art and music and pupils who have special educational needs make particularly good progress in design and technology. Pupils apply well what they have learned previously in geography and good teaching in history supports good progress by enabling pupils to develop the necessary enquiry skills. Pupils' readiness to work effectively with each other supports their progress in English and drama. Lower attaining pupils make slower progress in many subjects. Sometimes this results from an inability to concentrate for a lengthy period but more frequently it is because pupils lack the necessary reading and writing skills. Higher attaining pupils make slower progress in religious education than in their other subjects because the time allocated is insufficient.

23. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress overall by the end of both key stages. This results from the quality of the specialist provision to improve basic skills including very effective in-class support, the efforts of all teachers and the positive motivation of pupils. Many pupils achieve grades in the general certificate of secondary education that are well above what might reasonably be expected.

28. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

24. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are good and there is a positive work ethic within the school. Pupils settle quickly to written tasks when requested to do so, are interested in their studies and respond well when given challenging tasks. The high quality of teaching, particularly the organisation of a series of short and varied tasks within lessons, helps the majority of pupils to sustain their concentration well throughout lessons. As at the time of the previous inspection there is a tendency for pupils to be teacher dependent in dictating the pace of their learning. However, there has been significant progress in this respect and the school is rapidly moving towards enabling pupils to take overall responsibility for their learning. Pupils work well in pairs and small groups when given the opportunity and actively encourage and support each other. In science, for example, pupils work well in pairs when undertaking investigative project work and a readiness and maturity to support each other in group work was evident within many lessons. A readiness to express views on the work of others is a feature of many lessons, particularly drama, which helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and develop their social skills. Pupils show a sense of pride in their work, are proud of their achievements, and gain personal satisfaction for their efforts. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, their self-confidence is well developed, they are motivated to learn and are supported well by other pupils within lessons.

25. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is good and this has a positive impact on their attainment and progress. The standard of behaviour in lessons is rarely less than good and sometimes excellent. There are clear expectations of good behaviour that pupils respect. All staff demonstrate a consistent approach to the management of pupils' behaviour that contributes significantly to the good standard of behaviour throughout the school. There is a minority of pupils, whose behaviour is unsatisfactory, as at the time of the previous inspection, but this is not evident in the majority of lessons and the learning of other pupils is rarely interrupted. Incidents are usually related to frustration because pupils lack the necessary literacy skills to complete written tasks. Occasionally poor class management results in low standards of behaviour. Pupils are aware of the school's anti-bullying philosophy and of the procedures to follow if incidents occur. Any incidents that are brought to the school's attention are dealt with quickly and effectively. Bullying is not an issue in this school. Since the previous inspection the number of pupils excluded has risen but is now running at a lower level than before. This is due to a change in regime and ethos within the school. The school is a community and provides an effective learning environment. The exclusion of pupils, either fixed term or permanent, is reserved for those who seriously breach the school's code of conduct and the governing body is appropriately involved. A strength of the school is the highly effective manner in which pupils previously in danger of exclusion are supported and helped to overcome their difficulties and continue with their education.

26. Relationships within the school both between pupils and with adults are good. Pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. Care is taken of the school environment and pupils have been consulted about its refurbishment. Pupils have been responsible for creating an area of tranquillity within the school grounds in memory of a former pupil that is respected by all.

27. The personal development of pupils is very good. They are willing to accept responsibility and serve on both Year and School Councils. The School Council is consulted on aspects of the school development plan and encouraged to be involved with decisions that affect the life of the

school community. Pupils have a sense of ownership of the school and are ready to take on responsibilities. The positions of Head Boy and Girl are given status within the school and are appointed through formal application and interview procedures within the school. The Blake Buddies scheme in which Year 10 pupils are paired with Year 7 pupils is an undoubted success and valued by the young entrants to the school. Parents value this feature of the school. Pupils show initiative in the wider community by raising monies for charities. Recently they raised £600 in a day for Red Nose Day and also made a donation to a Tibetan Refugee School. An annual tea party for senior citizens is organised by two pupils who raise funds by selling raffle tickets. Pupils run the media desk during Arts Week, act as school librarians, help out at open evenings and run a Chemistry Club for Year 8 pupils. The Year 11 'Prom' and Year Book is organised by pupils. Funding is currently being sought to introduce a scheme of peer counselling next September. Pupils generally show respect for values and beliefs different from their own but opportunities to develop an awareness of life in a multicultural society are limited.

32. **Attendance**

28. The attendance level of pupils is satisfactory and is broadly in line with the national average in the academic year 1997/98. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The incidence of unauthorised absence is well below that of similar schools. A recently introduced computerised system for recording attendance is proving beneficial in monitoring the attendance of all pupils. The poor attendance of a significant number of pupils, particularly those in Year 10, has a detrimental impact on their attainment and progress and their likely success in GCSE examinations. Lessons always start punctually. The school complies with statutory requirements for the registration of pupils.

33.

33.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

33. **Teaching**

29. The overall quality of teaching is good. The proportion of good and very good teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The improvement of teaching has been a school development plan objective. The consistently good quality of teaching seen during the inspection reflects how successful the school has been in achieving it. Teaching was good or better in approximately three-quarters of lessons. It was very good in nearly one third of lessons. In the 122 lessons seen during the inspection, poor teaching was observed on two occasions and unsatisfactory teaching on a third occasion.

30. Teaching is consistently good across year groups and across the full range of ability. The best teaching was seen in Year 8 and in Year 10 where it was good or better in four out of five lessons. Very good teaching was seen regularly in mathematics, science and information technology. It was occasionally unsatisfactory in religious education and poor in German. The overall quality of teaching was good in all other subjects.

31. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. In nearly all lessons they make good use of this specialist knowledge and skilfully pitch their explanations and questions at the outset of the lesson to increase pupils' understanding and help them to make progress. For example in a Year 7 physical education lesson this enabled pupils quickly to appreciate aspects of defence and attack in hockey and in a Year 9 information technology lesson the teacher's excellent knowledge of the software enabled pupils quickly to gain in confidence. Subject knowledge is particularly good in mathematics and teachers explain difficult concepts such as factors and vectors very clearly, anticipating pupils' difficulties and developing their understanding through effective questioning. Well planned schemes of work successfully support non-specialists in history and geography.

32. Expectations are high and well linked to pupils' targets. In a very good Year 11 geography lesson pupils were studying trans-national companies. They were skilfully challenged to propose their own definitions. This made them think and encouraged a good level of understanding of terms used in the lesson. In a textiles lesson in Year 9 the teacher established high expectations by explaining and demonstrating good quality stitching at the start of the lesson which resulted in the pupils subsequently achieving a good standard of work.
33. Lessons are nearly always well planned. Planning is particularly good in mathematics where targets are clearly indicated and in design and technology where each stage of designing and making is carefully explained. In a very good Year 10 history lesson planning was highly imaginative. The teacher adopted the role of Pare, a renaissance medical innovator, and through skilful questioning brought the issues to life so that pupils of all abilities were fully involved in the lesson, developed a good level of understanding and were well prepared for the examination assignment. Weak planning resulted in some poor teaching in German where the target language was used insufficiently. Planning was much more successful in art, science and English where a series of short, well linked activities overcame pupils' short concentration spans and supported their good progress.
34. In many subjects much thought is given to the most appropriate teaching methods for pupils of different abilities. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson pupils were studying invertebrates as part of a topic on insects. The teacher used a recording of 'Flight of the Bumble Bee' to capture pupils' interest and used questions very skilfully to develop their knowledge and understanding. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson the teacher made very good use of everyday examples of symmetry and a good range of cardboard resources to make sure that pupils developed a very good level of understanding.
35. Classroom management is very good in nearly all subjects. Teachers know their pupils well and have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Only in German and religious education were relationships occasionally unsatisfactory. At all other times, a very good range of group work and whole-class teaching, clear explanations, skilful questioning and lively teaching were much in evidence. For example, in a very well paced Year 8 science lesson pupils were actively involved in developing a conversation between different organs of the body in order to develop an understanding of their different functions.
36. Time is very well used within the sixty-minute lessons. Lessons invariably proceed at a good pace and nearly all teachers appreciate the need to include a range of activities in order to sustain pupils' concentration. Resources are very well used generally and sometimes imaginatively so in science and mathematics.
37. Marking is very thorough and enables teachers to maintain good records of progress made in lessons. Teachers keep pupils very well informed about how well they are doing and where they need to improve. This is frequently well done in lessons. Homework is set regularly in all subjects and is frequently well used at the start of a lesson to review pupils' knowledge and consolidate their understanding. The concerns expressed by a very small number of parents concerning homework were not substantiated by the practice seen during the inspection and evident within the examination of pupils' previous work.
38. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good. Teachers receive detailed information that includes the targets set for them and suggested strategies to assist in their attainment. Support assistants are well informed and work closely with the classroom teacher to support pupils' good progress in lessons.
43. **The curriculum and assessment**
39. The school provides a good curriculum that is appropriately broad and balanced, and achieves

its aim of providing 'a curriculum that promotes both academic and vocational opportunity, enabling pupils to progress appropriately to employment or further education'. There are however, some weaknesses. In several subjects there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practice their computer skills, and inequalities of access and opportunity arise from arrangements for German lessons in Years 8 and 9.

40. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced. All pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, life skills, study skills, physical movement and drama. German is introduced in addition to French in Year 8 for those pupils who show above average skills in languages. Pupils are arranged into classes based on attainment, with detailed arrangements being left to individual subjects or groups of subjects. In music, drama, art, life skills and physical education pupils are taught in mixed ability tutor groups.
41. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is broad and balanced also. All pupils follow a core of English, mathematics, science, life skills, design and technology, French, physical education, information and communication technology and religious education. Optional courses include the other subjects of the National Curriculum, including German. The curriculum is given extra breadth by the provision of vocational and work-related courses as well as a course leading to the Junior Sports Leader Award. All pupils have access to GNVQ foundation courses in business or manufacturing through the options system. Pupils for whom a full GCSE programme would be too taxing can follow the work-related courses. Timetabling difficulties result in some imbalance in the options scheme, with one column of subjects being allocated an extra period per fortnight.
42. All pupils follow a well-planned course in life skills. Statutory requirements for sex education are covered by this course and within science lessons. There is good provision for careers education and guidance from Year 8 onwards. This provision includes a two-week period of work experience in Year 10 and a business mentoring programme in Years 10 and 11. It also benefits from close liaison with the Somerset Careers Service and a well stocked careers library.
43. The curriculum provides satisfactorily for equality of opportunity and access at Key Stage 3 and rather better at Key Stage 4. Within the constraints of timetabling and staffing, departments create teaching sets that give individuals the opportunity to fulfil their potential. These constraints create inequality in Years 8 and 9 where those pupils studying German have fewer lessons of religious education than the remainder. As a result of the setting arrangements boys are over-represented in the lower sets in several subjects.
44. Curricular provision for the requirements of pupils on the school's special educational needs register are met well at Key Stage 3 and satisfactorily at Key Stage 4. Individual education plans with specialist targets for adaptation by subject departments are copied to all teachers. Some targets are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-related, but many are not. Teachers are not always clear on the differences between targets, aims and strategies. The result is that although practice is good overall, it is variable. The quality of classroom support offered by special needs learning assistants is good.
45. Planning for progression and continuity of learning is satisfactory overall and good at Key Stage 4. There are good links with the five partner primary schools on pastoral matters but insufficient information concerning pupils' attainment in national tests as well as standards in the foundation subjects is available to the school to help in the planning of the Year 7 curriculum. Within the school continuity and progression are assisted in most subjects by schemes of work that effectively develop and regularly revise knowledge, skills and understanding in order to support good progress. Continuity is hindered in information and communication technology because a different operating system is used in Years 8 and 9. Pupils are given good advice at times of transition between Key Stages 3 and 4 and the next phase of education. Liaison with the post-16 sector is good.

46. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities, both in the lunch break and after school. The quality of its provision has been recognised by the award of Certificates of Distinction by 'Education Extra' in successive years. In sport there is a very good variety of clubs and teams, with over one third of pupils participating actively. There is a wide variety of activities associated with many subjects, including clubs and societies, drama and music productions and visits to venues both locally and overseas. Residential opportunities, including outward bound camps, enrich the experience of pupils in Year 7 and Year 9.
47. The school has addressed successfully most of the curricular issues raised during the previous inspection. The taught week has been lengthened to comply with national recommendations. Governors now play a much more active role in curriculum matters than they did formerly, to the benefit of all pupils. However, the provision of information and communication technology across the curriculum is little nearer realisation and the withdrawal arrangements for pupils studying German remain unsatisfactory.
48. Assessment procedures are very good. They are well linked to target setting and are helping to raise expectations. They are being used with increasing effectiveness to inform planning and are part of subject departments' regular reviews of their schemes of work.
49. The school has a clear and comprehensive assessment, recording and reporting policy. It provides the foundation for each department's own detailed policy. The school policy includes the use of baseline data to provide each pupil with individual minimum target levels for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, formative assessment to inform teaching and record individual progress, summative assessment and reporting to parents. Each pupil is in a tutor group for daily registration and a short tutorial period. The tutor is responsible for keeping track of the overall performance of these pupils. At least twice each year they have time for a personal discussion with each pupil as well as daily meetings with the group. Where extra attention is needed the system is sufficiently flexible to provide it. The school has a simple overall monitoring system using a commercial software package to keep track of performance and identify any individual pupil's under-performance measured against their agreed targets. The system is administratively very well organised but it also ensures that pupils are cared for personally as one of the school's large family. It is a most effective system and fully overcomes the issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. Assessment arrangements are now a strength of the school and play an important part in the school's strategy to raise expectations and standards.
50. Teachers are thorough in their assessments, including the regular marking of pupils' work and maintenance of records in line with their departments' policy. There is flexibility in the overall system to allow for the specific needs of each subject to be catered for. Heads of department efficiently monitor their own departments and the school monitors departmental assessment in practice. Teachers use formative assessment lesson by lesson to plan their teaching. It is all clearly related to National Curriculum attainment targets and levels. Teachers share with pupils not only topics at the start of each lesson but what they must know, understand or be able to do to reach different levels. Virtually all pupils responded to this as a challenge. Most pupils generally know their current level of attainment as well as targets or could quickly refer to them. Teachers give particular attention to pupils' potential at the critical times in their school career as they approach their Key Stage 3 statutory national tests and GCSE examinations at the age of 16.
51. Pupils who have special educational needs are identified accurately and promptly within the school's arrangements. There is increasingly good provision to meet their needs within the work related curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the setting arrangements at Key Stage 3, linked to a well planned programme of additional support both within and outside the classroom is helping them to make good progress. Very effective assessment arrangements are well used to inform the procedures for moving pupils up and down the stages of the Code of Practice. There is good monitoring and review of statements in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Code

of Practice.

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

52. The school places a high priority on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development. Overall provision is good. The life skills lessons make an effective contribution, particularly to pupils' social and moral development. Some aspects of the overall provision are very good. Since the last inspection there has been a rigorous examination of this provision. There has been a significant improvement in all areas of the school. The overall very good ethos of the school reflects this progress.
53. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The school policy on collective worship provides for a carefully planned series of 'themes for the week' around which school assemblies and tutor time are organised. During the inspection there was considerable variation in practice. Of the four assemblies visited only one contained an act of worship. Likewise the delivery of the 'Thought for the day' in tutor times varied. Whilst some teachers did make the most of the material offered, a significant number did not.
54. The school has recently conducted a review of the provision for spiritual development in subject areas. The results of this review are starting to be seen in practice. Some subjects include material to support spiritual development. For instance in geography pupils are encouraged to reflect on the sense of awe and wonder that is seen in volcanoes. In religious education there are many occasions when pupils are encouraged to reflect upon spiritual issues.
55. The provision for moral education is very good. Pupils are fully aware of the code of conduct that all teachers consistently reinforce. Teachers provide good role models, offering positive encouragement rather than negative responses. Opportunities for exploring moral issues abound in many subjects. For instance in geography pupils are encouraged to think through moral issues when dealing with subjects such as the environment, whilst in English pupils examine moral questions surrounding advertising. There are frequent opportunities in religious education to explore contemporary moral issues. These are supported by a life skills programme which enables pupils to explore their own responses to many moral dilemmas. Both tutor time and assemblies are used to reinforce work done elsewhere. A very popular school camp in Year 7 helps pupils develop a sense of ownership of school values.
56. The provision for social development is also very good. Both within and beyond the school day pupils are encouraged to develop their own responses to social issues. The importance of working together is encouraged in a number of subjects. In physical education pupils are frequently reminded of the values of team work. This is reinforced in subjects such as information technology and art. A much appreciated 'Buddy' programme encourages older pupils to take responsibility for younger ones. School prefects perform many responsible tasks both in school and on school buses. The School Council involves pupils in school development. In conjunction with the Prince's Trust pupils have been responsible for improving the school environment. There are numerous examples of pupils being involved in raising money for charities. Their willingness to spontaneously take on a charitable cause was recently illustrated in the collection of shoe boxes for Romanian children.
57. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Awareness of our own culture is promoted in a number of subjects. For instance in English pupils are encouraged to examine the diversity of our literary heritage, whilst in history and geography they are constantly encouraged to examine material from a wide culture background. Modern foreign languages encourages pupils to examine European cultures. Whilst some subjects such as religious education, art and music expose pupils to material from other cultures, there are many missed opportunities in other subjects to raise pupils' awareness of our multicultural society. Assemblies do not use material from other religions and most of the art work on display is based within a Western

European culture. There is extensive provision for extra-curricular activities and trips in which pupils are fully involved. Such activities as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme challenge pupils to be involved in a wide range of social and cultural activities.

58. The very good ethos of the Blake School encourages very successfully the development of a sense of social and moral responsibility. It is particularly alert to helping those pupils who have special educational needs to play a full part in the life of the school. It seeks to widen pupils' horizons in an active and positive way. Although not strictly following the letter of the law on school assemblies the school does embrace the spirit of the law and is endeavouring to improve on this provision.

63. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

59. The overall support, guidance and pupils' welfare provided by the school is very good. The school provides a caring, supportive environment where there are good relationships between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves. There is a good induction programme for pupils entering the school and they are well supported during their early life in school. Year 11 pupils are sensitively prepared for the next phase of education, or for entering the world of work through career advice provided by the school, the Careers Service and a wide range of outside speakers. The life skills programme covers very effectively several social issues, for example drugs education through the medium of drama and also usefully includes a series of driving lessons for Year 11 pupils. The educational needs of all pupils are addressed effectively and, if appropriate, pupils are able to follow a work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11. These pupils have also been allocated an industrial mentor. Qualified counsellors provide a voluntary service to the school on a daily basis that is available to pupils who are referred by their head of year.

60. Procedures for monitoring the personal development and academic progress of pupils are good. Form tutors stay with their tutor group throughout their time at the school and know their pupils well. The role of the form tutor includes monitoring the academic and personal development of their pupils and helping them with setting targets to improve their overall level of attainment. The emphasis is on encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for managing their own learning. There is a consistency of approach and commitment from form tutors in carrying out this important role which has recently been introduced. The introduction of computerised systems to manage and monitor assessment has enabled the school to identify pupils who are underachieving. Form tutors carry out individual interviews to monitor and review targets set on a termly basis but there is flexibility for more individual support if the need arises. Year 11 pupils are also well mentored by a member of the senior leadership team to support their preparation for GCSE examinations. Homework Clubs run after school every day where teachers are available to help pupils. These are held in the Learning Resource Centre and pupils are also able to access information technology to support their studies or just have a quiet environment in which to work. Many departments run lunchtime study sessions and teachers willingly give their time to supporting pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their work. Specific lessons are given after school to Year 11 pupils during the Spring and Summer terms which helps them to effectively prepare for their GCSE examinations.

61. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The school has high expectations of behaviour based on self-discipline and respect for others. Pupils are aware of the consequences of misbehaviour and clear about the sanctions it attracts. Members of staff are fair and consistent in the application of sanctions. The topic of bullying is addressed through many subject areas such as drama and also within life skills lessons. Pupils are clear about what action to take if incidents occur. The procedures for dealing with bullying ensure that any reported incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The governing body is appropriately involved in the exclusion of pupils and procedures are clear. This sanction is fairly administered and reserved for those pupils who seriously and consistently breach the school's code of conduct. The school has recently invested in a support centre that identifies pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who historically have been at risk of exclusion. A range of

strategies is being developed, with the help of outside agencies, to support these pupils and ensure that they are able to continue with their education and not disrupt their learning or the learning of others.

62. The monitoring and promoting of attendance is very good and includes active governor involvement. Pupils whose attendance level is poor, or who have any unauthorised absence, are identified and monitored. Reasons for non-attendance are sought and acted upon and the school seeks to provide an environment that encourages pupils' attendance. There is an effective re-integration programme for pupils who have had periods of non-attendance that identifies missed key skills and concepts and enables pupils to be able to rejoin lessons with confidence. Incidents of lateness for registration are rigorously followed up and the main entrance is monitored by members of the senior management team at the start of the school day. The recent implementation of a computerised registration system has assisted the school in identifying trends in non-attendance before they become a problem. There is an effective partnership between the school and the Education Social Worker who actively supports the school in this aspect of its work and gives generously of his time and expertise. Planning is in place for him to run group sessions promoting improved attendance. A significant strength of the school is the commitment to creating an environment where pupils want to come to school and has been a factor in raising the overall level of attendance of pupils since the previous inspection. A mountain bike is awarded at the end of the school year for 100 per cent attendance and punctuality. The procedures for recording late arriving pupils, and for those leaving the school premises during the school day, are satisfactory.

63. Child protection procedures are very good. The designated person has received appropriate training in all aspects of child protection. Arrangements are in place for all members of staff to receive awareness-raising training on an annual basis and it is part of the induction programme for new members of staff. The procedures for staff to follow if incidents occur are well documented in the staff handbook.

64. There are members of staff with first aid qualifications and the medical care pupils receive is good. Currently the school is reviewing its provision in this area. The school canteen provides a good range of hot and cold meals at lunchtime and pupils are able to eat their food in convivial surroundings. A breakfast club runs from 08.00 hours and is free to pupils.

65. Arrangements for health and safety within the school are satisfactory. Regular fire drills are held and recorded and regular safety audits carried out. There is a governor with responsibility for health and safety. Risk assessments have not been carried out in all subject areas.

70. **Partnership with parents and the community**

66. The partnership between the school, its parents and the community is very good. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection in enlisting parental support for pupils' learning, attendance and their contribution to school life generally. At the parents' meeting before the inspection parents emphasised that they felt they could approach the school and felt welcome when they did so. They value the headteacher's skills in encouraging parents to become more involved with the school. Parents serve the school well as members of the governing body. Many parents help within the school undertaking a range of tasks. The thriving Parent Teacher Association raises funds that enhance the resources of the school and has been particularly active in raising funds to support the school's bid for specialist school and Education Action Zone status. They have also organised information evenings for parents on topics such as drugs education. The governing body, staff and pupils value their contribution that supports the school in its work and enriches its resources.

67. The school provides very good information for its parents. They are informed about events that have occurred or the success of its pupils through the regular newsletters that include

contributions by pupils. Parents are expected to take an active role in monitoring the completion of both homework and course work. If problems occur parents are contacted and work in partnership with the school to resolve them. The parents of pupils exhibiting behavioural difficulties are invited to sit with their child in lessons to support the plan to improve behaviour that has been agreed with them. Annual consultation days give parents the opportunity of discussing their child's academic and personal development on an individual basis with form tutors. Parents are offered a twenty minute appointment throughout the day and 98 per cent of parents take up this opportunity. Information evenings for parents, which are also attended by representatives of the career service, provide valuable guidance for pupils and parents when choosing both GCSE and post-16 options. Parents receive termly work reviews that inform them of their child's progress and attainment. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved with their annual reviews.

68. The links with partner schools are generally satisfactory. Curriculum links are in the process of being developed with all partner feeder schools to ensure smooth transition across the key stage. There is an inconsistency between schools in the quality of these at present. Colleges of further education are invited to take part in post-16 choices events. Relationships with external support agencies are very effective and support the school in its work.
69. Links with the community are good. There is a wide variety of visits that enrich the curriculum and are positively promoted to widen pupils' experience. Year 7 pupils attend a residential camp within their first month and benefit from a range of new experiences that promote very well their personal development and promote a supportive group ethos. Visits to the theatre and art exhibitions are a regular feature of the curriculum. After-school visits to major sporting events are also arranged. The local area is used effectively to support fieldwork in both history and geography. Exchange visits to France and Germany help pupils to develop their linguistic skills and understand the culture of these countries. There are excellent links with the local business community who help prepare pupils for work experience, take part in 'industry days' and offer support in many other ways such as sponsoring a literacy drive within the school. Year 10 pupils undertake two weeks' work experience. At present there are 50 mentors from local business and industry who provide support to pupils. These contacts provide positive role models for pupils and deepen their understanding of the world of work and careers open to them. Local business is also providing sponsorship to support the school in its bid for specialist arts status.
70. The local community is regarded as an extension of the school community. Active work promoting this link is a recurring feature of school life and there are many initiatives in place. A Summer Literacy Scheme is helping Year 6 pupils to raise their level of attainment and their parents are taught how best to support their child. The Health Authority has provided funding for the Breakfast Club. Community funding through the Sure Start Programme is to be used to develop an Arts Centre in the school grounds that will address the needs of the community and also benefit pupils.

75. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

75. **Leadership and management**

71. Leadership and management across the school are very good. There have been major improvements since the last inspection, most of which have occurred since the current headteacher's appointment in January 1997. He provides excellent leadership and is well supported by a very hardworking senior management team.
72. The headteacher has led a fundamental review of what the school intends to achieve, led a thorough revision of schemes of work as part of a school strategy to improve the quality of

teaching, worked closely and successfully with his governing body and all staff to redefine their roles, increased their level of involvement and raised the profile of the school within the local community. As a result there is now a strong unity of purpose across the school, very effective teamwork and an increasingly effective involvement of governors as both 'critical friend' and supporters of the school. Individual governors are now linked to particular subjects and there is a shared commitment across the staff to raise attainment and meet the needs of all pupils. This is well illustrated in the school-wide commitment to improving the quality of teaching through regular monitoring. The senior leadership team provides effective support and has been particularly successful in promoting a renewal of confidence in both teachers and pupils that the school's challenging targets can be achieved and even exceeded. Heads of subject and pastoral leaders provide good, and sometimes very good, leadership within their areas of responsibility and contribute to the strategic management of school improvement through well considered development plans. Such unity of purpose is a real strength of the school.

73. The governing body has addressed well the large number of issues raised at the time of the last inspection. Working closely with the headteacher, they have also supported the school's determination to raise standards, improve pupils' attitudes and raise both their expectations and their confidence. However, despite the introduction of a 'thought for the week' within tutorial time, the statutory requirement to provide for a daily act of collective worship is still not met consistently across the school. All other statutory requirements are fully met.
74. There have been major improvements in the monitoring and support of teaching since the last inspection. Current arrangements are very good. There is an effective programme of visits by governors and team leaders report regularly to the governing body on progress made. The well managed programme of opportunities for teachers to observe good practice is helping to raise the standards of teaching across the school. The use of computerised systems to monitor pupils' attainment and progress is also very effective. It provides regular information to subject teachers, pupils and their parents. Pupils are well aware of their current levels of attainment and their targets. The highly effective management of these arrangements is a further strength of the school.
75. Arrangements to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs are well managed. The co-ordinator ensures that the statutory requirements of the Code of Practice are fully met, ensuring that teachers are kept fully informed of pupils' needs supporting subject departments in adapting teaching materials to meet particular needs. The deployment of learning support assistants is well managed. Records of progress, including assessment data, are maintained carefully and support both monitoring and annual reviews. However, assessment results are insufficiently analysed to inform a thorough evaluation of the current patterns of provision.
76. There is now a much greater emphasis on strategic planning than at the time of the last inspection. The school's priorities are emphasised in the school development plan. These are also well linked to the local authority education development plan. The plan provides precise targets, identifies necessary training needs and defines responsibilities and timescales clearly. Governors have a good level of understanding of the plan and an increasingly effective role in its monitoring through a range of committees. There are appropriate arrangements to monitor and evaluate objectives and the important role of working parties in creating sections of the plan and in monitoring its implementation is a particularly strong feature. The links between the whole-school plan and curriculum team and year plans further promote its consistent implementation in both the academic and pastoral aspects of school life. Although broad costings are considered by the senior management team and the governing body the school is aware that the current plan lacks the necessary degree of detailed costing. The school development plan defines a challenging programme for school improvement and the evidence of the inspection supports the view that it has been particularly effective in supporting improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes, helping the school to concentrate on clear targets to improve teaching and learning and, as a result, raise attainment.

77. The Blake School's statements of intent define its aims clearly and these are well understood by pupils and teachers. There is a comprehensive range of policies. These are applied consistently across the school. There has been a thorough revision of job descriptions since the appointment of the new headteacher. Roles are now much more clearly understood and this has further contributed to widening staff involvement in the management of the school and a consistently high level of shared commitment to raise the standards of all pupils. As a result, a very positive ethos founded on mutual respect and committed to raising attainment, pervades the school. In managing the curriculum, great care is taken to ensure that equality of opportunity is provided for all. The improved provision of a work-related curriculum for lower attaining pupils, many of whom have special educational needs, between the ages of 14 and 16 has been well managed and is an important feature of the school commitment to providing success and promoting confidence in all its pupils. Given the very low levels of attainment on entry to the school, significant improvements in test and examination results are a long-term objective. However, there is strong evidence in lessons that the school is on line to achieve, and even exceed, its targets. Very good leadership and management has successfully transformed the attitudes of teachers and pupils across the school.

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

82. ***Staffing***

78. The overall match of the number, qualifications and experience of the staff to the demands of the curriculum is generally good. There are thirty-two full-time and two part-time qualified teachers. There is just one unqualified teacher, who has ten years teaching experience and two newly qualified teachers. This provides an overall pupil to teacher ratio of 16:1, which is below average for comprehensive schools. Those with additional responsibilities have adequate non-teaching time to fulfil their roles. Staff are experienced with over two-thirds having taught for over ten years; half have taught in the school for ten years or more and only six have less than two years teaching experience. This has brought stability, enhanced by a low turnover in the last two years, and has also improved the balance between experienced and recently qualified staff.

79. The match between teachers' qualifications and subjects taught has improved since the last inspection and criticisms made then have been addressed: there is now a head of religious education and a full-time, qualified head of music. All other staff are suitably qualified and nearly all teach in their specialist area. Where they do not, there is no adverse effect on standards.

80. There is also a good match between the demands of the curriculum and the number, qualifications and experience of educational support staff. Although the expenditure on education support staff is very high compared with similar schools, it is used well to meet curriculum demands. Learning support staff for special educational needs are experienced and well deployed. The eight learning support assistants provide 160 hours of effective support a week, which is well above the national average. This is much valued by many departments in helping to address the weaknesses in literacy in particular. There is a full-time manager of the recently opened learning resources centre who is committed to making it a success. This enables individuals or groups of pupils during lesson time to do research and to develop their study skills. Technician support is good and well qualified in design and technology, including information and communication technology, and in science. There is a good level of peripatetic provision for 102 pupils within music.

81. The school is well served by its administrative and clerical staff, who make an important contribution to its smooth running. They are well deployed to give valuable assistance with the administration of assessment procedures, work experience arrangements and annual reviews for pupils who have special educational needs.

82. There are very good procedures for all aspects of staff support and professional development. The induction of newly qualified and newly appointed staff is very effectively organised by one of the senior leadership team. It includes a centralised programme in conjunction with the LEA and close mentoring by line managers, including classroom observation. Newly qualified teachers feel well supported. The comprehensive staff handbook provides comprehensive information and clear guidance on school matters. Up-to-date job descriptions are in place.

83. There is a thorough and effective staff development policy. The former appraisal system has been replaced by a very effective monitoring, evaluation and support policy. This involves well-organised annual monitoring of all teachers by senior staff and line managers through two classroom observations and a review meeting with the headteacher. The dissemination of good practice is also effectively promoted through the work of the Teaching and Learning Working Party, with a number of teachers volunteering their lessons for observation. A good, consultative system exists for establishing priorities in relation to school, departmental and personal training needs. Much school-based training has been organised on issues raised in the last inspection, such as assessment, teaching and learning and information and communications technology. Provision for training across departments is good overall and a careful evaluation of courses attended is kept and, if necessary, responded to. Evaluation of the impact of the training on teaching and learning is regularly monitored through the monitoring, evaluation and support procedures.

88. ***Accommodation***

84. The strengths of the accommodation are the new learning resource centre, the good information communication technology rooms, and the good sports hall and outdoor facilities. The quality of accommodation provided for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Good provision exists for mathematics, geography, history and design and technology. The good display and internal decoration of the building, as well as the improved hard play areas, ensure a stimulating learning environment in most parts of the school.

85. Although many teaching areas are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum and there are good examples of display in many subject departments and on corridors, aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory in several subject areas. The outdated laboratories in science have inadequate storage arrangements, the poor acoustics in the modern foreign languages classrooms are unsatisfactory and in music there is one unsatisfactory teaching room with a noisy heating system. There are cramped conditions in art. These unsatisfactory conditions limit pupils' progress in these subject areas. There is no provision for the physically disabled.

86. The building and grounds are generally well-maintained, although uneven paving stones and the rotting staging outside one temporary building, are identified problem areas. Since the last inspection the governors and senior managers have made good progress in addressing the issues raised, with all subject rooms grouped and most teaching done in specialist rooms. The refurbished boys' and girls' toilets are particularly good facilities. A security system has been introduced and new fencing built round the perimeter. Dining facilities are adequate. Good use is made of off-site facilities.

91. ***Resources***

87. The school has made considerable efforts to improve resources since the last inspection. There are now two new information communication technology (ICT) suites in addition to the older ICT suite available at the last inspection. The new suites are very well equipped with networked personal computers and multimedia provision. The under-used library reported at the last inspection has been completely refurbished, restocked and equipped with six computers and CD-Rom facilities that are linked to the network. It is a well managed resource. Display space in

the school has been improved and is seen as a valuable resource with a teacher responsible for its use throughout the school.

88. When the school was last inspected, in 1995, there were sufficient resources in most departments with minor resource needs in technology, humanities, art, music and physical education. Changes in the curriculum, the popularity of subjects, and further developments in teaching and learning methods have increased pressure on resources and overall provision is unsatisfactory. Religious education and music are under-resourced; geography has insufficient books and atlases. The library needs more non-fiction texts that are suitable for lower attaining readers. English is building new classroom libraries and needs class readers and verse collections. Drama needs light and sound equipment. Art supplements its resources from the library and with good resources borrowed from the Taunton Resources Centre and makes good use of artists in residence. Several departments, for example design and technology and science, have very good, photocopied, work books which are valuable resources but in common with some other departments they do not have sufficient textbooks for pupils to take home. Design technology machines and tools are in good supply and well maintained, apart from a milling machine that the department cannot afford to repair. The number of computers has increased significantly since the last inspection but some departments cannot use them fully until the next phase of networking and equipping can be funded.

89. The school makes impressive use of outside resources with many off-site visits, including Year 7 and Year 9 camps, theatre, museum, gallery and sports visits. Field and coursework trips in science, history, art and geography are made. A full programme of work experience and career visits, together with a large number of industrial mentors, indicate the extent to which the school makes very good use of local resources. Funding for resources has been restricted. The school has spent wisely in key areas to support its changing curriculum, its much improved ethos and its now consistently good teaching.

94. **The efficiency of the school**

90. The school is currently operating a deficit budget as a result of over-spending prior to the appointment of the current headteacher. This has increased further this year but the long-term resolution of this problem has been agreed with the local education authority. The quality of financial planning is now good and the governing body in consultation with the local education authority has drawn up a five-year financial plan that will enable the deficit to be cleared without reducing provision for pupils currently at the school. The school has worked very hard to acquire additional funding and this is very well used to support the development plan priorities. The finance committee of the governing body monitors expenditure carefully and is beginning to evaluate the outcomes of its decisions. Expenditure is linked to the school priorities although this needs to be expressed in more detail within the school development plan. The staff development budget is well used and expenditure decisions agreed in consultation with subject leaders. The budget for special educational needs is managed most carefully and results in a very good level of provision. The additional expenditure on support assistants in class is very effective and is helping to raise standards.

91. Resources are well used across the school although in several subjects, including religious education, geography and music, limited expenditure over several years has resulted in an unsatisfactory level of provision. Provision for information technology is good and the computer facilities are well used. However, their use within different subjects remains limited. Staffing is well deployed across the school and good use is made of existing accommodation. However, facilities for music, modern foreign languages and art are unsatisfactory.

92. The financial controls are very good and the issues raised in the most recent auditor's report have been addressed promptly. Inventories have been revised and all necessary procedures are now in place. The business manager is a member of the senior leadership team and this ensures that the financial implications of planning decisions can be immediately identified.

93. The school's income per pupil is above the national average and reflects their below average socio-economic circumstances and additional funding for schools of below average size. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average. Planned expenditure reflects the high priority that the school places upon raising standards by improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This is resulting in good progress at both key stages. Pupils' personal development is very good and results from the very good provision made for their welfare and guidance. Teaching is good across the school and care has been taken to broaden the curriculum at Key Stage 4 in order to meet the needs of all pupils. For these reasons, The Blake School gives good value for money.

98. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

98. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

98. **English**

94. Sixty-six per cent of pupils attained the national expectation or better in the 1999 statutory national tests. This was just above the national average, 63 per cent, and well above the average for similar schools. In recent years, results have improved. Girls attain more highly than boys by a wider margin than is found nationally. In GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C, 36 per cent, was well below the national average but matched the results of similar schools. This represents an improving trend. Attainment in English literature in 1999 was well below the national average. Twenty-three per cent gained grades A*-C. This was well below the national average and much lower than in 1998. There is insufficient evidence to explain the differences in attainment in the two subjects in 1999.
95. Attainment overall is below national expectations at the end of both key stages but, in each year group, the attainment of some pupils is much higher than is typical for their age nationally. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other with good understanding. These skills improve over time. If unsure about tasks, they ask for clarification. They speak clearly and confidently in class discussion and especially when working in pairs or small groups. Encouragement of these skills begins early in Year 7 and helps effective learning in later years. Few pupils are confident in developing ideas at length in speech and most are limited by restricted vocabularies, but, when given appropriate opportunities, they make sound progress. Pupils increasingly become able to read with satisfactory understanding of the general sense. Only a small minority recognise significant detail or understand at more than a factual level without considerable assistance from teachers. Opportunities for highlighting and note-making improve these skills. The small minority of higher attaining pupils achieve standards in writing that are above the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 3. However, standards overall are below the national expectation. At Key Stage 4, pupils become able to write appropriately for a widening range of purposes. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate very good levels of skill. At both key stages, the work of the majority is flawed by the persistence of basic, technical errors. There is some confusion in the use of capital letters and frequent misspelling of common words, failures of punctuation in sentence construction and errors of elementary grammar. The effectiveness of written work, even of some otherwise capable pupils, is reduced by the frequency of such errors.
96. Attainment on entry to the school at the age of 11 is well below the national average. Except in overcoming technical weaknesses in their writing, many pupils make good progress in lessons and over time by the age of 14. Progress is slower over time between the ages of 14 and 16 because many lower attaining pupils find it difficult to retain the knowledge and understanding that they gain in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported, teachers understand the nature of their difficulties and prepare work well to improve their basic skills. Good progress results from the positive attitudes of almost all pupils, and the quality of their response to the targets set for them by skilful teachers with whom they enjoy good relationships. In only one lesson in Year 11 did poor behaviour by some girls interfere with progress. A particularly good example of high levels of interest leading to very good progress occurred in a Year 7 class learning to use adjectives to enrich their writing.
97. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. In lessons seen it was invariably good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and attainment though in Year 7 this is not yet based upon full awareness of pupils' experience in primary schools. They have good understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses. They are careful to explain tasks clearly, linking lessons to previous and future work. They use a good range of questioning techniques both to confirm and extend understanding and to encourage all pupils to contribute to activities. Lessons are skilfully structured so that all the key

skills are developed and there is variety to sustain interest. Lessons are conducted at a crisp pace, often with testing time limits for each activity. Relationships with pupils are friendly but firm thus promoting effective teaching and learning. There is a good balance of individual, pair, group and whole-class work. The quality of marking is a significant strength. It is usually detailed, indicates successful features and sets targets for future work to which pupils at all levels of attainment, and especially the higher attainers, respond positively. Homework is set regularly and relates to work done in class. Many pupils lack confidence and find it difficult to retain what they learn in lessons. As a result the good teaching does not always result in similarly good progress.

98. Leadership of the department is clear-sighted, energetic and highly supportive of colleagues. Teachers are consistent in their aims to support the progress of all pupils and in their use of similar teaching strategies. There has been a good response to the recommendation of the previous report that pupils should have more opportunities to make choices with an increased provision of group work and an extended range of texts for individual reading. There is a need to extend the range of class readers, both fiction and verse, to widen pupils' experience further. The department provides pupils with opportunities to use information technology but does not make a planned contribution to their development of capability in information technology. The department recognises the need to improve strategies to raise levels of reading with understanding and writing with accuracy and is contributing to the development of whole-school plans to meet this need.

103. **Mathematics**

99. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment in mathematics. The pupils who took the 1999 tests entered the school with even lower than usual test results. Results in the 1999 statutory national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were still below the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils attaining Level 6, 23 per cent, and well below for the percentage attaining Level 5 or better, 42 per cent. The 1998 Key Stage 3 test results, whilst below average, were better than those for 1999. GCSE examination results in 1999 were at the national average for the proportion gaining A*-C but above average for the percentage gaining A*-G. In comparison with similar schools, attainment is very high at the age of 16. Since 1996 there has been an improving trend in standards achieved. The relative performance of boys and girls has fluctuated widely over the same period.
100. Attainment overall is broadly in line with national expectations. It is below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and in line by the end of Key Stage 4. The work seen in classes of current pupils was overall below average in Key Stage 3. Attainment is average at Key Stage 4, with Year 11 marginally above average and Year 10 below. There is a weakness in numeracy and pupils rely too much on calculators, at times out of habit. Even in an upper set in Year 11 a calculator was used to find the square root of 25. In another class some pupils were unable to find $130 \div 100 \times 100$ without a calculator. Basic understanding of number is often very poor in some lower sets. The department is well aware of these problems and has planned to improve numeracy with the result that standards of mental arithmetic are commonly better now in Key Stage 3 than with the current Key Stage 4. The numeracy policy for the whole school is starting to raise standards. Attainment is clearly rising and there is evidence of slowly improving knowledge and understanding across all attainment targets. This is helped by good assessment arrangements that identify the help that is needed to overcome each pupil's difficulties, including those pupils who have special educational needs.
101. The progress of all pupils is good overall at both key stages, including those who have special educational needs. It was very good in approximately half of the lessons seen. There was only one group of pupils in Year 7 who made unsatisfactory progress. Their understanding of new concepts was inhibited by very poor numeracy, poor reading ability and lack of motivation and concentration. The teacher's efforts and time was diverted to bringing pupils back to task and having to revise basic numeracy. The one hour lessons were slightly too long for the lower

attaining pupils to sustain full concentration despite the good efforts of teachers to introduce considerable variety of activity. The good and very good progress was a direct result of the quality of teaching and pupils' generally good motivation and concentration. Good planning, clear presentation of concepts with explicit statements of National Curriculum levels for each topic all helped, together with regular homework and detailed marking.

102. The attitude of pupils to mathematics is good overall. In just over half the lessons it was very good. There was only one group where pupils did not exhibit a satisfactory response, lacking interest and concentration and wasting time. Behaviour is normally very good and pupils are interested in the subject, working hard throughout lessons with a good level of concentration. There was some tendency for concentration to wane towards the end of lessons with some lower sets. Most pupils are developing a competence and confidence in the subject well above that which they had at entry to the school. Few pupils have much ability at independent study but willingly respond to the enthusiastic encouragement of their teachers.
103. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It was very good in over half of the lessons inspected. It was never unsatisfactory. Well planned activities and very good management of pupils are important reasons why the good teaching results in good progress. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject was contagious and produced a high level of interest and motivation in their pupils. The friendly but firm approach with clear statements of expectations in each lesson led to excellent relationships and a shared commitment to make progress. Teachers know their subject and present new concepts with clarity using a wide range of visual aids and activities appropriate to each group. For example the overhead projector was used well in lessons to help explain orders of symmetry to a lower set, vectors to an upper set and graphical presentation to another. Some of this very good teaching demonstrated how relatively complex new ideas can be explained simply using appropriate visual aids. Teachers' expectations are high and targeted for every pupil, most of whom attain above their own early expectations. Planning is thorough for each lesson and homework. Class teaching methods combine both the 'traditional' and the innovative to good effect. For example most lessons start with a whole-class review of the previous lesson and use oral questions well to link this to the new work. Teachers confirm pupils' understanding well before moving to this next stage. Pupils are given written or practical activities to consolidate their new knowledge and understanding and to develop skills. Lessons normally involve a variety of activities to ensure sustained concentration and maximise progress. In a set of lower attaining pupils on range and averages the teacher used a novel approach to show how to rearrange the numbers and determine range, median and mode. Each pupil was given a number and they had to move with it into ascending order. It was simple and effectively tailored to the needs of the particular set of pupils. Day-to-day assessment is good and exercise books show that the regular homework is well marked. Pupils are encouraged with praise both in lessons and by written comments in exercise books.
104. Mathematics has adequate time at both key stages. Setting from the start of Year 7 as a result of tests set by the school is a positive benefit in helping pupils progress as fast as possible. There is flexibility in setting to allow adjustments when needed. Pupils are generally well challenged in each set. Subject leadership is excellent and the department work very well as a team in their development planning, target setting and aims for the future. The quality of leadership and good teaching is an encouragement and inspiration to pupils to attain. The department has improved since the last inspection and is well placed to continue this trend. It is very efficient and effective in enabling pupils to make good progress.
109. **Science**
105. Attainment in the statutory national tests in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below the national average. Thirty-four per cent of pupils attained Level 5. Fifty-five per cent did so nationally. Very few pupils, 6 per cent, attained higher than the national expectation. This also was well below the national average of 23 per cent. These results were also below the average for similar schools. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, all pupils entered and attained an A*-G

grade which is above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C, 32 per cent, is well below the national average but above average for similar schools. Girls performed better than boys but both were below their respective national averages.

106. Attainment is currently in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 and below at the end of Key Stage 4. Attainment overall is below national expectations. In lessons at Key Stage 3 attainment is above national expectations in some top sets, for example in Year 8. In lower sets, particularly in Year 7, attainment is well below expectations. By Year 9 attainment is higher overall, and above expectations in the top sets. In the classes seen at Key Stage 4, attainment was good or very good in the top sets, including the option group which is taking three separate sciences, but ranged from below average to well below average in other groups.
107. Attainment on entry to the school is very low. Only a minority have previously achieved the national expectation, Level 4, and practical skills are weak. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in lessons at both key stages. However, progress over time is slower between the ages of fourteen and sixteen as many pupils cannot recall and readily apply what has been learnt previously. Progress ranged from satisfactory to excellent in all but two classes. In a Year 11 class progress was inhibited by pupils' lack of confidence in their written language and in a Year 7 class, poorly developed manual skills slowed practical work. Where progress is good, teachers use great skill in developing pupils' knowledge of key words and, more importantly, their ability to use extended talk to understand and internalise ideas.
108. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Overall it is very good. In lessons seen during the inspection it was very good or better in two-thirds of lessons and never less than satisfactory. All teachers are knowledgeable and plan and prepare lessons well. Instructions at the beginning of lessons and pulling together experiences towards the end of lessons are usually clear. Teachers manage the short attention span of some groups very skilfully using a wide range of appropriate strategies, often within a single lesson. One very good lesson introducing insects began with a short extract from 'The Flight of the Bumble Bee' and included a reading by the teacher about bees, on which pupils made notes and then answered comprehension questions; the lesson ended with an opportunity for individual learning using a CD-ROM encyclopaedia. Work is well differentiated by individual and group discussion with teachers. Teachers work very hard to develop pupils' language, but in many classes weaknesses in literacy slow down pupils' progress. There is evidence that in-service training has heightened teachers' awareness of the problem and developed their skills. A particular strength of teaching is that lessons are related to real life. For example, neutralisation of acid was carried out with proprietary anti-acid tablets and another lesson on earth materials was introduced with a study of locally made bricks and tiles. Effective help from classroom support assistants is given in Key Stage 3. Individual education plans are well used in science and often have a special science section. Pupils who have special educational needs all attained a grade in the 1999 GCSE. Homework is set and marked regularly. Staff are generous with their time, running after-school 'clinics' and GCSE revision for part of the year, science enrichment groups, and a Year 8 science project day. Staff also organise visits to the Science Museum, Faraday and Christmas Science Lectures, environmental conferences, and Further Education science departments. The Salters' Science competition is well used to extend able pupils.
109. Behaviour is always good. The majority of pupils respond well in class and relationships are very good. Where response is less good it is often related to language problems with pupils trying to disguise a lack of confidence in their ability to write. In order to raise standards there is a need to develop lower attaining boys' ability to talk and write confidently about science.
110. The department is very well led. There is a very good development plan that includes a clear strategy to raise standards. The effective assessment and recording system links school topic tests to GCSE grades, enabling past information to be used for grade prediction and the planning of any necessary extra help. Laboratories need some refurbishment, for example tap and cupboard door repairs; the layout of one laboratory inhibits teacher movement. Laboratory

displays include pupils' work and key words to help spelling and scientific vocabulary. Expenditure is low and ageing equipment cannot readily be replaced; this affects learning, for example old glass blocks are so chipped that their use is difficult. Science needs new equipment if it is to play its full role in the development and application of skills in information technology.

115. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

115. Art

111. Eighty-four per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation in the 1999 statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. This was above the national average. Over the period 1997-1999, GCSE results have fluctuated. Results were significantly below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in 1997 and 1999 but nearer to the national average in 1998. The proportion of grades A*-G obtained was in line with the national average in 1997 and above it in 1999. Girls performed significantly better than boys in the grade range A*-C in 1998 but there was an improvement in boys' results in 1999.

112. Attainment overall is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in drawing and painting is in line with expectations, although their knowledge and understanding of artists' styles and their ability to organise their time and work independently of the teacher, are below what might be expected, even in practical activities. Many lack the confidence to express their ideas orally. In Year 9 higher attainers have good knowledge and understanding of two-point perspective and are able to relate past learning to their present task, but middle and lower attainers reveal a reluctance and in some cases an inability to remember processes covered and apply knowledge.

113. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment in applying art techniques, and in thinking creatively and independently, within the framework provided, is in line with national expectations overall and occasionally above. In Year 11 higher attaining pupils benefit from enrichment activities such as gallery visits and are able to use such experiences to extend their own work. Examples of above average attainment were evident in the large pastel studies of sea creatures as well as some animation sequences. Other pupils are given the same opportunities but their lower motivation and lack of time management skills prevent many from making the best of the experiences offered.

114. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 make good progress as they observe and make pencil studies of pheasants. In Year 7 the progress of potentially higher attaining pupils in facial drawing is well supported by opportunities to understand the human skeleton and relate this knowledge to their own drawing. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress in skill development in Years 7 and 8. Their good progress is well-supported by very careful lesson planning, including the use of computer resources. Progress slows in Year 9 as they display a reluctance to think more independently. Pupils' literacy development is not well supported in this key stage, for although key words are displayed and there are some opportunities for group evaluation, there is little time for extended discussion, either as a whole class or in small groups, or for pupils to share their ideas with each other.

115. Progress at Key Stage 4, in lessons seen, was good overall. During the inspection satisfactory or good progress is evident in the Year 10 personal identity project, both in the wide range of interpretations and the materials chosen, as well as the way pupils manage their time within the lesson. In the Year 11 garden project progress is more variable, with the majority of pupils keenly interested in resolving personal problems, whilst a few pupils lack motivation. This slows their progress. Weaknesses in research and development and independent enquiry skills,

highlighted in the last report, are still slowing the progress of a significant minority of pupils in this key stage.

116. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are generally good. The majority of pupils enjoy art and behave well. The exception is in a Year 9 class where immature behaviour and the excitement of using paints lead to unsatisfactory noise levels which slow progress.
117. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It was good in over half of the lessons seen and never less than satisfactory. The best teaching occurs when the teacher has planned activities to give variety and sustain interest within the hour lesson. A strength of this teaching is where teachers encourage pupils to work independently, by devising tasks which reinforce their knowledge and personal understanding as well as their skill development. Assessment procedures are good. Pupils are informed regularly about the strengths and weaknesses of their work and this supports their good progress. Teachers are well qualified, and committed to their pupils' achieving higher standards. They are confident and competent in delivering the art element within information and communication technology.
118. The accommodation, although adequate and enhanced by good displays, is cramped and this discourages the production of large-scale work. The sink is poorly positioned in a corner of the room, and window blinds are inadequate for preventing strong sunlight interfering with pupils' work. The subject is well managed. Statutory requirements are met. Since the last inspection the assessment and recording policy has been refined and multicultural resources have been improved. Lack of an art technician limits the head of department's time for monitoring teaching and for curriculum development.

123.

123. **Design and technology**

119. In the 1999 statutory national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, 18 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation. This was well below the national average, 63 per cent, and lower than in the previous year. Boys and girls do significantly better at GCSE in this subject than in most other subjects in the school. Results have improved consistently over time in all design and technology subjects. In 1999, overall results at grades A*-C and A*-G exceeded national averages, and the average points score has also been above average. There have, however, been no A* grades recently.
120. Attainment overall is below national expectations. It is below expectations at Key Stage 3 but in line with expectations at Key Stage 4. Target setting and regular end-of-unit assessments that are linked closely to National Curriculum levels of attainment are helping to raise standards. These have improved since the last inspection. Across both key stages, the making of products is the key strength of the pupils' work. They measure, mark, cut and join materials with accuracy. Products are well finished, and this generates a sense of pride amongst pupils in their work. This is reinforced by teachers who celebrate this work with some excellent displays and use pupils' work as exemplars of good practice. Pupils are encouraged to produce good working plans that set out approaches to work and give consideration to appropriate tools and materials. Across both key stages, too, pupils have a good grasp of the process of design: they use a variety of methods to generate ideas for designs and to evaluate their work. Annotation of design sketches as ideas develop has improved since the last inspection. However, there is a lack of precision in the graphic communication of ideas; pupils lack formal drawing and lettering skills which would enhance design portfolios. Also, research techniques are limited to those suggested by the teacher and to very immediate sources; pupils do not often explore wider avenues unless directed. Evidence of use of computers by pupils to help in research and in graphics is limited. Weaknesses are also evident in the breadth and depth of knowledge and skill that pupils can apply in some areas; the present Key Stage 3 curriculum offers no opportunity to work with electrical or pneumatic systems, and there is little detailed exploration of the importance of structures and forces in designing and making products. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 meets national expectations.

121. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with limited design and technology experience and low levels of attainment. They make good progress at both key stages and by the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is in line with national expectations. In Key Stage 3, they quickly acquire the basic principles of good design through very careful direction by teachers; this framework helps the high proportion of lower attaining pupils make very good progress. Higher attainers make satisfactory progress overall, particularly in the making of high quality products, but their designing skills could be improved with better research and drawing techniques. Across Key Stage 4, good progress towards the completion of GCSE coursework portfolios is consolidated by very clear guidelines and monitoring systems established by teachers and pupils. This structured approach again particularly helps the majority of lower and middle attaining pupils to make very good progress, but higher attainers do not sufficiently extend their investigation of the factors underlying the design of good products. Sensitive handling by staff ensures that pupils with special educational needs generally make progress at least as good as the groups in which they work.
122. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. There are particularly good relationships between teachers and pupils, although there is too much reliance on teachers for guidance in all aspects of work. Pupils show pride in their work, and their levels of motivation and application to task are mostly high, especially in practical sessions. Classes are very orderly, and pupils are mostly quick to set up and get working. There are also very constructive relationships between pupils, who are happy to work in groups and are ready to lend each other helpful advice and support.
123. The quality of teaching is very good. At Key Stage 3 it was very good in half of the lessons as teachers work hard to build up the individual capabilities of pupils. Teaching is good at Key Stage 4. Under clear-sighted leadership, teachers have developed effective strategies for improving the standards of pupils' work and these are evident at all levels - in the detailed analysis of the individual performance of pupils and that of the teachers themselves, in lesson structure, in the comprehensive assessment of pupil work and progress, and in the degree of individual support offered to pupils. Teachers mostly have a good level of knowledge, understanding and skill, and their lessons are well structured, with confident introductory briefings or demonstrations and units of work that are designed to generate high quality products in which pupils can take pride. Lesson time is well managed, closing with an effective review of learning points. Tools, equipment and materials are readily available for pupils who need them, but written resources within the department lack breadth and depth, and, as at the last inspection, constrain the degree of independent research which pupils can undertake. Teachers and the technician have created a pleasant and safe working environment. Marking is very thorough, with mostly consistent application of mark schemes, and good supportive comments. Homework is well used to support work done in class.
128. **Drama**
124. Drama is taught within the expressive arts department. It contributes to the assessment of pupils' skills of speaking and listening in English. In 1999, at GCSE, a small number of pupils gained very good results with 90 per cent achieving grades A*-C. There is no statutory teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3.
125. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with expectations. By then, pupils have learned the essential disciplines of the subject and can work productively in groups to plan performances. Performance skills are insecurely established and there is a need to establish a better balance with the development of planning skills. When given opportunities to rehearse and refine, pupils develop appropriate gestures and become more confident in improvisation, as was evident in a Year 9 class exploring consequences of drugs abuse. However, they have insufficient awareness of how to communicate effectively with their audience and this continues into Key Stage 4. Few are able to comment on strengths and weaknesses in their own performances or those of others.

126. Progress is generally satisfactory once pupils have recognised that development of the techniques of drama requires effort and concentration. Progress is helped by the generally positive relationships pupils have with each other. It is sometimes hindered by the inability of some pupils to sustain concentration.
127. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Lessons are well planned to build upon previous learning. Positive relationships are established with most pupils. Good use is made of questions to help pupils to explore possibilities without relying upon direction by the teacher. Sometimes, too much time is given to planning at the expense of the development of other skills which slows the pace of lessons and the progress particularly of the higher attaining pupils.

132. **Geography**

128. In the 1999 statutory national assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, 58 per cent of pupils attained the national expectation, Level 5. This was close to the national average, 61 percent. In the 1999 GCSE examination, 42 per cent of candidates obtained passes at grades A*-C. This was below the national average, 56 per cent. Ninety-five per cent obtained grades A*-G, close to the national average of 97 per cent. These results show a significant improvement since the previous inspection and a marked improvement on the 1998 results. Throughout the last three years the relative performance of boys and girls in both GCSE and National Curriculum teacher assessments has fluctuated, with neither having a marked ascendancy in any year.
129. Attainment by the majority at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations, with one quarter above. Most pupils can, for example, use statistics to describe and draw age-related population pyramids, but only a minority can also explain them. Most pupils can draw accurate climate graphs and draw simple and compound bar graphs. While about half can extract relevant information from a range of sources to compile clear notes, lower attainers have difficulty with any task that requires extended writing.
130. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment by the majority of pupils is below the national average, with a small minority in line with or above the national average. Higher attaining pupils compile clear annotated maps and diagrams. They have acquired a good technical vocabulary and produce good quality coursework, where they use basic statistical techniques to analyse their gathered data and test hypotheses. They have a good grasp of such complex ideas as the effects of trans-national companies on the economies of developing countries. However, about one third of pupils have difficulty with such concepts and, as at Key Stage 3, have difficulties with extended writing. Most pupils read fluently and with understanding from detailed texts. Numeracy skills, normally well developed among geography students, are relatively undeveloped within the subject at this school. Key Stage 4 pupils have not progressed beyond relatively simple statistical techniques.
131. Most pupils make good progress in lessons. At Key Stage 3 all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress and two thirds make good progress. At Key Stage 4 the majority make good progress in lessons but this is only sustained over time by higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils, who comprise the majority of each year group, do not retain knowledge and understanding over time and this restricts their attainment in public examinations. Relatively slower progress in the classroom occurs when the pace of lessons is slow and pupils are not challenged sufficiently. In most lessons pupils recall and consolidate earlier learning and demonstrate advances in learning when responding to end of lesson progress checks. During a Year 8 lesson on the location of industry, pupils used earlier acquired learning on industrial location in the completion of an exercise on the location of an oil refinery and the clustering of industry around it. Year 10 pupils used their existing knowledge of volcanoes to good effect when describing the effects on human activity of the Mount St. Helens eruption. Most pupils show a gradual improvement over time in such skills as drawing sketch

maps and diagrams and in investigative work.

132. Attitudes to learning are predominantly good at both key stages, enabling pupils to make good progress in lessons. Most pupils concentrate well, especially when offered a variety of tasks in lessons. They work collaboratively in pairs and small groups when given the opportunity. They relate well to each other and adults and listen attentively to each other's points of view. Their capacity for personal study and independent learning is well illustrated by the way the majority approach enquiry work and coursework. The majority behaves well, but a small number of lower attaining Key Stage 3 pupils are occasionally disruptive and adversely affect the progress of others.
133. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. In lessons seen it was never less than satisfactory and was frequently good or very good. At Key Stage 4 it was never less than good. The overall standard is higher than at the previous inspection. Classroom management and control is never less than good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of curriculum requirements. Pupils gained much from the depth of the teacher's knowledge in a Year 11 lesson on trans-national companies. Teachers provide content that is accurate and reflects current information, as in the same Year 11 lesson, when current protests in Seattle were put into context. The best teaching enthuses pupils with descriptions and explanations of places. Most teaching shows sensitivity in dealing with controversial questions such as the inequitable distribution and consumption of resources. Expectations are high in most lessons, but occasionally lower expectations and slow pace result in slower pupil progress. Lower attaining Year 9 pupils were challenged by the requirement to extract information from a detailed source in order to reach conclusions on the characteristics of population and land use in a Bristol suburb. Most lessons start with a summary of recent learning, building on pupils' existing knowledge, after which the aims of the lesson are made clear. Teachers' guidance in the use of a range of learning resources has a positive effect on learning. Marking is completed regularly and is usually accompanied by helpful comments that help pupils of all abilities to improve their work.
134. Most of the issues raised during the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. Outcomes would be improved if more thought were given to matching tasks to the needs of individual pupils, by the inclusion of more opportunities for pupils to practise their computer skills and the introduction of a greater variety of statistical techniques.
139. **History**
135. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. The proportion of pupils who reached Level 5 and above in the statutory teacher assessments in 1999 was slightly below the national average. There is no marked difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Teacher assessments over the last three years have shown a trend of gradual improvement. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below the national average as indicated by the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C at GCSE in 1999. However, the percentage attaining grades A*-G is in line with the national average. These results, which have regularly been some of the best in the school, especially in 1998, have remained broadly consistent since the time of the last inspection. Apart from 1998, when the girls outperformed the boys by a margin similar to that nationally, there has been no marked difference between boys and girls in the last three years.
136. Attainment on entry is very low. The overall level of attainment in work seen during the inspection at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. By the age of 14, nearly all pupils have a sound historical knowledge and a good understanding of chronology, an area of weakness at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of simple causes, but only higher attaining pupils can understand and successfully evaluate a number of causes. The best pupils in Year 9 can select, record and deploy evidence from different sources and can see how an event can be interpreted differently, as when examining

the machine breaking of the Luddites from two different viewpoints. However, their understanding of bias and reliability of sources is limited. Weak literacy skills of lower attainers and those with special educational needs are hampering enquiry work, especially in selecting relevant evidence from sources and note-making, unless they are provided with appropriate materials and constant classroom support to help them. Such pupils also find recall of the key facts very difficult even when they receive direct help from the teacher. Attainment overall at Key Stage 4 is below the national expectation. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the main features of the period and understand change and continuity, as when Year 10 pupils could compare the changes in medicine in different periods of history. Most higher attaining pupils have satisfactory skills of research and organisation, as seen in their course-work studies, though many lower attainers and those who have special educational needs are weak in information gathering and recording from sources and in producing detailed, extended writing, often because of limited understanding or recall of basic concepts. Middle attaining pupils have a better understanding, which they can express quite well orally but often struggle to communicate effectively on paper.

137. Pupils' progress over time is good at both key stages compared with their prior attainment. Progress in lessons at Key Stage 3 is never less than satisfactory and in half it is good or better. At Key Stage 4, it is always good and is often very good. The significant improvements, particularly at Key Stage 3, owe much to the generally high quality of teaching and expectations that make the subject both exciting and challenging for pupils of all abilities. The strong educational direction provided by the head of department, especially in promoting more varied teaching strategies to raise general learning skills as well as specific history skills, is beginning to address the serious weaknesses in literacy of many pupils when they enter the school. Increased classroom observation and the ready sharing of ideas is also helping to disseminate good practice which is having an impact on the pupils' progress. By the end of Key Stage 3, most middle, as well as higher attainers, develop satisfactory skills of enquiry and organisation, often leading to detailed and well-argued essay-writing from the very best pupils. Lower attaining pupils develop these skills more slowly with the help of writing frames, redrafting of work and effective classroom help from learning support staff. The highest attaining pupils have developed effective skills of interpretation and analysis of events, though awareness of bias and reliability of sources is less well developed. Nearly all pupils develop appropriate historical knowledge and understanding of chronology and change, though developing satisfactory factual recall in lower attainers remains a problem. At Key Stage 4, skills of note-making, extended-writing and enquiry are more fully developed in lower attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs, as seen in their coursework studies on Bloody Sunday and the Bridgwater Docks. Satisfactory knowledge of the main characteristics of the period is developed in nearly all pupils, who learn to express themselves orally with more confidence through regular group work. Higher-attaining pupils have learned to analyse sources critically and have a sounder understanding of interpretation. Such skills are less developed in middle and lower attaining pupils.
138. The attitude of pupils to work in all the lessons is good and, occasionally, very good. It is equally good at both key stages. This is a definite strength of the department and an improvement on the situation previously reported. Nearly all pupils listen attentively, settle quickly and concentrate well for the whole lesson if the learning materials match their needs and there is a good pace to the lesson. They behave well and have a very good relationship with the teacher, which is based on mutual self-respect. They co-operate with each other and show respect for each other's views and feelings, as when Year 8 pupils effectively discussed the accuracy of a cartoon strip in illustrating the Peasants' Revolt. Most pupils work well on their own and strive hard with difficult tasks, including lower attainers and those with special educational needs when appropriate in-class teaching support and materials are available. They do homework regularly, encouraged by thorough and encouraging marking, with helpful suggestions on how to improve. Most pupils across the attainment range take a pride in their work and only rarely is it left uncompleted. Nearly all pupils are well motivated and are enthusiastic about the subject, which has a large uptake in the Year 10 options.

139. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It was good in two-thirds of lessons. Occasionally it was very good or excellent. It was never less than satisfactory. It was best at Key Stage 4, where it was always good or better. This is a marked improvement compared with the situation previously reported, when half of the lessons at Key Stage 3 were unsatisfactory. This has clearly contributed to raising the level of attainment and progress, especially at Key Stage 3. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons are well planned with learning objectives clearly explained to the pupils and high expectations set. Classroom management and control are good with high standards of discipline. There are very good relationships with the pupils, usually combining firmness and humour, and based on a strong desire to help pupils of all abilities. A wider variety of teaching strategies is now used, promoted by the recently revised and well designed schemes of work. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing history skills and basic learning skills and encouraging more individual enquiry and problem solving by the pupils. Teachers encourage empathy in activities and writing, often in an exciting way. For instance, Year 9 pupils had to describe a street scene in 19th century London through the eyes, nose and ears of one of the figures in a well-chosen picture of the time and a teacher dressed up as a renaissance medical innovator to explain the importance of his discovery to a Year 10 audience. Materials are being provided which match the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, though Year 7 pupils need more structured guidance in enquiry skills in their project on 'Life through the Ages'. Progress is also carefully monitored through regular assessments, moderated to National Curriculum levels, which most pupils understand. The head of department is well aware of the need for developments in the use of information and communications technology and history trips as additional resources in order to promote further the good progress already made in the quality of teaching.

Information technology

140. Overall standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 meet national expectations. In the 1999 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, 57 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation, Level 5. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are able to show a sense of their audience and purpose in the presentation of information, and demonstrate a high degree of confidence in the use of office standard applications. They are able to move between applications with ease, importing and exporting documents, and using tools within programs skilfully to refine their work. They build and use databases well. Pupils also have good keyboarding skills as a result of making use of multi-media tutorial packages in school, especially in Year 7. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment overall meets national expectations. On the discreet information technology key skills programme, followed by all pupils, attainment exceeds expectations as pupils use their confidence in office applications to complete a well-structured and administered course. In 1999 60 per cent of pupils completed this programme to Level II. All pupils are currently working at Level II standards in most aspects of their work, and higher attainers in Year 11 have already completed their portfolios. The GCSE course is new, and there have been no results yet. Standards are below national expectation; a high proportion of pupils are constrained in explaining systems and processes by literacy and numeracy difficulties, and coursework investigations and solutions lack depth; but pupils again show confidence in using machines and software. Across both key stages, there remains insufficient opportunity for pupils to apply information technology in other subjects to help them improve their learning; at Key Stage 4 this creates particular weaknesses in pupils' capabilities in using computers for control and measurement tasks, and for creating and manipulating spreadsheets.

141. Progress is good by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils of all levels of ability develop very high levels of confidence with office applications in particular, underpinned by good basic skills in keyboarding and use of application tools. They are helped by materials in the discrete information technology course that provide a well sequenced series of tasks for lower attainers yet also offer challenge to higher attainers. Resources currently place some constraints on progress, because pupils use different systems in Year 9 and spend some time repeating skills and processes. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in other subjects, and there is therefore insufficient reinforcement of the good work done in information

technology lessons. In maths and English, computers are used effectively in numeracy and literacy programmes, and there are instances of computers being used in other subjects such as science, art and design and technology; but pupils do not systematically use information technology to help them research, organise and present information in other subjects.

142. At Key Stage 4 overall progress is satisfactory. It is good in the key skills programme as pupils acquire valuable skills in the preparation of business documentation; though an exception occurs in a large Year 11 class where pupils who do not have access to computers and spend time undertaking copying tasks of limited value. Progress of pupils in the application of information technology to their learning in other subjects at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient planning for the use of information technology in subject schemes of work, and limited availability of computers and other resources for independent study outside class time. Development plans are in place which address these issues in response to the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. However, much remains to be done. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages, deploying information technology to help in a variety of ways, such as in the use of literacy and numeracy programmes, and in the use of laptops to help in written communication and the organisation of work.
143. Attitudes and behaviour in information technology lessons are very good. Pupils at both key stages show a good deal of responsibility in organising their work in order to meet the performance criteria set for them, and much perseverance in completing their tasks. There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils rarely turn to the teacher immediately for help; the teacher is then able to circulate, offering constructive advice on how work can be improved as it proceeds. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was 'over-controlled'. There are also constructive relationships between pupils, who are always ready to lend each other helpful advice and support.
144. Teaching of information technology is always at least satisfactory; it is mostly good at Key Stage 4 and very good at Key Stage 3 as pupils acquire the basic skills of the subject. It reaches excellent standards in Key Stage 3 where the structure of the work is so well understood by pupils of all attainment levels that they engage in their work immediately, with intense concentration, and with the minimum of teacher instruction. Management of pupils by teachers is a real strength. Pupils are encouraged to seek their own solutions to problems under close scrutiny by the teachers; this approach provides challenge and learning opportunities for higher attainers as well as effective support for lower attainers. Workbooks for the information technology courses offer very good stimuli to pupils of all abilities. Hardware and office standard software available in the new suited rooms are very good indeed and are used to very good effect by teachers whose knowledge, understanding and skill are very good. Technical support is readily available to pupils and teachers. Time is generally very well managed, with good reinforcement of learning points at the end of lessons. Marking is thorough and effective; pupils know what they need to do to meet performance criteria and course requirements. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the relationship between these assessments and the National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 is not explicit enough.

Modern foreign languages

145. Twenty-eight per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation, Level 4, in the 1999 statutory teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. This was well below the national average, 63 per cent. Results have fluctuated over the last three years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Within lessons seen during the inspection boys achieved a lower standard than girls and there were many more boys in the lower sets. With the exception of 1997 the GCSE French examination results since 1995 have been significantly below the national average. Boys outperformed girls slightly in 1999 and 1998. German results were well above national averages in 1996 and 1997 but significantly below in 1998 and 1999. GCSE German is an option subject.

146. Attainment is below national expectations by the end of both key stages. All pupils lack confidence in using the target language for free self-expression because they are given insufficient opportunities in lessons. They can readily give short answers to teachers' questions but cannot speak at greater length in order to hold a simple conversation. They can extract details after listening to short extracts but have insufficient opportunity to hear and extract meaning from longer passages. Pupils can extract details from short reading texts. Simple writing tasks are completed accurately. Extended, independent, writing is being gradually developed in all years and most effectively in Key Stage 4 where there is increasing evidence of a variety of styles that meet the requirements for the higher GCSE grades.
147. Progress is satisfactory by the end of each key stage. This owes much to the well planned teaching that is generally well matched to the different levels of ability, including those who have special educational needs.
148. Most pupils are very attentive and respond and behave well, showing positive attitudes to the learning of a modern language and excellent relationships. Attitudes are keenest and most positive at Key Stage 3.
149. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in four fifths of the lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred only in German at Key Stage 3. Where teaching was satisfactory or better the teacher had planned carefully, proceeding from listening to gaining confidence in speaking before reading and writing were attempted. Where lessons were less satisfactory and the response of pupils less active, teachers failed to use the target language consistently, to give a substantial input of their own expertise, to plan varied opportunities for full and active student involvement and to make lesson objectives clear. The frequent technique of closed questions restricts opportunities for spontaneous self-expression. There is an emphasis on word lists and writing to model sentences at the expense of applying words for self-expression and communication. Appropriate homework is set regularly at both key stages.
150. The staff are well qualified and experienced in the languages they teach. However, there are insufficient occasions when lessons are enriched by use of direct or indirect reference to life in France or Germany. Information technology is fully incorporated into schemes of work but as yet is not used on a regular basis in lessons.
151. Marking of pupils' work is regular and meticulous, including both evaluative and formative comments, thus contributing to pupils' increasing awareness of how they can improve. There are regular assessments to monitor progress and assessment grades are efficiently recorded and used for monitoring and to inform planning. A strength of the department is the awareness of the pupils of their grades and future targets.
152. Teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory and does not allow for flexible classroom arrangements. The hatted accommodation includes small rooms, with poor acoustics and inadequate dim-out facilities. Audio-visual provision is adequate. The textbook situation is satisfactory. Modern languages books in the school library are not used regularly. The German exchange, French residential visits and other cultural outings make some contribution to the cultural development of pupils but their potential is not fully realised.
157. **Music**
153. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in classroom work are well below those expected nationally. In the 1999 statutory teacher assessments 12 per cent achieved the national expectation. Sixty-seven per cent did so nationally. Many pupils have very limited musical experience when they start at the school. There are wide differences in attainment between those pupils who have received specialist and/or instrumental teaching in their primary schools and parental support and those who have not. Singing is under-developed. Pupils sing insufficiently and irregularly. Most pupils play keyboards and tuned percussion in instrumental

work, but performing and music reading skills are poorly developed. Pupils who play instruments can name given notes or recognise common signs but the majority shows little understanding of notation. In composing pieces with given ideas, many pupils show imagination and control but most do not understand structure, compositional devices and lack techniques to develop pieces or the performing skills to realise them. Pupils listen most carefully to each other and recordings. They appraise sensibly showing sensitivity towards the feelings of each other but their musical vocabulary is very limited. Pupils' general musical knowledge, for example of composers, instruments, forms, styles and artists is poor.

154. At Key Stage 4, music forms part of the expressive arts GCSE course. Good-sized groups have achieved above average examination results in recent years. The 1999 results were typical with all pupils achieving grade C or above. Standards in the current two Year 11 groups and in the Year 10 groups vary widely but most pupils' musical skills are limited. Some pupils show promise in singing individually and sound instrumental skills. In composing, pupils' standards are affected adversely by their lack of previous experience, the lack of practise areas for group work and the lack of computers to help them develop and record their work. They listen attentively to each other and appraise sensibly but show very limited general knowledge of music and the arts.
155. At Key Stage 3, progress in relation to pupils' prior experience is good. In recent years, the department has been through a period of instability, affecting progress. Since the arrival of the new, enthusiastic head of department, standards have begun to improve and the department is well placed to move ahead. Pupils who are instrumentalists, and read music, make the best progress building on their previous learning, experience and their personal interests. However, many pupils lack prior appropriate experience to adequately develop instrumental, vocal and music reading skills to enable them to achieve their potential in performing, composing and listening. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress and are well integrated, especially where they are supported in the classroom. Progress in Key Stage 3 is affected by the insufficient time allocation for music, the lack of practice areas and shortages in resources. Progress at Key Stage 4 in expressive arts is good when pupils show enthusiasm but progress is affected by the absence of pupils, sometimes at college and the shortages in accommodation and resourcing.
156. Most pupils show positive attitudes and good behaviour supports achievement. Music is a popular subject and most pupils enjoy the lessons. They are involved and well motivated. Pupils are friendly, open, responsive, respectful towards staff and each other, use equipment sensibly, work well collaboratively and generally they remain on task when working in groups. They show initiative and appreciate being given responsibility, for example when composing in groups. They enjoy music making most, especially using instruments. In expressive arts work, most pupils are keen and many rate the subject as their favourite but a minority does not make enough effort to do their best and underachieve. Some examination pupils take advantage of opportunities in tuition and this supports their work. Pupils recognise that the arts contribute significantly to their social, cultural and personal development.
157. All teaching seen during the inspection was good and many lessons were very good. It has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is enthusiastic, confident and shows good subject knowledge. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour challenge pupils. There is a strong rapport between pupils and their teacher and relationships are excellent. The lively lessons use a wide range of resources although pupils do not make sufficient use of their own musical instruments to support their work. Lessons are appropriately planned, pitched well, and well organised. Assessment is very encouraging and supportive; skilful questioning involves all pupils. Homework is set informally but is not used systematically to extend learning, especially in practical work. The new staff have worked very hard to achieve great improvements but need more time to raise standards further, for example by monitoring tuition. Documentation is now excellent; links with other schools are now being developed. Deficiencies in resources include sheet music, books, computers, audio equipment and a piano for the hall. Technical support is needed.

158. Six visiting teachers provide an appropriate range of instrumental and lessons involving 25 boys and 49 girls (an above average 13 per cent of the school's population). Standards are satisfactory; pupils' attitudes, progress and the quality of teaching are good but the small hut used is unsatisfactory and also poses a health hazard to hearing when used by rock bands. Instrumental staff and their lessons support a wide range of developing extra-curricular activities. In these, standards are sound and improving; attitudes and progress are very good. Events such as the talent competition involving large numbers are held regularly, visits to concerts are now being planned and musicians visit the school, for example to give workshops within arts week. Current activities include the choir, band, wind, string, percussion and recorder ensembles as well as several rock bands. The extra-curricular work offers opportunities for all pupils to be involved in a wide range of activities. These are now beginning to enhance the cultural life of the school and the community although there is a lack of regular listening or live performances in assembly. The activities reflect the dedication of staff, the support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes are now bringing credit to the school and this thriving department.

163. **Physical education**

159. Attainment at the end of both key stages is currently in line with national expectations although the percentage attaining the national expectation in the 1999 statutory teacher assessments was below the national average. Boys and girls attained similarly. In terms of pupils' practical performance standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection and they remain broadly in line with national expectations at both key stages. At Key Stage 3 pupils are successfully developing their sending and receiving skills in a variety of games as well as improving their knowledge and understanding of rules and tactics. In hockey, for example, girls in Year 7 are able to retain close control of the ball when practising using the forehand and in some cases reverse stick. The more competent netball players in Year 8 can demonstrate correct footwork when catching and can apply their skills in a game situation. In badminton in Year 9 most pupils can sustain a rally with a partner and a significant number can play a drop shot and overhead clear.

160. At Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils consolidate and develop the skills acquired earlier and most, though not all, work with increasing levels of confidence in activities such as basketball, football, volleyball, badminton and netball. Some pupils are also able to officiate and control games competently as well as leading warm-up activities very effectively under guidance at the start of lessons. Several also help in extra-curricular activities with younger pupils. GCSE is not currently offered in physical education.

161. Pupils have had different experiences and opportunities prior to coming to the school and at Key Stage 3 they make good progress in lessons and over time. They adjust quickly in Year 7 and as they experience the different activities most maintain their good progress as they move through the key stage. At Key Stage 4 where the majority of pupils have less time for physical education progress is satisfactory over time but is good in some individual lessons. Most pupils who are taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award are progressing well. In Year 10, for example, pupils made very good progress in a basketball lesson in which they learnt a number of different drills that they could use in coaching younger players as well as improving their own individual levels of performance. The majority of pupils on the register of special educational needs are also making satisfactory progress.

162. Most pupils enjoy physical education. They arrive for lessons in an orderly way and change quickly. The standard of kit is very high and levels of participation are good throughout the school. They respond positively in lessons and work with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils co-operate with others very willingly in practices aimed at improving their level of performance. Equipment is treated with respect, pupils are aware of safety aspects and behaviour in all lessons is very good.

163. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection and the quality of teaching from the two full-time members of the department, one of whom is a newly qualified teacher, is always good and on occasions very good. The most effective lessons are characterised by high expectations of work and behaviour and very good class management. Relationships are particularly good and staff are sensitive to the needs of those pupils who might lack confidence in some activities. The quality of teaching, combined with the very good indoor and outdoor facilities, has a positive impact on standards.

164. Since the last inspection an appropriate assessment system has been put in place. Some adjustments have also been made to the curriculum. Pupils are no longer withdrawn from physical education to attend German lessons. Pupils at Key Stage 3 currently experience dance through the expressive arts faculty but there are plans to review this arrangement. The school has recently conducted a pilot study which has involved 'buying in' a teacher to deliver dance at Key Stage 4. In lessons observed during the inspection this proved to be very successful. The Junior Sports Leaders Award is a positive addition to the curriculum for some pupils at Key Stage 4. There are also plans to consider the re-introduction of the GCSE course in the near future. The department, supported by several other colleagues, continues to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school which are open to all. During the inspection these included football, netball, hockey, basketball, badminton and volleyball and most activities were well supported by groups of enthusiastic pupils.

169. **Religious education**

165. Attainment overall is below the expectations of the Somerset Agreed Syllabus. It is below expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and well below expectations by the end of Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have a broad knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and are aware of the major Christian festivals and rites of passage. A growing number of pupils are able grasp the significance of such beliefs for a believer and how they influence a person's life style. Their knowledge of other religions is much less detailed. They have an awareness of some of the main features of these religions but their knowledge lacks depth and is at times confused. For instance in Year 9 pupils know that the Jewish place of worship was a synagogue but can not go on to describe how Jews worship in such a building. They have no understanding of the importance of the Torah. Most pupils are able to relate the issues being discussed in the classroom to their own life style and understand that responses to such issues would vary between religions and cultures. For instance when examining the problem of suffering in the world Year 9 pupils were able to recognise that much of the suffering in the world is caused by human conflict. A minority of pupils can bring into their discussions specific concepts and language from other religions.

166. A shortage of time at Key Stage 4 means that pupils do not go on to consolidate the knowledge that they have acquired at Key Stage 3. They are able handle discussions sensitively on contemporary social and moral issues. They recognise that people often demonstrate their religious commitment and values in their response to such issues, but the level of knowledge displayed is at a very personal and narrow level. A small minority of pupils were able to look beyond their immediate environment and bring to bear concepts and beliefs of other religions but their knowledge of all religions, including Christianity, was very shallow and confused. Year 11 pupils were unable to describe in detail any major festivals.

167. Low and middle attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in some areas. Their lack of knowledge of basic Christian beliefs was clearly shown when some pupils were not aware that Roman Catholicism was a Christian denomination. Progress for the higher attainers was unsatisfactory. For pupils taking German as a second language the time allocation for religious education is reduced by half. This has a serious effect upon standards and is a major factor in the progress of the higher attainers.

168. The majority of pupils approach the subject in a positive and open manner, take an active role in group discussions and are sensitive to the views of others. When asked to work in pairs they co-operate well. Pupils accept responsibility for their own learning, completing satisfactory project work on their own. A small proportion of pupils (10 per cent), especially in Year 10, were hostile disinterested and uncooperative.
169. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Although not a specialist religious education teacher the commitment of the head of department has meant that the teaching in this subject has improved considerably since the last inspection. Lessons are carefully planned using a variety of teaching methods. In one lesson the teacher stimulated discussion with a set of photographs then illustrated the subject with an appropriate clip from television. Limited resources are carefully used and homework is set when appropriate. Assessment procedures are currently under review and will shortly be in line with those required by the agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 4 the management of group discussions is unsatisfactory.
170. There has been considerable progress since the last inspection. The appointment of a teacher with responsibility for the subject has improved standards. There are two factors that contribute to the lower attainment. A shortage of curriculum material that is directly related to Attainment Target 2 means that pupils do not have a strong base of knowledge on which to base their judgements. A shortage of time for pupils taking German at Key Stage 3 is compounded by limited time at Key Stage 4. This means that the requirements of the agreed syllabus cannot be fully met.

Vocational courses

175. GNVQ (Foundation) courses in business and manufacturing

171. These popular courses, run in conjunction with the local further education college are additional options at Key Stage 4. They have not yet been running for two years, so final results cannot be compared with national standards. Pupils are making good progress towards the completion of the courses.
172. In the business studies course the written demands will prevent a small number obtaining foundation level. Otherwise, standards are in line with national expectations. In the manufacturing course over 80 per cent of pupils are working at levels which should result in a pass at foundation level. A minority of pupils on both courses are producing very good work that is approaching intermediate level standards. Pupils use a variety of sources and make some good, well-supported career choices, adjusting them as necessary to meet their own capabilities.
173. Most pupils make good progress during lessons, as in a Year 11 manufacturing lesson, when they completed a study of the manufacturing structure of Bridgwater. Available resources allow higher attainers to complete thorough investigations. The lowest attainers have severe literacy problems that restrict their ability to produce any pieces of extended writing. Evidence from pupils' work folders suggests that nearly every pupil can carry out research tasks at a basic level and record findings clearly. All pupils can select key statements from textbooks.
174. Pupils respond well to the challenges of the courses and apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks. In a Year 11 business class pupils' interest was engaged by the teacher's effective use of questions. They are attentive, listening carefully to instructions. They relate well to classmates and teachers, and work collaboratively when required.

180. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. It was good or better in over half of the lessons seen. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and of syllabus requirements. Their organisation and use of a range of reference sources and materials has a positive effect on learning. In a Year 11 business lesson the teacher made good use of the overhead projector to help pupils to focus on key points. In a minority of lessons the pace is rather slow, but the central objective is still achieved. In most lessons there is secure classroom management and control, thus establishing a good atmosphere for learning. Although tasks are rarely designed to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment, teachers are very supportive of weaker pupils.

180. **Work-related courses**

175. Following a well planned programme of guidance interviews during Year 9, the National Curriculum in modern foreign languages and science has been disapplied for a small number of pupils at Key Stage 4. Their Key Stage 4 course includes a link course with the local further education college, following an NVQ course in construction, a link course with the careers service following GNVQ careers and the bronze and silver Youth Awards scheme. These pupils have all been allocated industrial mentors. Some pupils also follow a course leading to the Junior Sports Leader Award.

176. Most of the pupils following these courses have low literacy and numeracy standards, but they make good progress on practical tasks. In a Year 10 NVQ lesson pupils made good progress on making a bridle joint for a mirror despite the fact that few of them had practised any carpentry skills since Year 7. Pupils are attentive and follow instructions carefully. Good teaching promotes good progress from a very low starting point. Teachers have good subject knowledge, a keen awareness of health and safety issues and secure classroom management and control.

177. These vocational courses have brought welcome extra breadth to the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school might now consider steps towards making the GNVQ courses more attractive to higher attaining pupils, by offering them at both foundation and intermediate levels.

183. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

183. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

178. Before the inspection, the registered inspector held a meeting, attended by 17 parents and the team considered 77 responses from parents to the questionnaire about their opinions of the school. The registered inspector also met with the School Council. A number of very positive responses from local businesses were also received.
179. Twelve inspectors spent the equivalent of 43 inspector days in the school, gathering first-hand evidence. One hundred and twenty-two lessons were seen in all subjects. Because the school operates a ten-day timetable it was not possible to see a full range of life skills lessons but additional time was spent looking at pupils' work in this area. Several assemblies, a range of registration periods across all year groups and a number of extra-curricular activities were also seen. A sample of pupils' written work, taken from across the full ability range of the school, was analysed and arrangements made for this to be discussed with heads of subject. Representatives from each year met as a group to talk with an inspector about their experiences and views. A total of 115 hours was spent observing lessons and a further 13 hours was spent in gathering direct evidence, including the sampling of pupils' work and discussions with them.
180. All teachers who are timetabled to teach were seen in lessons on at least one occasion and many were visited several times, particularly if they were members of small departments or taught several different subjects.
181. Subject inspectors held planned discussions with subject leaders, including the co-ordinator for special educational needs, and arrangements were also made to discuss the pastoral curriculum with relevant staff. Discussions also took place, by prior arrangement with the school, with teachers who hold special responsibilities for various aspects of school life, and also with administrative and support staff. Governors were involved in many of these meetings.
182. The previous OFSTED report and its related action plan, policy documents, schemes of work, subject and year development plans, the school development plan and related financial information, the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents as well as the minutes of their meetings were all studied closely both before and during the inspection.
183. Attendance registers, the most recent auditor's report, statistical information concerning the socio-economic circumstances of the school, detailed records of pupils' prior attainment and a sample of pupils' reports were also scrutinised and helped to inform the judgements made.

189. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

189. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	540	26	151	164

189. **Teachers and classes**

189. **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	32.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.5

189. **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	14
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	375.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	70.2
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	23

189. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	1,320,504
Total Expenditure	1,349,234
Expenditure per pupil	2,595
Balance brought forward from previous year	-728
Balance carried forward to next year	-29,458

189. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 540
 Number of questionnaires returned: 77

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	33	59	7	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	44	52	1	1	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	25	47	22	6	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	29	54	11	5	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	38	53	5	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	39	55	4	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	40	52	8	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	32	55	6	3	4
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	57	12	6	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	26	46	21	5	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	43	45	8	3	1

189. **Other issues raised by parents**

A small number of parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed some concerns about the regular setting of homework, particularly towards the end of term. Inspectors found that homework was being set regularly.